Date: May 21, 2020
To: All Campus Researchers
From: Sarah M. Nusser, Vice President for Research
        Guru Rao, incoming Interim Vice President for Research
Cc: Provost, Academic Deans, Associate Deans for Research, Graduate College Dean
Re: Summer Guidance for Ongoing Research During the COVID-19 Pandemic

Over the past 11 weeks, members of the Iowa State research community have adapted and persevered to advance our institution’s research mission, despite the considerable challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic. Research has continued in a limited fashion on campus, and more broadly across the university through telework arrangements. We also took the necessary proactive steps as an institution to prepare to reduce our footprint to only essential research activities, if presented with that scenario. Now, following President Wintersteen’s direction in her memos to faculty and staff on May 8 and May 15, it is time to carefully plan and methodically implement a phased return to normal research operations – starting this summer – with the goal of expanding fully in the fall.

The purpose of this memo is to A) provide guidance as we begin to undertake a measured approach to increasing on-campus research activities; and B) share what’s next in this process.

Please keep in mind, as you review this memo and all related materials, that they were developed and framed following these guiding principles:

- The primary goals of ISU’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic are protecting health and safety while continuing the fundamental core missions of the university as a premier land-grant institution: education, research and extension and outreach;
- It is not expected that all risk from COVID-19 can be eliminated. The ISU community must work together to monitor, evaluate and adapt to mitigate the risk; and
- ISU will align our plans and procedures with the local orders and ordinances of Ames and Story County and reopening guidance from the State of Iowa and the Board of Regents. Our plans and procedures will follow science-based guidance and incorporate recommendations from the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDPH) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve, as do our knowledge and understanding of the virus and its effects. We will continue to update our plans, policies, and procedures as appropriate to the situation at hand.

GUIDANCE
Because the university as a whole is planning and preparing for a return to normal on-campus activities this fall, researchers can begin outlining plans to increase their research activities, as well. As a starting point in developing a phased plan to resume on-campus research activities, please carefully review and adhere to the Guide to Returning to the Workplace handbook. The handbook has been written and organized by overarching topics to provide easy-to-read and digest information on relevant subject matter, including but not limited to:
• Returning to Your Work Location
  o Workplace Expectations and Guidelines
  o Health Etiquette
  o Self-Monitoring

• Health and Safety Guidance
  o Cloth Face Coverings
  o Handwashing and Hand Sanitizer
  o Clean and Healthy Workplace

• What do I do about?
  o Laboratories and Research Work
  o Offices and Work Areas
  o Shared Vehicles
  o Restrooms, etc.

ESSENTIAL REQUIREMENTS FOR ALL RESEARCH LEADS
Following the direction of the Guide for Returning to the Workplace and Supervisor Expectations, research leads should use the Supervisor Workspace Plan to guide discussions with their team members and draft their plans regarding how they intend to organize and manage teams and workplaces occupied by faculty, staff, graduate and undergraduate research assistants, or post docs under their supervision. These plans must be completed by research leads for all laboratory and research work spaces, whether they were temporarily closed or remained open as the university reduced its campus footprint during the spring semester. Completed plans must be reviewed and approved by the department chair or center director and this process may be completed at any time. In addition, the research lead must share the approved plan with the department DOGE if graduate students are involved.

The health of all researchers is of paramount importance. In research projects where faculty, undergraduate students, graduate students and post-doctoral fellows are working in a team environment, it is imperative to minimize disruptions to the academic progress of the students and, it is especially important to safeguard the professional interests, and health and safety of all researchers through a proper assessment of risks and benefits.

Anyone who has concerns that their normal work location could elevate their personal risk or that of members of their household, should consult with a health care provider, while also contacting University Human Resources to discuss options that are available in these circumstances.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR DEVELOPING PLANS
In developing workplace plans, research leads will need to perform environmental and staffing/personnel assessments with the intent of maximizing safety by ensuring:

• Adequate supplies of necessary Personal Protective Equipment (PPE);
• Adequate supplies of cleaning and disinfectant products to maintain optimum hygiene of all shared spaces and surfaces in a lab or other research space;
• Workers within the lab or other research space can maintain a minimum physical distance of 6 feet from others as much as possible. Please download and use the scheduling tool posted in the RESOURCES section of the COVID-19 & RESEARCH web page to help effectively manage the staffing density of your lab or other research work space; and
• If six feet of distancing is not possible for some tasks, complete the task with as much distance as is feasible. Work as quickly as possible, while maintaining safety standards and following standard operating procedures.

Research leads are also advised to consider these additional resources when developing return-to-work plans for laboratories or other research work spaces:

• Laboratory Ramp-Up Checklist;
• Physical Distancing Guidelines for Campus Supervisors; and
• Safe Distancing Guidelines for ISU Laboratories

Please also continue to adhere to the most current guidance on university-related travel, which can be found on the regularly monitored and updated Travel FAQ page.

Face-to-face human subjects research is not permitted at this time. Please refer to the document titled Face-to-Face Human Subjects Research Activities Restricted for the most current guidance. We are working with researchers from across the university to develop parameters for when resumption of these activities will take place.

**WHAT’S NEXT**

The Research Continuity Working Group (RCWG) of the Emergency Operations Center (EOC) will continue its work to guide the level of research activity on campus – increasing or decreasing – in response to institutional decisions about the campus footprint.

Because campus is already prepared to reduce research activities through the essential research application process, the primary focus for the summer is planning and implementing an approach to increase research activities. This work will be conducted in collaboration with the university’s Fall Planning Committee. This summer, the RCWG anticipates developing an approach and associated guidance for further increasing research, followed by testing, evaluating and refining the approach as conditions warrant.

The RCWG includes the VPR leadership, Research Leadership Council, Faculty Senate Research Planning and Policy Committee, and Graduate and Professional Senate President and Vice President.

We will continue updating guidance for the campus research community as conditions related to the pandemic and university evolve. Again, thank you for your commitment to advancing the Iowa State research mission in the face of adversity and opportunities presented by the COVID-19 pandemic. As spring rapidly turns to summer, we wish you continued good health, safety and wellness.