Dear Students of INDS,

You are very much in our thoughts in these strange and uncertain times. We hope this reaches you in good health and good spirits. Above all else, know that the staff of INDS care about you.

We write to offer you practical lines of support and encouragement. From Spring Break until now, we have been focused largely on transitioning INDS classes online and listening carefully to the larger changes at the university that are starting to unfold. Enough time has passed and enough decisions have been made that it is time to write, but the first and most important guidance from us to you is that everything is still changing fast. Please stay in touch with your advisor, try to notice the emails coming from "top brass" at the university, and expect more updates from us! One of the best roles we can play in supporting you is to connect you with the latest and clearest information. With that being said, here’s some important themes from this past week:

(1) All of us within INDS have learned rapidly a variety of software platforms and approaches to meetings, big and small. Please reach out to any of us, especially your INDS advisor, wherever you sense there is something we could help you with (or anything that you are worried / confused about)! As we grow in confidence that our classes and business procedures are working well, we are ready and waiting to work with you individually.

(2) You have probably already noticed that the university is starting to change policy this semester for grades; these are potentially big changes! But , please DO NOT MAKE HASTY DECISIONS...This is exactly where we can help, and the right decisions for you are on a case-by-case basis. The most important detail here is that your options for choosing Pass/Fail instead of letter grading can be made up through June 10th, days after final grades are posted, so there is no rush. For ALL of you right now, the best thing you can do is to reach out to your advisor once you are ready to talk through options.

(3) As a general guide to the policy changes taking place, please note and use this website: https://academicsuccess.umbc.edu/student-academic-success/academic-and-enrollment-policies/ But again, please do not feel that you have to interpret this and/or make decisions alone, as that is what we are here to help with. As we learn new information, we share with each other so that all of us can be best informed to then help you.

(4) More generally, please note that all forms of academic support available through the Learning Resources Center are now available online, from tutoring and SI pass to the Writing Center and placement testing. Keep this link handy for any needs you may have: <https://lrc.umbc.edu/>

(5) Finally but as important as anything written above, please understand that ALL the changes I have been following are made with one, united spirit: to help you, to ease your burdens of stress, anxiety, and other challenges. You made a good choice with UMBC; it is an institution that cares about you and wants to help.

So please stay safe, be kind to one another AND to yourselves, and we look forward to hearing from you.

Steve Freeland

Steven McAlpine, Carrie Sauter, Eric Brown, Christopher Varlack, and Holly Cudzilo