DATE: March 16, 2020

FROM: Jessi L. Smith, AVC-Research

TO: UCCS Research Community

*Revised*: As part of our response plan to the spread of COVID-19, we are taking great care to ensure that we consider the possible impacts on academic research. The health of our UCCS community is most important and your patience and flexibility are deeply appreciated. Our goal is to reduce the risk to students, faculty, and staff by minimizing exposure through social distancing and remote work, actions that we hope will “[flatten the virus curve](https://theconversation.com/coronavirus-control-measures-arent-pointless-just-slowing-down-the-pandemic-could-save-millions-of-lives-133468).” With the ongoing concern for the spread of the disease, researchers should anticipate interruptions to normal activities and develop plans for the different scenarios to ensure the continuity of research. **Starting immediately, there is very limited access to campus.**

**Research Continues:**

* Research should be conducted remotely starting immediately.
* Access to databases, journals, archives, and software are generally available off-campus via the Kraemer Family Library. The library will be open, but with limited hours of operation. Be prepared to show your UCCS ID to gain entry.
* If you have an IRB approved protocol, you may need to take extra precautions for in-person study visits or modify your protocol to accommodate remote working practices. Emergency changes to protocols that ensure the health of your participants or your research team can be made immediately as long as no new risks are introduced; report the changes to irb@uccs.edu as soon as possible.
* Yes, you may continue to pay your student and staff employees working on research projects remotely. Follow HR rules and complete [paperwork for remote work](https://www.uccs.edu/hr/covid-19-hr-guidance). If you have a sponsored program and have questions about paying your grant-funded students or staff, you can contact Lin Kaplan jkaplan2@uccs.edu.
* ***Now – April 13*** *(at least):* access to research facilities will be limited to those spaces identified during our 2019 winter closure. We know that there are a few research labs on campus that require regular access to maintain critical research functions. That said, our main objective is to minimize access and limit how many spaces require regular deep cleaning. If you are unsure if you were on the winter closure approval list, you can confirm your approval with me, AVC Jessi Smith.We ask that only the primary investigator, or their voluntary designee, access the facility. **If you did not get research access approval for winter closure, you can request it now by contacting me by end of day on March 18, 2020**. **Only critical access will be approved.**

**Sponsored Programs Continues:**

Our OSPRI staff will continue to submit proposals, accept awards, issue subawards, submit extensions, submit annual reports, and perform other sponsored program activities as usual. Know that our OSPRI staff will also be working remotely. The Council on Governmental Relations is maintaining an up-to-date list of [agency responses to COVID-19 here](https://www.cogr.edu/institutional-and-agency-responses-covid-19-and-additional-resources) including information on late applications, paying staff, and guidance on major facilities. For a list of frequently asked questions and answers related to sponsored program administration and financial impacts, [please see the Controller’s Office Sponsored Projects FAQ](https://www.uccs.edu/rmd/covid19-financial-impacts).

For general post-award questions, you should contact your research administrator. You may also contact the campus post-award specialist **Lin Kaplan** at jkaplan2@uccs.edu who can help direct you to the right person, help research answers, and serve as a resource.

**Graduate Research Continues:**

Graduate students on path to graduate this spring will require utmost flexibility to successfully complete their thesis/dissertations/capstone/comprehensive exams.

* We ask that you arrange video conference calls, phone calls, or other means of communication to sustain graduate student mentoring.
* Student defenses can be handled by electronic means (use conferencing tools such as Zoom, WebEx, Microsoft Teams, Collaborations within CANVAS). You can consider changing strategy to using a written format for defenses (e.g., have faculty submit questions and students provide a written response; students video-record their defense and send to committee members for evaluation if an oral component is important). Defense committees with external members should allow for electronic participation.
* The most difficult phase to handle is during key data collection phase. Students who need access to human participants on or off campus, or who need access to lab equipment, animals or materials may need special consideration for completing this phase.
* The Graduate School [has adjusted deadlines](https://www.uccs.edu/graduateschool/current-students/graduating-this-semester) and requirements for enrollment during semester of defense *if* the student is enrolled this spring semester, but campus disruptions result in a delay in finishing. The Graduate School will work with programs and the Registrar office for possible accommodations.

**Steps to take now:**

* Gather books, files, thumb drives, and documents that you require for working remotely.
* Identify procedures and processes that require regular personnel attention (e.g. cell culture maintenance, animal studies).
* Assess and prioritize critical research activities.
* Identify any research activities that can be potentially ramped down, curtailed, or delayed.
* Identify research activities that you can accomplish remotely (e.g., writing, data analyses, manuscript or grant submissions).
* Ensure that you have access to contact information for your research team.
* Cross-train critical research staff to fill in for others who may be out sick.
* Review contingency plans and emergency procedures with researchers and staff.

**Bookmark the UCCS COVID-19 webpage for up-to-date details at** [**https://covid19.uccs.edu/**](https://covid19.uccs.edu/)

Questions? Feel free to email me at jsmith20@uccs.edu

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