

Ramping Down On-Campus Research¹

Dear Colleagues,

I am writing to provide new guidance for managing our research activities that has drawn upon the actions taken at top research facilities across the country. We must now very substantially reduce our research activity to avoid further community transmission of COVID-19. We must prepare for the possibility of a complete cessation of on-campus, noncritical research while maintaining critical systems, on short notice, should that be the only means to protect the community.

This memo covers the following points:

- The motivation for these actions
- How we are relying upon your awareness of the risks and your help
- Expected duration of reduced on-campus research
- Guidance
- [Link to examples of ramp-down checklists](#)

This message and related information are posted to the [Office of Research COVID-19 website](#). The Office of Research will remain open with staff working from home. The Office of Research will be fully operational, albeit with potential delays. See: [Office of Research Website](#).

The motivation for these actions

- We must practice social distancing and do all that we can to minimize person-to-person interactions within our community. This includes minimizing interactions between our researchers and those who support our research, research facilities and the campus as well as the general public.
- This is (not yet) a complete shutdown of all research at UCSB. We hope and expect that much research will be done remotely and that researchers will shift their work accordingly to the extent possible. Note that older community members have been asked to self-quarantine by Governor Newsom “...new advisories on bars and restaurants on social isolation ... home isolation for our 65 and older population and those with chronic disease.” [Link to full transcript](#)
- We recognize that some research is necessarily conducted in our on-campus facilities. For this research, our goal is to reduce the number of people engaged in this work to zero where possible and on the order of 10-15% of normal levels elsewhere by prioritizing critical activities.

¹ This memo draws upon communications at Harvard, MIT and other UC campuses

We are relying upon your awareness of the risks and your help

Research is decentralized and varies widely across campus. We seek to make use of the leadership of the Deans, Lab Directors and Department Chairs to help guide this process in a way that allows for sharing of best practices and of more detailed guidance. We have encouraged the Deans to convene the leaders in their organizations on a regular basis via Zoom or other form of remote conferencing.

Expected duration of reduced on-campus research

This is hard to predict but based on the way things have played out in other regions of the globe we should anticipate that it could last several months. We will determine the timing for changes based upon the best information we can obtain from public health professionals and university experts as to when the risk of exposure has reached an acceptably low level. Please plan for a protracted period of disruption and we will keep in regular contact. Also, as noted above, prepare for the possibility that research may need to be fully stopped on campus.

General guidance

The goal is to reduce the density of people in research laboratories, on campus, and in the community in general. Like many other top research universities, we believe that reducing to 10-15% of our normal level of lab presence is a reasonable approach. Moreover, we should not only reduce presence, but wherever possible reduce occupancy to zero in some spaces by limiting access. This will help reduce how much support staff are required, which is important since we expect that some staff will not be able to work (remotely or on-campus) due to school and/or childcare closures, illness, etc.. Note that this memo does not preclude the filming of laboratory experiments for remote lab courses. This can go ahead if done carefully with 1-2 people involved, well-separated, and with the hygienic measures discussed below.

We expect the definition of critical activity to be along the following lines and determined on the basis of local criteria:

- Research for which discontinuation would generate data and sample loss that would be effectively irreplaceable.
- Maintenance of critical equipment and a safe standby mode of laboratories.
- Maintaining critical animal populations.
- COVID-19 research with a timeline relevant to the current pandemic.

We define **essential research personnel** as follows:

1. Necessary to ensure the ongoing viability of research, including the well-being of research animals and other not easily replaceable, perishable research materials.
 - a. Vivarium staff

- b. Non-vivarium lab staff responsible for animal care
 - c. Faculty and/or research staff necessary to maintain other, not easily replaceable, perishable research materials. This could be primary cell lines or long-term experiments with considerable cost and/or time associated with requiring the experiment to end. (For example, if there has been a continual one-month experiment that has been on-going that requires regular measurements or maintenance to avoid all previous data being lost or losing all value).
2. Responsible for maintenance of equipment that, if not done, could result in damage. (For example, cryogenic filling of NMR spectrometers).
 3. Researchers working on experiments that have a small window for completion. (For example, the ability to make a short specific measurement only a few times per year.)

In addition, we are aware of your concerns about salaries and career advancement of graduate students, post-docs, junior faculty, staff and student workers who depend on labs. We expect considerable accommodation from the university and funding agencies. For example, NIH has already posted information, (see below), and a [DOE Accommodation memo](#) is online. These and others that appear on the Office of Research COVID-19 [COVID-19 Guidance and Agency Notices Webpage](#).

- **Salaries:** *NIH understands that many researchers may be unable to work as a result of or related to the effects of COVID-19. If a recipient organization's policy allows for the charging of salaries and benefits during periods when no work is performed due to the effect of COVID-19, regardless of the funding source, including Federal and non-Federal, then such charges to NIH grant awards will be allowable. Reminder: NIH awarding Institutes/Centers (ICs) may request documentation to confirm the requirements of institutional policies. [NIH FAQs here](#) suggest that supplemental support may be available.*

Note that teams critical to maintaining operations should be divided into two or more fixed member groups to ensure continuity of critical functions should a single team member be diagnosed with COVID-19, leading to all members of the team to have to stop working. In the same vein, if critical operations rely on a single individual, contingencies should be developed in the event that that person becomes infected. It may be valuable to produce written procedures, cross-train personnel, or consider shutting down those operations.

Labs should consider their supply chains particularly where critical supplies may be sole-sourced or come from regions that are hit hard by COVID-19.

Additional guidance

CNSI Director Hawker, and all ORU Directors and directors of all shared facilities (e.g. MRL, Nanofab, etc.) will coordinate with relevant Department Chairs and Deans.

Even with a reduction to 10-15% of our normal lab presence (1 to 2 persons working in one enclosed space with adequate separation), labs must implement social distancing and other best practices, develop individualized work plans that minimize close contact, and maintain the safety of the air and surfaces. Until more is known, care should be taken in rotating personnel in and out of labs, particularly in light of [recent research on COVID-19 survival in air and on surfaces](#). We strongly recommend that touch points be regularly cleaned and research be done with fixed membership groups (as for critical operations teams) and that a gap of at least 3 hours be in effect between lab occupation by a new team if the rate at which the air in the space is completely replaced by the ventilation system is unknown.

Human subjects research studies involving face-to-face interaction with participants must be suspended. This applies not only to campus, but also to field work. Virtual interaction is permitted (e.g. by Zoom, phone, or other means). As additional guidance is developed, it will be posted at the UCSB Human Subjects Research webpage:
<https://www.research.ucsb.edu/human-subjects/about>.

One consequence of the scaled-back activity on campus and our remote work regimen is that we will need to make sure that spaces and valuables are secured. Campus Security is aware of this concern and will be taking appropriate measures.

Principal Investigators must work with their respective Department Chairs and Lab/ORU Directors to develop a scale-back plan as soon as possible, ideally by Wednesday, March 18, with implementation on Friday, March 20. At this point we are not offering specific recommendations for what individual scale-back plans should look like, as many Lab Directors and Department Heads have already begun soliciting these plans. All plans must be consistent with UCSB policies, especially those of EH&S, and should follow the guiding principles expressed in this document. As these plans emerge, please look for opportunities to create more common formats and share best practices. We expect that these plans will be living documents.

Further guidance will be provided as it becomes available including that in regard to financial implications. Please develop methods to stay engaged with your remote workforce. Several other units on campus have, for instance, set up slack accounts for all members.

Finally, thank you for all that you are doing in this difficult period.

Sincerely,

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