

August 21, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

I am writing to provide you with another update on the status of on-campus research. The Research Ramp-up Oversight Committee recently met and reviewed progress in Stage 3 of our [ramp-up plan](#) and discussed moving to Stage 4. Reports confirmed that researchers are following the carefully crafted plans that were put in place, with rare and minor exceptions. There has been no case of the virus being transmitted to any of the nearly 2,000 active researchers while carrying out their on-campus or field research. I would like to thank each and every one of our active researchers for their contribution to this achievement. We have had to adjust to new ways of doing research, but the benefits are beginning to be realized. With continued diligence, it is our hope and expectation that this can continue to be the case and we will not have to curtail any activities, even if the situation in the broader community worsens.

Indeed, the meeting took place amidst a backdrop of worsening conditions in Santa Barbara County and the State of California. To paraphrase EVC David Marshall's August 13 memo to you, conditions have worsened and [State Guidance for Institutions of Higher Education](#) is still very restrictive and dependent on improvements in our County. Very limited resumption of activities in labs is going on with the special permission of County public health agencies. Movement to a future stage requires further review and approval from the County.

Nevertheless, the success of our ramp-up thus far, and the potential to increase the number of on-campus researchers without weakening any of our protective measures, in many instances, enables us to begin planning to move to Stage 4, albeit in a more limited way than originally anticipated. Building Committees should ask PIs to prepare proposals for new laboratory spaces and for adding people to already approved laboratory spaces consistent with [OR guidelines](#). We are considering an increase of 200 to 250 researchers across all divisions in the peak number of on-campus researchers in what we are calling Stage 4a. This is a bit less than half of the number added in Stage 3. The number of new unique researchers can be larger by use of shifts. **Our goal is to receive the proposals for laboratories for Stage 4a by about September 1 for consideration at an Oversight Committee meeting to take place possibly as early as September 4.** We will then present our plan to SB County Health.

The Oversight Committee briefly discussed but did not yet approve the general return of undergrads to on-campus or field research. There are some undergrads that were granted exceptions as essential workers already in Stages 1 and 2. There was no discussion of Human Subjects Research (HSR) at this meeting but work is progressing in the HSR committee. These will be considered in future meetings in the context of Stage 4b or Stage 5 of the ramp-up.

Access to studios, rehearsal rooms, and offices for research was discussed. It is important to note that covid-mitigation is easier in laboratories than in offices and studios. Laboratory

buildings often have HVAC systems with 100% fresh air intake, high level filtration systems (e.g. MERV ratings above 13), and are powerful enough to support full-volume air changes as frequently as every 2 to 15 minutes. In addition, the labs themselves often have additional HEPA filtration that reduces particle counts by many orders of magnitude. Offices and studios do not generally have such systems and recirculate air from one space to the next so that it is possible for small droplets and aerosols to accumulate in some regions. Prof. Bjorn Birnir presented research in this area and an example in which 9 people were infected in a relatively short period of time as a result of recirculated air in part of a restaurant.

This information together with the limited approval by the County for on-campus laboratory research led to the conclusion that more study would be needed before we could begin to open up such spaces, in general. The committee did however grant exceptions for access to four studios where each would be used by a single unique person with their own entrance and exit, and with the understanding that they would establish fresh air ventilation, sanitize all touched surfaces, and wear masks at all times in these spaces. *It is important to note that the higher risk of virus accumulation makes it even more critical that people in offices and studios always wear masks.* In the interest of learning more and in anticipation of eventual County approval, we agreed that it would be good for researchers to begin to put together proposals for studio research that cannot be done remotely for Stage 4b or Stage 5. Access to offices for research purposes will be considered only when conditions improve and we have the permission of public health authorities.

Elsewhere, we will be moving to a new self-enrollment method for COVID symptom surveys. Anyone with a UCSB NetID who is approved for on-campus or field research will need to self-enroll in the new survey, once it's available. Your supervisor will receive copies of your clearance certificates. Version 2 of the Building Occupancy App is also underway. We will communicate these changes broadly once we are ready to roll them out, hopefully soon.

As you add new researchers to the program, please be sure they review our [COVID safety slide presentation](#). All researchers will need to sign off that they have done this. You will hear more about this soon. In addition, UCOP will release a required safety video for all who come to campus. Where guidance differs with our own, always use the more stringent of the two. Finally, note that we have prepared new [guidance on face coverings](#), for your reference.

I thank all of you for your flexibility, patience and understanding as we work together through these challenging times and for the impressive job you are doing to keep our important research enterprise up and running.

Sincerely,



Joe Incandela, for the Oversight Committee