



## Pittsburgh Institute of Mortuary Science

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### **7/9/20—COVID-19 UPDATE ON POSTPONING THE RETURN TO CAMPUS FOR CLASSES 161 AND 162**

Please be advised that a surge in coronavirus cases in Allegheny County continues, which has led the County Health Director to extend the order to limit indoor gatherings to 25 people to July 24, 2020. Hence, a decision has been made that campus students will continue to utilize Alternative Delivery with a tentative return date set for Monday, July 27, 2020.

This decision is made out of an abundance of caution for students and school employees. It is consistent with the county order and will be reevaluated as the COVID-19 pandemic is an evolving situation. Therefore, students will remain in Alternative Delivery as scheduled, continuing with Zoom classrooms supplemented by itslearning and other forms of remote delivery.

Dean Michael Burns, the Pandemic Officer for the Institute, will issue an email reminder to all about their schedule as we move closer to resuming campus operations. We hope this will be just a two-week postponement in the campus return for Classes 161 and 162, but that will be decided based on the success in mitigating this spike in the virus. The Summer Non-Core 16 classes that are in alternative delivery will remain in this format as scheduled at the beginning of the term.

Clinical embalming will continue to be performed with all precautions in place, including wellness checks, universal masking at all times before and after embalming (obviously full PPE is used during the embalming operation) and all other protocols put forth in the PIMS COVID-19 Safety and Health Plan. Dean Burns will continue to advise on this practical rotation. If permitted, you may continue to perform practicum tasks and as a reminder, if you are at a funeral home that has not been visited, you may perform a virtual visit to have the site approved for BOTH Funeral Service Skills Practicum and Clinical Embalming (contact Dr. Lease regarding Practicum questions and Dean Burns for Clinical Embalming questions).

Once again, this decision to postpone is made with an abundance of caution for your collective safety as the surge of the virus has continued in Allegheny and surrounding counties. We apologize for any inconvenience, but your safety is our primary concern. Updates will be provided as the situation evolves, but at this point, our plan is to return to campus on Monday, July 27, 2020.

Finally, although formal classes are being held in the AD format, a decision was made to begin offering in person “learning enhancements.” This program is designed to provide ADDITIONAL instruction to limited numbers of students on campus at specified times. Such sessions will not be mandatory and may be subject to change without notice due to various reasons including instructor availability, and of course, the spread of the virus.

If interested in a particular class for such enhancement, please contact Dean Burns to see how this might be arranged. A key factor will be maintaining numbers within the Health Department guidelines so times and schedules may vary. Please also note that the learning enhancement program was designed for courses that have proven to be more challenging based on testing and performance, so some classes will not require this program.

To that end, the enhancement program is not designed to replace the weekly lectures for any of the courses, rather it is to supplement the education with select in-person guidance. We hope you find it is yet another creative way we are trying to keep you making pace and progression during the pandemic. In closing, it should be obvious that students attending learning enhancement sessions are subject to ALL safety and health protocols before entering the building.

Stay safe and stay healthy!