Memo to students, faculty, staff on 3/25

As the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic continues to evolve, we want to update you on the steps being taken within the educational program to limit the spread of this disease in our UF community.  The following actions are particularly relevant to our graduate students and faculty:

1)    All UF classes will remain online for the rest of the spring semester.  UF is working on an S/U/Drop option for students.  All summer A and C classes will be held online.

2)    Spring commencement has been rescheduled for the weekend of July 31-August 2 for students graduating with master’s or bachelor’s degrees.  Graduating doctoral students can participate in the August 7 summer doctoral ceremony.

3)    Everyone is strongly encouraged to follow Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) best practices for prevention of COVID-19 including; hand washing, social distancing, avoidance of large gatherings, and conductance of university business via videoconferencing and virtual meetings.

4)    No visitors including visiting students are to be hosted on campus unless approved by a senior vice president or vice president.

5)    Alachua County mandated emergency "stay at home" orders effective at midnight, Monday, March 23. UF is reducing on-campus personnel to those identified as essential.  University operations are not covered under this order. However, as you know, for the past two weeks the university has strongly encouraged taking action to allow those who can work from home to do so.  With this new order, we are now transitioning our focus to determining those who are considered essential personnel and can perform these duties remotely and those who are considered essential personnel and must report to campus. At this time, all faculty are considered essential personnel as classes are still in session and our research and clinical operations are still active. We recognize that some faculty may be able to perform these essential duties at home, while other may not. For faculty, graduate assistants, and staff that are performing essential duties at home, we must remember that as the situation evolves there may come a time when employees are called back to campus.

6)    The Graduate School requests that Academic Units and supervising faculty review and revise as necessary all Graduate Assistant work-plans and assignments. Efforts should be undertaken to encourage work at remote settings for all Graduate Assistants.  It is recognized that the work assignments of Research Graduate Assistants can be quite variable and may in some cases seem to require physical presence in a lab or field setting.  It may sometimes occur that work in such settings is accomplished by a single person, and may allow for successful social distancing.  However, concerns about research progress must take a back seat to the COVID-19 emergency.

7)    Research activities that can be accomplished remotely should move to this modality now.  PI’s should immediately make all necessary preparations to restrict research activities to essential functions and personnel.  While certain limited operations in laboratories are essential, the definition of "essential personnel" must be applied as strictly as possible.  Information on COVID-19 impacts on UF research and sponsored program operations is published at https://research.ufl.edu/covid-19-updates.html.

8)    Master’s thesis and Ph.D. dissertation defenses should continue as scheduled.  Physical attendance at the thesis and dissertation defenses will be limited to the student and their supervisory committee under conditions that maintain social distancing.  Zoom (https://uflphi.zoom.us) or other electronic medium may also be considered as an option to allow committee members or others to virtually attend the oral presentation.  The Graduate School has temporarily waived the requirement for the Supervisory Committee Chair/Co-Chair and the candidate to be physically present during the final thesis or dissertation defenses.   Additional updates related to these guidelines can be obtained by emailing the UF Graduate School at gradschool@aa.ufl.edu<mailto:gradschool@aa.ufl.edu>.

9)    The Medical Guild event scheduled for Wednesday, April 8, is likely to move to an electronic medium presentation mode or possibly be postponed to a later date.

10)  UF is canceling, postponing or, where feasible, moving all events to alternate virtual modes of participation until further notice.  Scheduling new future events and conferences will also be postponed until further notice.

11)  More information from UF regarding questions related to COVID-19 are available by accessing these updated FAQs or visit http://www.ufl.edu/health-updates/ for up-to-date information.

We sincerely appreciate all your efforts in addressing this ongoing pandemic and welcome any input or questions you may have.  We will continue to monitor and provide updates as new information becomes available.