

Date: March 21, 2020

To: All UNT Campus Researchers

From: Mark R. McLellan, Vice President for Research & Innovation

RE: March 21<sup>st</sup> Update on campus research operations under COVID-19  
**In-Laboratory Research Ramp Down to commence immediately**



As UNT moves closer to a Full Campus Closure for our operational status on campus, we need to move research operations into a preservation mode to ensure protection of research assets and resources.

In support of this need, I am hereby directing all in-laboratory research operations to ramp down all functions into a non-use preservation status. Priority should be given to ensure preservation of complex equipment and all living organisms.

**General:**

- **All UNT research laboratories in all UNT locations are to commence immediate ramping down of all in-lab on campus operations.** (The only exception are any laboratories where they are specifically working on COVID-19 and if those exist, I will need to speak personally with the Principal Investigator.
- Attached is a **checklist for faculty** to use for closing in-lab research operations. It is modified for UNT from checklist used in the UC system as they ramped down last week.
- **All face to face Human Subjects Research is to cease.** Associated principal investigators should contact IRB for guidance.
- All research facilities must move into a **caretaker status** with highly limited access for critical personnel needed for limited **maintenance of complex equipment and living organisms only.** The name of critical personnel coming to campus must be provided to their academic units (Departments/College). Large-scale share environments such as **green-houses should move to an assigned caretaker** who is given maintenance instructions.
- Essential personnel are instructed to take precautions during their work which includes washing hands frequently, social distancing, disinfecting surfaces working on or using as appropriate.
- All other research activities **must move to remote operations.**

- Grants & Contract Administration is seeing a significant increase in grants being worked on and submitted. We are **gearing up to assist as needed for researchers moving heavily into a grant writing** and submission activities.

### **Salary Payment of Research Staff on Grants & Contracts:**

- UNT will be announcing guidance in the near future as to leave related to the crisis.
- Effective immediately the Division of Research & Innovation is putting in place a policy regarding sponsored programs to address this COVID-19 crisis.
- **New Research Policy:**
  - Effective immediately, UNT Grants & Contracts Administration will allow Principal Investigators for all sponsored projects at UNT **to apply the guidance given by the university for university salaried, wage hourly and student employee** categories to employees of sponsored projects while addressing this COVID-19 crisis.
  - This particularly applies to UNT guidance regarding **payment of salary when no work is being performed by employees**.
  - This also applies to charging of salaries and benefits to currently active awards (under unexpected or extraordinary circumstances) **from all funding sources, Federal and non-Federal** at the University of North Texas.
  - Exceptions to this policy would only apply if an **individual sponsor counters with explicit guidance** to the contrary. In these cases, sponsor ordered restriction on use of funds will be honored during this crisis.
  - Note: this research policy **applies to the current COVID-19 crisis only** and it is not intended to extend beyond this period.
  - The Vice President for Research & Innovation will declare when this **emergency period ends** for the purposes of enforcing this research policy.
- UNT Grants & Contracts Administration will do our best to monitor agencies for any unique guidance but we encourage all principal investigators to be monitoring their sponsoring agency for guidance.

### **Research Staff paid on Grants & Contracts when working remotely:**

All Principal Investigators funded by grants NEED to act and plan accordingly

1. Assess the scope of your award and the wording of the proposal and award.
2. Specifically identify, list and formally record all possible and reasonable activities that meet the expectations and scope of work which may be accomplished in a remote setting such as a researcher's home. (i.e. literature review pertaining to the grant, bibliographic collections pertaining to the grant, data analysis, data preparation, statistical runs using various models, writing of papers on the work, meta data preparation, data management preparation to meet DMP requirements, data repository searches for use with the project, etc.)
3. Share that list with your paid researchers for discussion so that all researchers understand the work you have identified.
4. Make work assignments to all researchers which would be triggered in case of closure or quarantine.
5. If no assignments are possible and no work is possible on the grant, then charging salaries to the grant will only be allowed to the extent that UNT allows this for university employees as limited across the categories of benefited employees, wage hourly employees and student employees. And as limited by sponsor specific restrictions. (See research policy above).

#### **Division of Research & Innovation Contacts:**

- This division is now on full remote operations. Most staff are working out of their home offices
- Division offices are not being staffed for face-to-face meetings.
- To contact our offices:
  - For conversations, feel free to reach our staff via MS Teams. Our office employees are all using MS Teams for daily business operations.
  - For group conversations Zoom is an option.
  - For more detailed documents review, we suggest using email.
  - Since most phones are forwarded to private cell phones, we recommend phone calls be used as backup communications to Teams & email.