On behalf of the Office of the Vice President for Research and our partners in the Colleges, I want to thank you for your commitment and dedication to continuing to advance Iowa State’s research mission during the spring and summer through the many significant challenges of the COVID-19 Pandemic. Now that the fall semester is upon us, we wanted to share updated research guidance as the university, as a whole, resumes on-campus activities.

Please keep in mind this memo, and all related materials, were developed with ISU’s primary goals of 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. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to evolve, so too do our knowledge and understanding of the virus and its effects. We will continue to update plans, policies, and procedures as appropriate to the situation at hand.

GUIDANCE
If you have recently returned to campus after working remotely the past few months, we encourage you to complete the Learn@ISU online training course: Returning to Iowa State. Thank you if you have already completed the Supervisor Workplace Plan for your laboratories and research work places. If you have not yet completed these plans, please follow the direction of the Guide for Returning to the Workplace and Supervisor Expectations, to outline how you will organize and manage teams and workplaces occupied by faculty, staff, graduate and undergraduate research assistants or post docs under your supervision. As a reminder, these plans must be completed before individuals can return to their work locations. Please also refer to the COVID-19 fall semester 2020 website for other relevant information.

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.

In developing workplace plans, you 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 workspace; 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.

As you continue or resume your research activities in full, please commit to following the four healthy behaviors for mitigating the spread of COVID-19 that President Wintersteen outlined in her recent video:
  • Wear a face covering;
  • Maintain distance – 6 feet apart;
  • Wash and/or sanitize your hands often; and
  • Stay home if you are ill.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES FOR DEVELOPING PLANS
Please also consider these additional resources when developing return-to-work plans for laboratories or other research workspaces:
  • Research Continuity Working Group Recommendations;
  • 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.

If your research involves face-to-face interaction with human subjects, please review the recently updated human-subjects research section of the FAQ on the COVID-19 & RESEARCH web page on the OVPR website. The updated FAQ features several helpful resource documents including the COVID-19 Risk Mitigation Plan Guidance document and Checklist for Resuming Face-to-Face Human-Subjects Research.

We will continue updating guidance for the campus research community as conditions related to the pandemic and university evolve. Again, thank you for your ongoing commitment to advancing the Iowa State research mission in the face of the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Be safe and be well.