



Office of the Vice Provost of Research

Research Continuity Plan

March 17, 2020

UA Little Rock has made the decision to move to an all online format for instruction as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Currently, research is not impacted by this announcement and may continue as usual. There is great uncertainty, however, regarding how the COVID-19 pandemic could affect the research enterprise in the intermediate and longer term. As a result, each research lab should begin planning now for the potential of significant disruption. Leaders in the field have been sharing best practices for dealing with this scenario. Much of this document was adapted from the guidance provided by the research offices at both Yale University and the University of California at Berkeley.

Please remember that all essential research must continue within the confines of appropriate laboratory space and should not be taken off the campus. Each individual researcher, lab, and/or research facility is best positioned to create a continuity plan to meet their unique needs, but we strongly encourage you to consider the following guidelines while preparing your contingency plans.

Immediate Measures

To reduce the potential transmission of the COVID-19 coronavirus (or other colds and flu) in the coming weeks, all campus labs and research facilities should implement the following measures:

- Require that all personnel who are feeling unwell stay home until they no longer have symptoms.
- Remind all personnel to practice sanitary measures such as washing hands with soap and water frequently and for at least 20 seconds, using hand sanitizer if handwashing sinks are not available, avoiding touching their face, and covering coughs and sneezes with their elbow.
- Explore and implement measures to reduce density and allow “social distancing” of lab/research personnel. For example, when possible, increase spacing between researchers or have personnel come to the lab in shifts.
- Review opportunities for lab personnel and support staff to work remotely; even consider modifying and conducting research activities fully remotely in the short term.
- Increase proactive cleaning and disinfecting of laboratory and communal spaces, including lab benches and chairs, equipment, common spaces, etc.
- Many scientific conferences and other research community meetings are being cancelled or are permitting remote participation. The university has already canceled all out-of-state travel for the [next 60 days](#).
- Implement a communication plan with your lab staff to communicate any changes to the current situation.

Long-Term Planning for Research Continuity

Principal Investigators should begin scenario planning now for the potential continuation of research and campus operations with reduced or remote staffing if significant numbers of research or research support personnel become ill or large-scale self-isolation is required.

PIs should plan for the following possibilities:

- Be prepared for some of your laboratory workforce to fall ill or be required to self-isolate.
- Be prepared to decontaminate the workspace of an ill researcher in your laboratory.
- Be prepared for critical supply orders, including controlled substances, to be delayed. PIs should work with the Office of the Vice Provost for Research to coordinate essential deliveries.
- Be prepared for building or laboratory access to be curtailed. Assume that essential access for equipment maintenance and essential laboratory experiments will continue. **Using this [form](#), please identify essential equipment/facilities and experiments that would need to continue in the event of a campus closure.**

Steps you can take now to ensure continuity of critical functions in case of a severe outbreak:

- Identify equipment or facilities that must be maintained in the event of a campus closure (use form above).
- Assess and prioritize critical laboratory activities.
- Identify any research experiments that can be ramped down, curtailed, or delayed.
- Identify key personnel able to safely perform essential activities to ensure the continuity of your laboratory's research capability (use form above).
- Ensure that you have access to up-to-date email and telephone contact information (including cell phones) for your critical staff.
- Cross-train research staff to substitute for others who may be out sick or unable to come to work.
 - Ensure that staff have the appropriate, up-to-date training.
 - Document critical step-by-step instructions for laboratory procedures.
 - Encourage all researchers to be familiar with each other's work if an absence would threaten the loss of experiments (such as which cells need transferring to new media, etc.).
- Coordinate with colleagues who have similar research activities to identify ways to ensure mutual support and coverage of critical activities.
- Review contingency plans and emergency procedures with researchers and staff
- Maintain a sufficient inventory of critical supplies that may be affected by global shipping delays.
- Implement a communication plan with your lab staff to communicate any changes to the current situation.

Other safety considerations:

- Ensure that individuals performing critical tasks have been adequately trained and understand whom to contact with technical or safety questions.
- Avoid performing high-risk procedures alone. When working alone is necessary, exercise extreme caution.
- Ensure that research team members notify colleagues of their schedule when working alone for an extended period of time.
- Ensure that hazardous materials (e.g., radioactive, biohazards, chemicals) are properly secured.

Office of Research and Sponsored Programs:

- The Office of Research and Sponsored Programs will continue operations in the event of a campus closure and will be available via email to assist you with all grant-related needs.
- All ORSP forms will be accepted by ORSP with email approvals by all required signatories.

Office of Research Compliance and IRB

- The Office of Research Compliance will continue operations in the event of a campus closure. Both the Export Control Officer and the Research Compliance Officer will be available to assist you via email
- IRB and IACUC meetings will be held virtually if necessary.

Important Links:

Campus Coronavirus page for up-to-date information:
<https://ualr.edu/safety/home/emergency/covid-19/>

Messages from Funding Agencies

National Institutes of Health:

General Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) - Proposal Submission and Award Management Related to COVID-19 (NOT-OD-20-083)

Flexibilities Available to Applicants and Recipients of Federal Financial Assistance Affected by COVID-19 (NOT-OD-20-086)

NIH Extramural Response to Natural Disasters and Other Emergencies

NIH Late Application Policy Due to Public Health Emergency for United States for 2019

Novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) (NOT-OD-20-082)

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19)

NIAID: [Coronaviruses: Information for Researchers](#)

NIAID's Multi-Pronged Response to the COVID-2019 Outbreak

Fogarty International Center: [Coronavirus news and resources for global health researchers](#)

National Science Foundation

[Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\) About the Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) for National Science Foundation \(NSF\) Proposers and Awardees](#)

[Statement on Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\)](#)

[NSF Guidance for Major Facilities and Contracts Regarding COVID-19](#)

[Coronavirus Information](#)

[Coronavirus Information: Message to NASA Contractors - Assistant Administrator for Procurement Message on Coronavirus](#)

Council on Governmental Relations (COGR)

[FAQs Regarding COVID-19's Impact on Federal Awards](#)

[Institutional and Agency Responses to COVID-19 and Additional Resources](#)