A Plan for Restarting University Research Activity

On May 19, 2020 President Marta Meana discussed the plan to have the UNLV workforce start transitioning back to campus gradually – and in steps. This approach also applies to restarting university research activity. This document provides guiding principles in restarting university research activity.

These guidelines are subject to change to align with directives from the Governor, UNLV NSHE Chancellor, and UNLV President.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

(Developed by UC Berkeley in partnership with VCRs/VPRs from the University of California system and the APLU, with contributions from many other institutions including UNR and UW)

Overarching Goal: To enable all research to resume as soon as possible while ensuring a safe work environment and maintaining public health requirements.

Principle #1: Follow the cognizant Local, State, and National Public Health Authority directives regarding social distancing and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

- Social distancing should be implemented until otherwise informed by NSHE and UNLV.
- UNLV will continue to follow the recommendation from the Centers for Disease Control to wear face coverings in public settings where social distancing measures are difficult to maintain. Read the UNLV COVID-19 Response Policy.

Principle #2: Protect the health and safety of the research workforce, emotional as well as physical, and the health and safety of our clinical patients and human research subjects.

- Researchers should not feel they are being compelled to work on campus without defined standard operating procedures (SOPs) for safety. Principal investigators (PIs) will be required to define safety SOPs and implement and maintain adequate access to PPE and other safety related supplies that are necessary.
• PIs will be required to identify essential research personnel and ensure they are properly trained in COVID-19 related safety before being granted access to perform research.
• PIs must identify essential researchers and procedures for remote work due to safety concerns. Continued remote work should be based on policies and procedures established by UNLV.
• Field research may continue, on a case-by-case basis, given rigorous social distancing plans within a SOP.
• The IRB process for human subject research (SOP) has been updated.

**Principle #3: Protect the careers of early stage researchers.**

• Priority should be given to those researchers and students to restart research who cannot work remotely and are under time constraints to complete degrees, term appointments (e.g., postdoctoral researchers), or for tenure and other career reviews.

**Principle #4: Undergraduates are students first, researchers second.**

• Engagement of undergraduates in research should only be permitted under the most exceptional of situations. This may include a situation in which (1) the undergraduate student is an essential team member for the project, (2) the project itself has been authorized for access, (3) the work of that student must be performed in person in the research space, (4) research is a requirement of the undergraduate degree program, and/or (5) no other work can be assigned to that student that can be performed remotely. PIs will be required to provide justification for undergraduate researchers in their laboratories.

**Principle #5: Implement a fair and transparent process for granting access.**

• The process for granting laboratory access and access to other on and off campus research spaces will be based on a step approach with prioritized activities that are defined below. However, all current research activities and any request to restart research activities require PIs provide a SOP for safety.
• Department Chairs and Deans are required to approve restarting research activities after the PI submits a SOP and plan for commencing research activities.
• Department Chairs and Deans are required to prioritize research activities of their faculty based on the three steps of research and scholarly activity and the criteria for prioritization.

• The Associate Deans for Research will provide guidance in establishing social distancing and density limitation guidelines for different kinds of activities in research space based on UNLV guidelines and the type of research to be conducted.

**Principle #6:** *Ensure as rapid of a research restart as the public health conditions permit.*

• Under no circumstances should safety be sacrificed due to lack of adequate supplies, such as the type and quality of PPE. The required PPE for research or scholarly activities to resume and the purchase of adequate supplies are the responsibility of the PI.

• PIs should consult with both RMS and Facilities and Maintenance to ensure the infrastructure and layout of facilities are consistent with the PIs safety SOP and workflow requirements for social distancing.

**Principle #7:** *Prioritize support for finding cures and preventions for COVID-19, and assessing the economic, political, and cultural impacts of the virus, while increasing the safe access for all patients to clinical trials for their conditions.*

• There is important research taking place in our research units regarding the impact of COVID-19 on the workforce, and it should be prioritized as broader laboratory and clinical research activities are resumed.