

## **COM Final COVID-19 Research Contingency Plan**

Advanced planning will allow everyone involved in College of Medicine research activities to focus on their own efforts and work together as a team. Given the urgency of the Covid-19 situation, the steps below should be taken now to prepare for possible research restrictions, including a complete cessation, should they be required in the future.

### **Checklist:**

1. Identify essential personnel and ensure they know what to do in the event of suspended operations
2. Remind lab personnel of your communication plan or create one if not in place
3. Identify priorities in case of restricted access
4. Ensure remote access to files, data, servers, etc.
5. Prioritize experiments
6. Plan for remote proposal submission
7. Check travel restrictions before making travel plans

### **Essential Personnel**

In each unit, essential personnel should be already identified or newly designated. In this scenario, essential personnel are defined as paid employees and/or paid graduate students who perform a critical research function. Volunteers and undergraduate students are not considered essential personnel. To minimize community interactions, we ask that each lab identify a few key individuals, in discussion with the department chair, to manage issues such as animal husbandry or essential experiments—those that if discontinued would generate significant financial and data loss. To meet the requirement for social distancing, essential personnel need to maintain a 6-ft radius, including the potential to stagger essential personnel shifts (e.g. work different times of the day) as necessary. Should the university close down, essential personnel must have their FAU designation letter with them to be allowed on campus.

### **Communication Plan**

If a communications plan (e.g. phone tree) for your research group is not already in place, designate points of contact so everyone receives timely information.

### **Plan for researcher time**

Principal investigators and research group leads should discuss approaches now in the event that some personnel are unable to come to work. Such advanced planning will minimize disruption to research activities. Research teams should cross-train on essential tasks and roles, and have backup plans for absences and for the possibility of the majority of personnel needing to be off campus, including a plan for essential personnel only, should that become required.

### **Remote access**

All students, post-docs, staff, and faculty involved in research projects should ensure that they have access to information they need to carry out work remotely. This might include, for example, access to literature, access to existing datasets and research-related files, and access to meeting software (such as Zoom or Webex). Group/team/lab meetings should be held remotely. If you are unsure about whether you have access to such tools, it is wise to test them now.

### **Remote Work Activities**

During this period, researchers are urged to devote time to productive alternatives, such as writing grant proposals, reviewing articles and papers, writing thesis chapters, and conducting data analyses. Students may conduct an in-depth review of background literature to compensate for missing time in the lab.

Faculty, staff and students may also use the time outside of the lab to complete required CITI or EHS trainings that may be expiring and/or participate in professional development webinars. It is the responsibility of each faculty member to assign and track remote work activities for their personnel and encourage consideration of both flexibility and accountability in doing so. Faculty are required to have a written plan in place for remote workers and a process for tracking daily activities (e.g. staff email each morning what they plan to work on for the day, email at the end of each day what they completed).

### **Samples/Animal Research**

As applicable, researchers should send their list of VIP mice to Dr. Sylvia Gografe in the FAU Comparative Medicine Core Facility. As funds permit, researchers should strongly consider cryo-preserving their mouse lines through Jackson Laboratories. In the event of a university wide closure, please refer to and follow the guidelines outlined in the COM Hurricane Policy, including drastically scaling back number of animals to be maintained.

### **Proposal Submissions and Deadlines**

The FAU Division of Research Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP) will keep the colleges informed as to any changes related to grant submission deadlines and operations. At this time, we expect that OSP will be able to submit proposals, even if personnel are working remotely. Our experience is that federal agencies are flexible about deadlines under difficult circumstances beyond our control and we will monitor updates from agencies.

### **Travel**

Visit the CDC webpage for the latest information regarding travel restrictions and health notices <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>. In addition, visit the FAU webpage <http://www.fau.edu/coronavirus/> that applies to the entire FAU community, including those traveling on grant or contract funds.

### **Social Distancing**

Currently recommended social spacing is six feet (2 meters) radius around each person. Other recommended health practices include: staying home if sick, no shaking hands, keeping a 6 foot distance from others if possible, washing hands frequently for at least 20 seconds and use hand cleanser with >60% alcohol, not touching eyes, mouth, or nose. Although cleaning efforts have been ramped up throughout the university, we encourage all researchers to do extra cleaning in their labs and offices.