

Subject: [col-sw-emp-staff-appt] COVID-19: COTW Weekly Round-Up
Date: Friday, April 10, 2020 at 2:55:40 PM Mountain Daylight Time
From: Amanda Moore McBride
To: Christine Mafana
Attachments: image002.png@01D60F48.11F948A0, image004.png@01D60F48.11F948A0, image006.png@01D60F48.11F948A0, image008.png@01D60F48.11F948A0

GSSW faculty, staff, and doctoral students,

We are coming to the close of the second week of spring quarter. It is hard to believe that we began our shift to remote work and learning just a month ago. So much change and tragedy are filling our days. I write to keep us connected and informed about developments.

Progress

We are so fortunate to work with a group of committed, caring people and professionals. I have example after example across the school of how you have met the moments of challenge with determination. You are giving your best effort, and it shows.

Spring quarter registrations have maintained across all programs—and may have even up-ticked slightly. All courses are online and actively engaged. New instructional supports continue to emerge. Even though they are remote, MSW students are learning a lot while providing vital services to our field partners during this crisis. Research and development of new knowledge continues. Dissertation defenses are being scheduled. Events and groups have moved to virtual rooms, where we are grateful to be in community. Deposits for summer and fall quarters continue to roll in.

We are making much progress to live into a very different spring quarter. The EAC and the MSW program directors are also continuing to look into the future, modeling different scenarios and planning for contingencies. I consider planning to be progress too. Emerging public health science suggests that coursework will most likely continue to be remote through the summer. We are less sure about fall quarter, but we must plan for a potential resurgence of infection and the consequences for work and learning.

These potentialities are clearly on the minds of admitted Denver Campus students, who are asking if we will have multiple start points. Allowing for multiple starts across the quarters will give students choice, especially for those who may not want to start summer or fall quarters online. Associate Dean Leslie Hasche and Denver Campus Program Director Kate Ross are developing a possible plan for multiple starts with the curriculum committee for the next academic year. This nimbleness is a testament to our student centeredness and resolve, which will support our enrollment goals for FY21. We will share our progress on these plans in the coming weeks.

Updates

Field Education:

All field activities will remain remote for the rest of spring quarter. We are developing an FAQ for students regarding the many questions they might have about field placement, which will be available next week. The Field Team is actively preparing for a summer field start for MSW@Denver students and other campus-based students, as needed. If remote learning needs to be continued into the summer, we will offer:

- trainings/resources for agencies and students on how to complete onboarding to new placements remotely and how to engage in provision of services and supervision in a virtual world.
- the option for students to complete waivers to complete in-person field work in the summer, should students feel safe and comfortable and agencies agree to safety precautions.
- the choice to delay field until students are able to engage in the type of meaningful learning they desire.

All of these decisions are dependent on emerging public health science and guidance will be communicated to students and agencies as new information becomes available. For the latest communications, please visit the [GSSW Student Resource Portfolio Field Education COVID-19 Updates](#).

Alternative Grade Option:

The Chancellor and Provost announced an alternative grade option on April 9 for all DU students across all programs. This option may be chosen by students who feel that they cannot fulfill their learning requirements to the best of their abilities, due to their unique life circumstances during this crisis. It is a relief valve, a bit of grace, that is being provided by many universities.

The students may choose this alternative Pass+ / Pass / Fail grade option for any or all of their courses. Students can opt for this at any time up until 72 hours after their final course grades are available in June. However, our handbooks still stand for what is considered passing, which is a C- and above for the MSW program and a B- and above for the doctoral program. Faculty will assign grades as usual, and faculty will not know which of their students opted for the Pass+ / Pass / Fail grading system.

Faculty and staff advisors may be met with questions by students about whether or not they should exercise this option. General GSSW guidance is that this option should only be chosen in unique and exceptional circumstances, given licensure requirements and future educational choices. You may refer students to the GSSW Academic Affairs Virtual Office Hours, to Program Directors, and to the Professional Advisors for further guidance.

We are working on an FAQ, and will distribute that to all faculty and staff as soon as it is available.

Technology Issues:

We understand that some of you may have unstable internet connections. Each of your tech situations is unique, so unfortunately, we cannot deploy a universal solution. We encourage you to [explore how you might boost your WiFi](#). If you are still experiencing challenges after performing these diagnostics, please email gssw.tech@du.edu or call/text 303-900-2805 and we will explore the options with you.

Parking Refunds:

Those of you who pay for parking on campus will receive prorated refunds for the months we are not on campus. Central is working to process this, hopefully in the next month. This refund will not affect your "place" in a parking garage.

Events:

Thank you to all who completed the survey regarding unique learning needs and your ideas for community engagement. We received a great response and a long volunteer list. Our goal is not to overwhelm with even more virtual engagement, but to be responsive with approximately one voluntary event a week for the rest of the quarter.

The Office of Community Engagement is compiling the roster now. Be on the lookout for more information next week. In the meantime, feel free to join in [yoga](#) or [meditation](#) provided to our community by two of our alums. Please continue to check our COVID-19 [community care and wellness page](#) for additional resources.

Also, please check out [an example of an external communication](#) that was sent today to alumni, with adapted versions sent to field partners, the larger community, and social work deans and directors. It highlights the amazing remote continuing education sessions, alumni opportunities, and more that OCE, career services, and alumni engagement created for our extended community. Thank you, Trish, Eden, Stacy, and Carly!

Our sense of self, our sense of humanity is shifting. Many are experiencing loss, anxiety, fear, grief, and fatigue. Please continue to be patient and compassionate with one another—and please keep up the phenomenal team work! Unknown challenges are before us. We will prevail, together, through our ingenuity and support of one another, just like we are now.

May we soon begin to experience new feelings of groundedness, connectedness, and hope. As always, please let me know your needs, concerns, and ideas.

With appreciation,
Amanda

Amanda Moore McBride, PhD
Morris Endowed Dean and Professor
Graduate School of Social Work, University of Denver

2148 S. High Street, Craig Hall 306, Denver, Colorado 80208
303.871.2203 | Amanda.McBride@du.edu | [Portfolio and CV](#) | [she/her/hers](#)



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