

UC SANTA BARBARA

Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research

March 10, 2020

Dear UC Santa Barbara Research Partners,

I am writing to ask that all campus research groups take steps now to put in place measures to reduce potential transmission of the COVID-19 disease within our facilities and to make plans for the possibility of a disruption to normal operations, should employees become ill or have to self-isolate. To assist you, we provide guidance below.¹ This guidance is also posted to the [Office of Research website](#) along with worksheets to help you to develop your laboratory or research group's plan linked directly here: [Mission Continuity Plan](#). The Office of Research Website also provides updates on the status of research support operations, as well as information on federal funding availability, and award management.

Although there are no known cases of COVID-19 at UC Santa Barbara or in Santa Barbara County at this time, the University is following guidance issued by the CDC, California Laboratory of Public Health, and Santa Barbara County Public Health Laboratory. Additionally, more information and updates can be found on the UC Santa Barbara COVID-19 website: <https://ucsb.edu/COVID-19-information>.

The [Office of Research website](#) will be updated regularly as new information becomes available. If you have questions, or if there is additional guidance you would like to see posted, please contact ViceChancellor@research.ucsb.edu.

Thank you all for doing your part to make UC Santa Barbara a more resilient campus!

Joseph Incandela
Vice Chancellor for Research

Immediate Measures to Avoid/Reduce Transmission:

To reduce the potential transmission of the coronavirus (or other colds and flu) in the coming weeks, we ask that all campus labs and research facilities put in place the following measures:

- **Require personnel who are feeling unwell to stay home** until they no longer have symptoms.
 - [UC paid leave and remote work guidance](#)
- **Remind all personnel to practice recommended [personal hygiene measures](#)**
 - Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for 20 seconds. Hand sanitizer is not a substitute for hand washing in the laboratory.
 - Disinfect common laboratory areas and touch points, at least daily, with 70% ethanol (e.g. doorknobs, sink handles, freezer doors, fume hood sashes, telephones).
- **Reduce non-essential in-person meetings.** Use remote work technologies such as Zoom conferencing.

¹ Much of these guidelines has been adapted from notices issued by the University of California Office of the President, UC Berkeley, Harvard, Yale and other Universities.

- **Explore and implement measures to reduce density and allow “social distancing” of lab/research personnel.** For example, increase spacing between researchers where possible to >6 feet, have personnel come to the lab in shifts, allow alternate benches to be unoccupied.
- **Review opportunities for lab personnel and support staff to work remotely** - both to allow for social distancing, or in case they need to self-isolate on short notice. Have personnel test out remote setups before they are needed. All employees, including graduate research assistants and postdoctoral researchers paid through the university, have access to a Zoom account acquired by the university. VPN access may be limited, and you may need to prioritize access for your group.
- **Researchers should not take materials other than laptops, data storage devices, etc., offsite (e.g., to their homes) to ensure research continuity during a curtailment.** All laboratory research must continue within the confines of appropriate laboratory space.
- **Regarding Travel:**
 - All University-related non-essential international travel to affected countries should be avoided. See [UC President's guidance on travel](#)
 - All personal international travel is strongly discouraged.
 - All University-related non-essential domestic air travel should be avoided.
 - We strongly urge extreme caution and judgment for your personal domestic travel.
- **Consider cancelling or postponing field research trips,** as they present unique risks because of shared housing, eating meals together, potential multi-week quarantines, and challenges to “sending someone home” should they become ill during an extended trip.
- **Cancel visits from CDC Level 3 countries** if less than 14 days; ensure all longer-term visiting scholars from these countries know they will have to self-isolate for 14 days upon arrival.
- **For those conducting research with elderly or immunocompromised populations,** please take appropriate protective measures to protect these populations and evaluate what visits and/or research procedures are essential during this time period.

Research Continuity Guidance for Laboratories and Research Facilities

Assumptions you can use for planning, based on a scenario with COVID-19 communal transmission:

- A significant percentage of your laboratory workforce may be out sick or unable to come to work.
- Essential research infrastructure, such as power and telecommunications, will be maintained.
- Orders for critical supplies may be delayed.
- Processing of visas by the federal government may be delayed, resulting in delayed appointments.
- Core facilities and other fee-for-service resources may not be available.
- Repairs performed by Facilities and other UC Santa Barbara and non-UC Santa Barbara service providers may be delayed.
- Decontamination of your workspace may be necessary in the event of a local illness.
- The university will communicate any disruptions to laboratory access.

Steps you can take now to ensure continuity of critical functions:

- Identify procedures and processes that require regular personnel attention (e.g. cell culture maintenance, animal studies).
- Assess and prioritize critical laboratory activities.
- Identify any research experiments that can be ramped down, curtailed, or delayed.
- Identify personnel able to safely perform essential activities.
- Ensure that you have access to contact information for your critical staff.
- Cross-train research staff to fill in for others who may be out sick or unable to come to work.
 - Ensure staff have the appropriate training.
 - Document critical step-by-step instructions.
- Coordinate with colleagues who have similar research activities to identify ways to ensure coverage of critical activities.
- Review contingency plans and emergency procedures with researchers and staff.
- Maintain a sufficient inventory of critical supplies that may be impacted by global shipping delays.
- Communicate significant planned absences and/or lab closures to your Laboratory Safety Representatives, business offices, and other key administrative units.

Other safety considerations:

- Ensure that individuals performing critical tasks have been adequately trained and understand whom to contact with technical or safety questions.
- Do not perform high-risk procedures alone.
- When working alone is necessary, inform your colleagues of your schedule and exercise maximum caution.
- Ensure that high-risk materials (radioactive, biohazards, chemicals, controlled substances) are secured.

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