CONTINGENCY PLANNING GUIDANCE FOR RESEARCH OPERATIONS

(March 20, 2020)

The contingency planning guidance below was established to assist researchers in developing a proactive plan for conducting research and creative activities. It is important that all researchers prepare for the possibility that all but the most essential research and creative activities are curtailed. Please work with your department chairs, research center directors, and associate deans for research to make appropriate decisions.

1. Getting Started
   a. Update your research group or lab member contact list (e.g., name, title; location, office phone, email; and cell phone number). Share the list with each research group member and with your supervisor and/or department chair as well as the building manager (if applicable). Keep electronic and hard copies of the list handy.
   b. Make sure that there are additional backups for emergency contact information for your laboratory.
   c. If personnel are teleworking, please ensure that your University phone calls are forwarded automatically to appropriate alternative phone numbers.

2. Planning for Disrupted Research Operations. In considering potential disruptions of research activities, keep the following aspects in mind.
   a. Critical Personnel
      i. Who are the key people (staff, students, faculty) whose positions or knowledge deem them critical to operations if your research is disrupted or curtailed? Resist the temptation to identify all lab staff as critical. The staff you identify should be those you would call upon first in time of crisis; who have the experience, skills, or authority to perform critical essential tasks and/or make important decisions?
      ii. Who are the most important relevant people from elsewhere on campus that need to be kept abreast of disruption and/or curtailment? (e.g., department chairs, research center directors, associate deans for research, and for research center directors, Office of Research & Scholarship staff)?
      iii. Do all critical personnel have access to enter the buildings and laboratories if needed in the case of a curtailment of university activities?
      iv. Who are the key internal and external partners, vendors and core facilities that your staff rely on? Who are the other stakeholders that your staff may need to contact during and after the pandemic period, for example project partners, collaborators at other universities, donors, or sponsors?
   b. Vital Tasks
      i. Which tasks absolutely need to be performed in-person by essential personnel, to sustain only the most important essential functions?
ii. Which unique specimens, research materials, and projects are important and also require staff maintenance?
iii. What task modifications may be necessary under pandemic conditions? Consider possible health, safety, and security aspects.
iv. How can the time needed to complete vital lab tasks be minimized?

c. **Vital Equipment**
i. Which equipment are vital to maintaining the essential functions of your lab?
   Examples: NMR/MRI/other magnets requiring cryogens; GC/MS, PET, EM, irradiators; Glove Boxes; Solvent Purification Systems; Incubators; Refrigerators/Freezers; -80 Freezer(s); other?
ii. At what frequency (daily, weekly) does in-person operation, maintenance, and troubleshooting need to occur?
iii. What mitigation activities could protect vital equipment and extend the time between required maintenance tasks?
iv. What emergency equipment is accessible and workable (e.g., defibrillators)?

d. **Vital Research Material**
i. Of the supplies needed to conduct your research, which are vital to your operations?
ii. What would you do if timely delivery of supplies is interrupted? What duration of interruption would cause irreparable damage to your research?
iii. Which personal protective equipment (PPE) is required for essential functions?
iv. Which PPE may be subject to shortages (e.g., gloves) in the current pandemic?
v. What is the best approach to conserving limited supplies while adequately protecting staff?
vi. Do labs need to have duplicate samples of novel compounds, specimens, etc. to continue research? Examples include samples and specimens (live, fresh, frozen, and fixed); novel compounds and biochemicals; type specimens; cell lines; seeds; plants; animals; specialized reagents and chemicals; other.

e. **Communication and Collaboration**
i. How will your staff communicate with each other and provide regular updates while teleworking? Do staff have the necessary equipment, knowledge, and skills to work remotely? Are documents and reference materials available to facilitate remote collaboration?
ii. Which special IT security and privacy requirements or licenses to specific software need consideration?
iii. How can reliance on key people be mitigated temporarily during the pandemic? (e.g., cross-training, written instructions or notes)
iv. What should be communicated when and to whom about the potential for and impacts of disruption?
v. Consider contacting research partners and sponsors that may not have specific guidance for interruptions (e.g., industry) regarding project plans and timelines.