

**Below are questions that were received prior to, during and following the Research Continuity Town Hall on May 13<sup>th</sup>. The Town Hall may be [viewed on-line here](#).**

### **PPE-related**

- In preparation to returning research to campus, what can you say about PPE requirements and availability? Prior to campus closure, I tried to secure wipes and disinfectant and was barely able to find a limited amount. It would be best if the university could make a coordinated effort to procure wipes, hand sanitizer and masks for all labs that will re-open. Ideally, every lab location would have wipes and hand sanitizer.

UC is operating in accordance with CDC and ODH guidance. All employees must wear facial coverings on campus, except while eating or alone in a private space. For more information on facial coverings, including exemptions to this requirement, [click here](#). Facilities is installing hand sanitizing stations in all building entrances and elevator lobbies. Buildings will also be equipped with hand sanitizing dispensers that allow individuals to fill personal containers for their own use. Housekeeping is going to be focused on high touch areas (elevators, restrooms, etc.). To make that possible everyone is going to need to clean their own personal spaces (offices, cubicles, laboratories, etc.). Cleaning kits will be provided to every mail location; the kits will include instructions and directions to reorder. Your department/unit head can tell you who the custodial liaison for your unit. Everyone will need to take their non-hazardous trash and recycling into the larger receptacles on every floor. Contact [Custodial Services](#) with questions or concerns regarding trash removal or other housekeeping-related concerns.

- Regarding masks, will they be required for everyone? This would be the recommended option, as masks are about protecting others from yourself.

UC is operating in accordance with CDC and ODH guidance. All employees must wear facial coverings on campus, except while eating or alone in a private space. For more information on facial coverings, including exemptions to this requirement, [click here](#).

- The type of mask and duration of usage is also important. Will we have disposable masks and use several during the day? Is everyone supposed to bring their own cloth masks?

Out of care and concern for all members of our campus community and in accordance with a recent directive from the Ohio Department of Health, the University of Cincinnati will require all working on campus to wear facial coverings in the workplace setting. To preserve masks for health care providers' personnel should provide their own facial coverings. At minimum, a facial covering should be cloth / fabric and cover the nose, mouth and chin. Facial coverings can also be made with a bandana. See more advice from the CDC on [how to wear and position a facial covering](#).

- If cloth masks are recommended, will there be a preferred type that we perhaps can get for everyone? Not all masks will be as effective. Will we check if users wear them properly? And will we have more than one mask available per person so that we can switch during the day and wash every night? Wearing the same mask all day has the potential to accumulate droplets in the air. Additionally, guidance for masks is that they ideally should not be removed and put back on repeatedly.

Controlling the pandemic is a community effort, we must all protect each other. At minimum, a facial covering should be cloth / fabric and cover the nose, mouth and chin. Facial coverings can also be made with a bandana. See more advice from the CDC on [how to wear and position a facial covering](#). Additional training will be available.

- Any news on availability of N95 masks if work in close proximity is needed? I understand that priority should be on frontline workers. I ask because I cannot see anywhere what kind of situation exists nationwide regarding these masks (such as ramp up of production, outstanding shortages, etc). It would be completely understandable if we cannot use these masks given the situation.

PIs will need to describe how they will protect researchers in their health and safety plan. Given the variety of situations where distancing may not be possible we cannot provide a generic answer. However, in many circumstances' facial coverings with a face shield would be a reasonable alternative to N95s until such time as they become more available.

- We donated all unopened boxes of gloves. Are we allowed to purchase some from vendors who have them in stock, or should we not deplete any stocks at the vendors' at this time?

You may order PPE.

- Will PPE be provided at all buildings/locations including Stetson?

No, PPE will not be provided. Cleaning supplies and hand sanitizing stations will be available.

- Are personal fabric masks going to be allowed in the animal facility to conserve PPE?

The PPE requirements for LAMS have not changed; except that you must wear the facial covering in common areas (the hallways, locker rooms etc.).

- Will homemade masks be acceptable PPE for entry into the COM?

Yes.

- should employees proceed with EH&S fit testing for the respiratory protection program as normal, even though PPE is in short supply nationwide?

Previously mandated PPE requirements including testing, have not changed. Please contact EHS for guidance regarding testing.

## **Employee Health & Safety**

- What would be the plan to deal with a suspected positive COVID-19 case within a lab/department/college? What is the chain of command if a concern arises?

All reporting will be managed through [University Health Services](#).

- Will there be a UC policy regarding CDC recommendations for requiring Dr. notes from those who have been out sick?

UC will follow HR policy regarding the mandate for returning to work. Personnel are responsible for self-monitoring for symptoms prior to accessing UC facilities and for reporting (suspected) COVID-19 cases.

- What is the HR/UC policy on those that do not feel comfortable coming back to work? Are they protected from firing?

All employees who meet the CDC's definition of individuals at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19 may continue to work remotely. CDC information on risk factors is available [here](#). Please contact Human Resources to submit a request to work remotely due to being at higher risk of severe illness from COVID-19.

- We work in an open space lab concept...If someone gets sick with Covid19, is previous social distancing at best of our knowledge sufficient to let everyone else come to work? who gets to be quarantined?

We will apply the current best practice for contact tracing, testing, and quarantine; this will be managed through [University Health Services](#).

- How is the entry to the main bldg regulated: is there an office assistant manning the door/to check masks are used or available, to squeeze hand sanitizer...

All building entrances and elevator lobbies will be equipped with hand sanitizing stations. Personnel are responsible for bringing facial coverings.

- Can you address what would happen if someone has gone through COVID-19 infection? If someone in the vicinity or the lab were to get infected, would someone who has previously been infected be subject to quarantine?

We will apply the current best practice for contact tracing, testing, and quarantine; this will be managed through [University Health Services](#).

- What are the procedures when someone in the Lab gets sick and has a confirmed COVID-19 (current guidelines for getting tested, quarantine, lab disinfection?)

We will apply the current best practice for contact tracing, testing, and quarantine; this will be managed through [University Health Services](#). Areas that may have been contaminated with SARS CoV-2 will be disinfected by EHS.

- Will research personnel who are able to work remotely (perform all work functions from home) continue to do so and for how long? (And especially for individuals who are at higher risk for severe illness with COVID-19 per the CDC.)

UC will continue to follow CDC and ODH guidance. We cannot predict when guidance will change.

## Cleaning Supplies

- What is the cleaning schedule for offices within UC & UHealth & Stetson owned spaces? Will there be a more strict cleaning routine? Are we in charge of cleaning our own areas & to what extent is UC providing cleaning products to do so & what about those in a UCH space where EVS is union?

We can only speak to UC facilities. Housekeeping is going to be focused on high touch areas (elevators, restrooms, etc.). To make that possible everyone is going to need to clean their own personal spaces (offices, cubicles, laboratories, etc.). Cleaning kits will be provided to every mail location; the kits will include instructions and directions to reorder. Your department/unit head can tell you who the custodial liaison for your unit. Everyone will need to take their non-hazardous trash and recycling into the larger receptacles on every floor. Contact [Custodial Services](#) with questions or concerns regarding trash removal or other housekeeping-related concerns.

- Can you please speak to anything that is being done by the university helping departments obtain enough PPE, hand sanitizer, and surface disinfectant? Suppliers do not seem to have these items.

Personnel are to provide facial coverings, hand sanitizing stations will be deployed in every building entrance and elevator lobby. Cleaning kits will be provided to every mail location; the kits will include instructions and directions to reorder. Your department/unit head can tell you who the custodial liaison for your unit.

## Human Subjects/Clinical Research

- Much of the initial guidance document seemed aimed at basic science labs. Would love to hear more about return to clinical research. Will we need to continue to minimize interactions between research staff and participants or can we allow this with appropriate mask and face shield?

You must have an approved health and safety plan. Further, if you are engaging in activities that require in person interaction, regardless of the location. You must provide a risk benefit analysis for IRB review prior to commencing work. Please refer to the [IRB guidance](#).

- What are the rules/guidance for human-subjects research, especially as it pertains to participants in high-risk categories (i.e., stroke). A number of us in Allied Health Sciences have NIH funded projects for behavioral interventions that cannot be performed with social distancing (e.g., speech-language pathology, physical therapy services). Also, we do not have PPE in our labs or as part of our NIH budgets. Will these studies be postponed further to ensure there is not another peak?

Regrettably, we cannot predict if, when, or where, the next surge will occur which may impact ongoing work; Researchers will need to determine when best to resume work. Please refer to the [IRB guidance](#) and you must have an approved health and safety plan.

- Does this mean UC Health/UCMC/UC IRB will allow us to enroll clinical research subjects again starting June 1?

Please refer to the [IRB guidance](#) and you must have an approved health and safety plan.

- When will study monitors be allowed into the facility? If they meet travel restrictions, bring PPE and we have an isolated room for them to monitor, can we allow them back. Monitors are wanting to remote monitor, but it requires more work for our clinical staff to identify and scan documents for monitors.

Safety is our primary concern. You must have an approved health and safety plan that includes onsite monitoring. Please also refer to [guidance for external vendors](#).

### **LAMS/IACUC**

- If reboot is to happen June 1, is there a way to allow for animal ordering 7-10 days prior to June 1 so that some lab activities can start June 1, otherwise realistically it will be mid June before ramping back up?

You may order animals in advance of June 1 upon approval of your health and safety plan.

- When will we be allowed to order animals for non-critical research purposes?

You may order upon approval of your health and safety plan.

- Are we going to start testing animals for COVID-19 infection?

We will test animals should there be reason to believe that they have been infected with SARS CoV-2.

### **Undergrad/Grad Students**

- I'd like to know if the return to research plan is geared toward PhD students and principal investigators or will it include a return to research plan for undergraduate students?

Please check [here](#) for latest guidance on undergraduate students.

- If a student has graduated and will enter as a grad student in the fall, are they considered a undergraduate or a graduate student THIS summer?

Student status is determined by their HR status at time of employment.

- Will undergraduate students doing capstone research be allowed in research labs after June 1, as long as COVID-19 safety protocols are in place?

Please check [here](#) for latest guidance on undergraduate students.

- When will undergraduate students be allowed in the Labs? Our Lab has 2 undergraduate students hired as lab workers/assistants, their tasks are hands on (making media, washing glassware etc.) and cannot be performed remotely, when can we let them come (given we are able to follow physical distancing guidelines)?

Please check [here](#) for latest guidance on undergraduate students.

- Do you have any recommendations on how to handle the graduate rotation students in the labs: are there any restrictions to their presence during the first weeks or ramp-up?

All interactions must be consistent with social distancing and health/safety policies of the university. Interactions that cannot abide by these guidelines and policies are not allowed at this time.

- Can undergrad researchers participate in local, off-campus research (field work) before they are cleared to come to campus, so long as social distancing guidelines are met?

Please check [here](#) for latest guidance on undergraduate students. Please check [here](#) for latest guidance on off-campus research.

- Can graduate students start in July?

All UC personnel involved in research activities are allowed to resume such activities June 1<sup>st</sup> subject to the discretion of the Principal Investigator (PI) and approval of a research Health, Safety & Scheduling plan.

- A related question is whether undergrad researchers can participate in local, off-campus research before they are cleared to come to campus, so long as social distancing guidelines are met.

Please check [here](#) for latest guidance on undergraduate students. Please check [here](#) for latest guidance on off-campus research.

- Would you say that course and capstone student research should minimize all face-to-face research; and instead encourage survey and possibly virtual research?

Please check [here](#) for latest guidance on undergraduate students. At all times researchers should work to minimize any face-to-face activities and encourage those activities that can be conducted and completed remotely.

### **Travel-related**

- Hi Pat, can you clarify the procedure for local off-campus research accessible by car. Will short trips to local field sites need to be cleared through Concur requests if there are no billable expenses involved?

Please check [here](#) for latest guidance on off-campus research. Travel by car (for day trips only through June 30<sup>th</sup>) that will not be generating any billable expenses should be described in a Health, Safety and Scheduling plan and approved following the process identified by your college.

- My question is specific to re-engagement of international research activities. Are there plans in place to support this type of re-engagement, and for personnel associated with these activities, are there restrictions for faculty, students or staff? I currently have an NIH grant that includes an international component, necessitating travel. I understand that UC restrictions are currently in effect on any non-essential national and international travel. As such, any research activities that are internationally-based would, at the very least, have to wait for those restrictions to be lifted.

Please check [here](#) for latest guidance on travel. International travel remains prohibited through June 30<sup>th</sup>. Updated guidance for travel on July 1<sup>st</sup> and onward will be forthcoming.

- Do you expect research-related travel to potentially resume in August?

Please check [here](#) for latest guidance on travel. Research-related travel may resume June 1<sup>st</sup> so long as it is consistent with current restrictions.

- If a faculty member has personal travel out of the Cincinnati metro area, what restrictions might there be on that individual's ability to return to campus following the June 1 target date?

Please check [here](#) for latest guidance on travel including any potential self-quarantine situations.

- For one of my research projects, we have to travel to Nebraska to install sensors inside bridge beams that will be cast and sent to our lab for testing. Are we allowed to travel on or about June 1?

Please check [here](#) for latest guidance on travel. Out of state travel remains prohibited through June 30<sup>th</sup>.

### **Social Distancing-related**

- Will there be published guidelines we need to follow for office locations/social distancing?

Please check [here](#) for latest guidance on social distancing.

- Are sponsors allowed to come in and train Research staff. There will be times when less than 6 feet social distancing will not be possible.

All interactions must be consistent with social distancing and health/safety policies of the university. Interactions that cannot abide by these guidelines and policies are not allowed at this time.

- Who is enforcing physical distancing if students/ post-doc's don't?

Any research staff that are not following social distancing guidelines or other university policies (e.g., face coverings) should be managed by their supervisor as with any employee behavior issues. As necessary, supervisors should work with their local HR representative for guidance and assistance with employee non-compliance.

- Please remember that many UC COM Researchers do not work in labs! Family & Community Medicine does educational, quality improvement, social-behavioral and health-care research in a huge number of different settings, all outside of laboratories. We can easily comply with Covid restrictions when at the MSB, since we have individual offices and all of our activities with student will use remote learning. However, we DO need to be able to return to our offices in the MSB. Specifically, our NIH/NIDA research uses secure programs that can ONLY be accessed via designated computers at the COM. We cannot access them remotely with VPN. Please remember that non-laboratory research exists at the COM and brings significant funding to our university. We ask to be included in any plans to reopen.

The Office of Research represents the entire campus community, not just the College of Medicine and not just those involved in laboratory research. Guidance for a broad range of research, scholarly and creative activities is available [here](#). All research-related activities – regardless of type – may resume subject to adherence with existing university guidelines and policies as well as subject to approval of a Health, Safety & Scheduling plan.

- How to do lab rotation/training while maintaining social distancing?

All interactions must be consistent with social distancing and health/safety policies of the university. Interactions that cannot abide by these guidelines and policies are not allowed at this time

- If a piece of equipment requires a brief, transient, and one-time violation of the 6 foot spacing (e.g., it needs to be moved to setup the lab for optimal social distancing throughout the month of June), can that be done with appropriate PPE.

You should propose an appropriate health & safety plan with your supervisor to determine the best way forward in this situation.

### **Library-Related**

- Research performed by faculty in humanities departments depends on using library facilities, our equivalent of research labs. What provisions are being made for this? For instance, in my department we have a specialized library of high quality, and access is essential for producing books, articles, and conference papers. Social distancing can be easily maintained in our library, which have generous study space. Have any of our needs been considered?

The Library has been developing a multi-phase plan to expand beyond our current service offerings in the online environment. We are planning for a phased roll-out of contact-free request and pick-up of our physical collections in the near future. For special research needs of accessing our physical collections that are beyond request and pick-up service, please discuss it with our subject librarians listed here: <https://libraries.uc.edu/research-teaching-support/subject-librarians.html>. Our facilities will continue to remain closed to the public. Our plans for facility access are based on the university's plans for the Fall Semester and beyond.

- When will Langsam Library be open or at least be available to provide "curbside" service for book pickup?

We are making plans to provide contact-free request and pick-up of physical materials from Langsam and other library locations. With the President's May 20th announcement on a return to campus and explicit information on Safety Protocols, we feel confident in executing this phased plan and will communicate this information to the campus soon.

- Classicists need their library to do anything!

We completely agree and understand how critical physical collections are to our Classics department as well as other disciplines. Our plans to provide contact-free request and pick-up of physical materials in the Classics library is a priority.



- Why is a massage or tattoo parlor considered "safer" than a library?

Libraries pose a unique challenge in that they are similar to an Office Environment, Laboratory, Restaurant, Classroom, and Retail Establishment while also promoting the shared use of physical materials and furniture that are touched by several different people in a given day. Public, college, and research intensive academic libraries all share significant similarities and differences in how they must provide environments that place the health and safety of their staff, faculty, and community as the highest priority in this extraordinary situation. We recognize and appreciate how important the libraries are to the UC community, and while we are proud of our transition to providing high quality services, collections, and research support in an online environment, we also recognize that it is incomplete without the physical environment. We will expand our services and facilities, but must meet all requirements of the university, state, and best practices of the industry in our planning to ensure that we all are safe.

### **Deliveries**

- When is that we can do orders -Molecular Biology Lab-? can we use our own UC address for delivery? since when?

Each department or unit area that will be having researchers return must identify a point of contact and establish a process whereby mail, package and cleaning supplies delivery can be accommodated. You should work with your College office to identify delivery location, schedule and timing.

- Orders and receiving: by now most delivery companies have obtained a badge pass... should the external door opened only by badge? can we use our 3125 Eden Ave address for orders now?

Each department or unit area that will be having researchers return must identify a point of contact and establish a process whereby mail, package and cleaning supplies delivery can be accommodated. You should work with your College office to identify delivery location, schedule and timing.