



UNIVERSITY OF
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Office of Research

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Coronavirus (COVID-19) Update on Research Activities at UofSC

In a letter to the University of South Carolina research community, Vice President for Research Prakash Nagarkatti provides guidance for researchers and research administrators on research activities and services while system campuses are closed. This letter, initially published on March 17, 2020, will be updated on the [Office of the Vice President for Research Website](#) as new information is available.

Dear Colleagues,

As was communicated by President Caslen regarding the coronavirus (COVID-19), the health, safety and well-being of our institution is a priority, and this includes faculty, staff and trainees engaged in research. This communication is intended to guide you in relation to research operations while the University is closed for normal activities. To the extent necessary and practical, the Research Enterprise continues to operate with support offices staffed sufficiently to enable the essential aspects of research administration. Our faculty pursue different types of research, some of which can be pursued through telework while some must be carried out in a lab and requires essential personnel to complete critical procedures. Here are some guidelines for such research.

Principal investigators and lab managers should develop individual contingency plans for research operations that are consistent with UofSC's overall plan of action. **Below we provide a list of items and/or suggestions to consider as they relate to operations of your individual research program.**

- Develop a communication plan to assure that you and your laboratory staff are in communication over research operations. Suggestions include creation of an emergency call sheet that has contact information for all laboratory members, designating a point of contact for various research-related activities and delineating modes of interactions for research purposes (e.g. remote meetings).

- Identify essential research operations (e.g., special care for animals, cell culture maintenance or ongoing experiments), and identify who will be responsible for performing those essential activities (teams identified with back-up plans). This is especially important for ongoing animal experiments to assure investigators are responsible for animal care that is outside of the Department of Laboratory Animal Research (DLAR) personnel responsibilities. Also, always follow DLAR guidelines for emergencies.
- Delineate research outcomes that can be performed remotely, and what resources are needed to do so (e.g., [Zoom](#)). Consider using remote work time to draft manuscripts, grant proposals, perform literature reviews, review dissertation drafts, etc.
- Consider resources needed for continued experimentation and whether orders and/or needs should be adjusted, if possible, to ensure ongoing operations.
- If you have regulatory approvals that will be expiring soon, contact offices to request extensions, if needed.
- Consider cross-training methodologies and/or tasks across laboratory co-workers, to assure that if one essential person is not able to perform their tasks others understand and can perform needed duties.
- Consider shutting down non-essential equipment that will not be damaged by shutdown, or that requires reagents (e.g., liquid nitrogen or gases) where supplies may not be readily available. Create plans for equipment maintenance by designated laboratory staff. Devise a plan to clean equipment within your laboratory to protect staff.

Other Research Considerations

Proposal Submissions

Office of Sponsored Award Management (SAM) will continue to submit proposals as necessary to meet deadlines. Federal agencies are flexible regarding deadlines and agency guidance is evolving as the government responds to the virus. Many agencies, including NIH, have announced that deadlines will be extended in cases where institutions have closed. Updated information regarding agency policies and communications will be posted on the SAM website.

Human Subjects Research

The Office of Research Compliance is operating, and applications/amendments submitted via eIRB will be reviewed.

Animal Research

The Department of Laboratory Animal Research (DLAR) is operating with staff on site to maintain and care for animals as usual. Pending animal orders will be cancelled and animals only may be removed from the DLAR facility with permission from the Attending Veterinarian. DLAR has issued guidance to all USC animal users. Please follow those guidelines.

For the latest information for the broader university community, see:
<https://sc.edu/safety/coronavirus/>.

Undergraduate Research

Undergraduate students whether paid or doing independent study in research labs are not essential personnel and should not be on campus as long as the campus is closed.

Undergraduate students in independent study classes should be given remote work such as data analysis, readings, writing literature summaries, etc. while UofSC is teaching remotely.

Best Regards,

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