

Universidad de Chile
Facultad de Medicina
Escuela de Salud Pública

SANTIAGO, March 12th, 2010.

Dear Friends of the School of Public Health, University of Chile:

In the aftermath of the February 27th Earthquake, we have received hundreds of letters from our international friends expressing concern over our wellbeing and offering words of comfort and solidarity. Please accept this collective response, as we have not been able to respond to each one of you individually. We are deeply grateful for your letters and felt comforted by them.

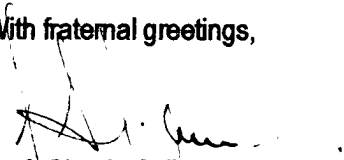
The impact of the recent earthquake and resulting tsunami on many communities was severe; many are still without basic services such as electricity, water, and sanitation, and many communities are unable to provide even emergency healthcare. What's more, the arrival of winter will bring new challenges for the many families that were left homeless.

Although in Santiago the impact of the disaster was limited, the University of Chile and its students, faculty and employees have been affected by the recent earthquake. Many University of Chile students and faculty come from or have family members living in the affected areas. The University is taking steps to accommodate and support these individuals, as well as provide broader support to their communities. The Faculties of Sciences, Social Sciences, Philosophy and Humanities and Physical Sciences have all suffered damages to classrooms and laboratories, and will remain temporarily closed. The Casa Central (central headquarters), a landmark built in 1863, has suffered structural damages, and will remain closed for at least a year. The earthquake hit just a week before classes were about to start, causing the administration to postpone classes for two weeks, until March 22nd.

At present the focus is on immediate response to the needs of the victims of the Earthquake. Of course this task is being led by the specialized agencies of the Chilean government and international cooperation agencies. We at the School are cooperating with volunteer work of our students, providing technical support to volunteers, and providing assistance to the families of our faculty and students residing in the most affected regions. But we also need to plan for the mid and long term. The SPH will be called upon to assist with training and research to document lessons learned, evaluate our response capabilities, make health policy proposals related to emergency preparedness and response, conduct disaster related epidemiological studies among many other topics.

Friends, we will keep you informed of earthquake related developments in our School and will invite and welcome your involvement in reconstructing our University and supporting the affected communities. We would love to see our international friends organized, somehow, to assist us through fundraising, proposal preparation and other such efforts. Please let us know if you have any suggestions and/or would like to participate in organizing a support soliciting campaign.

With fraternal greetings,


Prof. Giorgio Solimano
Dean