From: Vice Chancellor for Research and Graduate Education Steve Ackerman  
Dated: March 16, 2020

Dear members of our campus research community:

As you all know, we are living through an unprecedented time as we confront the COVID-19 pandemic. I want to thank all of you for your hard work and efforts to prepare and respond to the virus and its far-reaching effects. I know this is a difficult time for many.

To that end, we must take steps to mitigate the spread of disease, confront the reality that we may experience additional cases that affect members of campus, and limit the number of people gathering at any given time. We also must delay or pause research activities that consume personal protective equipment, which is in short supply across the world.

We should begin preparing for a scenario in which campus is open only to staff critical to maintain operations. Please consider how your lab might continue to function with significantly reduced personnel or whether you will need to begin winding down research activities that are unrelated to critical COVID-19 campus priorities. This includes:

- Identifying employees who are critical to maintaining operations, including those required for basic animal care, and the maintenance of cell lines, equipment, and liquid nitrogen and helium stocks.
- Limit or cancel all in-person staff meetings and stagger employee shifts for those necessary to maintain operations to reduce person-to-person contact.
- Put on hold plans to order and ship animals; take advantage of extensions for grant deadlines; and more.
- Conserve all PPE necessary to protect patients and health care workers, and to maintain necessary research animal care. The most critical items include N95 respirators, Tyvek suits, isolation gowns, and procedure masks. The Office of Biological Safety has offered guidance, which you can find here: https://covid19.wisc.edu/faqs/#c19-faq-research.

Also note the following:

- Review the campus Telecommuting Policy. Be prepared to allow those staff who are not critical to maintaining research operations on campus (such as those suggested above) to conduct work remotely.
- Visitors are prohibited from entering animal research spaces until further notice.
- All face-to-face human subjects research interactions are suspended, except for therapeutic studies involving drugs or devices or those critical to the health and safety of patients or study participants.
- Some federal agencies are revising grant policy. Research and Sponsored Programs is providing updates to sponsored research on its COVID-19 webpage. While RSP is open and processing grant submissions, to assure processing please get proposals to RSP in a timely fashion.
- The Office of Human Resources will send guidance shortly with respect to new leave policies for employees, graduate students, teaching assistants and project assistants.

At this moment, we can’t account for every possibility and scenario, but will continue to communicate about this situation and answer your individual questions as best we are able. Please don’t hesitate to reach out to my office if you need help or support, or if you have any additional questions. Please also check your campus email regularly and watch for updates posted to the UW–Madison COVID-19 website. The site also includes a section dedicated to research that will be fleshed out shortly.

We are here to support you.

Sincerely,

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