

Date: March 13, 2020

To: Purdue Research Community

From: Theresa S. Mayer, Executive Vice President for Research and Partnerships  
Linda J. Mason, Dean of the Graduate School

Re: Mitigating the Impact of COVID-19 on the Purdue Research Community

As incidence of COVID-19 in Indiana and the United States continues to evolve, we continue to follow a precaution-containment-continuity framework with an overarching focus on health and safety. This involves taking actions that limit exposure of community members to the virus, imposing social distancing, and elevating preventive hygiene practices. You can find the most recent information and campus-wide guidance on the [Purdue COVID-19 website](#). Research-related questions or concerns not addressed in this memo can be directed to Purdue's central support email at [ehps@purdue.edu](mailto:ehps@purdue.edu) (please include "research" in the email subject field for quicker response).

The Purdue campus currently remains open. At this time, there are no plans to restrict access to research laboratories on the West Lafayette campus or at the Purdue Agriculture Centers (PACs) for Purdue researchers. This status could change as we respond to rapidly evolving information on the spread of COVID-19 in Indiana and across the country. Therefore, it is prudent for the research community to prepare contingency plans in the event of a partial or full closure of research activities.

**Graduate Teaching Assistants:** Graduate students and staff with appointments that include on-campus instruction should contact the primary course instructor for adjusted assignments while courses are delivered in a modified format. Information of graduate teaching assistant pay can be found on the [Purdue COVID-19 website](#).

**Research and Graduate Staff:** All researchers (including undergraduate, graduate, and postdoctoral students) should follow Purdue's overarching guidance on (a) social distancing and attendance limits in group meetings, (b) travel to conferences and meetings, and (c) hosting external visitors on campus as specified on the [Purdue COVID-19 website](#). Individuals should consult with their supervisors or unit leadership if special accommodations or assistance is needed to ensure their ability to continue work without compromising their own health and safety or that of a larger group. This would include developing plans for remote work due to factors such as experiencing a respiratory illness or flu-like symptoms, participating in a recommended quarantine, or having a chronic medical condition or compromised immune system. International postdoctoral students should work with their supervisor(s) to determine if there are "work from home" restrictions in their immigration paperwork and, if so, [contact ISS](#) for assistance. Information of graduate research assistant pay can be found on the [Purdue COVID-19 website](#).

**Undergraduate Researchers:** We recognize that many research group leaders engage undergraduate students in credit bearing and/or funded activities in their research. We are currently working with the Provost's Office to develop guidance that is consistent with the latest changes that have been announced. Undergraduates participating in research activities as part of a course should be told to follow Purdue-wide directives regarding course participation, including the discontinuation of face-to-face instruction.

**Research Operations and Supporting Units:** At this time, there is no change in research operations and all of our supporting units remain available and fully functional. This includes Sponsored Program Services, Regulatory Affairs, and Research Development. Our Regulatory Affairs team is available to assist with revisions to existing research protocols that may be needed to accommodate changes in new and ongoing studies due to COVID-19 related restrictions. Information on updates to regulatory requirements can be found in the FAO section titled “Faculty and student research” on the [Purdue COVID-19 website](#). For those conducting controlled and/or proprietary research, guidance is offered via the [Export Controls and Research Information Assurance web page](#). For those conducting human subjects research, guidance from Purdue’s Human Participant Protection Program (HRPP) and Institutional Review Board (IRB) can be found on the [Purdue COVID-19 website](#). We recommend not bringing human subjects to campus who are considered high risk for COVID complications (see <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/high-risk-complications.html>). For those conducting research involving animals in Purdue’s centralized managed animal facility, current and planned action information at CMAF can be found on the [Purdue COVID-19 website](#).

**Federal Agency Updates:** The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) and the Federal Agencies are beginning to issue initial guidance for existing grants/contracts and future proposal submissions. Although very few changes have been announced, we anticipate that some proposal deadlines will be extended, and that future program solicitations may be delayed. The March 9, 2020 [OMB memorandum](#) also notes that the Administration is evaluating granting Federal Agencies the ability to extend flexibilities on such items as pre-award costs, no-cost extensions, and expenditure of funds for salaries and other program costs, to recipients whose operations have been adversely impacted in the emergency response related to COVID-19. Federal Agency updates are being compiled on the [Purdue SPS website](#) for quick reference by the Purdue research community.

**Contingency Plans for Central Research Facilities:** The research office is currently working with university-wide shared experimental and computational user facilities to develop and document contingency plans that would maintain critical functions and experiments if laboratory access is reduced or suspended. This includes the designation of essential personnel as well as backup personnel if quarantine or illness prevents originally designed personnel from handling their responsibilities. Additional details will be shared on the Purdue COVID-19 website as generated.

**Contingency Plans for Research Groups:** We encourage research group leaders to begin to develop contingency plans if personnel are unable to come to the lab for an extended period of time. Scholars whose research does not entail laboratory work should comply with the spirit of limiting campus presence to essential personnel during Spring Break, while making contingency plans for a more extended period of reduced access to campus. Some examples are provided below:

**Remote access.** Researchers should ensure they have access to information needed to carry out work remotely. This might include, access to literature, existing datasets and research-related files, and meeting software.

**Prioritize work that requires access to special facilities.** Depending upon the nature of your research, you might consider prioritizing work that can only be carried out in your research facility, and put off work amenable to remote support, such as data analysis. Ongoing research that would be severely compromised if paused should be prioritized.

**Plan ahead for sudden changes in access to sensitive samples.** If you are carrying out a long-term experiment and if it is feasible to freeze or otherwise capture samples at specific steps, you might consider doing this more often.

**Conduct alternative research activities.** We understand your research is critically important, and during this period we urge you to devote your time to productive alternatives, such as writing grant proposals, reviewing articles and papers, writing thesis chapters, conducting analyses, compiling data and/or synthesizing important research. This is a good opportunity to reflect, and to work on books and research papers. We ask research group leaders to identify contributions that individuals in their group can make while working remotely.

We know that this is an extremely challenging time with significant uncertainties for our research community, and this guidance only begins to address the many questions that will arise in the coming days and weeks. We will make regular updates to relevant websites based on your questions and input and as the COVID-19 situation continues to evolve around us.

We would also like to acknowledge our research colleagues in the Big 10 Academic Alliance for their partnership in sharing guidance and best practices for the benefit of all of our universities.