



THE GRADUATE SCHOOL  
PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

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*Sarah-Jane Leslie, Dean*  
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March 27, 2020

Dear Graduate Students,

I hope this message finds you safe and well. This has been an extraordinary week of change for all of us and I am so proud of the way we have come together as a community. While we're still feeling uncertainty in our lives right now, I would like to provide a few updates and information to help us continue to navigate the challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic together.

### **Complying with Governor Murphy's Executive Order**

New Jersey Governor Murphy's state-wide "stay at home" order to slow the spread of COVID-19 started at 9 p.m., Saturday, March 21 **and remains in effect**. While we understand that this has caused further disruption to our daily lives and routines at an already challenging time, we must all continue to do our part to mitigate the spread of the virus. No matter how tempting it may be to try to return to your normal routine, I urge you to remain vigilant, to act responsibly and to adhere to state and University guidelines for the safety and well-being of our entire community.

- The Executive Order means **everyone** must work from home unless their job requires them to be present in the workplace. This includes all graduate students, as well as faculty. Graduate students should not be in academic buildings or labs unless they have received prior approval through the continuity of research plans as essential personnel or unless your teaching crucially relies on equipment that you cannot access or replicate from home. In those rare instances where you must access equipment on campus, you are only permitted in the building to teach your class and then you must immediately return home. For guidance about essential research operations, including lab research on campus, please refer to the [frequently asked questions](#) on the [Princeton Research website](#).
- The University is committed to [ensuring compliance with these policies](#). Violations of these guidelines are a serious threat to public health and safety and may be subject to University disciplinary procedures. We understand that this may seem severe, but we are living through unprecedented times and we must remain vigilant in addressing the serious health risk this pandemic poses to our community.
- Our individual and collective actions are so important right now to flatten the curve. Princeton University President Emerita Shirley Tilghman and several professors have joined a group of scientists urging New Jersey residents to stay home to slow the spread of COVID-19. Please take a moment to [read this article](#).

### **Engaging in Local Outdoor Activities while adhering to Social Distancing**

Please be reminded that all non-essential indoor gatherings of any size are prohibited. However, you may engage in outdoor activities while strictly adhering to social distancing. According to the [New Jersey COVID19 Information Hub](#), "exercising in open spaces is encouraged for mental and physical health as long as you maintain proper social distancing practices by staying six feet away from others while walking, hiking, ... or

biking.” You should also use good judgement in choosing outdoor activities and note the accessibility requirements of various locations. It’s important to reduce the potential for injury that would add additional stress on first responders and healthcare providers. Please consider your personal safety as well as the health and safety of others.

- In addition to taking advantage of the beauty of the campus outdoor spaces, you may also wish to safely and responsibly explore nearby outdoor locations such as the [Institute Woods](#), the [Princeton Towpath](#) and the [Mountain Lakes Nature Preserve Trail](#). Please check their websites for information regarding hours or any closures.

## Building Virtual Community

We want to make sure our community is still able to connect even when we need to be physically apart. This week several new virtual programs and opportunities were announced by teams at the Graduate School as well as many campus partner offices.

- For personal and professional development, the GradFUTURES website includes an easily accessible listing of dozens of [online programs and resources](#). Please check out their weekly newsletter for events, programs and opportunities for the week ahead (<https://conta.cc/2UyZv2h>).
- To help build connections and facilitate conversations among and between graduate students and graduate alumni we invite you to join the [GradFUTURES LinkedIn group](#), an exclusive online community. Graduate alumni are actively sharing advice for graduate students in the LinkedIn group. We will also launch [GradFUTURES Virtual Meetups](#) featuring facilitated conversations with graduate alumni beginning on April 8. [Please use this brief form to let us know you'd be interested in being paired with a graduate alum](#) in our soon-to-be-announced virtual mentorship program.
- Please also check out the virtual community building activities, workshops, and resources that the Graduate School and partner offices in Campus Life and throughout the University are offering for students: <https://winter.princeton.edu/virtual>. The offerings will include meditation sessions, virtual group movie nights, worship services, professional development workshops, fitness classes, games and more. Check back each week to see what else has been added to the schedule.

## Getting Involved in Service to Others

Engaging in service from a distance within your home community or within the greater Princeton community is another way to make a positive impact during these challenging times.

- The [Pace Center for Civic Engagement](#) has launched a new "[Activate Your Engagement: From a Distance](#)" newsletter offering tips, resources, information, and ideas to virtually respond and engage. More information can be found on their [How to Respond Virtually](#) web page as well.

## Seeking Support

The [Graduate School staff](#) are always available to answer your questions and assist you in whatever ways we can. There are many campus resources available to support you. Counseling and Psychological Services (CPS) can be reached at (609) 258-3141, and [virtual CPS](#) counseling sessions are being offered as well. CPS has also prepared [very helpful guidance](#) on how to take care of your mental health during this pandemic; please do take a moment to review it.

Even though we cannot be physically connected, we want you to know we are here to support you. This week, members of the Graduate School staff and I recorded [individual messages of support](#) for graduate students as part of the #VirtualPrincetonU campaign. We hope you enjoy viewing them!

## THANK YOU!

We thank you for everything you are doing to care for yourselves, and to support each other during these uncertain times. As always, I want to extend our deep appreciation for the outstanding leadership, and continued partnership and support of the [Graduate Student Government](#).

In closing, as I shared in my video message, I know this semester has brought many unprecedented and unanticipated challenges for us all. As a former Princeton graduate student myself, I have seen remarkable discoveries and achievements by our graduate community – and have seen us at our very best when addressing some of the world's toughest challenges. I am confident that through our collective expertise and ingenuity -- and with a renewed focus on being in service to each other and to all humanity, we will get through this together.

Please be sure to check [coronavirus.princeton.edu](https://coronavirus.princeton.edu) and the [FAQs for graduate students](#) regularly for updates, information, and guidance.

Stay safe, stay well—and stay connected online,

Sarah-Jane Leslie  
Dean of the Graduate School