**Research Community Letter**

Date December 16, 2020

FROM: Jessi L. Smith, AVC-Research

TO: UCCS Faculty

This fall semester was and is full of difficult challenges. The pandemic is tightening its grip on our community and we must redouble our efforts to flatten the curve. As part of our mitigation strategies, UCCS moved to primarily remote learning after Thanksgiving, which extends into the early parts of spring semester.

I am sure you have questions about what this means for your research agenda. Know that our top priority is your mental and physical health. This is why part of our goal is to help you continue to meet the research and teaching mission of our university while alleviating as many stressors as we can. I hope the below information will provide structure in what is otherwise an unknowable and anxiety-producing situation. Please take care of yourself and your loved ones.

**Important Dates**

* Primarily Remote Learning: November 27, 2020 to December 23, 2020
* Winter Break Closure: December 24, 2020 – Friday, January 1, 2021
* Primarily Remote Learning: January 2, 2021 to February 22, 2021

Below, please find information related to research and creative works as they stand right now for our move to mostly remote instruction and the winter break closure; knowing we need to stay ready, flexible, and motivated to adjust our expectations and processes as the public health crisis requires. Remote learning applies only to most of our campus classroom activities; research activity should look very similar to how it looks today.

**What can you expect for your research during remote learning?**

**Essential research continues**

* All research and creative activities are considered essential and can continue.
* Faculty are encouraged to **facilitate remote research opportunities** for themselves and their students where possible, for example, literature searches, data coding and analyses, transcriptions, and online studies.
* Faculty mentors should **revisit their safety guidelines** they set at the start of Fall Semester 2020 and update them as necessary. Faculty must continue to limit the number of people in their research spaces to ensure social-distancing; use face-coverings; [take the daily self-health check](https://healthcheck.uccs.edu/); clean shared spaces, etc. Consider using a staggered schedule for your research team members.
* Campus buildings **remain open** during normal business hours (for most buildings this is 8:00 am to 5:00 pm). The temperature will remain at normal settings.
* Faculty researchers have **full access** to their offices, studios, and lab spaces during normal business hours. After hours will require a key or card access or an appointment with campus police to open the doors. Campus police can be reached at 719-255-3111
* Graduate student researchers will have full access to campus during normal business hours, follow all safety protocols. However, consider ways to minimize their time on campus where possible.
* Undergraduate student researchers will have full access to campus during normal business hours, follow all safety protocols. However, consider ways to minimize their time on campus where possible.
* We ask that when possible, you arrange TEAM meetings, phone calls, or other means of remote communication to sustain student mentoring.
* Thesis and dissertation defenses can be handled remotely as needed and all submissions to Graduate School and the Library can be handled virtually.
* Travel (e.g., to field sites or conferences) using university-sponsored funding is generally unallowable.

**Access to research support**

* At this time, the plan is for the **Kraemer Family Library** to remain open, though with limited capacity. Their posted hours of operation [are here](https://uccs.edu/library/info/hours). Prospector is unavailable. However other interlibrary loan processes are currently operating. Access to databases, journals, archives, and software are generally available off-campus via the Kraemer Family Library website. Be prepared to show your UCCS ID to gain entry.
* The [Institutional Review Board (IRB)](https://osp.uccs.edu/research-compliance/research-involving-human-subject-irb) will continue to review protocols for human subjects research. At this time, in-person research projects **may continue** or begin if approved through our current process. The documents and instructions for that process can be found here: <https://osp.uccs.edu/covid19-resume-research>. However, as state and county conditions change, this may change. We highly encourage all researchers to utilize remote methods to the extent possible in order to minimize disruption to your projects.
* The Office of Sponsored Programs and Research Integrity (OSPRI) staff will continue to work remotely to submit proposals, accept awards, issue subawards, submit extensions, submit annual reports, and perform other sponsored program activities as usual.
* If useful, OIT can assist you in setting up a VPN for remote access to lab or office computers, and help you consider cloud computing options.
* Research support staff may require more time to accomplish their tasks. Please be patient and compassionate as they adjust to changing work demands.

**What can you expect for your research during Winter Break Closure?**

**(December 24, 2020 to January 1, 2021)**

* Everyone is encouraged to stay home and take a much-deserved break.
* The Cybersecurity, Hybl Center, and Lane Center buildings will remain open due to existing business partnerships.
* All other campus buildings will be locked. If you must come in, you will need a building key or card access.
* The Kramer Family Library will be closed.
* Temperatures will be set at 62 degrees. If you have research or an archive that requires a different temperature, please contact Kent Marsh at kmarsh2@uccs.edu
* Power will remain on, though we encourage people to reduce energy consumption where possible.
* Most sidewalks and parking lots will not be plowed.
* If your lab or studio contains chemical or physical hazards be sure that they are secured and/or disabled. For specific questions or assistance, please email Cynthia Norton at cnorton@uccs.edu.

**Steps to take now to prepare your research activities for remote learning and winter closure:**

* Assess and prioritize your critical research and creative activities for the remainder of Fall, winter break, and the first part of spring semester. Wind down projects as much as possible.
* Identify research and creative activities you can accomplish remotely (e.g., writing, reading, data analyses, manuscript or grant submissions).
* Set up clear and regular communication with your research teams. Convey to your students, research personnel, and team members that they can opt-out of coming to campus if they no longer feel safe.
* Ensure you have access to contact information for your research team.
* Cross-train research staff to fill in for others who may be out sick.
* Review social distancing plans, contingency plans, and cleaning procedures with your research team.
* Gather books, files, thumb drives, and documents that you require for working remotely. Keep in mind that only in rare cases can data be moved off-campus. Export control, IRB, and other compliance regulations must be followed. Contact Mike Sanderson msander3@uccs.edu for guidance.

**Social distance does not mean disconnected**

The Office of Research is here to support you, offer advice, research the answer to your questions, and do our best to keep some resemblance of business as usual during this public health crisis. Stay connected via our:

* UCCS Research Listserv
* UCCS\_OOR Instagram page
* Email OOR@uccs.edu

Office of Research Website: <https://research.uccs.edu/>

**Informational Resources:**

* [Campus information on COVID-19](https://covid19.uccs.edu/)
* [UCCS status board](https://statusboard.uccs.edu/)
* [UCCS Resources for Mental Health and Wellbeing](http://view.communications.cu.edu/?qs=f90d21b00fd00848fd26ad5fa8cf0673a84a1e99f8de12aca7a1dab667e5d4746955c2bc3285ae9d658994819addf4daa360da772387731ca4b9ff8f8e7994dc4c3bb5400c0fa4132fea067338740945)
* [CU System information on COVID-19](https://www.cu.edu/coronavirus)
* [State of Colorado information on COVID-19](https://covid19.colorado.gov/)