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COVID-19 Research Guidelines Update

1 message

Office of VP for Research <research@maine.edu>

Wed, May 6, 2020 at 5:18 PM

Reply-To: Office of VP for Research <research@maine.edu>

To: UM-EMPLOYEES@lists.maine.edu

Dear University of Maine and University of Maine at Machias Colleagues,

I am writing to provide you an update in response to [Governor Mills' Stay Safer at Home Executive Order, plan to gradually restart Maine's economy \(PDF\)](#), the Chancellor's extension of the [work from home directive](#) through May 31st, and the [limiting of in-person events, group gatherings, summer camps, day camps or other such in-person activities on its campuses or under its auspices at non-university locations through June 30, 2020](#).

Our primary focus is the safety of faculty, staff, students and the public. As such, we continue to stress that most research and scholarly activity should continue to be conducted away from field sites and university facilities or delayed if possible. The COVID-19 Research Continuity Task Force is working to draft recommendations for a phased research ramp up which aligns with the Governor's plan and the various UMS/UMaine plans being developed to ramp up operations as safely and controlled as possible. During this time of transition, the definition of essential research and scholarly activity (that require working on campus or a field site) has been expanded effective immediately to include the following (the bullets in bold below are two new additional criteria):

- Research and scholarly activity that is critical to the health of the public
- Research and scholarly activity of national or state importance
- Research and scholarly activity that involves the protection of valuable resources such as cell lines, animal lines, instrumentation requiring regular attention, etc. which cannot be shut down and must be kept going at a basal level
- Research and scholarly activities that directly support current [Business and Operations designated as critical infrastructure](#) in the [Governor's initial mandate](#); *general university research and scholarly activities in those designated areas would not typically qualify as "essential"*.
- **Research and scholarly activity necessary to avoid prematurely stopping an experiment or research process in progress that would result in an irrecoverable loss.**
- **Research and scholarly activity necessary because experimentation or related activities for the coming year are tightly linked to seasonal phenology and even a short delay will result in long term impact.**

Essential research and scholarly activity conducted at a field site or on campus or a university facility should be conducted in accordance with guidance available on the [UMS Health Advisory](#) site. More specifically - these efforts, once approved, should be conducted with minimal numbers of personnel (less than 10) appropriately distanced and in staggered time schedules in a location, for the minimum amount of time necessary to complete the approved on-site work. All personnel **must** follow available [CDC guidance](#) and take basic preventative measures (which include proper mask usage, distancing procedures, disinfection, hand washing, etc.) to avoid exposure to or infection from coronavirus. Further, the [UMS Safety Management portal](#) (requires an [@maine.edu](#) log-in) has updated guidance and safety checklists for safely returning to work spaces.

Essential research and scholarly activity requests should continue to be submitted using the [request form](#) which has been in place since March 24th. Requests will be sent to the applicable College or Center and the Research Continuity Task force for the respective review and recommendation regarding approval. Requests approved by OVPRDGS will continue to be shared with Safety Management, Facilities Management, and University Police; you may be contacted by one or more of these offices if more information is needed.

As a reminder, COVID-19 Research Guidelines are available at the links below:

- [Research and Graduate School FAQs](#)
- [Graduate School Community Guidelines](#)
- [Office of Research Development Guidelines](#)

- [Office of Research Administration Guidelines](#)
- [Office of Research Compliance Guidelines](#)

The response to COVID-19 continues to be a rapidly evolving situation even at this stage of the pandemic and this guidance is subject to change. Please be sure to regularly review available Research Guidelines at the above links. Also, please continue to regularly check the UMS Information page (<https://www.maine.edu/health-advisory/>) and the UMaine Information page (<https://umaine.edu/coronavirus/>).

Thank-you for your patience during this time of uncertainty and for all that you do in service of our University, the State and beyond.

Best wishes and stay safe,
Kody Varahramyan

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