

Dear SPH students, staff and instructors,

Hopefully you all saw the messages from President Cauce and Provost Richards today (1/24/22) to [students](#) and to [instructors and staff indicating that UW will return to largely in-person instruction effective January 31, 2022.](#)

I understand that some of you will be thrilled to hear this news and some will be... not so thrilled. While we can all celebrate that the Omicron wave is past its peak in our region, that most members of our community are vaccinated and that Omicron cases tend to be milder than what we saw in previous waves, I know that many of you are still experiencing disruptions (e.g., for kids in K-12 schools and day care) and no one enjoys getting sick or taking care of sick loved ones. As we transition back to being together more in community, here are some details about what we are doing to provide flexibility and some things that you can do to take care of yourself and loved ones:

SPH STUDENTS:

- [Accommodations can be requested](#) from Disability Resources for Students (DRS) by students with physical or mental health concerns that may impact academic success.
- In addition, students in programs in SPH who live with individuals who are immunocompromised can request from the SPH Office of the Dean a [special arrangement to take their SPH classes remotely for the winter quarter.](#)
- Students who cannot come to class in-person because they are ill, [quarantining or isolating per UW guidance](#), staying home to care for a sick loved one, or staying home to care for a child whose school or daycare has been canceled should communicate directly with their instructors and the directors or managers of their degree programs by email. Although instructors are not required to provide a synchronous remote option for classes that are being taught in person, instructors will work with students to find ways for students to make-up missed coursework, so that they can complete the course and progress towards their degrees.

SPH INSTRUCTORS:

- While instructors are expected to return classes to the mode of instruction listed in the time schedule by Monday, January 31, instructors may alter a course's instructional modality, including a temporary change to remote instruction, for limited periods of time if there are COVID-related factors that impact their ability to teach in person, such as a need to [isolate or quarantine](#) or disruptions to daycare or K-12 schools. No permission is needed from the Office of the Dean to make these changes, but instructors should consult with your department chair and/or program director.
- Instructors may also [request formal accommodations from DSO or special arrangements from SPH](#) to teach remotely for the remainder of winter quarter due to physical or mental health conditions.

SPH STAFF:

- Staff who cannot come to work in-person because they are ill, [quarantining or isolating per UW guidance](#), staying home to care for a sick loved one, or staying home to care for a child whose school or daycare has been canceled should communicate directly with their supervisor by email. No advanced permission is required.
- Staff may [request formal accommodations from DSO](#) to work remotely for the remainder of winter quarter due to physical or mental health conditions.
- Staff who provide core in-person services may need to start coming into the office in person more frequently starting January 31. However, to the extent possible, additional flexibility through the month of February will be provided for those who need time to figure out their childcare or commuting arrangements, or just need a little more time to adjust (please coordinate with your supervisor).
 - Staff who have been teleworking since the Omicron surge began in mid-December and would like to continue to do so during the month of February may do so with the approval of their supervisor and department chair, regardless of whether they have a telework agreement in place.
 - Those individuals who do not have a signed telework agreement in place should plan to return to 100% in-person work no later than March 1, 2022.
 - All staff in SPH who have signed telework agreements should plan to revert to the arrangement specified in this agreement no later than March 1, 2022.

TAKING CARE OF YOURSELF AND OTHERS:

- Please stay home if you are sick. If your symptoms are consistent with COVID, please get tested. [Testing options in our region](#) continue to expand and now include [rapid tests](#) that are mailed to you.
- Follow UW's [updated public health guidance](#) if you test positive for COVID-19 or have a known exposure to someone who tests positive.
- Instructors and supervisors can help the whole community stay safe by being patient with and accommodating individuals who need to stay home for health reasons or because they are caring for loved ones who are ill.
- If you haven't done so already, [get a booster shot](#) when you are eligible.
- Consider ["leveling up" your facemask](#) with a KN95, KF94, N95 or surgical mask. If you cannot afford to purchase a higher-grade facemask or forget your mask at home, please reach out to your department administrator or Assistant Dean [Uli Haller](#).
- Be kind to and patient with yourselves and each other. While we have all experienced difficulties, anxiety and frustration, some individuals and communities have experienced heightened stress and losses. We can never know the extra burdens some are carrying.

I recognize that this continues to be a stressful time. If you need extra support, please let us know. SPH students have access to a dedicated Mental Health Counselor and Liaison for Health Sciences, [Jen Nguyen](#), as well as [mental health resources](#) and well-being [resources](#) that are available to all UW students. If you need help navigating these systems, please reach out to your program manager or Assistant Dean for Students [Juanita Ricks](#). Benefits-eligible employees can connect with support through [CareLink](#) – please ask for help if you need it. SPH faculty and staff should also feel free to reach out to their departmental HR Manager or SPH HR Manager [Meghan Herman](#) if they need assistance. Likewise, your department chairs, department managers and I are all here to support you – please don't hesitate to reach out if you need us.

Many thanks to all of you for your continued understanding and dedication during this time. I look forward to seeing some of you in person after January 31.

Best Wishes,




Hilary Godwin
Dean, UW School of Public Health



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