The COVID-19 pandemic is leaving little unchanged in its path. Institutions are closing their doors, health care facilities are rushing for supplies, and home is the new work zone. Even Disney has closed its amusement parks!

On March 17th, Florida State University decided to move classes online for the remainder of the Spring 2020 semester. In addition, the university has moved almost its entire staff to remote work. The DMC applauds this decision, as the benefit to public health is exponential.

The DMC, as an in-house unit of the College of Social Sciences and Public Policy, is fully dedicated to FSU's mission in doing our part to help flatten the curve. We have always had a remote component to promote flexible schedules for our interns who actively balance the stressors of school, work, and home life.

We have recently stepped up our remote practices and procedures to do our part in slowing the COVID-19 infection among our staff. Our efforts also avoid undue burdens on our public health system and health professionals to properly care for the patients in need.

These measures will also prevent businesses and other operations from spreading the virus internally. These practices are considered the most effective measures to prevent contraction and the continued exposure to the virus.

The center understands that this is a challenging time for everyone. But as we work together to overcome this setback, we will become stronger. Our approach is one of understanding, uninhibited productivity, and increased communication. Social distancing? Challenge accepted!
THE DMC APPROACH

Thankfully, the DMC operates semi-virtually already. Cloud-based workspaces such as Google Drive and Slack, for example, are central parts of our collaborative operations. Regardless, a fully virtual transition requires adapting protocols and procedures.

The transition is projected to benefit all DMC staff, interns, and the center as a whole. Our team now operates via a more rigid schedule and protocols in order to reap these benefits. New initiatives include weekly Zoom meetings, stricter deadlines, and progress reports. Frequent reporting clarifies lines of communication and offers increased productivity.

Instituting individual objective plans in shared productivity suites increases accountability, motivation, and production rates. The transition will also enhance the professional communication among all DMC faculty, interns, and staff. The potential benefits are elucidated in a study discussed on the opposite page.

STUDENT SPOTLIGHT: Chelsea Gow

Chelsea is a Florida State alumna who earned a bachelor's in Psychology and a minor in Chemistry.

As a social entrepreneurship research assistant with the DMC, she investigates improved financial sustainability pathways for free and charitable clinics in Pinellas and Hillsborough county areas. As a volunteer at a clinic herself, Chelsea observes the potential social and economic benefits of sustainability-focused funding structures.

These clinics currently supply $29 million dollars worth of care to uninsured patients all over Florida. Her research finds that the majority of the clinics rely on funding sources that require repeated renewal. Research further examines pathways to long-term financial sustainability - benefiting both the uninsured patient and the taxpayer. Chelsea hopes to transform the public's perception of Florida health care.

I think the biggest benefit from working virtually is knowing I am protecting myself and others by social distancing.

- Judy Kirk
Business Manager
The Importance of Digital Literacy

The Florida State campus has moved their operations online in the form of virtual lectures and meetings. As a collaborative, content-producing think tank, the DMC views this transition as an opportunity-rich experience for our interns. Increased online communication, improvement in digital skills, and knowledge of how to collaborate in virtual productivity suites will prepare students for the increasingly technology-centered job market.

One of the key skills employers look for in applicants is their ability to operate independently in the digital sphere. Burning Glass Technologies, a data analytics software company in the UK, analyzed the importance of technology skills in the job market. Their research supports the importance of foundation skills in productivity suites such as Microsoft Office, as they are "commonly required in jobs across all skills levels" and serve as a ticket to entering the workforce.

The researchers broke the job market into low-, middle-, and high-skill roles. The distinctions were dependent on qualifications. Examples of high-skill qualifications include a professional degree. Lower-skill qualifications include an entry-level certificate. The study found that "over 75% of job openings at each level request digital skills," showing that digital literacy is not confined to certain positions.

Similar to language fluency, digital literacy creates wage differences in the job market. In the same study, researchers found that roles requiring digital skills paid more than roles that did not. This difference was analyzed between salaries at each skill level. The salary differential for digital skills ranged from approximately $3,000 for low-skill jobs ($23,300 vs $26,300), $6,300 for middle-skill jobs ($29,000 vs $35,300), and $12,400 for high-skill jobs ($49,700 vs $37,300).*

While the study was conducted in the UK, its results are applicable to the US job market as well. Instead of hiring individuals to complete digital tasks for marketing campaigns, companies are now recruiting from within and training employees for these tasks; they want to hire and utilize multi-skilled individuals to achieve maximum output.

The UK study notes that digital skills supplement communication skills. Adobe Photoshop, for instance, is a technological design element that benefits marketing efforts. The skills complement each other.

Researchers at the DMC develop market-ready skills due to the integration of research, writing, and digital media. In the current professional setting, these digital skills will be among the highest valued.

*Monetary values converted from Euros and rounded

Avoiding Automation:

"By entering a role that requires specific digital skills, workers can reduce their risk of automation by 59%.

Digital skills complement human skills, such as writing and design, which are difficult to automate.