Fwd: COVID-19 Research Resiliency Planning for the UC Berkeley Community
1 message

Armeen Mozaffari <armeenm@berkeley.edu>   Sat, Apr 4, 2020 at 4:27 PM
To: pb919@georgetown.edu

Begin forwarded message:

From: "Randy H. Katz Vice Chancellor for Research (campus-wide)" <CALmessages@berkeley.edu>
Subject: COVID-19 Research Resiliency Planning for the UC Berkeley Community
Date: March 9, 2020 at 6:48:49 PM EDT
To: calmessages_communication@lists.berkeley.edu

Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research

Dear UC Berkeley Research Community:

I write to build on the Chancellor's message earlier today, outlining new measures to reduce the risk of transmission of the coronavirus within our campus community.

Although these measures do not immediately impact the campus research community, I am nevertheless writing to ask all campus laboratories, research facilities and research groups to **undertake their own efforts and put in place specific measures** *now*, **to reduce potential transmission of the disease within our facilities**, and also to **make plans for the possibility of a significant disruption to normal operations, should large numbers of employees become ill or have to self isolate**.

Individual labs and research facilities are best positioned to create a continuity plan that will meet their unique needs. A set of recommended measures to reduce transmission of the virus, as well as steps y ou should take now to ensure future resiliency is outlined below, and is also posted on our Research Continuity & Planning for COVID-19 website. The website also provides updates on the status of research support operations, as well as information on federal funding availability, and award management.

For more information and guidance on other aspects of campus planning, please visit the campus Coronavirus COVID-19 website.

The Research Continuity website will be updated regularly as new information becomes available. If you have questions, or if there is additional guidance you would like to see posted, please contact vcr@berkeley.edu. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Randy Howard Katz
Vice Chancellor for Research

Immediate Measures to Avoid/Reduce Transmission

To reduce the potential transmission of the coronavirus (or other colds and flu) in the coming weeks, I ask that all campus labs and research facilities put in place the following measures:

- **Require that all personnel who are feeling unwell to stay home** until they no longer have symptoms.
- **Remind all personnel to practice recommended personal hygiene measures** including washing hands frequently, using hand sanitizer, avoiding touching their face, and covering coughs.
- **Explore and implement measures to reduce density and allow "social distancing" of lab/research personnel**. For example, increasing spacing between researchers where possible to >6 feet, having personnel come to the lab in shifts, allowing every other bench to be unoccupied, etc.
- **Review opportunities for lab personnel and support staff to work remotely** - both to allow for social distancing, or in case they need to self isolate on short notice. Have personnel test out remote setups before they are needed. All U.C. Berkeley employees, including graduate research assistants and postdoctoral researchers paid through the university, have access to a Zoom account acquired by the university. See resources and tips on technology@berkeley telecommuting website. Check the VCRO COVID-19 website for future resources.
- **Increase disinfecting of laboratory and communal spaces**, including lab benches and chairs, equipment, common rooms. Facilities Services will be increasing service to labs and public spaces now that classes will be held on-line. To assist Facilities Services in their work, tidy up laboratory spaces and inventory and label dangerous reagents and sensitive instrumentation for which services staff should steer clear. For cleaning done by laboratory researchers and staff, VCRO is working with research sponsors to determine if such cleaning supplies will be reimbursed as allowable expenses on existing grants. Other funding mechanisms are also being explored.
- **Consider curtailing travel and attendance at scientific conferences**, and attending meetings via phone or videoconference. Many scientific conferences and other research community meetings are being cancelled or are permitting remote participation.
- **Consider cancelling or postponing field research trips**, as they present unique risks because of shared housing, eating meals together, and challenges to "sending someone home" should they become ill during an extended trip.
- **Cancel all non-essential UC-related travel to CDC Level 2 and 3 countries** (Level 3: currently China, South Korea, Iran and Italy; Level 2: Japan). **Review current campus travel guidelines and enforce self-isolation as necessary**: Ensure that all lab employees, students and visitors who have traveled to or from a Level 3 country in the last 14 days self isolate for 14 days since the date of departure from the country. All other travelers should monitor for symptoms for 14 days. See additional details on the campus COVID-19 website (under Ongoing Recommendations and Actions).
- **Notify visitors from CDC Level 3 countries**: cancel visits from individuals from Level 3 countries (through at least the month of March), if less than 14 days; ensure all longer-term visiting scholars from these countries know they will have to self-isolate for 14 days upon arrival. Contact the Visiting Scholars and Postdoc Affairs Office at vspa@berkeley.edu with questions.

Longer Term Planning for Research Continuity

We gratefully acknowledge our colleagues at Yale University, whose communication to their research community influenced our statement below.

Principal Investigators and Research Managers should begin scenario planning now for the potential that research and campus operations need to continue with reduced or remote staffing, if significant numbers of research or research support personnel become ill, or large-scale self-isolation is required. Any changes to research support unit operations will be posted on the Research Continuity & Planning for COVID-19 website and communicated to the campus.

Note: In no event should researchers take materials other than laptops, data storage devices, etc., offsite (e.g., to their homes) to en sure research continuity during a curtailment. *All essential research must continue within the confines of appropriate laboratory space. Questions on this policy should be addressed to vcr@berkeley.edu.*

Assumptions to use for planning, should widespread COVID-19 communal transmission require campus support operations to be delivered remotely, or with reduced staffing due to illness:

- Life safety and the good health of our research workforce and animals will remain our highest priority.
- Assume that essential research infrastructure, such as power and telecommunications, will be maintained.
- Assume that research administration units, such as the Sponsored Projects Office (SPO), BRS regional research administration (RA), Industry Alliances Office (IAO), Berkeley Research Development Office (BRDO) Contracts and Grants Administration (CGA), and Intellectual Property and Industrial Research Alliances (IPIRA) Office will continue to provide service such as proposal preparation and submission and award management.
- Assume that the offices of Laboratory Animal Care (OLAC) and Environment, Health & Safety (EH&S) will maintain their critical oversight functions, with back-up plans should the campus go into curtailed access.

Nevertheless, PIs should plan for the following possibilities:

- Be prepared for some of your laboratory workforce to fall ill or be required to self isolate.
- Be prepared to decontaminate the workspace of an ill researcher in your laboratory.
- Be prepared for core facilities and other fee-for-service resources to become unavailable.
- Be prepared for critical supply orders to be delayed. PIs should work with their building manager to coordinate essential deliveries.
- Be prepared for building or laboratory access to be curtailed. The campus will notify the affected communities as soon as possible. Assume that essential access for equipment maintenance and critical laboratory experiments will continue. Such access will be coordinated through Building Managers; the VCRO will be developing a list or critical access needs in the near term to minimize disruption.
- Be prepared that repairs performed by Facilities Services and other campus and non-campus service providers may be delayed.
- Be prepared that processing of visas by the federal government may be delayed, resulting in delayed appointments. The Berkeley International Office and is working on an FAQ related to our international research workforce.

Steps you can take now to ensure continuity of critical functions in case of a severe outbreak:

- Identify procedures and processes that require regular personnel attention (e.g., cell culture maintenance, animal studies).
- Assess and prioritize critical laboratory activities. Create an accurate inventory of laboratory chemicals and sensitive laboratory instrumentation and equipment, and share this information with your building manager and EH&S.
- Identify any research experiments that can be ramped down, curtailed, or delayed.
- Identify key personnel able to safely perform essential activities to insure the continuity of your laboratory's research capability.
- Ensure that you have access to up-to-date email and telephone contact information for your critical staff.
- Cross-train research staff to substitute for others who may be out sick or unable to come to work.
    - Ensure staff have the appropriate, up-to-date training.
    - Document critical step-by-step instructions for laboratory procedures.
    - Encourage all researchers to be familiar with each other's work if an absence would threaten the loss of experiments (such as which cells need transferring to new media, etc.)
- Coordinate with colleagues who have similar research activities to identify ways to ensure mutual support and coverage of critical activities.
- Review contingency plans and emergency procedures with researchers and staff.
- Maintain a sufficient inventory of critical supplies that may be impacted by global shipping delays. Inform your building manager if your lab relies on regularly-scheduled supplies such as liquid nitrogen, dry ice or helium. Coordinate those deliveries with building management.
- Consider installing remote control monitoring devices for critical equipment (e.g., -80C freezers, liquid nitrogen storage dewars, incubators).

- Communicate significant planned absences and/or lab closures to your EH&S Safety Advisors, business offices, and other key administrative units..
- Contact your departmental leadership, building manager and EH&S staff if you need assistance in reviewing your continuity plans.

Other safety considerations:

- Ensure that individuals performing critical tasks have been adequately trained and understand whom to contact with technical or safety questions.
- Avoid performing high-risk procedures alone. When working alone is necessary, exercise extreme caution.
- Ensure that research team members notify colleagues of their schedule when working alone for an extended period of time.
- Ensure that high-risk materials (radioactive, biohazards, chemicals) are properly secured.

Coronavirus research on campus:

- Note that all PIs must have Committee for Laboratory and Environmental Biosafety (CLEB) approval prior to performing any coronavirus research or work on campus (including to help state and federal agencies to screen patient samples). This includes requesting or accepting COVID-19 samples (patient or otherwise).

Please visit the **Research Continuity & Planning for COVID-19** and campus COVID-19 website for continual updates, additional guidance and resources.

If you are a manager who supervises UC Berkeley employees without email access, please circulate this information to all.

Please do not reply to this message

Berkeley
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA