



Special Issue - Spring 2020

Dear USC Graduate Students,

This is a difficult time for everyone. I see it on my friends' and colleagues' faces. I hear it through the emails I read from students, staff, and faculty. I feel the fear, the grief, the frustration, the anxiety; I feel it all deep in my bones, and what makes all these feelings more confusing is that sometimes there is no clear target to direct them toward. This Coronavirus pandemic is a complicated, pervasive, and completely unprecedented crisis. There is no roadmap to follow, but everyday we get closer to drawing a new map. We will get through this, and we will get through it together, emerging stronger than ever.

As graduate students, we comprise an extremely diverse academic landscape: Masters students in film studies, finance, molecular pharmacology, computer science, public policy; Doctoral students conducting high-impact research in biomedical engineering, substance use disorders, ethnography, cancer prevention and treatment; future healthcare providers, lawyers, social workers, statisticians; future faculty whose impact will extend far beyond the students that they teach. We all came here because we are committed to lifelong learning and recognize that our advanced degrees will provide us with the tools we need to make the world a better place. However, all of these unique program requirements and expectations make it difficult for University leaders to develop University-wide policies for our diverse population. As GSG, I see our mission as identifying subpopulations of students who are disproportionately burdened by recent and ongoing changes, then fighting for equity in solidarity and providing financial support when we are poised to do so.

Over the last month, GSG has been hard at work responding to the vast spectrum of graduate student needs. Because we can no longer fund in-person events or conference travel, we have effectively restructured our Executive Board and our budget. We have working groups collecting data on academic and financial concerns, developing action plans and resource guides, and planning virtual programming events to offer spaces for graduate students to connect. I am also proud to share that we have expanded eligibility criteria for our GSG Emergency Fund, which is designed to quickly address unforeseen expenses arising from a crisis. Students may apply for up to \$700 to cover any unexpected financial burdens related to the COVID-19 pandemic, such as loss of income or wages, increased caretaking responsibilities, moving/relocation costs, technology-related equipment required for online coursework, or DACA/visa renewal fees. More information on GSG activities and updates can be found on page 6.

In this special issue of our newsletter, you will find information on the Coronavirus pandemic, some USC resources available to you, and a showcase of our pets that I hope will make you smile. Contact information for everyone on our Executive Board can be found on the last page; please feel free to reach out if you have any suggestions for how GSG can help our fellow graduate students. I also encourage you to share your thoughts by participating in GSG's COVID Response Survey (link can be found on page 6).

Sincerely,

Sam Cwalina | PhD Student, Keck School of Medicine

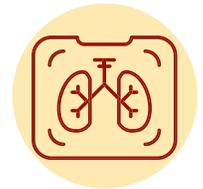
USC Graduate Student Government | Interim President, 2019-2020

CORONAVIRUS 101



The Coronavirus is also sometimes referred to as SARS-CoV-2 or COVID-19. Technically, the virus itself is called SARS-CoV-2, and the resulting disease is called COVID-19. Any of these names are appropriate to use. It is important to use these appropriate names to push back against narratives that individuals of Asian descent are more likely to spread the virus.

Viruses do not discriminate and neither should you.



The most common symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, extreme fatigue, and dry cough. Some people may also experience aches and pains, nasal congestion, runny nose, sore throat, or nausea. Sometimes people with the virus experience no or very mild symptoms, especially during the early stages of the disease.



COVID-19 can spread from person to person through respiratory droplets, commonly expelled when an infected person coughs or exhales. Preliminary evidence suggests that the virus can survive on surfaces for up to several days. The incubation period - the time between catching the virus and beginning to experience symptoms of the disease - can range from 1-14 days, with an average of 5 days.

5 Ways You Can Prevent the Spread of COVID-19

- 1** Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- 2** Cover your cough using the bend of your elbow or a tissue.
- 3** Practice social distancing, even if you don't feel sick.
- 4** Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth.
- 5** Get info from trusted sources.



Wearing face masks or face **coverings** in public spaces is now **required** in Los Angeles and on all USC campuses.

Source: World Health Organization (WHO)

What Does "Flattening the Curve" Mean?

Flattening the curve is a population-level effort to slow disease transmission and prevent healthcare systems from becoming overwhelmed by a high volume of cases all at once.

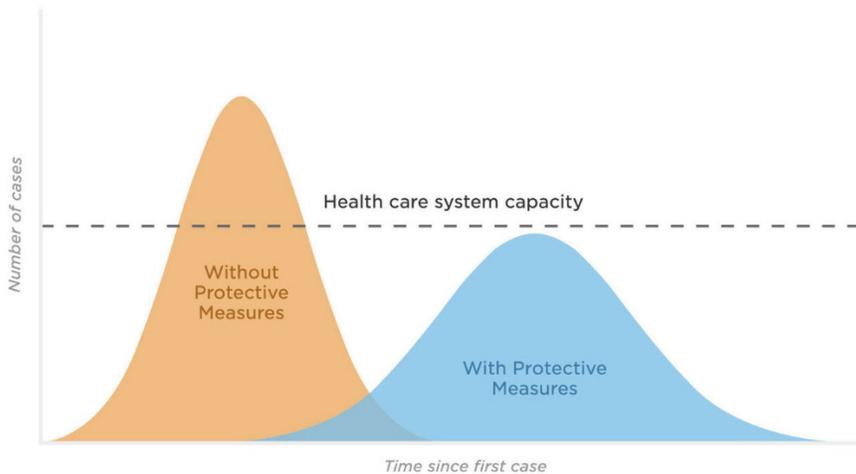


Image source: NPR

Social distancing (i.e., maintaining a six-foot distance from other people) is an effective public health strategy to flatten the curve. The goal of social distancing is to deliberately reduce the amount of physical contact between individuals. This is why non-essential businesses are closed, large events are being canceled or postponed, and many people are working from home instead of going into the workplace. Click [here](#) for a simulation demonstrating how social distancing flattens the curve.

What to do if you experience respiratory symptoms:

- **Stay home** and practice good respiratory hygiene.
- Call USC Student Health at **213-740-9355 (WELL)**. You will likely be scheduled for a virtual Telehealth appointment to review your symptoms and receive further instructions.
- Do **not** go directly to an urgent care or emergency department unless you are experiencing severe, life-threatening symptoms.

Stay up-to-date with the latest University information at the [USC Official COVID-19 website](#). If you have a specific question that cannot be answered on the website, you can reach out to the USC Emergency Operations Helpline at 213-740-6291 or covid19@usc.edu.

SURVIVING SOCIAL DISTANCING

It is not yet clear when social distancing measures will be lifted. As of this writing, the University has announced that courses will remain online through at least the first summer semester session, and all in-person University-sponsored events have been canceled or postponed, including 2020 Commencement ceremonies.

Remember that social distancing only refers to *physical* distancing. There are still plenty of options to socialize virtually! Stay connected with friends, classmates, family, or other people you care about through phone calls, group messages, or video calls using apps like FaceTime, Skype, or Zoom.



To help you explore new activities to keep you entertained at home, the USC Division of Student Affairs has developed a [website](#) that lists dozens of options for virtual engagement, including fitness, cooking, and art. Even though fitness facilities are closed, USC Rec Sports offers live [fitness classes](#) through Zoom.

Mental Wellness

This is a stressful time for everyone. Pandemics and quarantine measures can trigger symptoms of anxiety or depression, such as difficulty concentrating, changes in sleep and eating patterns, irritability, fatigue, or decreased motivation. It is important to be kind and patient with yourself as you learn to navigate this new reality, and understand that decreased productivity in times of crisis is completely normal. Remember that you are not alone; we are all going through this together.

To take care of your mental health, identify healthy coping strategies or “self-care” activities that you enjoy. Everyone is different, so what works for someone else may not work for you, and that’s okay. Experiment with a few recommended strategies and find activities that bring you comfort while maintaining physical distance from others.

Check out this [list](#) from USC Student Health to learn about the many different ways you can practice self-care during stressful times.

**USC Student Health hosts weekly “Let’s Talk”
[drop-in sessions](#) for students through Zoom.**

Monday-Friday 3:00-4:00pm (PDT)

Let’s Talk About Coping and Connecting

Monday, Wednesday, and Friday 12:00-1:00pm (PDT)

A Workshop - Thriving During COVID

Monday* and Friday 12:00-1:00pm (PDT)

Let’s Talk - International Students Edition

**Mandarin-speaking psychologist available on Mondays*

UNIVERSITY RESOURCES

Food & Housing Insecurity

Student Basic Needs helps students experiencing financial hardships with their food pantry and other grocery assistance programs, emergency housing, and other community resources.

Campus Support & Intervention offers individual consultations to connect students with appropriate resources on an individual basis. CSI assists students who need support in achieving their academic, professional, or personal goals.

The USC **Financial Aid Office** has established a COVID-19 Emergency Assistance fund, using funds received from the CARES Act. Currently enrolled graduate students with extraordinary one-time costs that have arisen as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic can apply for up to \$3,000.

\$7 MEALS



Community Cafes have been set up at both **UPC** and **HSC** to offer a variety of affordable meals. Menus change daily.

Academic & Professional

ITS has developed a website with tips on how to get the most out of **Zoom**.

The **USC Writing Center** offers one-on-one virtual consultations for students to help with writing cover letters, CVs, and essays.

The **USC Career Center** is now offering virtual drop-in appointments and will host their annual Career Fair (virtually) on April 23rd to provide networking opportunities for students.

Although USC Libraries are closed, all resources, services, and reference materials remain available **online**.

Adobe is offering free access to their Cloud services for USC students until May 31st. Login **here** with your USC NetID and create an account.

Are you a TA?

Check out the **USC Center for Excellence in Teaching** for tips on how to maximize your teaching effectiveness on Zoom, and the Disability Services & Programs (DSP) **guide** to make your course materials accessible for all students.



Did you know that all USC students get free access to the New York Times? GSG and USG have established a partnership with the New York Times, allowing all students free access to this service. Head to **nytimesaccess.com/usc** to register and stay up-to-date on world news!

GSG UPDATES

Changes to Our Budget

On April 13th, the GSG Senate approved our budget reallocation proposal to:

- Expand our GSG **Emergency Fund** by \$70,000, so we are able to offer more funding to students experiencing unexpected financial burdens due to the COVID-19 pandemic
- Donate \$15,000 to the USC **Community Outreach Fund** to support our partners from the Office of Civic Engagement, who have been coordinating food distributions and making wellness calls to seniors and low-income families that live in the communities surrounding the University Park and Health Sciences Campuses

Current Activities & Advocacy Initiatives

- Revised our **Emergency Fund** eligibility criteria so that more students will qualify to receive funds to address COVID-related financial setbacks
- Created a new **Facebook group** for USC student parents and caretakers to share support and resources related to childcare
- **Advocated** for reimbursements on USC graduate student housing payments
- Advocating for extended graduation timelines and funding for **PhD students**
- Planning **virtual social programming** events for graduate students to connect from a safe distance



We want to hear from you!

GSG is collecting data from USC graduate students to learn how we can best serve our constituents. Data will be used to support ongoing funding initiatives and advocacy efforts. The survey link below will close on April 22nd.

Fill out our survey [here](#).

GSG PETS!



272 Whiskey Charlie



Jack-Essex Bayard Baldwin



Juno Bellrose



Denver



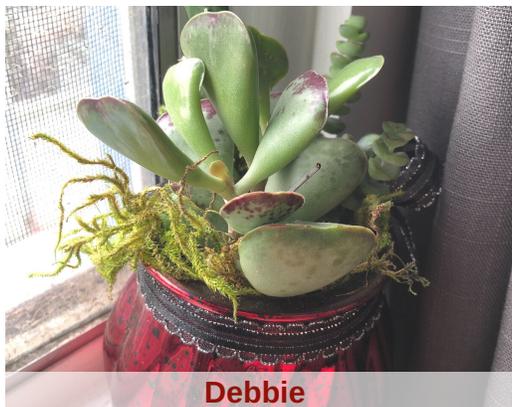
Vicky



Buddy



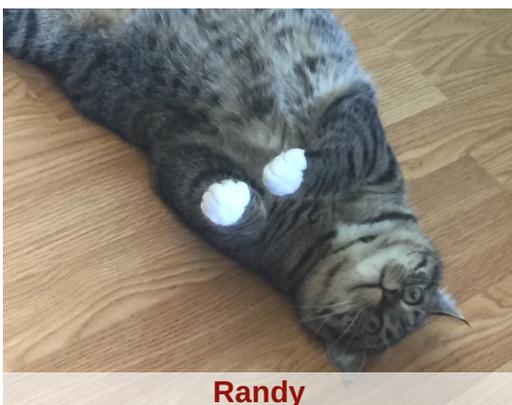
Shrimpie



Debbie



Oliver



Randy



Milo



Billy (sourdough starter)

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Please note that AY 19-20 Executive Board members will transition to the AY 20-21 team on May 15th.