

December 4, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

As you may know, the California Department of Public Health issued a new [Regional Stay at Home Order on 12/3/20](#). The full extent of this order is expected to apply to Southern California including Santa Barbara County in the very near future. However, our planning and its implementation has shown that we can operate safely. Despite the rising caseload statewide and in our county, we have not had anyone infected while carrying out research. I am extremely grateful to all researchers for their hard work and full compliance with all of the COVID mitigation procedures we put in place. Our excellent track record means that our research can continue during the Stay at Home Order. Please be extra careful to follow all of the mitigation protocols in your research plan. We will remain in Stage 4a of our ramp-up.

Increased Density Allowable in Some Areas

We are compiling a list of certified labs for which Principal Investigators can choose to move to an increased density of one person per 150 sq ft. This will depend on characteristics of the ventilation system, which is the most critical factor for aerosols. Any labs that are allowed to increase density must strictly comply with 6' minimum, 9' preferred physical distancing, face coverings, and all other safety and mitigation measures. In situations of higher occupancy density or where social distancing measures cannot be maintained (at least six feet apart, except for momentary exposure while persons are in movement), additional controls (e.g., physical barriers, increased ventilation, etc.) must be evaluated and implemented if feasible. If additional controls are not feasible and close contact (CDC: within 6 feet for at least 15 minutes within a 24 hour period) is unavoidable, the use of respiratory protection should be considered. If filtering facepiece respirators such as N95s or KN95s are utilized voluntarily (i.e., not required), wearers must read and sign the [UCSB Voluntary Use Form](#). In situations where respiratory protection is required per existing regulation or a risk assessment, respirator wearers must be enrolled in the campus [respiratory protection program](#).

There have been several requests for working at even smaller separation for longer periods in the process of training new researchers in various procedures. This may be allowable only in those labs that have been reviewed and approved for higher density, and N95 masks must be worn after being properly trained. Researchers involved in these trainings and procedures should isolate for 10 days prior to and also during this period of work. A negative COVID test result three days prior to starting the work, and continued isolation and weekly testing during the period of work is also required for those approved to work in these situations. All such requests must be submitted to the building committee, Dean and Office of Research for review and approval.

Human Subjects Research Update

We have begun to approve a limited amount of human subjects research. We are grateful to the County for reviewing and approving our request to carry out these studies. Note that all requests for human subjects research must continue to be submitted to the Human Subjects Research Committee for review and approval.

Undergraduate Research Update

I have formed a committee, consisting of representatives suggested by the Deans, charged with establishing guidelines for how to safely bring on undergraduate researchers. The committee will make recommendations on procedures and guidelines for allowing undergraduate research, with the hope that we can add undergraduates incrementally up to a maximum of 250 by Spring. We currently have 61 undergraduates in research. Mandatory weekly COVID testing will be one element of any ramp up of undergraduate research. Those PIs with undergraduates in your laboratories, please verify with those students that they are getting their weekly COVID tests. We are seeing somewhat uneven compliance and those who are not getting tests weekly could soon be restricted from campus research labs.

WSSPs and Office Research Use Update

Environmental Health & Safety is working with Building Committee chairs to complete Worksite Specific Safety Plans (WSSP) where needed. Building committees will need to provide an employee roster and be able to certify that all employees have taken mandatory COVID-19 safety training. These WSSPs are supplements to our existing building plans and are required by Cal OSHA. As a reminder, office usage is not permitted without an approved WSSP. While we understand that there are other approval processes in place on campus guiding office usage once WSSPs are complete (see the EVC's document outlining [Guidance for Use of Faculty Offices](#)), the Office of Research and campus experts will review existing operational plans and may provide additional suggestions for increased COVID safety measures where needed. Our goal is not to prohibit research in offices, but to provide the best possible safety recommendations for preventing the transmission of COVID in office settings, which are inherently less safe than some of our lab spaces on campus with regard to ventilation and potential accumulation of COVID in aerosol form.

Reminder: Requirements for all personnel

All research personnel must review our [COVID safety slides](#) and attest to having reviewed them. Building committees should collect and maintain these signed attestations for everyone who has been approved in their building plans. Any undergraduates who have been granted exceptions to conduct research must sign the [Student Researcher Return to Campus Agreement](#). All research personnel approved to be on campus or in the field must [self-enroll in the daily COVID-19 screening survey](#).

I appreciate your patience, hard work, and resilience in dealing with all the added measures required for us to do research while protecting our community during this pandemic.

Sincerely,



Joe Incandela