March 23, 2020

Dear Colleague,

To follow up on my earlier messages on research continuity and COVID-19, I write regarding Governor Whitmer’s Executive Order to “Stay Home, Stay Safe.” MSU will limit access to laboratories: only essential research-related operations can continue (see below). Researchers must suspend non-essential research activities conducted on-campus or at remote MSU sites across the state. OSVPR has developed a list of minimum basic operations for research.

Research-Related Minimum Basic Operations Include:

- Projects related to COVID-19, particularly if they have a timeline for deployment that could address the crisis.
- Activity that ensures safe conditions that if discontinued would pose a safety hazard, and/or that maintains critical equipment or resources in facilities and laboratories or other infrastructure.
- Clinical trial activity, which if discontinued, would negatively impact the patient’s care.
- Activity that ensures humane care of animal populations.
- Activity that maintains critically needed and uniquely available plant populations, tissue cultures, bacteria, archaea, and other living organisms.
- Seasonally dependent agricultural and environmental field research with critical implications for human and animal health, as well as food security.
- Activity that if discontinued would generate significant loss of existing data in a longitudinal or long-term study in support of critical infrastructure.
- Activities as described by the Director of the U.S. Cybersecurity and Infrastructure Security Agency in March 19, 2020 guidance on the COVID-19 response at CISA COVID-19, including those that impact national security and maintain the value of federally-designated scientific user facilities, associated equipment, and cryogen inventory.

If you are unsure whether on-campus aspects of your research constitute or entail stewardship of critical research infrastructure, please consult with your college associate dean for research or your department chair.

If you believe you need to undertake activities that should be considered essential to “minimum basic operations”, but that are not explicitly called out above, please inform your chair, so that review of these activities can be documented. (E-mail would work well.)

Any research-related minimum basic operations activity should be conducted in a manner to minimize the number of individuals involved subject to safety requirements, and to maintain stringent hygienic practices and strict social distancing. Access to lab, facilities, and field sites will be available only for personnel who conduct essential minimum basic operations or are preparing their research operations for full shut-down.

As a reminder, faculty members cannot and should not require graduate students to come to campus, though that does not preclude their willing participation in minimum basic operations.

For additional guidance on research, please see: https://vp.research.msu.edu/coronavirus

With best regards,

Stephen Hsu
Senior Vice President for Research and Innovation