June 30, 2020

Dear Students:

I am very much looking forward to meeting you in the Fall and wanted to write to let you know our plans for instruction and safety. First, let me explain how we will deliver classes. The model that we have chosen for instruction is HighFlex/HyFlex, which is designed to provide maximum flexibility in terms of how and where students take courses. In this model, the number of students in the classroom can, in theory, go from 1% to 99%, allowing us to adapt to the social, political, and public health environment.

The HighFlex/HyFlex model will enable us to rotate which students can learn in and outside the classroom. Not to be confused with classic online, the model uses multiple cameras and microphones and a large screen so that students in and outside the room can participate as a group. The number of students who opt to participate in-person is determined by the specifications mandated by the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health. If the number of students who want to learn inside the classroom exceeds the number allowed, we will rotate students’ in-person class participation according to their wishes. Students who opt to learn completely online will be able to participate from home. Should any change prevent us from being on campus, the HighFlex/HyFlex model would allow us to move entirely online rapidly. No class time would be lost.

Our plan is to provide as many opportunities as possible for our students to get to know each other and interact with their faculty while staying safe. We will provide ample study spaces for students. Study spaces and classrooms will be cleaned three times a day and we will provide clear signage on safety features.

We will provide you with additional information in the coming weeks. In the meantime, I encourage you to stay informed on the health and safety precautions the university will be implementing this Fall via the COVID-19 Resource Center. I cannot wait to meet you. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have questions.

Sincerely,

Sarah Gehlert, MA, MSW, PhD
Dean
USC Suzanne Dworak-Peck School of Social Work
President, American Academy of Social Work and Social Welfare