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COVID-19 Research Guidelines Update

1 message

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

Wed, Apr 8, 2020 at 4:35 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 let you know about an important change in procedure in response to [Governor Mills' Stay Healthy at Home Mandate](#). We continue to stress that research and scholarly activity should be conducted away from university facilities and field sites, or delayed if necessary. Given the Governor's mandate and the emphasis to be far more conservative in our activities to reduce the spread of COVID-19, *essential research and scholarly activity* (that require working on campus or a field site) are now limited to the following areas:

- 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 mandate; *general university research and scholarly activities in those designated areas would not typically qualify as "essential"*.

While "essential research and scholarly activity" is defined above, we would like to clarify that all research/scholarship conducted away from university facilities and field sites may continue without approval, including "essential research and scholarly activity". **We are requesting census information about research and scholarly activity being conducted away from university facilities and field sites via the same [form](#) with a subset of information and no approval needed.** We wish to encourage researchers and scholars working in areas not considered "essential" to continue their work under the new conditions we all now face. **Also, please note, students would report through their advisors.**

Further, effective today, essential research and scholarly activity which involves activity on the University of Maine's Orono or Machias campuses, its other facilities in the state, and/or in the field, is transitioning from a *notification* to an *approval* process. The [request form](#) requires a justification for why the activity cannot be delayed, why it is essential research as defined above, information regarding the associated research personnel (including students) and the steps that will be taken to ensure the safety of participants during the COVID-19 pandemic.

New requests will be forwarded to the appropriate college dean or center director who will review the activity to both determine essentiality and ensure that established unit-specific safety protocols are followed. If approved by the college/center, the OVRDGS will review the request and make a final determination which will be communicated to the individual with a copy to the applicable college/center.

Please note: Specific guidance for field research is being developed to position us to review

additional activities when restrictions are loosened and provide advance information to faculty and staff developing research contingency plans. This guidance will be released in the near future. In the interim, faculty and staff are encouraged to defer all non-essential field research through at least May 17th. We encourage faculty and staff to discuss your research plans with your college or center leadership.

During this time of minimal on-site presence, university buildings are locked at all times. Researchers approved to conduct essential research activity can use their MaineCard or key(s) to access buildings for which they are allowed access. Should you need assistance, please call UMaine PD (207-581-4040). This is a good time also to update signage on doors of labs and facilities with primary and secondary emergency contact information if you haven't already done so.

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

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

The University will continue to monitor this rapidly evolving situation and regularly update the Research Guidelines provided through 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/>).

We understand that this temporary pause or slowing down of certain aspects of research activities will be disruptive to the research and scholarly activities of you, your students, and your research team. But please be assured that all the units associated with my office are operational and will do everything possible to support you.

Best Wishes,
Kody Varahramyan

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