



UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH ALABAMA

DATE: March 16, 2020

TO:

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RESEARCH CONTINUITY PLAN DURING PANDEMIC EVENT

Included in this Plan are:

- To Whom the Plan Applies
- Research Courses and Meetings
- Sponsor guidance
- Submission of proposals
- Access to Laboratories
- Core Facilities
- Graduate and Undergraduate involvement in research
- Laboratory Safety
- Human subjects research
- Animal research
- Clinical trials

Key Points

1. Most research can continue during the pandemic event.
2. A written plan is required for all laboratories or other in-person research. This plan must be sent to the Dean and then to the Vice President for Research or the Senior Associate Dean for the College of Medicine. A form to complete for this plan will be sent separately.
3. Graduate student research can continue unless it poses a health risk.
4. Undergraduate student research can continue with approval from the Vice President for Research.
5. Social distancing should be practiced.

Research Courses and Meetings

Please see Guidance from each College Dean. However, unless specifically approved for in-person meetings, all meeting and courses will be online or cancelled.

Research/dissertation and directed studies - these courses should transition to online, independent study if possible, using email/phone communication or [Zoom](#).

Routine laboratory team meetings - transition to [Zoom](#).

Seminars/workshops/dissertation committee meetings - cancel or transition to [Zoom](#).

IMPORTANT NOTE: You should use the University's single sign-on to access the [Zoom](#) platform. This will allow you to access all Zoom features.

Sponsor Guidance

For NIH proposers and awardees, please see the NIH COVID-19 Guidance at www.grants.nih.gov.

The Federal Office of Management and Budget (OMB) have provided this guidance:

Awarding agencies may allow necessary pre-award costs that are incurred (i) from January 20, 2020 through the Public Health Emergency Period and (ii) prior to the effective date of a Federal award.

Awarding agencies will be more flexible on no-cost extensions on expiring awards.

email a short justification for student access. The Vice President for Research or Medical Affairs, as appropriate, will review and confer with the College/School Dean and respond ASAP.

- Social Distancing practices should be followed in all instances. In small laboratories it is prudent for only one individual to be present in a laboratory at the same time. This will require scheduling of access.
- If best practices or information indicate that it is likely the virus survives on surfaces, the laboratory must include guidance for disinfecting all work spaces.
- Remind each individual to follow strict laboratory safety protocols.

NOTE: Access to the Laboratory for Infectious Disease (LID), Shelby Hall (SH) and the Mitchell Cancer Institute Research Section (MCI) are always restricted to those with appropriate clearance and FOB or keycard entry.

Graduate and Undergraduate involvement in Research

Under the Research Continuity Guidance graduate students may continue their research with approval from the College/School. Continuation of all undergraduate student involvement in research, including travel and work related to the research (collectively “Research”), requires approval. Research includes, but is not limited to, laboratory, digital and field work.

The following guidance applies when: (a) campus access is limited to administration, staff and faculty; (b) students are not allowed on campus, and (c) classes are only provided online (collectively “Limited Access”). Research may continue subject to approval and the restrictions below.

Under limited access due to full or partial closure, all graduate students under stipend (and undergraduates as explained below) doing research can access campus and the relevant academic building(s) to continue research under the supervision of a faculty advisor. Research can continue by respecting social distancing, limiting personal interactions only as necessary, communicating remotely whenever possible and observing appropriate personal hygiene and equipment sanitation protocols. If portions of Research can be done remotely, in full compliance with all security and confidentiality protocols (e.g., VPN, etc.), then this work should be done initially to avoid the need for campus access (collectively “Restrictions”).

If necessary, with specific approval, (i)-6 (v)-4(i)-6 (c ap4 (l)-22 (y)2)shou(o)-4 (n)-4 1, (i)ad4(i)-

It is the general intent of the Research Continuity Plan during limited access to laboratories: (1) to approve the continuation of Research, or any portions, subject to Restrictions; and (2) to require a written request to continue the Research subject to Restrictions.

Laboratory Safety

1. BIO/LIFE/PHYSICAL SCIENCES LABORATORIES

Research Preparation and Implementation:

Have up-to-date contact information for your team, including staff, postdoctoral fellows and students (phone numbers, addresses, emails).
Practice social distancing at all times.

Create a plan for your laboratory for closure or reduced level of activity. The plan must be submitted to the Chair and Dean in writing. The plan should prioritize safety of all personnel engaged in research, and ensure laboratories and research areas are placed in a safe configuration that is maintainable for an extended period.

Identify backup sources for liquid N2 and dry ice if primary vendors are unavailable, or identify strategies to have sufficient supplies on hand for a 2-3 week closure.

Identify non-critical equipment that could be shut down in the event of closure.

Backup electronic research data and ensure remote access.

Identify critical research tasks that must be completed to sustain continuity.

Determine whether your team is sufficiently cross-trained on critical tasks.

If cross training is needed to support animal research, make sure cross-trained individuals are included in IACUC protocols and have appropriate vivarium access.

Inventory supplies to ensure stocks of critical materials if ordering is suspended, including special supplies that might be needed for research animals.

Submit revised protocols for any change in approvals from IACUC, IRB, Bio-Safety, and other assurances and approvals.

The Office of Research Compliance and Assurance provides additional detail regarding proactive measures researchers can take to help mitigate the impact of a pandemic on their research programs and a checklist to follow to ensure preparedness in the event of shut-down/closure for unoccupied research labs.

For additional details, see [Office of Research Compliance and Assurance website](#).

2. COMPUTING/ TECHNOLOGY LABORATORIES

Please see STEM Lab Policy. In addition, it is critical to assess security requirement and to determine off-campus access issues e.g. use of VPN. Please be aware that malicious cyber actors may be targeting employees working from home, so review the University VPN announcement carefully.

Core Facilities

Identify contingency plans to continue critical research support.

Identify what core resources would not be available if core staff is ill.

Research Compliance

The University Office of Research Compliance and Assurance is positioned to continue to function across its areas. The preparation, review and submission of applications to the IRB, IACUC and IBC can happen entirely electronically. The IRB, IACUC, and IBC have the capability to meet by teleconference. Researcher guidance documents on the impact of
