

From: [Office of GSSW Dean](#)
To: [Amanda McBride](#)
Subject: [col-sw-stu-MSW] COVID-19: GSSW Denver Campus Changes
Date: Wednesday, March 18, 2020 9:09:04 AM
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Denver Campus MSW students,

I write to address the changes underway to your educational experience.

GSSW administration, faculty, and staff have been and are working to plan for and respond to COVID-19 as a rapidly evolving public health crisis. This historic time is a challenge for us to live into our social work values and skills. We have three criteria guiding our decision-making: follow public health science; ensure continuity of learning and work to the extent possible; and promote individual well-being.

We are as committed to the safety and security of the school and our larger community, as we are to providing you with the highest quality educational experience possible during this time. We recognize that the experience you will have in the spring quarter will be different than what you expected when you enrolled in the program. Different, however, does not mean less than; we are working harder and deploying more resources for you, not less.

The following outlines changes that have been made to instruction, field education, and the student experience, and why we have made them. **Please read this email in its entirety.**

Online Instruction

The entire University of Denver has moved to online instruction for the spring quarter. This is in accordance with public health science and follows federal, state, and local guidance regarding the need to reduce our collective risk of exposure through physical distancing.

Most GSSW faculty are trained in online instruction, and have taught in that modality for years. A range of additional supports have been added to adapt courses to be online, including instructional design support, individual consultation by master teachers, and remote learning opportunities.

The faculty mobilized on March 11 to begin the course development process, and all spring courses are underway for placement in Canvas, which will include weekly “synchronous” Zoom class sessions hosted by the instructor. You will still be “in a classroom” with them, albeit virtual, and able to see and interact with all of your classmates. Your faculty will still have all the expectations for readings, coursework, thoughtful conversations, and graded assignments.

I am heartened by the faculty’s commitment to you. They do what they do because of you, and want you to have the best experience possible.

Field Education

We recognize that there are some students who will be relieved to learn of GSSW’s plan to make field learning remote for now, due to the pressures they felt to meet their field commitments in a time of risk and uncertainty; there are some students who want to continue serving their community in-person during this time of high need. We commend all of our students’ dedication to serving vulnerable populations, while also balancing the importance of caring for themselves, their loved ones—and community health.

Again, public health science and federal guidance is that we practice physical distancing. When this is paired with the fact that many of our field education partners have closed facilities and moved completely remote, we had no other option but to move field education remote for now as well.

GSSW has been a national leader in remote field education for some time, helping to draft guidelines for

approved alternative learning activities, which have now been adopted at schools of social work across the nation. You are allowed to continue your field progress through approved alternative learning activities. We encourage you to draw upon your skills as leaders during your time of remote learning. Perhaps you can explore and propose policies and procedures that your agency could adopt to be better equipped in the future to engage in tele-mental health and remote service provision.

We have been in regular communication with field partners over the last two weeks, hearing their concerns and developing supports for this transitional period. Your field liaisons are there to advise you.

Our priority is to ensure that those planning to graduate in June 2020 can do so. Assistant Dean for Field Education Aneesha Bharwani explains how we are doing that in her March 17 email. For those of you who will continue with us next academic year, we are working now to ensure that field opportunities will be available to you in the summer, should you need them.

A number of us are also working to support the creation of highly-needed activities to support members of our community during this time of crisis, which can be completed remotely. We are coordinating with the Governor's office and Mile High United Way, among others.

Student Experience

Communication:

You **must read email** during this time of crisis. It will be DU's and GSSW's official means of communication with you. Continuity of your student experience depends on your cooperation. The [GSSW Student Resource Portal](#) is also updated daily with new information to help you through this crisis.

Please know that your questions, concerns, and ideas are important to us. Please email GSSWdean@du.edu. While volume of email and the necessity of crisis response may not allow for a reply to each email, please know that I am reading them all, and aggregating the common concerns, sharing them with DU and GSSW administration, and working toward solutions. It may take time to find solutions, but we will do our best.

Virtual office hours and advising:

The GSSW Student Services Office, including the registrar and student services teams, have set up remote operations. They are all fully staffed, and ready to support you—just as they do when we are all in Craig Hall.

Associate Dean for Academic Affairs Leslie Hasche, Program Director Kate Ross, and Assistant Dean for Students Deana Ahmad have set up supports for you. For example, virtual office hours and meetings for each department are available through Zoom, which began this week.

We will continue to offer individual and group advising options during the spring quarter, as well as workshops to prepare you for upcoming interviews for field or careers post-graduation. Please visit the [GSSW Student Resource Portal](#) for more information. You can also still sign up for one-on-one consults with our Career Services team.

Emergency financial aid:

We are in the process of setting up an emergency aid fund for those of you who are facing extraordinary financial hardship *as a result of this crisis*. For example, some of you have lost your employment; are being threatened by eventual eviction; or are food insecure. Faculty, staff, and alumni are already contributing to that account, and we will share more about it soon.

Mental health support:

I encourage you all to access the mental health supports that are available to you. What we are all experiencing is extremely anxiety producing. Please take care of yourselves. In addition to supports through the [DU Health and Counseling Center](#), all degree seeking students have free, 24/7 access to tele-mental health support through DU's My SPP: Student Support Program.

Please download the mobile app today and [click here](#) to learn more.

Social Work in This Moment

This is a moment for us as social workers to rise collectively to the challenge of seeing humanity through a global pandemic. It is a fact that some of us will become ill; some of us will have loved ones who become ill. We will **all** be isolated. This will get harder before it gets better, but the measures we have taken now will save lives.

We ask our community to remain vigilant in protecting the civil rights and well-being of those who are subject to prejudice or acts of discrimination, because they or their family members are from geographic regions where COVID-19 outbreaks have occurred.

I ask that you please understand that our faculty and staff are working hard to ensure a quality experience for you, while also responding to this crisis on a personal level as parents, children, friends, and individuals. I have asked them to please exercise care, concern, and patience with one another, and I ask that you please do the same.

Now is the time to be more social, not less. I challenge you to do something, to act out of love, such that you can look back on this moment and say that you made a difference in someone's life during what is undoubtedly one of the most difficult times in modern history.

We want humanity to make it through this, for you to stay on track with your education, and for you to be well. More communications will be forthcoming on a regular basis. For now, please turn in your final winter quarter papers, stay at home, rest, and be well.

In solidarity,
Amanda

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