March 16, 2020

TO: Deans, Directors, and Chairpersons

FROM: Stephen Hsu
Senior Vice President for Research and Innovation

Dear Colleagues:

This morning Research & Innovation launched a new COVID-19 website that outlines research guidelines and provides key contact information:

https://vp.research.msu.edu/coronavirus

The contents of that site are already being overtaken by events, but it will be updated regularly. The following points from the site apply already:

- Research activities are continuing at the present time, with appropriate health and safety modifications.
- All research support units are operational, although staff members are working remotely where possible.
- We are monitoring federal funding agency guidance around research activities, as well as CDC, State, and local recommendations.
- Face-to-face group meetings, group research work or seminars are strongly discouraged, even when social distancing and stringent hygienic practices can be deployed. We make this recommendation to minimize risk to the MSU community to the greatest extent possible, recognizing that gatherings of 50 or fewer persons are still permissible under current CDC guidelines. Zoom™, Teams™, or other videoconferencing resources should be utilized in lieu of face-to-face activity wherever possible. Help can be found on the Keep Working/Remote Access website.
- All face-to-face non-therapeutic human subject activities are suspended.
- Research computing resources are expected to remain remotely accessible to investigators working at home via the Internet.

As the coronavirus situation continues to escalate, so too do operational aspects of our scholarly and creative activities need to adapt.

The governmental and institutional counter-measures to COVID-19 now under local, state, and national planning consideration could easily result in an MSU decision to restrict all non-essential MSU on-campus laboratory work that has not been explicitly granted an exemption.

This letter serves as notice that such a decision might be taken on short notice, potentially as soon as this week.

In light of possible further restriction of on-campus laboratory work, I ask that all MSU faculty and research teams conduct immediate planning for significant reductions or suspension of on-campus research activity.
Plans should include:

- Development of a full shut-down procedure for the laboratory, in case it is needed.
- Requirements for maintaining critical animal, plant and cell culture resources and reagents.
- Acknowledgment that all individuals, regardless of student or employee status, may decline, during the current COVID-19 outbreak, to conduct on-campus laboratory work, and moreover may do so without fear of retribution.
- Emphasis that all MSU faculty, staff, and students have access to Zoom and/or other video conferencing tools to permit telework.
- Implementation of a room sign-in/sign-out sheet at the door of each room occupied by the research group.
- Implementation of a requirement for group members to refrain from all laboratory work if they have respiratory or flu-like symptoms,
- Restriction of laboratory access, particularly for children, those known to be at special risk, visitors, and all others without a defensible need to enter.

Interruption of laboratory work (here taken to include farm-based activities) obviously poses special issues, including those related to human subject protection, animal care, and chemical, biological, and radiological safety. Should the decision to restrict non-essential research be made, we can anticipate that exemptions will be rare.

Collectively, we are all aware that very important research and scholarly activity (e.g., data analysis, manuscript preparation, progress reporting, invention disclosure, refereeing, etc.) can be conducted remotely. Hence, MSU expects research stipendiary and salary support for funded project participants will be continued during the COVID-19 response period. Federal guidance on this matter is understood to be in development, and will be shared when available.

With respect to laboratory work, while it is important that essential research continue to the extent possible during this time, I cannot emphasize enough the importance of keeping everyone safe and healthy, in part by minimizing laboratory work that is not essential.

If you have any questions, please refer to the [website](#) for the appropriate contact information.