

## Principles and Framework for a Phased Approach to Restarting University Research

### Guiding Principles

**Overarching Goal:** To keep everyone safe, while increasing research productivity in a phased approach as safety becomes easier to manage.

**Principle 1:** *The timing of our phased approach will be informed by the cognizant Local, State, and National Public Health Authority directives to shelter-at-home and implement social distancing, recognizing that SUNY and the University have the ultimate decision-making authority.*

- Public health authority directives have become more restrictive over time (recommendations, urgent recommendations, requirements, stricter identification of essential businesses and closures, clarification of allowable activities like exercise, more restrictive social distancing directives such as closing of parks and beaches, outdoor face coverings, etc.). We can expect that “loosening” will look like a similar process in reverse.
- Governor Cuomo extended the stay-in-place order until May 15th, at a minimum strict social distancing practices will be in place until then to mitigate the spread of the virus. Higher risk groups—like older individuals or those with underlying health conditions—may have to shelter at home longer.
- New York has a 10-point plan that must be followed until further notice: <https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/new-york-state-pause>
- New York has defined essential business within the state: <https://esd.ny.gov/guidance-executive-order-2026>; our shared enterprise, research and laboratory services, is specifically named in this order.
- Executive orders are in place for face coverings for essential workers that have contact with the public: <https://www.governor.ny.gov/news/no-20216-continuing-temporary-suspension-and-modification-laws-relating-disaster-emergency>
- White House Plan for Opening up America Again: <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/Guidelines-for-Opening-Up-America-Again.pdf>
- We expect that between “only essential/minimal activity outside of the home” and “return to business as usual,” there will be intermediate phases of increased access, with one to three weeks between phase changes, gaged to regional pandemic data, with the possibility of returning to a more restricted phase should Covid-19 infections again rise.

**Principle 2:** *Protect the health and safety of the research workforce, emotional as well as physical, and the health and safety of our clinical patients and human research subjects.*

- No researcher should feel they are being compelled to work on campus or in the field during periods of broad shelter-at-home directives. Safety within laboratories must be rigorously maintained, with adequate access to PPE and other safety related supplies. Researchers, students and staff who feel their work situation is unsafe should report their concerns to their supervisor. If their concerns are not adequately addressed, they should bring the concerns to the supervisor of their supervisor.
- The Vice President for Research (VPR) must be made aware of all research activities within university spaces and will act as the coordinator with other University offices. Guidelines for the design of these plans are given below and in the Ramp Up Check List. Access may be denied to labs who fail to provide plans. As part of the hibernation process, PIs identified essential personnel and activities; those personnel and activities should be reviewed now and updated reports sent to Chair/Division Chief/Vice Chair for Research/research directors. An aggregate report will be forwarded to the office of the VPR.

- Limiting access is likely to persist for some time. A vaccine is at least 12-18 months away and likely longer. SARS-CoV2 testing will play an important role in monitoring workforce safety as well as antibody testing to identify those that have already been exposed. Although it is expected that prior exposure will provide immunity for some period of time, it is not currently known if this is true or for how long.
- All personnel must follow SUNY and University guidelines on travel; these are likely to have different time tables and will necessarily affect intercampus collaborations, field research including human subject related field research. These restraints should be incorporated into the PIs action plan for re-start (above).
- A very small amount of UMU research projects can be successfully and productively performed remotely; where this is the case, during the Un-Pause New York phase, we encourage that work to continue remotely.

**Principle 3:** *Ensure as rapid a research restart as the public health conditions permit.*

- General considerations for smooth ramp-up and acceleration of research activity. Develop flexible work schedules, plan for supply chain issues, and prepare core and fabrication lines in advance of need.
  1. To ensure social distancing requirements and to reduce density of research personnel in university research spaces, we encourage work shifts or staggered work days, extended auxiliary service support to enable more round the clock operation of laboratories.
  2. Supply chain issues on restart. Under no circumstances should safety be sacrificed due to lack of adequate supplies, type, and quality of PPE.
  3. Ensure Core Facilities are engaged and ready to support work ramp up.
  4. *Protect the careers of vulnerable researchers' (e.g. in danger of losing funding), including early stage researchers.*

**Principle 4:** *Implement a fair and transparent process for granting access by working closely with Chairs, Division Chiefs, and Vice-Chairs of Research to prioritize and space lab restarts.*

- A Faculty/Administration Task Force was established to develop and endorse these guidelines for ramping-up and ramping down research activities.
- Departmental Based Calendars with staffing charts will allow for complete visibility during ramp-up and provide visible assurance of social distancing.
- We expect that the vast majority of investigative staff on campus are and will continue to follow the guidelines set out to protect all of our safety. Violation of the guidelines, will be reviewed by Departmental and University levels and appropriate action including denying access to campus will be taken.

**Principle 5:** *We encourage and support finding cures and preventions for COVID-19, while increasing the safe access to all patients to clinical trials for their conditions.*

- Critical clinical research has continued, while non-critical research was suspended, which affected many researchers conducting both federally-funded and industry-funded research.
- Leaders involved in organized clinical trials have developed and endorsed guidelines for ramping-down clinical research, and are developing new rules for ramping-up clinical research, while respecting social isolation and maximizing the tele-medicine resources.
- The clinical trial participants, research nurses, and research coordinators must respect all university health system precautions.

**Phases of Research Activities**

The six-stage phasing description outlines our plan for ramping down and ramping up research activities. Public health directives and the current state of the health care and COVID-19 public health response systems determine the timing as to when we will be permitted to move up or down between phases. Before allowing greater researcher access to labs, libraries, and other research spaces, a plan and the rigorous enforcement of social distancing directives is necessary. It is expected that chairs or their designates will monitor and enforce social distancing within departmental spaces.

Each PI must submit their plan for ensuring the following (this is list intended to illustrative, not exhaustive):

- scheduled/work-shift access;
- follow standard laboratory safety procedures for use of laboratory coats, hand hygiene, use of gloves when appropriate, etc. with the addition of face masks;
- Wiping of all common equipment in labs and in departments on a daily basis with 70% ethanol or disinfecting wipes;
- Method for monitoring who has entered a lab;
- 6-foot distancing between occupants when possible, and appropriate PPE when not;
- disinfecting work surfaces after use;
- identifying use of equipment/areas outside the lab, and disinfection of those areas after use;
- PI and all lab staff use proper procedures when donning and doffing masks.
- Any staff member who has any Covid-19 symptoms should contact the Upstate employee hotline – 315-464-8436 (THEM)

A Groupwise or Google calendar must be setup by each department for use in coordination of staff times in the building.

Because of the limited services, facilities, and staff available, it is even more important now to carefully plan at home all of your experimental work. Communicate (Zoom, email, phone) with other lab members prior to arrival to discuss aspects of experimental design and to obtain necessary reagents and tools to increase the efficiency of your time in the lab.

## PHASED APPROACH

- Phase 1 represents access restricted to only the maintenance of critical research capability. We estimate this to be **5-10% of normal activity**.
- Phase 2 represents access restricted to critical and high priority activities, such as Covid-19 rapid response research. We estimate this to be **15-35% of normal activity**. Think of this as a density metric: normal research space occupancy should be maintained at no more than this level. Upstate Medical University is operating in this phase at the present time.
- Phase 3 represents a degree of relaxed access, with priorities given to time-sensitive research activities. We estimate this to be **35-50% of normal activities**.
- Phase 4 represents increased relaxation, permitting new research to be initiated if it has been identified as a priority. We estimate that this represents **50-70% of normal activities**.
- Phase 5 represents a further relaxation of research density constraints, opening up most research activity, but maintaining the density of research personnel to more than **70-90% of normal density**.
- Phase 6 represents a return to business as usual, full campus density and activity.

PHASE	EXTERNAL CONDITIONS	SUMMARY & METRICS	CRITERIA	TIME PERIOD
1	<p><b>Situation unknown and changing.</b>            COVID-19 hospitalizations on the rise            Testing limited, PPE shortages</p>	<p><b>Only research deemed critical is allowed</b>            Researchers must be designated as Critical to be on site</p> <p>On site research activity estimated at <b>5-10% of normal</b></p>	<p><i>Research facilities are closed, except where personnel are required to protect life, safety and critical research infrastructure/capability (maintaining cell lines, animal health, instrumentation, etc).</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Minimum staffing.</li> <li>• Authorization for one-time access to faculty offices to pick up books and materials, shut down instrumentation, etc. delegated to deans.</li> </ul>	3/23/20-3/30/20
2	<p>COVID-19 hospitalizations on the rise, testing limited, PPE shortages</p> <p>Initial Stay Home/Stay Healthy directive in place</p>	<p><b>On-campus access allowed to maintain research capability or prevent catastrophic disruption</b></p> <p><b>COVID-19 related research encouraged</b></p> <p>Researchers must be designated as Essential to be on site</p> <p>On site research activity transitions to an estimated <b>15-35% of normal</b></p>	<p><i>Research access limited to social-distanced essential personnel only for recommended priority research activities:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Life, safety and critical research (as stated above)</li> <li>• “Critical Research”, where a delay would have significant financial impacts or catastrophically disrupt the project or protocol (including avoiding necessary euthanasia of research animal). Finish up critical projects - no “new” projects can be initiated on campus.</li> <li>• COVID-19 related rapid response activities (e.g. testing, ventilators, etc.)</li> </ul>	3/30/20-present (at least thru 5/15/20)

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prioritize core facilities that support COVID-19 research.</li> </ul>	
	<p><i>Preparations for next phase</i></p>		<p><i>Necessary core facilities are staffed and operational</i></p> <p><i>Labs are able to purchase necessary supplies</i></p> <p><i>Social distancing, facial coverings, cleaning measures understood and in place (e.g. face coverings for all on-campus personnel required)</i></p>	
3	<p>Local COVID-19 hospitalizations flatten, then drop COVID-19 testing capacity increases PPE shortages still exist</p> <p>Public health authorities &amp; Governor relax restrictions on 'essential workers'</p> <p>Local schools still closed/teaching remotely</p>	<p><b>Definition of "critical" relaxed to include time-sensitive research</b></p> <p>All research that can be done remotely should continue</p> <p>On site research activity transitions to an estimated <b>35-50% of normal</b></p> <p><b><i>Plans for sudden return to previous phase in place</i></b></p>	<p><i>Recommended Priority Research Areas</i></p> <p><i>Deadline-driven research activities:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early Career Faculty</li> <li>• Experiments close to completion, or deadline driven, <u>whose pause or deferral would lead to catastrophic delay or loss of research result</u></li> <li>• Animal experiments where a delay would result in euthanasia or loss of a colony.</li> <li>• Prioritize access for graduate students and postdocs close to completing their degree/term of appointment</li> <li>• Prioritize research for completion of grants with end dates within 3 months ~July 31, 2020 (where funding agency has not granted leniency).</li> <li>• Prioritize experiments needed for submission</li> </ul>	<p>May 2020 – ???</p>

			<p>of grants with deadlines before July 10</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <u>Core facilities</u>: restart facilities based on sufficient 'customer' demand (approved projects) where work cannot be done remotely. Also cores where recovery from shutdown (recalibration, etc.) may require some time.</li> <li>• Labs with active extramural funded research</li> </ul>	
	<p><i>Preparations for next phase</i></p>		<p><i>Core campus functions are staffed and operational to handle increased load (DLAR, EH&amp;S)</i></p> <p><i>More core facilities are staffed and operational</i></p> <p><i>Labs are able to purchase necessary supplies</i></p> <p><i>Social distancing, face mask, cleaning measures understood and in place</i></p>	
4	<p>Local COVID-19 hospitalizations continue to decrease COVID-19 testing capacity near maximum of needed capacity PPE more widely available</p> <p>Further relaxation of restrictions - standards for</p>	<p><b>Gradually expand # of people on campus</b> while maintaining social distancing</p> <p><b>Critical new on-campus research allowed, but labs/groups only allowed to operate at 50-70% total personnel capacity, with social distancing.</b> All research that can be done remotely should continue to be, including all seminars, group meetings, etc.</p> <p>On site research activity transitions to an</p>	<p><i>Recommended Priority Research Areas</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Labs with competing renewals due in the next 12 months</li> <li>• Labs submitting a A01 application (resubmission) in the next 6 months</li> <li>• Labs with active extramural funded research</li> </ul>	TBD

	return to normal	estimated <b>50-70% of normal</b>  <i>Plans for sudden return to previous phase in place</i>		
5	<p>New cases of COVID-19 are low COVID-19 testing is at maximum needed capacity PPE availability normal</p> <p>Further relaxation of restrictions - standards for activity based on ability to social distance</p>	<p><b>Continued expansion of research on campus</b> while maintaining social distancing</p> <p>Critical new on-campus research allowed, but <b>labs/groups only allowed to operate at 70-90% total personnel capacity, with social distancing</b></p> <p>All research that can be done remotely should continue to be, including all seminars, group meetings, etc.</p> <p>Onsite research activity estimated at <b>70-85% of normal</b></p> <p><i>Plans for sudden return to previous phase in place</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Access to offices allowed generally, with attention to social distancing and cleaning</li> <li>• Access to labs with social distancing and disinfection of materials</li> </ul>	TBD
6	<p>Vaccine widely available and used in combination with widespread testing and identification of new COVID-19 cases, with quarantining; herd immunity achieved.</p> <p>No or minimal state restrictions</p>	<p><b>All onsite research has returned to normal</b></p> <p>On site research activity <b>normal at 85-100%</b></p> <p><i>Plans for sudden return to previous phase in place</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Restart normal research operations.</li> </ul>	TBD