As Clark Atlanta University continues to closely monitor the outbreak of coronavirus disease known as COVID-19, the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs (RSP) is advising all PI/PDs to plan for the possibility of a significant disruption to the normal operations of research, creative and scholarly works. While the federal funding agencies are relaxing some controls, as of today, research activities are expected to continue. To that end, RSP is offering faculty guidelines for the development of *individual research and educational programs continuity plans.* As this COVID-19 situation is fluid, the information and resources posted here will be updated periodically.

As of March 20, 2020

Currently, according to the University telework announcement dated March 17, 2020, all employees are required to work remotely. This means the campus is officially closed. As such, access to all R&D labs in the Thomas Cole building is suspended. Additionally, all *"in-person"* data collection for human subjects studies is suspended. If you have critical research activities or equipment that requires monitoring, describe the critical activity in your continuity plan and email the Associate Vice President of Research and Sponsored Programs so these activities can be coordinated with the Office of Public Safety.

Research Continuity Plan Development Guidance

Complete and submit to RSP at dwilson@cau.edu , the Research (Business) Continuity form and develop a written plan. As you develop your plans and complete your form, make the following assumptions:

1. Research infrastructure, such as power and telecommunications, will be maintained.
2. Environmental Health & Safety critical functions will continue.
3. Hazardous waste removal may be delayed.
4. Experiments must be ramped down.
5. Morehouse School of Medicine (MSM) CLAR critical animal care functions will continue.
6. CAU Core Facilities or external/partner fee-for-services resources may become unavailable.
7. Critical supply orders may be delayed.
8. Essential lab supply deliveries may require additional coordination.
9. Access to labs or equipment may be disrupted, limited or suspended for a significant time.
10. Repairs performed by Facilities and other service providers may be delayed.
11. Lab personnel may fall ill and workspace may require decontamination.
12. Lab personnel may require self-isolation and may not be available to perform tasks.
13. Personal Protective Equipment may be limited as gloves and masks may be limited.
14. RSP will continue to provide proposal development, submission and award management services and COVID-19 related guidance.

PLAN CONTENT

Send a memo/email to all your grant-funded personnel. The memo and plan should:

1. **Prioritize** the health and safety of all personnel.
2. **Remind** personnel to practice recommended personal hygiene measures including washing hands frequently, using hand sanitizer, avoiding touching their face, and covering coughs.
3. **Provide** graduate research assistants and postdoctoral researchers access to a Zoom account.
4. **Cancel** meetings with visiting scholars. Refer to University guidelines on campus visitors.
5. **Prohibit** the removal of research materials other than laptops, data, storage devices, etc., from campus. While all federally funded research must continue, it must do so within the confines of appropriate lab space.
6. **Develop** a plan for lab communications (email, VPN access, Microsoft Teams, Dropbox, etc.)
7. **Instruct** staff to review current campus travel guidelines.

FORM CONTENT

The research and educational program continuity form must list contact information for all essential personnel on active awards. Essential personnel are those who perform critical tasks for the maintenance of the research infrastructure and award obligations. List priority functions, responsible parties and alternate parties should the responsible party become unavailable. List all resources required to telework, such as, VPN access, software and hardware. List critical infrastructure and procedures. Critical infrastructure is anything that must not be powered down because continuous operation is necessary to maintain other critical resources. List the contact information for technicians that need access to specific labs to monitor equipment.

OTHER CRITICAL FUNCTIONS TO CONSIDER

- Save samples and results. Ensure all experimental data is available and appropriately backed up.
- Make sure data security and confidentiality is maintained at the same level as expected at all worksites. Confidential and sensitive data should not be saved on the local computer. Restricted access or confidential material shall not be taken out of the primary worksite or accessed through a computer unless approved in advance by the supervisor. The teleworker is responsible to ensure that non-employees do not access University data, including in print or electronic form.
- Verify the functionality and integrity of your data backup plans.
- Enact extra cleaning procedures for shared labs and core facilities in "high-touch" environments.
- Develop a plan to monitor critical equipment remotely (e.g., -80 freezers, refrigerators, cell culture incubators, nitrogen dewars). Label all freezers with contact information.
- Forward your office phone to your cell phone.
- Identify procedures and processes that require personnel attention (e.g., cell culture maintenance, animal care).
- Update your chemical inventory.
- Ramp down, curtail or delay experiments.
- Document critical step-by-step instructions for laboratory procedures.
- Encourage researchers to be familiar with each other's work if an absence would threaten the experiments, cells or animals.
- Coordinate with researchers to ensure mutual support and coverage of critical activities.
- Review contingency plans and emergency procedures with researchers and staff.
- Maintain a sufficient inventory of critical supplies that may be impacted by shipping delays.
- Notify the Lab Safety Manager to coordinate deliveries if your lab relies on liquid nitrogen, etc.
- Ensure that high-risk materials (radioactive, biohazards, chemicals) are properly secured.

KEEP RESEARCH STUDENTS ENGAGED

Continue to engage research student as they work remotely such that their activities are productive and within the goals of the award. To do so:

- **Ensure** that those involved in research projects have access to information they need to carry out work remotely (e.g., access to literature, existing datasets and research-related files, and meeting software, such as Zoom).
- **Prioritize** data that students can analyze remotely.
- **Require** students, post-docs, lab techs to finalize reports, edit manuscripts, proof-read publication drafts, develop PowerPoint presentations for further conferences, organize data and engage in ZOOM meetings or conference calls.
- **Track** student productivity by keeping a record of tasks and accomplishments.
- If your students are involved in teaching/ learning, then transition to remote groups.
- **Use** University policy as well as your best judgement to ensure that you are not adding financial insecurity to the students' lives at this point.

HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH

In light of the public health concerns and social distancing recommendations, all in-person data collection for ongoing studies is suspended until further notice. Suspended activities include in-person interviews, focus groups, surveys and studies employing observation methods. This policy is to protect the well-being of our faculty, staff, students, participants and community. Projects that do not require direct contact are permitted to continue, to include online surveys, phone calls, and virtual meetings. Should you wish to revise your proposal to include virtual or remote data collection that does not require face -to-face contact, email your request for protocol modification and as well as new IRB applications to research@cau.edu, and copy pmusey@cau.edu. As the COVID-19 situation changes, RSP will provide updates.

DOCUMENT DELAYS

If the impact of COVID-19 causes delays in the implementation of grant-funded activities and productivity, document deliverables delayed, create a modified timeline, and request a no-cost extension.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q1.) Will I have access to my lab if the University closes?

A1.) No, the last day to access your lab is Monday, March 23, 2020. Afterwards, access will be restricted to only critical activities such as maintenance associated with essential equipment and materials. The need for critical access must be written into your continuity plan and coordinated with RSP and Public Safety.

Q2.) May I visit my lab to pick up materials such as lab notebooks and computer that I need for my research?

A2.) No. Only employees identified as essential personnel and approved by the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs and the Office of Public Safety may visit campus. Refer to the "Access to Campus" communication sent by the Office of the Provost on March 23, 2020 at 3:56 PM.

Q3.) What material can I take from my lab or office to work remotely?

A3.) You may take lab notebooks, computers and other storage devices. You may NOT take animals, equipment, tools or other supplies.

Q4.) Will my lab animals be cared for while I work remotely?

A4.) Yes, animal care is a part of MSM CLAR's continuity plan.

Q5.) If I wish to suspend my human subjects research study, what actions should I take?

A5.) The IRB does not require a modification for a temporary pause in research activity.

Q6.) Will research compliance committees (IRB, IACUC, etc.) continue to provide reviews? Y

A6.) Yes, via virtual meetings. Submit your applications to research@cau.edu and copy pmusey@cau.edu.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

RSP, Award Management and Compliance – The RSP staff is working remotely and supporting ongoing research administration operations (proposal submission, annual reporting, compliance monitoring, etc.). Be advised that we do expect delays in the notification of awards and flexibility with proposal submission deadlines. Federal funding agencies are still working on unified messaging related to award expenditures, allowable activities, NCEs and COVID-19 related costs.

Federal Guidance – RSP is continuously reviewing guidance from sponsors and will post updates on the CAU Website. We are actively following OMB guidance related to the allow-ability of costs associated with any disruptions to sponsored projects that result from this public health threat.

> **National Institutes of Health -** General Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) - Proposal Submission and Award Management Related to COVID-19 (NOT-OD-20-083)
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> **NSF** has developed a new Website for the research community with detailed guidance on the Coronavirus (COVID-19). This includes guidance for awardee organizations, researchers and reviewers of NSF proposals. Please note that this Website will be updated as new developments arise.

RSP will continue to provide additional resources, links to federal agency FAQs and updates as the information becomes available. In the interim, email your questions to research@cau.edu.