Dear Colleagues,

Many of you conduct your research in indoor labs – the guidelines below, developed mostly by LCOM researchers and informed by a 2009 UVM planning exercise, may be helpful to you. These probably align with many of the common-sense things you are already doing, but please review them. Also, please adapt these to your field research protocols as needed.

Grad students, I encourage you to walk through the guidelines with your advisors to ensure that you are both in sync on how we are doing our very best to avoid virus contact and spread. In turn, please review with your lab teams or anyone still working directly with you on your research.

My best to all of you and I hope you get outside this weekend to enjoy our growing daylight hours.

Nancy

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Research Continuity Objectives, Considerations, Mitigation, and Preparedness
Adapted from a contingency plan developed in 2009
March 20, 2020

High level points abstracted from the 2009 Continuity Planning for research

Objectives for the Research Continuity Response
- Protect the health and safety of the University community
- Continue as many research projects as possible, to the fullest extent possible
- Preserve valuable research assets, such as data collections, specimens, species, genetic lines, etc.
- Support researchers in coping with disruptions
- Maintain services from research support and administrative units
- Minimize disruption to the research enterprise and maximize our ability to recover

Related Considerations (Policy Areas)
- Procurement policies/exceptions related to cancelled/delayed research travel
- Bridge funding support in cases where external or normal revenue sources are not available and/or when a disruption creates the need for additional resources to support research continuity
• Flexible schedules/determination of critical employee functions if social distancing is implemented and/or if employees become ill
• Subject to approval from the Graduate College, Department Chairs may need broad latitude to reassign graduate teaching and research assistants to courses and projects as needed

Mitigation and Preparedness

Central Level

• Travel guidance over the next three months (who makes the decision; potential implications: inability to return, funding liability, etc.)
• Ensure that PI’s are informed of any guidance from major funders and the Federal Office of External Policy
• Development of a webpage or blog specifically related to PI needs/questions/information
• Assess equipment and systems necessary for research continuity should the need to work remotely arise (researchers, research administrative functions, research protection, research support services)

Here are things Deans, Department Chairs, PIs should be thinking about

• Develop standard operating procedures for the back-up and security of data, research records, samples and materials, disposal of hazards, etc.
• Plan for a delegation of project leadership if necessary
• Develop a lab closure/project suspension check-list
• Analyze current research projects and prioritize activities and projects giving highest priority to those for which delay or suspension would result in loss of expensive assets, animal life, or significant research funding (and which activities could be curtailed if necessary)
• Identify critical skills and cross-training needs within research projects and facilities
• Continuity considerations specific to each research project:
  o Special storage or maintenance needs
  o Adequate supply levels of essential consumables
  o The level of face-to-face or direct physical contact required to carry out essential research activities
  o Human subject impacts
  o Vertebrate animals
  o Research data
  o Funding stream
  o Post-doc or graduate student training and dissertation progress
  o Replacement of samples etc. that may be lost/destroyed
Considerations Regarding Closures (this is what you can ask your PIs to share; we provided some suggestions which were adapted from our telecommuting efforts)

1. Critical Functions: The major/critical functions of your office/research lab
2. Description of Research Activity: A clear explanation of how you/your employees will accomplish their functions and effectively implement research activity remotely.
3. Supervision Guidelines: A plan for remote supervision, e.g., how will you supervise your employees remotely? How will you conduct meetings, and assign, track, prioritize, and review their work? Will you be meeting one-on-one through the Teams platform daily or weekly?
4. Telework Summary and Employee Agreements: A list of which employees have asked to telework, and a completed telework agreement for each. Review the telework agreement to see if there is something you can draw on, or you may just want to know the following:

   - Who is working in your research lab?
   - What is your funding mechanism for them?
   - Who, if anyone, would lose their job if you stop your research?
   - Who in your lab, can do their work remotely?
   - Can you follow social distancing principles in your lab and stagger who is in your laboratory?
   - What is the impact of you pausing your research?

Current guidance for LCOM research laboratories during the COVID-19 pandemic

- While our research laboratories remain open:
  - We expect that as much work as possible will be done remotely. We expect faculty lab directors to work with all members of their laboratory teams, including graduate students and postdoctoral trainees, to accommodate remote work options. Faculty lab directors should be especially mindful of those that:
    - Require flexible working hours to accommodate childcare.
  - It is imperative that:
- Lab workers should follow social distancing guidelines, including staggered schedules as needed. See link to CDC prevention guidelines. https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/prepare/prevention.html
  - Faculty lab directors and their supporting personnel that work in our laboratories should now prepare contingency plans for the possibility of future shutdown that address essential needs like sample storage and maintenance of cell lines.
    - Develop standard operating procedures for the back-up and security of data, research records, samples and materials, disposal of hazards, etc.
    - Identify minimal personnel and time commitments to maintain essential activities such as critical cell lines, and ensure adequate supplies of required consumables.
    - Develop a lab closure/project suspension check-list.
    - Consideration to curtailing new experiments, new breeding, and possible reduction of animal colonies.
- The faculty lab director should prepare a brief written lab summary that includes the below information to be forwarded to Elayna no later than Wednesday, March 25, 2020 emellas@med.uvm.edu Note – we will create a fillable form for this information that will accompany this guidance.
  - Name and contact information for faculty lab director.
  - Who is working in your research lab or at home? Include their contact information.
  - Plan for delegation of lab leadership if necessary. Provide the name of an appropriate faculty member and contact information.
- The Animal Care Management facility will remain staffed to deliver essential care.
- Our shared resource cores have developed scaled down service plans that will be applied as necessary.