

To: UCSC PIs, Research

From: Scott Brandt, Vice Chancellor for Research

Subject: Funding researchers during the temporary cessation of non-essential on-campus research

I am writing to clarify UC policy and make some recommendations regarding paying research staff during the temporary cessation of on-campus research due to COVID-19.

I want to acknowledge that this temporary cessation of on-campus research is extraordinarily disruptive. Please know that we have not made this decision lightly and will do everything in our power to find ways to relax and eventually reverse the restrictions as soon as possible. In the meantime, it is critical that we continue supporting our postdocs, grad students, and research staff. To that end, please note the following:

1. *Funding agencies are keenly aware of the impacts that COVID-19 is having on researchers' ability to perform their planned research; they are delaying deadlines for proposals and reports and adjusting their expectations about what researchers will be able to do during this unprecedented period of disruption.*
2. *PIs are always able to pay their postdocs, students, and research staff to do productive work related to their projects, even if it is not what was planned or expected.*

We encourage you to be creative in finding ways to keep your research staff productively engaged during this time. While it may not be possible to do the planned research, there are many other useful tasks that they may be assigned to work on, including:

- a. Performing non-lab research tasks, such as analysis of data
 - b. Writing manuscripts
 - c. Writing invention disclosures
 - d. Reading papers and writing literature surveys
 - e. Learning new things related to research -- programming, etc.
 - f. Updating lab standard operating procedures
 - g. Updating websites
 - h. Other related tasks
3. *UC and Federal funding agencies have made provisions to ensure that idled researchers will continue to be paid.*

It is our expectation that most research staff will be able to continue performing and being paid for research-related tasks as outlined above, but we recognize that in some cases it is simply not possible.

- a. As most of you know, [UC has granted all staff 128 hours of paid administrative leave](#), to be used when they cannot otherwise perform their assigned duties due to a number of conditions related to COVID-19.
- b. With the release of the Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) [Memorandum M-20-17](#), federal sponsors have begun implementing varying degrees of flexibilities in grants management due to the impact of COVID-19. [NSF](#) and [NIH](#) are currently allowing salaries, benefits and stipends to be charged on active awards, however, recipients must not assume that supplemental funding will be available should the charging of such costs or other fees result in a shortage of funds to eventually carry out the project.

Per UCOP guidance, fund sources in place at the time that the leave is taken should be charged for Paid Administrative Leave unless directed otherwise. "Unless directed otherwise" includes fund sources that do not allow leave to be charged to the grant/fellowship. For details, see the attached memo from UC Interim Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer Paul Jenny.

As with everything COVID-19 related, guidance is fluid and rapidly changing. Our APO office has two websites that are being regularly updated to reflect guidance as it evolves,

- <https://apo.ucsc.edu/covid-19/covid-leave/index.html>
- <https://apo.ucsc.edu/covid-19/index.html>

The Council on Governmental Relations (COGR) has comprehensive up-to-date [agency-specific guidance](#) to federal sponsors' administrative and financial flexibilities currently in place.

Please contact your Research Accountant or the Office of Sponsored Projects for questions regarding grants management. Questions related to paid administrative leave should be directed to the Academic Personnel Office or Staff Human Resources.

There is currently no uniform guidance on funds from State agencies. UCOP State Government Relations is on it and is optimistic about getting a statewide solution. In the meantime, we may have to reach out to individual agencies and program managers as needed. Similarly, where there are contracts or grants with corporations or other private entities, provisions to pay idled researchers may need to be negotiated on a case by case basis.

4. *Everyone involved understands that these policies may mean not completing all planned work.*

Paying idle researchers and paying researchers to do something other than what was planned may mean that not all of the work planned for a particular project will get done, or it may get done later than planned. Everyone involved understands that—from our research staff all the way up to our Federal politicians--and everyone is aware that it is a problem that will need to be addressed. Our immediate concern is ensuring that our soft-funded researchers are paid. We will deal with the downstream impacts on our projects when we get there, with understanding—and potentially supplemental funding—from our sponsors.

Finally, please refer to our [Research Continuity with COVID-19 webpage](#) for additional guidance and/or email us with any comments or questions at researchcontinuity@ucsc.edu.