July 6, 2020

Greetings new and continuing students of the Bloustein School—

I hope you are in good health during this difficult time. As your Dean, I wanted to send you this note following the University decision today regarding campus status for this upcoming fall 2020 term.

The year 2020 has been an extraordinary one in so many ways. We have all struggled through personal and public challenges. We have witnessed and felt societal tension and anger, while all along trying to maintain our sense of self, community, and wellness. You are an integral component of our scholarly community and I wanted to explain to you our plans for the Fall semester given the status of the university and the State of New Jersey.

The Bloustein School graduate and undergraduate faculty have dedicated months to developing a strategic plan for content delivery for classroom environments this fall. Given the state of the pandemic and our concern for the health of the entire Bloustein community, we have decided that Bloustein classes, with the exception of a few, in Fall 2020 will be delivered remotely.

We had the latter part of the Spring 2020 term to test out best practices, and to learn from those experiences, and to develop this plan. Our faculty have developed course material and instructional delivery approaches that includes a combination of synchronous (i.e., “live” online together in a specific day/time format) and asynchronous (i.e., not tied to a particular day/time) remote instruction. These approaches embed a firm commitment to students that they will be offered the courses they need to complete their program of study, with the highest quality of instruction. I can say with confidence that all students—whether local, regional, national or international—will have access to our programs and be able to participate in virtual classrooms.

We certainly do not find this approach to course delivery ideal. It goes without saying that we deeply value meeting with you in person, and miss the opportunity to engage with you face-to-face. However, we are determined as a professional school to provide a quality education with components that will take you forward to the day we return to in-person instruction, and to offer educational, professional and social opportunities that will prepare you for your future career.

The messages from President Holloway and Chancellor Malloy mention R-connection, the University’s commitment to deliver remote education and virtual student engagement in innovative ways, despite our physical distance. The Bloustein School fully supports this initiative. The Rutgers Campus Status Fall 2020 FAQ page, a part of this initiative, provides details on our campus environment in areas of instruction, housing and residence life, financial aid, and dining and parking services. I encourage you to avail yourselves of this important information.
The Bloustein School also fully commits our support and resources to you in the form of student services and technology. The educational environment this spring and summer has served to enhance our capacity and to refine our ability to support applicants, students and graduates in a way that we have never done so before. Academic and career advising, management and development, university resource navigation and personal counseling support will all be cornerstones of our high quality student support services. Online technology, connections to networks, applications and other IT support services will also remain a part of the school’s mission to take you further as student within our programs. All of these resources will be fully outlined in the coming days as both our student services and IT support divisions reach out to you to provide information and answer your questions.

Finally, I’d like to make a formal appeal to each of you to engage with us. Community is about how all persons interact and we do want your input and involvement in what we can do better. We are here to support you, but we also need to hear from you. Please stay in touch and as mentioned above, you will be hearing from us again soon.

With all my best to you for a summer of health and wellness,

Vonu Thakuriah
Distinguished Professor and Dean