

March 13, 2020

MEMORANDUM

FROM: Gabriel P. López, Vice President for Research

TO: The UNM Research Community

RE: COVID-19 Preparedness

With the arrival of COVID-19 in the United States and New Mexico, the UNM Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR) asks all Associate Deans for Research, Research Center Directors, and faculty engaged in research to develop (or update existing) guidelines and contingency plans for their research labs, teams, students, and operations. President Stokes has announced a period of limited operations during which regular face-to-face classes will not take place – currently through April 5, 2020. This does not mean the campus is closed to all research. To prepare for potential work slowdowns or shutdowns both due to COVID-19 as well as more generally, UNM is working to ensure that all critical research facilities are appropriately prepared and that documentation on these preparations is appropriately accessible.

In particular, faculty engaged in research should plan for a possible shortage of personnel physically in the lab and/or a shortage or delay of supplies, as well as the potential for campus closures. Support from UNM Facilities Management and Safety and Risk Services could also be delayed during an outbreak of COVID-19 on UNM campus. These disruptions have the potential to last two weeks or more.

UNM facilities are already documented and managed, but in the interest of completeness and thoroughness, we ask that you:

1. Identify any research equipment or facilities you manage or oversee that will require ongoing, regular maintenance.
2. Double-check that the appropriate contingency plans for the maintenance or shutdown of any such systems as necessary are up-to-date, documented, and, when required, filed with the appropriate University support units (e.g. Safety and Risk Services).
3. Communicate to the cognizant Associate Dean for Research or Level 3 Center Director (1) the relevant facility or system, (2) that you have verified that the operational contingency plans for the relevant system or facility are up-to-date, and (3) when relevant, provide a reference to the written documentation of this plan.

In addition, investigators working with human participants should consider whether protocols should be revised to limit personal contact. Whether and when this may be appropriate will vary depending on the protocol and subjects with whom you are working. We encourage you to work the Office of the IRB for additional guidance.

Planning and implementation of procedures should follow Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)-recommended guidelines to minimize the spread of infection. These include:

1. Social distancing: Personnel working in a lab should maintain a distance of 6 ft between each other. Team meetings or conferences should take place virtually when possible.
2. Quarantine: Consider what your lab might need to remain safe and operational without a physical presence should one or more of your team become sick.
3. Point of Contact (POC): Designate a point of contact to relay communications to the OVPR regarding closures, outages, illness, or other urgent matters. Name a backup POC in the event your usual POC is not available.

As directed by President Stokes, all university-related domestic and international travel is not permitted due to the high risk of community spread of the virus.

For researchers conducting externally-sponsored research, contact your Program Officer for answers to any questions that are specific to your work.

We ask that above all, you continue to prioritize the health and safety of yourself, your team members, your lab, and the entire UNM community. For updated information on current UNM guidelines and procedures, visit the [UNM COVID-19 website](#). For information about COVID-19 in New Mexico and beyond, visit the websites for the [New Mexico Department of Health](#), and the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#).

Thank you for your vigilance and attention to this challenge.