To: Graduate and Professional Students

FROM: Katherine Karraker, Associate Provost for Graduate Academic Affairs

RE: Extensions to time limits and exceptions to rules related to the COVID-19 pandemic

CC: Graduate Associate Deans, Graduate Program Coordinators

DATE: June 2, 2020

I am writing to describe some modifications in University policies and procedures that have been put into place in response to the disruptions of graduate and professional students' academic activities during spring and summer 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of these modifications were communicated to the graduate Associate Deans in April; this message is to elaborate that information and to make sure that graduate students and graduate program coordinators are also aware of these modifications.

I recognize that many students' academic and research or scholarly progress was slowed or halted when the University moved to remote instruction and closure of the campuses. Hopefully, many others have been minimally delayed and will be able to recover their momentum as the campus returns to more normal operations. Because of the substantial variability across colleges, schools, and programs in requirements and in students' need for access to campus facilities to progress in their program, we decided not to enact any across-the-board modifications in University-level student requirements or time limits. Rather, graduate program administrators and associate deans are being asked to modify program-level requirements or time limits either for all students in their program/college/school or for individual students, when justified by the effects of changes in WVU operations on students' ability to complete requirements.

We do also have some University-wide time limits and regulations that I can modify for some students. Exceptions to these time limits and regulations must be
approved by me, as the Associate Provost for Graduate Education (Katherine.Karraker@mail.wvu.edu). Listed below are these items:

1. I will provide expedited extensions of the 5-year limit on time in doctoral candidacy or the 8-year limit on completion of a master's degree to students who have been delayed in their progress to graduation because of events this semester. The requirement for full assessment and documentation described in the catalog is not needed. These expedited extensions based on COVID-19 disruptions are for students who are within 1 year of exceeding their time limit. Requests for expedited extensions will continue to be considered as long as we are experiencing serious disruptions in research and scholarly activity that impede students’ ability to complete their degrees.

2. I will consider requests to extend course validation beyond 8 years (without completing the revalidation procedure) or applicable catalog version beyond 7 years if a student exceeded these limits because of their inability to graduate as planned during spring or summer 2020.

In many cases, modifications of students’ timelines or requirements will be discussed and determined during the required yearly review of all graduate students. However, students may also initiate a request for a change in program/college/school rules or University-wide time limits and regulations by conveying their request to their advisor, advising committee, program coordinator, department chair, or associate dean, as appropriate to their program procedures. I encourage programs to expedite the processing of such requests. I also encourage documentation in individual students’ records of the challenges and delays currently being experienced in case a student later encounters difficulty in meeting deadlines and then needs to request an extension or exception. Students should also be told what impact the granting of time-line extensions are likely to have on their access to funding. Students are welcome to consult with staff in the Office of Graduate Education and Life if they need advice or assistance with these
requests.

Please keep in mind that much information about WVU’s response to the coronavirus pandemic is available on the coronavirus.wvu.edu website (see especially the Students and Researchers sections) and that this information may change periodically. We are also regularly posting information on the Graduate Education website (watch for the addition of a COVID-19 tab with a Frequently Asked Questions section soon) and sending information through our Weekly Update (which will be monthly during June and July) and occasional other messages.

I hope that you are all staying safe, healthy, active, and intellectually engaged during these unusual times, and look forward to the timely completion of your degree program!