

To AS&E Chairs and Directors

Re: Effective Social Distancing in a Lab Setting

With the arrival of COVID-19 in the wider Rochester community please ask your PIs with research labs (and/or comparable research spaces) to design and implement plans to limit the spread of the virus through effective social distancing practices. Issues to consider include the following:

1. Be aware that research is continuing but please design work shifts that limit occupancy\* in high use areas (e.g. areas where multiple pieces of equipment are used by multiple users).
2. Separate work shifts by times of robust laboratory cleaning
3. Be mindful of the number of people occupying office space and congregating in common areas.
4. Urge students to concentrate on non-lab related research activities (e.g. writing, data analysis) to accommodate new work shifts and/or to reduce overall lab load.
5. Consider other alternatives to working in the lab/research space that will bring forward your research program but also help achieve goals of social distancing (e.g. research group members working alone in offices).

We understand specific decisions can only be made with a PI in coordination with the Department Chair/Director. We strongly urge you to seek and share individual laboratory/research space plans that address these issues.

**Following SMD, AS&E Enrollment in human subject research studies should be placed on hold immediately.** For more information about which studies this new policy will affect, what steps to take for paused studies and steps to safeguard study participants, visit the updated – and public – SMD [COVID-19 Guidance for Human Subject Researchers website](#).

**We wish to emphasize that your business continuity plan should include information on critical needs for your labs if there is a need to make additional restrictions on activities.** Many of you may be aware of Harvard's decision to drastically reduce activity in its research labs. We are not anticipating such a decision here but everyone should be prepared, should the situation evolve in that direction.

Finally, we provide some additional helpful practices to share with your PIs below.

John Tarduno AS&E Dean for Research

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\*To date the University guidance is to limit groups to 25 or less. This is much too large for a laboratory/research space setting. In practice, limiting usage to 1-3 people would be desirable, but we understand the exact number will depend on the nature of the laboratory/research space. In any case you, should communicate to all lab users that they should not be using the laboratory/research space if they are ill or think they have been exposed to Covid 19.

## Helpful Practices for Laboratory/Research Group Members:

- Develop a lab or research team group phone tree. Make sure that everyone in your group can contact each other.
- Reconsider your experiments or research activity. Every lab, research group and every individual researcher should carefully consider the experiments or activities that they have in progress, or planned. How might they be impacted if members of your group (or yourself) were out sick, or needed to self-isolate for 2 weeks? What would happen if your lab or research space was temporarily inaccessible, because it was being decontaminated? Now is not the time to start a large, long-term experiment or project that depends on a specific research space. And if you have such an experiment/project in progress, please think carefully about how you might preserve what you have, or possibly stop the activity early if you had to.
- Do some cross-training. Who knows how to change the LN2 tank? Who places the orders for your lab/research group? **Backup for all routine lab or research group tasks would be wise.**
- School and daycare closings will create unanticipated childcare responsibilities - which will in turn require more flexible work schedules for those affected (including the ability to work from home, when feasible). Please talk to your PI/supervisor and let them know your situation. In creating a lab shift schedule, please also remember safety issues. **If it is not safe to work alone on a given laboratory procedure please do not do so.**
- Don't congregate in public spaces. Try to eat lunch at an off-peak time, so that you're not in the break room with a large group of other people.