Dear SESP colleagues,

As we approach one year (!) of remote work and classes, we’re all missing the relationships and the community we enjoyed together on campus. We’ve maintained our connections online well, but our offline interactions—the chat in the hallway, the walk to lunch, or the quick hello on the way to the classroom—have certainly been in short supply.

Because we are focused on health, safety, and the long game, we are extending our practice of remote work. This means the vast majority of the SESP community is advised to continuing working remotely with intermittent/ad hoc access to campus through June 20, 2021.

This decision is based on a realistic assessment of the present situation and optimism about the future. By May 21, 2021, we plan to announce updates to our remote work plans. We hope to begin coming back together in the early summer.

If you have not already done so, please review the recent message from Kathleen Hagerty and Julie Payne-Kirchmeier. The message outlines information on Spring Break, Wildcat Wellness, and the start of Spring Quarter.

Some positive signs of late have been the increased testing on campus – Northwestern has the ability to perform up to 5,000 tests per day – and the overall positivity rate on campus, which remains under 1 percent. Nationally, millions of people have received their first dose of the vaccine. However, we’re still not out of the woods.

For Spring Quarter, the majority of SESP undergraduate and PhD program classes will continue to be offered remotely with some hybrid classes. Decisions about course delivery are made by the faculty instructor, and Spring Quarter modes will be noted in CAESAR. SESP professional master’s programs (MSEd, MSHE, MSLOC) will continue to offer classes in remote formats.

Research staff may receive updated guidance from their supervisors/PI’s who plan to resume on-site research during Winter Quarter and/or Spring Quarter, but until this happens, they should plan to continue to work remotely according to the above guidance.

As before, faculty and staff are not restricted from coming to campus, yet prioritizing remote work helps us reduce risk and manage personnel density in SESP spaces. We will continue to follow University guidance and adapt or update as requirements change. We remain hopeful that we may be able to host a completely voluntary in-person activity or two sometime in June.

Should you be on campus this winter and spring in any capacity, please remember to:

- Complete the daily Symptom Tracker each time before coming to campus, and wear masks in all campus public and shared environments.
- Follow the procedures for positive cases of COVID-19, per University policy, if you receive a positive COVID-19 diagnosis or if you must self-isolate.
• Access information on free COVID-19 testing through the University by reviewing the Winter Quarter testing message from Luke Figora and visiting the Faculty and Staff Testing webpage.

We intend to keep this schedule in place through June 20, 2021. However, operating needs as well as other internal and external factors will be reviewed periodically, and we reserve the right to modify the plan as needed.

We are beginning to see the light at the end of the tunnel, but this is certainly not the time to become any less vigilant. We appreciate all you are doing to keep yourselves and the community safe and healthy. We can’t wait to come together again offline!

Stay safe.

Sincerely,

David N. Figlio
Orrington Lunt Professor and Dean

Coleen Coleman
Senior Associate Dean

Melissa Weidman
Director of Administration