

Date: April 23, 2020
To: All Campus Researchers
From: Sarah M. Nusser Vice President for Research
Cc: Provost, Academic Deans, Associate Deans for Research, Graduate College Dean
Re: **Updated Guidance for Ongoing Research During the COVID-19 Pandemic**

As the COVID-19 pandemic evolved in recent weeks, we wish to thank Iowa State researchers for their commitment to adopting critical changes that are key to maintaining the safety and wellbeing of our community, students, faculty and staff during this crisis:

- You efficiently transitioned any and all work that could be continued through telework arrangements;
- You embraced the development and implementation of research contingency plans;
- You've made critical changes to research processes and protocols when it is necessary to be on campus or an Iowa State facility by minimizing on campus time and adhering to social-distancing principles – and the use of Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) – that are essential for limiting the spread of the COVID-19 virus; and
- You worked with your department chairs, associate deans of research and – when applicable – research center directors and VPR liaisons to identify truly essential projects that should continue if a temporary research shutdown must be enacted.

As research at Iowa State continues – albeit differently and in a much more limited capacity – the VPR office and colleges share this guidance as we continue conducting research during the COVID-19 pandemic:

1. **Continue to maximize personal protection and social distancing to reduce the spread of the COVID-19 virus, including tracking CDC guidelines on appropriate protection.**
 - Work remotely: Research activities that can be performed remotely must be conducted off-campus, with approval from your supervisor – this applies to all faculty, staff, post-docs, graduate students, and undergraduate researchers.
 - Use social distancing: Activities that require access to campus facilities (as deemed by a supervisor) should have been modified to implement rotations and shift schedules with the smallest numbers of people and to maintain the CDC-outlined minimum distance of six feet between individuals, while also ensuring operational safety. Guidance is posted on the [COVID-19 & RESEARCH](#) web page in the section titled *Social Distancing and Mitigating the Risk of Transmission While Conducting Your Research*.

- Continue using required laboratory protective PPE: As researchers are already aware, when working in laboratories, you must continue using the laboratory-required personal protective equipment PPE as well as fume hoods, biosafety cabinets and other engineering controls as specified in your standard operating procedures and research protocols.
 - Consider face coverings and gloves: In addition, follow the latest [CDC guidelines](#) on how to protect yourself and others from COVID-19 – particularly the use of protective [face coverings](#) and gloves – when on campus and while working in lab and field settings.
 - Suspend face-to-face research: Some research has been paused, as is the case for in-person human subject studies, to reduce the risk of exposure to both participants and researchers. You can find the most current guidance in the *Human Subjects* section of the [COVID-19 & RESEARCH](#) web page on the [VPR website](#).
 - We're still open to help you: Campus research administration services that support researchers remain available through phone, email and video methods.
2. **Continue to talk with department chairs, associate deans for research or directors for VPR research centers for counsel and direction regarding research activities.** If you have any questions about whether you should conduct research on campus or how to address the current situation, please reach out to your supervisors and college/VPR research center liaisons.
 3. **Be sensitive to the needs and concerns of graduate students and research staff when making plans and decisions.** As noted in the [Graduate College COVID-19 FAQ](#), graduate students are partners in research activities and may voluntarily agree to participate in essential research activities. However, it is unacceptable for them to be pressured into this role or assigned an active role that requires in-person participation in a laboratory or research site without their consent.
 4. **All researchers should have created contingency plans – and adopted them where necessary.** To prepare your research for a potentially sudden temporary shutdown, visit the *Research Contingency Planning* section on the [COVID-19 & RESEARCH](#) web page, along with the [Research Operations Contingency Planning](#) support document.

5. **Researchers should have completed the Essential Research Activities application process for any individual projects they believe are absolutely essential should ISU be required to minimize its footprint during a temporary shutdown.**
- The April application cycle to deem a research activity as essential in the event of a temporary shutdown has been completed. Applications that were given preliminary acceptance met at least one of the [Essential Research Criteria](#), and are being held for further evaluation if a temporary shutdown is issued. Activities in applications that were not accepted must be suspended in a shutdown.
 - Many field-based activities that span the growing season were approved to pursue initial work (e.g., planting) through May and early June, and will be reviewed for subsequent activities in May or early June. Please use [these protocols](#) as general guidance for conducting safe essential field research activities during this period of COVID-19-related social distancing.
 - A May application cycle is planned for receiving new applications, updating accepted applications, and reviewing submitted field work applications for subsequent stages. Applications that were not accepted in the first cycle will not be reviewed. We anticipate providing details on this next round to campus on May 1, 2020.
6. **Continue using the resources that are available to you** – including the [COVID-19 & RESEARCH](#) web page and the [JSU Safety page](#) – for guidance on wellness and to make the best and most informed decisions you can make.

Thank you for your perseverance and flexibility during this challenging period. Please don't hesitate to reach out at vpr@iastate.edu with any questions, suggestions or ideas.

My best regards, and please be well.

Sarah Nusser
Vice President for Research
Iowa State University