

Dear SOM MS and PHD Students with anticipated defenses this semester,

Given the university's response to COVID-19 including advice regarding social distancing and guidelines for teleworking, all MS and PHD defenses should be held via remote format as of Monday, 3/23.

Thereafter, defenses will continue via remote format for the foreseeable future. Here are key points to keep in mind:

- Students are encouraged to use Zoom for remote conferencing for defenses. More information is available on VCU's [Continue Learning](#) page. Also, I've put together basic guidance on scheduling and hosting Zoom meetings on the [Student Resource page](#) (scroll to 'Resources for Graduate Students' and then 'Graduate Student Degree Completion' and click 'Zoom meeting guidance').
- Students are encouraged to present their seminars and defend their theses/dissertations from remote locations. Importantly, students, audience members, advisors and graduate advisory committee members should not physically be in the same rooms for defenses.

A related message was sent to your advisor and graduate program director. Please reach out to them or my office if you have questions. I wish you all the best as you move toward the key milestone of defending your MS or PHD research, and I thank you for your patience and flexibility during this challenging time.

Sincerely,

Mike Grotewiel, Ph.D.
Associate Dean for Graduate Education
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