

April 15, 2020

Dear DDDC and RCAAS Staff,

It has been nearly a month since I last wrote to emphasize my commitment to supporting the work of our GSAPP Autism Centers during this time of uncertainty. In the past month, I have greatly appreciated the support of the GSAPP leadership (Dean Francine Conway and others) as well as the DDDC and RCAAS Directors. Cat Francis and Chris Manente and the entire team of each center have worked tirelessly to navigate this crisis situation, and you have all mobilized to support your students, clients and families in amazing and meaningful ways. I am also deeply appreciative of the actions taken by the University to make paid leave available for all employees directly affected by the situation.

As these weeks turn into months, and the timing of any return to “business as usual” remains unknown, new challenges have and will continue to present themselves. The people that we serve in our centers are vulnerable, with many facing extreme and difficult circumstances. It is my hope that we will continue to provide remote support to the full extent possible, and eventually work to safely re-engage in direct in-person services as soon as it is permitted and safe to do so. However, we all know that this is a process and timeline we can’t control and must be navigated cautiously.

In the coming months and even years, the financial impact of this situation will become more clear, for the State of New Jersey and for Rutgers, as New Jersey’s State University. We are fortunate at the DDDC and RCAAS to benefit from the support of the University and GSAPP. With the potential for dire financial consequences at all levels in the state, it is likely that we will not be able to benefit from the same level of support for a period of time in the coming months and years. With this reality in mind, we have a responsibility to develop cost-saving strategies to help counter-act what may be a significant funding shortfall.

Please know that my heart is heavy as I write this memo and consider potential action plans. I will continue to collaborate with all Center administrators, GSAPP leadership, and university units to explore all the possibilities. We will remain focused on our commitment to serving the autism community with safety and integrity and to uphold our ethical and legal obligations to the entire DDDC and RCAAS community.



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