

May 11, 2020

To: UC Santa Cruz Research Community
From: Scott Brandt, Vice Chancellor for Research
Subject: Planning for the Ramp-up of UCSC Research

Dear Colleagues,

With the release of Governor Newsom's [four-stage plan for reopening businesses and schools](#) and even more recent statement about [moving to early stage 2 of reopening on May 8](#), it is time to discuss **UCSC's gradual ramp-up of research operations**. The general principles and points of consideration articulated below are intended to inform faculty and researchers, department chairs, deans, research unit/center directors, and research leadership in their planning and decision-making.

GENERAL PRINCIPLES

UCSC's top priority is the health and safety of its faculty, staff, and students. Therefore, **UCSC will continue to comply with the current and future versions of the Governor's Stay at Home Order, as well as County public health directives, especially physical (social) distancing requirements.**

Because ramping up research will increase the population density in UCSC facilities at a time when Santa Cruz County shelter-in-place orders are relaxing, the opportunity for COVID-19 infections remains and the possibility of a resurgence exists. **Our research ramp-up plans must adhere to and exceed the physical distancing and other safety requirements established by public health authorities and must include the possibility of returning to a lower level of activity and population density as needed.**

Ramping up research will begin slowly and carefully in approximately 2-3 weeks, initially with research that must take place in UCSC facilities and cannot be carried out at home and at densities that, as much as possible, mitigate risk of COVID-19 transmission. Over time and with an abundance of caution, UCSC will gradually increase activity and the population density of its research facilities. As a general guideline, researchers should continue to perform research from home to the greatest extent possible. We appreciate the importance of campus offices to many researchers and will begin considering office access for research purposes when the Governor announces a move to late Stage 2. If your research requires access to library content please see <https://guides.library.ucsc.edu/remote-access>.

As the campus continues to ramp up on-site operations, additional public health precautions will be implemented. The campus is developing the testing and health monitoring protocols that will be implemented. These can include, but are not limited to: daily symptom

monitoring, temperature checks, asymptomatic testing, contact tracing and antibody testing. Plans will be developed in coordination with the Office of the President and other UC campuses.

All researchers, including students, academic researchers, and support staff (technical and administrative), will be transitioned back to work slowly, taking into account physical distancing and personal protective equipment requirements. As the campus continues to scale up research operations, many students, staff, faculty, and researchers may face difficult emotions around returning to work. If you have concerns about returning to work, please consult with your appropriate [Employee Relations analyst](#) or [academic personnel representative](#). The [Employee Assistance Program](#) also provides free, confidential resources for managing anxiety and workplace effectiveness, which may be helpful as the campus returns to in-person operations.

Early-stage researchers, including graduate students and postdoctoral fellows, are in a particularly critical time in their academic and professional careers. Therefore, to the extent possible, **ramp-up plans should prioritize getting these scholars back on track as soon as possible, and processes for granting access should be fair and transparent.**

PLANNING PROCESS FOR ENABLING THE RESEARCH RAMP-UP

The planning process will proceed as follows, with the above general principles guiding plan development and consideration given to the points further below.

1. The official (e.g., Dean, Director) responsible for each building will develop an occupancy plan for each building/facility in which research is conducted, keeping in mind existing use by faculty teaching online courses and others approved via the exception process. Where building/facility oversight is shared, responsible officials should collaborate. While plans may differ between buildings/facilities, all plans should address:
 - a. Managing population density and accommodating physical distancing;
 - b. Adherence to UCSC health and safety guidelines; and
 - c. A process—probably via a committee—for reviewing and approving the ramp-up plans for independent labs and research programs housed in the building/facility.
2. Faculty members and researchers with independent laboratories/studios and research programs will develop plans for their space. These plans should be based on target densities and social distancing requirements (both of which will be provided), bearing in mind the dynamic nature of lab/studio activities and the use of common equipment in labs and studios, and include plans for disinfecting high-touch surfaces, and maintaining appropriate laboratory safety. (See <https://officeofresearch.ucsc.edu/covid-19/research-ramp-up.html> for planning templates and web forms for submittal, a Research Ramp-up Checklist, and COVID-19 Disinfection Guidance.)
3. The official(s) responsible (or their designated committee) for the buildings/facilities that house research space will review and approve plans deemed feasible within their building/facility occupancy plan. Approved plans will be forwarded by the Responsible Official(s)

to the Office of Research (OR) for final review with Support Services/Facilities to ensure appropriate levels of operations support for the planned activities. Once approved by OR, the individual ramp-up plans may commence.

4. The Office of Research will communicate with the responsible officials as needed to inform them of any changes to the operational restrictions, such as target densities. They will use that information to determine which plans they may approve and at what level.

Initial Target Densities for labs/studios: Initial target densities will be 500-1000 sq. ft. per person. In smaller spaces, this means one person per room. In larger spaces, the specific amount of space allocated per person should depend upon the configuration and use of the space. For example, in the large shared labs in Biomed, we anticipate no more than 1 person per bay, with provisions to avoid 2 people in adjacent bays using benches that face each other.

Initial Target Densities for buildings will be determined in consultation with Support Services/Facilities and communicated to the official(s) responsible for each building.

Building/facility occupancy plans and individual research ramp-up plans should be considered living documents. As such, the owners of these plans are responsible for monitoring communications from the Office of Research regarding changes state and county public health orders, UCSC health and safety requirements, as well as any other applicable health and safety directives, and modifying their plans accordingly.

POINTS OF CONSIDERATION

- Faculty, independent researchers, department chair, deans and research unit directors should carefully consider the spirit of these guidelines, and always make the health and safety of the research workforce their primary concern.
- Everyone accessing the campus and facilities will need to abide by the campus and public health directives already in place, including requirements for face coverings and building signage. Failure to align with the requirements could result in denial of access.
- Employees who are at [higher risk for severe illness due to COVID-19](#) should not hesitate to reach out to discuss potential reasonable accommodations so that we can collectively prioritize everyone's health and safety.
- Ramping up research will increase the current population density in buildings, especially in elevators, stairwells, hallways, restrooms, and other shared spaces where physical distancing and sanitation of high-touch surfaces will be more challenging. Therefore, it is important that plans consider the overall population density of buildings (in addition to individual research spaces) by limiting personnel to the number that a workspace can safely accommodate while meeting or exceeding physical distancing requirements at all times. In larger rooms and shared spaces, this will mean more than one person, which will require coordinating with other space users. If space constraints (of any type) or the use of shared equipment prevent physical distancing and/or following other public health

requirements, the space must remain single-use until circumstances change to enable safe sharing.

To the maximum extent possible:

- Doors should be designated exclusively for entrance or exit.
 - Staircases should be designated as up or down only.
 - Corridors should be designated as one way.
 - Scheduling time in the research space should be accomplished in a fair and equitable manner; however, consider giving priority to trainees (graduate students and postdocs) who need to meet academic deadlines and junior faculty who are establishing their careers.
 - Minimize situations where two or more people must work together, and where this cannot be avoided (complex experiments, training experiences or where lab safety requires working with a buddy) research personnel should follow public health directives and physical distancing requirements to the greatest extent possible (except in emergencies).
 - Experiments that require access to equipment in another laboratory should be coordinated ahead of time.
 - One-to-one discussions should occur virtually, except when truly necessary for conducting research or maintaining lab safety.
 - Use shared calendars to schedule research team lab time and use shift work (staggered work schedules) to maintain low population density. Plan on collaborating with other lab leaders to create a calendar for shared lab space.
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- All group meetings should continue to be held virtually.
 - Face coverings continue to be required when working in or walking through common areas such as hallways, stairways, elevators, restrooms, and parking facilities, or in any room or enclosed area when other people are present.
 - Consider how communications will occur within and between research teams, and ensure redundant responsibility for team communications. Plan on communicating frequently and openly with team members (and neighbors in shared space) regarding scheduling.
 - Team members should weigh the need for coming to campus against potential health and safety hazards (to themselves and others). This includes avoiding coming to campus whenever showing any symptoms of potential illness.
 - To the greatest extent possible, desktop activities should be conducted at home. Where such desktop research cannot be conducted remotely, researchers should work with deans, department chairs, or directors to develop plans for staggered occupancy days/times to reduce density in shared spaces. This applies to researchers who primarily work in individual offices occupied by one person, where such research cannot be conducted remotely, or where there is a need for access to collections (archives, books, artifacts, creative works).

- Assume that undergraduate student involvement in research will be limited to those highly exceptional situations where they are essential personnel (by their choosing, and not mandated by a PI).
- Only UCSC employees and registered students (if they have chosen to participate in research) may conduct research—volunteers and visitors should not conduct research or be in UCSC research space at this time.
- Consider the needs of employees/students with current disability accommodations or those who will require new accommodations and work with the applicable HR or academic personnel representative as accommodation requests are received.
- DO NOT ramp-up research without first ensuring/acquiring adequate stocks of PPE and research supplies to carry out planned experiments. Consider the current state of supply chains and plan appropriately.
- Be prepared to use PPE or other precautionary measures (such as cloth masks) to meet physical distancing requirements.
- Make sure that core facilities will be operating before ramping up research that relies on their services. Be sure to schedule research activities to coincide with their days and hours of operation.
- Do not ramp-up research that generates large volumes of hazardous waste and/or necessarily involves chemical, biological, radiation or other hazards without first consulting with EH&S to review lab safety and assess waste disposal requirements.
- Consider how high-touch surfaces, such as bench tops, equipment, door handles, keyboards, etc. will be sanitized prior to ramping up research and how this will be sustained over time. In addition, consider what hygiene procedures personnel should conduct when they arrive in the lab, especially if they rely on public transportation or transportation that they don't personally own when commuting to campus.
- Use the Research Ramp-up Check List in the planning and ramp-up processes.
- **All research leaders are responsible for what happens in their space, including their team's compliance with these guidelines.**

By developing appropriately careful plans for ramping up research now, UCSC will continue to “flatten the curve” while also preparing to responsibly resume our research mission as safely and effectively as possible.

This memo and the forms and other documents associated with it can be found at <https://officeofresearch.ucsc.edu/covid-19/research-ramp-up.html>. Any questions or concerns may be sent to researchcontinuity@ucsc.edu. Additionally, the Office of Research will be holding divisional research ramp-up town hall meetings to go over the plans and address any questions.