

MEMO FROM PROVOST

To: Faculty, Other Academic Appointees, Postdocs
From: Ka Yee C. Lee, Provost
Subject: COVID-19 Planning for Research
Date: March 16, 2020

The rapidly changing nature of the COVID-19 pandemic requires us to continue to take deliberate steps to actively curtail its spread. Protecting the health and safety of our faculty, researchers, students, staff, and research participants is our top priority, and University leaders and deans have been unequivocal on this point. We – along with our peer institutions – are taking unprecedented steps to safeguard our community, which now must include significantly ramping down on-campus research activities. To help reduce the number of people on campus, we are asking **all Principal Investigators** who lead on-campus research teams and laboratories and **directors of on-campus research facilities to take the following actions immediately**:

- **Limit the number of people physically present in the research environment to only essential individuals.** All people who can conduct their work remotely should do so right away.
- **Prioritize the health and safety of your research teams, labs, and participants.** The definition of safety will mean different things for different types of research and may change over time.
 - For those who are able to conduct research with no one physically present on campus, research activities should transition online immediately.
 - For those who conduct human subjects research involving person-to-person contact that does not directly benefit the subject, those activities should be suspended immediately.
- **Implement public health practices into all research environments,** including: limit the number of people physically present to essential people only; implement social distancing strategies for people who must be on site; consider having people work in asynchronous shifts; and use virtual meetings where possible. Visitors (i.e., anyone who does not have an official University of Chicago appointment) and minors are not allowed in any research lab.
- **Implement a ramp down of people in your laboratories and facilities without delay.** Identify which operations are critical and which can be deferred or paused. Please plan for operating with the minimum number of people physically present to preserve critical functions through at least April 15.
- **Develop a plan by Wednesday, March 18 for the possibility of a total lab closure.** We need to be prepared for the possibility that we could be required to close one or more labs with little notice, and planning now ensures the greatest opportunity to preserve research and data. Your dean will instruct you where to submit the plan.
- **Continue vital research related to COVID-19 and start new projects related to COVID-19,** following containment guidance provided by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and in consultation with the Office of Research Safety.

We understand the impact that these changes will have on our research community and are actively working to provide support and resources during this challenging time.

- We have created a new website – researchcontinuity.uchicago.edu – to assist in your planning. On this site you can find templates for continuity planning, a ramp-down checklist, and other resources, which a cross-campus working group is developing. This will be updated regularly as new information and resources become available.

- We are planning **two virtual townhalls for researchers** on Tuesday, March 17 at 12:00 PM ([RSVP here](#)) and Thursday, March 19 at 3:00 PM ([RSVP here](#)). You can submit questions in advance using the RSVP forms linked above.

These decisions are not ones we take lightly, and we appreciate the deep concern you have for your teams and your research. Acting definitely now gives us the best chance of preserving the most critical components of research in the event of a required complete shut-down, and we must be prepared for that possibility.

We will keep you informed as we move forward together, and we are grateful for your partnership.