



Recent Updates – March 19, 2020

[Human Subject Research Pause](#)
[Research Involving Animals](#)

The University of Toledo is committed to facilitating and protecting your research, but safety is our top priority. As the COVID-19 outbreak expands and the impact evolves, the Office of Research & Sponsored Programs (ORSP) is working closely with the UToledo leadership team, other universities, and government agencies to identify best practices and establish guidance specific to research operations. This guidance is intended to help the campus research community limit the impact and potential risk associated with the growing COVID-19 pandemic.

Laboratories and research facilities must begin to plan for significant disruptions to routine operations. Your plans should identify critical activities and associated essential research personnel for those functions. Essential personnel should be limited to one to two individuals, with exceptions clearly justified. The guidance below and updates accessible from [ORSP](#) website for [Mitigating impacts of COVID-19](#) are provided to help assist you in this process.

We are facing an unprecedented challenge and must all do our part to “flatten the curve” to protect our community and to lessen predictable pressures on our public health infrastructure. **We should work to reduce the number of researchers on campus.** While we recognize the challenges, we must shift work habits to significantly reduce the number of physical interactions on our campus.

Please establish a system by which lab members can and will check the status of each other. We must look after not only our physical health, but also consider the mental health impact that current events can have on our research community.

We ask research group leaders to identify contributions that individuals in their group can make while working remotely. To the extent possible, you, your students and other lab personnel should devote time to productive alternatives such as writing grant proposals, reviewing articles and papers, writing thesis chapters, conducting analyses, compiling data and/or synthesizing important research. This is a good opportunity to reflect and to work on books and research papers.

Research Continuity Planning Guidance Topics (Last Updated 19 March)

- [What actions can I take right now?](#)
- [What are examples of essential or critical functions?](#)
- [What can I plan to take out of my lab or office?](#)
- [How can we prepare for a potential shortage of crucial supplies or vendor disruption?](#)
- [My work involves core facilities or shared usage space. What should I do?](#)
- [Will ORSP still be submitting and accepting proposals?](#)
- [What should I do about Human-subject research?](#)



- [How will animal care proceed?](#)
- [-back to top-](#)

The latest guidance and information will always be available at the [UToledo Coronavirus website](#) and the [Office of Research](#) site.

What actions can I take right now?

- Update your research group or lab member contact list (e.g., name, title; UC location, office phone, email and cell phone number). Share the list with each lab member and with your supervisor and/or department. Keep both hard copies as well as electronic versions of the list.
- If your research requires [essential functions](#) that must be supported on campus during a disruption, please identify key lab members, personal protective equipment, and equipment needed to perform these functions. As a PI, you should provide this information to your supervisor and/or department chair. Supervisors and department chairs should notify the College Dean.
- If required on-campus functions depend on vendor supplies for ensuring research facility or lab safety (e.g. liquid nitrogen), please plan ahead appropriately to meet this need.*
- Ensure that standard operating procedures and Materials Safety Data Sheets are available in a visible location and all safety procedures are being followed. Dispose of hazardous waste in a timely fashion, especially if working with time-sensitive materials (e.g., peroxide formers).
- Ensure you and your research team have remote access to files, data and software systems, while maintaining data control assurances.
- Develop plans for backing up data on One-drive if you are working remotely or plan to work remotely.
- Continue to follow compliance guidelines for each project protocol. Be sure to submit modifications to the appropriate protocol review committee prior to making changes in protocols.
- Test and practice remote working arrangements.
- Be strategic about how you plan and conduct your research at this time. Prepare to ramp down to essential/critical functions on short notice (24 hours or less). Depending upon the nature of your research, you might consider:
 - Advancing work in progress to the point that it could be paused with short notice if necessary;
 - Identifying the work that has the highest future potential; and
 - Considering the relationship of projects to graduate student theses and post-doctoral training objectives in prioritizing continued research activities.
- REMEMBER to preserve whatever samples that you can now.

You may wish to put off work amenable to remote support, such as data analysis, planning, and writing, by stockpiling results and data now that could be analyzed remotely in the future. If you



are carrying out a long-term experiment and if it is feasible to freeze or store samples at specific steps, consider doing this more often.

*UToledo has contracts with a number of vendors (e.g., Fisher Scientific) who have specific commitments to supply our research enterprise. If you encounter delays from those vendors, please contact Purchasing.

[-back to top-](#)

What are examples of essential or critical functions?

Essential or critical functions are procedures, processes, or equipment management that requires regular attention or longitudinal studies that will incur irreparable harm if closed on short notice. Examples include liquid nitrogen tank filling; maintenance of other equipment that requires gas or cryogen monitoring/service, including deep-storage freezers, electron microscopes, mass spectrometers and incubators; animal care, including invertebrates and vertebrates; activities which ensure continued viability of critical samples; maintenance of shared computational equipment; core instrumentation and animal care facilities.

What can I plan to take out of my lab or office?

Researchers should carefully evaluate whether on-campus research functions can be conducted off-campus. Many restrictions apply that are enforced by Federal, State and UToledo regulations, including export control, policies and guidelines.

- Your Associate Dean for Research is a valuable resource in determining appropriate approaches to remote research operations.
- Specific questions on export control* contact Gary.Rafe@UToledo.edu

All laboratory research must continue within the confines of the appropriate research space. In evaluating your options for remote work, please note the following:

- Researchers are not allowed to set up an off-campus laboratory site.
- Under no circumstances is it appropriate to remove animals or other materials from UToledo-approved housing or research spaces.
- Researchers may arrange with their PI or lab manager to take copies notebooks, data storage devices, or laptop computers for remote work. * **No other materials, equipment or laboratory supplies are allowed offsite.**

**Transfer and/or transport of Controlled Unclassified Information (CUI) or other data that requires a controlled environment requires prior approval from the Export Control Officer (Gary Rafe) and must be in accordance with UToledo Data Security Policies.*

[-back to top-](#)

How can we prepare for a potential shortage of crucial supplies or vendor disruption?

- Assess which supplies or services are truly critical.

- Please follow your vendors guidance on information regarding the potential for disruption. Identify alternative sources.
- For supplies or services that would be needed even in the event research would be interrupted, work with your research group, department and/or building manager to plan appropriately ahead of time to meet this need.

*Contact Purchasing

[-back to top-](#)

My work involves core facilities or shared usage space. What should I do?

All researchers should immediately observe the 6' social distancing guidance in any shared usage space. Proper personal hygiene is critical to mitigating the spread of the disease.

- This can be accomplished by instituting a practice of cleaning shared equipment and space before and after individual use.
- If planning to submit samples to a core or shared facility do not take samples without first contacting the Core Manager/Director to confirm they are operating and able to accept samples. If they are operating, provide experimental and sample details remotely (email, telephone) and arrange to drop off the samples to the lab in a designated area to minimize any personal contact.
 - The Histology Core facility on the Health Science Campus is no longer accepting samples until further notice.
- Upon receipt of samples, core personnel should wipe down the samples with a suitable disinfection prior to further sample processing.

As a core director/manager what are some specific thing I can do now to mitigate the impact if the situation escalates?

- Prepare and share the designated point of contact for each core laboratory and at least one backup with your college's Dean or Associate Dean for Research. Please indicate who needs critical access to the laboratory. This will initially be to maintain a minimal level of research continuity and secondly if a further escalation requires the cores to be shuttered. This latter category might include designated personnel for maintaining critical equipment that cannot be readily shut down (e.g. system that require cryogen fills). This would also be a good time verify that your emergency contact placard posted for your lab space is current.
- Be prepared with a process to shut down or "park" core equipment in a state that can be safely maintained for a period up to 6-8 weeks, if needed.
- Delay the initiation of any longitudinal study that will require time-dependent core activities or analyses be completed over the next 6-8 weeks. This is particularly relevant for animal studies.

- For existing longitudinal studies, communicate with the customer/collaborator to determine if the project can be truncated to a useful point earlier in the study or if it needs to go to completion. Every attempt will be made to complete the study if the conditions allow.
- Secure any chemical or hazardous materials in the appropriate longer-term storage areas rather than the active use areas (e.g. flammables in flame cabinets instead of out in the fume hoods).
- Verify your offsite connectivity to IT resources that may be needed for remote working opportunities.
- Consider adjusting workflows to maximize those activities that need to be done on site (e.g. data collection) for the short term, with those activities that can be done remotely (e.g. data processing, report generation), being reserved for when remote activities may be the only option.

[-back to top-](#)

Will ORSP still be submitting proposals and accepting awards?

The Office of Research & Sponsored Research Programs is providing support for proposal submissions and award negotiations. PI's should continue to monitor funder websites for updates on proposal submission deadlines or changes due to COVID-19. The [ORSP website](#) will continue to list updated guidance from our major federal funders.

ORSP staff will continue to be available during normal operating hours, although they may be working remotely.

PI's conducting sponsored research should inform their appropriate Program Officer of any changes in research plans or progress as a result of COVID-19 impacts to UC.

[-back to top-](#)

What should I do about human-subject research?

In an effort to minimize the risk of contracting or spreading COVID-19 in human participant research interactions, the university is [placing temporary restrictions on human subjects research](#) through May 1. We will continue to reevaluate this timeframe

[-back to top-](#)



How will animal care proceed?

March 19th – [Animal Research Notification](#)

During the COVID-19 emergency, the University has placed restriction on animal studies.

Every PI working with research animals should create a plan to manage animal experiments and ongoing care in case of decreased lab staffing or shortage of supplies. Every PI should create an emergency contact list and share that with the Attending Veterinarian lisa.root@utoledo.edu and DLAR Associate Director scott.bechaz@utoledo.edu :

Other considerations:

- Research labs should prioritize ongoing essential research
- No acquisition of new animal subjects until further notice
- Reduce rodent breeding to only numbers required to maintain lines
- Minimize waste of feed and bedding supplies whenever possible
- If the University should limit access to essential personnel only, DLAR will conduct all weanings of critical strains for researchers free of charge. This free service will only be instituted if the university limited access to essential personnel and only during that timeframe.
 - DLAR is offering this to limit the potential exposure of DLAR staff to someone that may have COVID-19.

The Department of Laboratory Animal Resources (DLAR) has continuity plans in place to provide routine care (food, water, sanitation, health checks) and routine veterinary care. DLAR is stocked with essential items for animal care. Animal caretakers and Veterinarians are considered essential personnel and will continue to report to work unless they become infected with the COVID-19. The IACUC office is operating and IACUC meetings are continuing as scheduled using remote networking tools. If changes occur, the ORSP website will be updated accordingly.

If you manage your own animals or conduct your work at an outlying facility your group should have contingency plans in place for who will provide daily animal checks and what to do if this person is unable to perform them. If help is needed providing care due to illness of all caretakers and PIs, the Attending Veterinarian should be contacted to arrange for emergency backup animal care.

[-back to top-](#)