Dear Colleagues,

As those of you who have school-age children may already know, the Poudre School District released their preliminary plan for fall yesterday. Neither Thompson nor Weld County Schools have released fall plans yet, and of course we know that some families may send their children to local private schools that operate independently of district calendars.

Nonetheless, even this preliminary information from PSD is significant to the entire CSU community, because it highlights several aspects of our current situation: the continued uncertainty of all institutional and public planning necessitated by the ongoing pandemic; the additional layer of uncertain schooling and childcare schedules that will significantly impact all of our employee families this fall; and the concerns that all of our employees, faculty and staff, have about what work for CSU will look like in the coming months.

I promise all of our families that we are monitoring and accounting for the local school schedules as they develop and developing flexible options for work,  I also want to remind you that you do have unique leave options available through the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, which provides employees up to 12 weeks of leave to care for school-age children who cannot attend school as the result of COVID. This leave is, in part, designed to help alleviate scheduling conflicts as you plan for your child’s return to school or, or plan for homeschooling your child or children. You can find more information about FFCRA here.

I also want to take this opportunity to answer a question that the Pandemic Preparedness Team is hearing daily from more and more people and teams from across the university:  When can I (and when will I be expected to) return to in-person work?

In accordance with Colorado and Larimer County public health orders, at this time we can bring only a limited number of employees back to campus. The number of people who can occupy a specific physical space depends on there being enough space to allow for safe physical distancing between those individuals.  This will continue to be the case in the months ahead, even after students arrive on campus on August 24.

So our return to on-campus operations will be a phased process. Some labs, offices, and other units have already returned to in-person work, having applied to do so with the PPT and been approved. (More information on the return-to-work application process can be found here.) Others will do so in
the coming months. However, it is possible that employees in some units will need to continue to work remotely into or throughout the fall semester. This necessity for some continued virtual work arrangements will depend upon public health guidance.

I’ve heard from some of you that working remotely—even with family in close quarters—has been rewarding and productive. Others have had very stressful and challenging experiences working remotely. I assure you all that we are developing a comprehensive, health-first framework under which to physically bring you back onto our university spaces when public health guidance permits. We are also developing mechanisms to support everyone continuing to work remotely. And we will take local school schedules into account as we move forward.

We value all of you so much, and we know that in this incredibly difficult time, providing you with information and clarity is the best way we can demonstrate that.

Warmly,

Joyce