

From: [All Emory University Staff](#) on behalf of [Emory Together](#)
To: [External:All-Staff](#)
Subject: Guidance for Managing Emory University Research Enterprise During COVID-19
Date: Wednesday, March 18, 2020 12:07:22 PM

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Dear colleagues,

Emory University's strategic framework clearly signals our institutional commitment to be recognized as a top-ranked global leader in research and to drive societal impact. As we face new and unique challenges during the current COVID-19 pandemic, the urgency of this mission could not be clearer. At the same time, the health and safety of students, faculty, staff, patients, and the general community are of critical importance to Emory. Safe-guarding our community and stewarding health-care resources are among our highest priorities.

We are committed to balancing our essential research enterprise with the imperative to implement social distancing, as recommended by the CDC ([CDC COVID-19](#)), to flatten the curve of the pandemic and do our part to keep our community safe and healthy. As such, we are writing to provide Emory's guidance regarding on-campus laboratory research while we mitigate COVID-19 challenges. **Effective immediately, laboratory researchers should begin a pandemic-mitigation process to suspend and conclude experiments and reduce direct contact study visits with participants for all non-essential, non-critical, on-campus research. The process to wind down these activities should be completed no later than Monday, March 23.** Until further notice, only those activities designated by school or unit leaders as *essential* during this period should be conducted in on-site laboratories. You will need to communicate with your school or unit leaders for guidance in determining what is critical during this period.

Peer institution responses to the pandemic—such as those by Harvard, Stanford, and Johns Hopkins—were considered in this guidance to redirect and wind down along with CDC (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/guidance-business-response.html>) and Emory guidelines ([Emory COVID-19](#)). Thus, **all but essential research activities (as defined for this situation and determined at the school level) should start the ramp down, effectively immediately and completed no later than March 23.**

Emory's ramp down will include all on-sites research activities, including laboratory and certain human subjects research. **Access to laboratories ramping down will be minimal**, only to allow maintenance of critical activities, such as completing ongoing research that is at a crucial phase, maintaining animals, and safeguarding unique reagents and essential materials and equipment. Research that is deemed essential/critical during this period by your school or unit leaders may continue—but only upon implementation of stringent social distancing and

handwashing precautions. Some examples of research to be designated as essential/critical at this time may include research related to COVID-19, that for which a halt would result in irreversible loss, and other critical and essential research as determined by your school or unit leader to be of substantive benefit. **Requests for consideration to proceed as “essential research” should be submitted to the senior research officer in your school or unit as soon as possible and no later than March 20.**

After March 23, all non-essential, in-person human subjects research, community-based and clinical research that does not meet the criteria noted above, should be **suspended until further notice. All new studies that have not yet started should be postponed.** Research that can be conducted remotely or virtually is strongly encouraged and can proceed.

To reduce non-essential clinical research activities, further guidance and tools will be forthcoming on a tiered approach.

If essential in-person work needs to be completed, this should be done on a limited basis, and lab staff should abide by social distancing practices including the option of shift work that minimizes personnel overlap.

We understand this will be disruptive, and it is not intended to be a full shut down of research at Emory. Rather, this policy is intended to minimize spread of COVID-19 through in-person contacts. Therefore, we encourage you, your students, and your research team to take this opportunity to focus on the activities that can be conducted remotely, such as completing data analysis, writing papers, and drafting grant proposals.

We encourage you to continue the structure of your teams of staff and postdocs, even while working remotely. Federal guidance has stated the salaries for remote workers will be allowable during this time, thus please continue charging them to grants as usual. The NIH is also working on lengthening timelines for certain activities such as progress reports, etc.

Additionally, a [website](#) has been created for the COVID-19 response for researchers and it is being updated daily. We recommend someone on your team be assigned to check it frequently as we post updates from sponsors.

In addition, Emory’s [research administration support](#) offices are well prepared for remote support, and they will serve your research needs to the best of their ability over the coming weeks.

Please read the following carefully:

Immediate Steps

- PIs should immediately identify essential research experiments that are at a critical

phase. We anticipate this would mean that abandoning them would cause irreversible and irreparable loss. With consideration of the issues raised above, school and unit leadership may wish to support the completion of critical experiments.

- When considering research that requires a physical presence in the laboratory, labs should, at most, carry out limited amounts of only the highest priority work as established by PIs in consultation with their school leadership. We understand that there is some subjectivity in the definition of high priority and essential. As such, these decisions should be made in concert with the PI and their school's designated leader.

Students and Other Learners in Laboratories

- Undergraduates, volunteers, and visitors, including non-Emory students, are not permitted in any laboratory, even those conducting critical research.
- Critical functions should not be assigned to graduate students. Graduate students should begin working remotely immediately, or as soon as the research ramp down process is complete, but no later than the March 23 deadline. Mentors should work with graduate students to develop individualized plans to maintain progress towards completing their dissertations and other academic work. In the event that a laboratory engaged in essential research activities requires graduate students to maintain a functioning effort, graduate student participation must be approved by the student's program director or director of graduate studies, the department chair of the investigator, and the Laney Graduate School. The resulting decision should be reported to the School/Unit Dean.
- If the criterion of “essential” is met and approved, a postdoc of a research team may, at their own discretion, continue to work physically in the laboratory. In other words, unless their presence is required for an essential role, trainees who wish to work remotely should be allowed to do so, and PIs should work to facilitate that effort.

What to Do In Case of Any Illness

- If you think you may have been exposed to COVID-19 and develop a fever, cough or difficulty breathing, don't come to work, separate yourself from others, and call your healthcare provider for medical advice. **Students:** Call Student Health Services, 404-727-7551. **Faculty and staff:** Call the Office of Occupational Injury Management, 404-686-8587. After hours or on weekends, call the OIM Nurse Practitioner on call at 404-686-5500 and enter the ID #50464. If you are having chest pain, serious difficulty breathing, or another type of medical emergency, please call 911.
- Contact your supervisor and OIM to inform them of your illness.
- If you are instructed to stay at home, don't leave except to get medical care—review the [steps](#) to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- Once symptom-free, call OIM to get cleared to come back to work.
- Additional information can be found at [Coronavirus Updates for the Emory Community](#),

a website dedicated to our response to COVID-19.

Managing Laboratory Activities

- Laboratory work specifically related to COVID-19 is continuing to expand and should continue.
- Disinfect the common lab areas and touchpoints according to the [EHSO guidelines](#).
- Beginning March 23, **access to labs will be exclusively for school or unit approved essential personnel who perform critical procedures and experiments, equipment management, or animal management that require personal attention to maintain laboratory viability** (e.g. liquid nitrogen tank filling, animal support, maintaining shared computational equipment). Notify your school leadership immediately about who these individuals are.
- **Essential work in labs should be staggered** so that minimal personnel (in accord with social distancing concepts) are present at any one time. Consider using flex time and off-hours to achieve social distancing. Physical safety is a consideration in situations where a single person is in a laboratory—a virtual check-in/out should be implemented to in these situations.
- Communicate frequently, and review contingency plans and emergency procedures with your group.
- Meetings should be held online or by phone, including one-on-one meetings and formal lab or group meetings. Groups should use the available video conferencing and networking tools, such as Zoom or Skype business, to continue to interact regularly.
- PIs should prepare for the eventuality that an individual in their group will test positive for COVID-19. Given the current projections, this is a likely scenario for many research groups. **Laboratory spaces and offices used by an individual found to be COVID-19 positive will be closed, disinfected, and prepared for re-occupancy.** Incidents should be reported immediately to OIM.

Guidance Regarding the Division of Animal Resources

- The Office remains open and fully functional.
- Large animal surgery, with the exception of terminal procedures, has been discontinued.
- Animal ordering from approved vendors is winding down, but will remain intact for experiments and activities (e.g., cryopreservation) determined to be essential.
- Animal imports into quarantine and exports have been suspended.
- In-person training, such as Tuesday new facility orientation, has been discontinued.
- The overall focus is on high-quality animal care and preservation of the environment to enable current experiments to continue.
- Recommendations for our research partners:
 - Investigators encouraged to conclude experiments, not start lengthy or complicated ones, and consider euthanasia of surplus animals.

- Labs are encouraged to ensure contact information is in place for communication with and from vet staff.

Our primary concern is for the safety of our faculty, staff, and trainees. Wash your hands frequently, and practice social distancing.

Thank you in advance for your efforts to keep our community safe in this global health crisis. Questions and feedback will be regularly monitored, and the FAQs on the [ORA COVID-19 page](#) will be routinely updated.

Sincerely,

Jan Love, Interim Provost and Executive Vice President for Academic Affairs

Christopher L. Augostini, Executive Vice President Business and Administration, Chief Financial Officer

Jonathan S. Lewin, Executive Vice President for Health Affairs, Executive Director, Woodruff Health Sciences Center, President, CEO, and Chairman of the Board, Emory Healthcare

Resources:

Emory University COVID-19 Updates: <https://www.emory.edu/coronavirus>

ORA COVID-19 Updates: <http://ora.emory.edu/COVID/index.html>