

May 12, 2020

AS&E Faculty:

Redesign: Preparation for Initial Laboratory Reactivation

We continue to acquire new information about the corona virus and its spread, but the months ahead remain filled with uncertainty. Current trends indicate that this is likely to be a prolonged event. Infection rates, particularly in Monroe county, remain low. The good news is that our health care system is not being over-run, the bad news is, we will be slow to develop “herd” immunity, and, as a community, will remain susceptible to reinfection, the so-called second wave, for some time. This has significant implications about raising the level of research activity in research labs, as this is likely to take place over a time when social distancing still needs to be practiced to avoid rampant spread and a renewed crisis.

Our reopening must first and foremost consider health and safety. Accordingly, together with input from AS&E Chairs and Directors and University Health representatives we have composed guidelines (below) for labs approved for reopening.

The schedule of reopening must abide by policy established by Governor Cuomo, which limits Phase 1 reopening to select areas deemed as “essential research”. Our government relations team continues to work hard to gain clarity on these areas and to argue for the inclusion of more AS&E research areas.

Currently, the following area can be considered for phase 1 reopening, which we anticipate will commence on May 18th:

1. *Research in support of national defense and national security-related operations supporting the U.S. Government or a contractor to the U.S. government (e.g., Department of Defense funded research).*
2. *Biomedical research*
3. *Research supporting essential manufacturing including:*
 - *chemicals*
 - *medical equipment/instruments*
 - *pharmaceuticals*
 - *telecommunications*
 - *microelectronics/semi-conductor*
 - *agriculture/farms*

To be included in the initial AS&E lab restart, approvals will be needed by Department/Chairs, the relevant School Dean (Dean Wendi Heinzelman for the Hajim School; Dean Gloria Culver for School of Arts & Sciences) and the Research Dean (John Tarduno). PIs should initiate the process by requesting approval from their Chairs/Directors. In such requests, PIs should explicitly explain (including funding sources) how their research falls into one of the areas above defined by the State. If an AS&E lab is approved to proceed in phase 1, only that research

within the category of “essential” research can be conducted. Chairs/Directors will also need to approve the personnel plan for lab operation described in the guidelines.

Arguably the biggest challenge for all labs will be to compose lab usage plans that limits personnel (at any one time), and together limits the total building occupancy so we can meet social distancing goals.

Note, AS&E researchers with labs in SMD must follow SMD restart guidelines.

To date, the University has had remarkable success in limiting the number of COVID-19 cases on campus. We must continue a diligent approach to protect the health of our community and to insure the continuation of the research we all want to pursue.

Sincerely,

John Tarduno
AS&E Dean for Research

Guidelines for an initial redesign of AS&E laboratory research activities:

1. **Health Status: Dr. ChatBot.** We are asking that all approved lab users use the app developed and implemented by ECE and the SMD Health Lab (Dr. ChatBot). This will help identify workers with symptoms before they come to work and provide directions to them about self-quarantine and who to contact. Workers who develop symptoms while at work should secure their work space, notify other lab members, and notify University Health Services, and then leave campus as quickly as possible. Details will be forthcoming about Dr. ChatBot access for AS&E.
2. **Training.** Training modules to be accessed through MyPath will be required for approved returning workers that will emphasize the health concerns and provide directions and cleaning protocols. Notices will be sent soon about availability of the training.
3. **Remote Work.** *This initial redesign is not meant to replace work that can be done remotely.* We need to keep building and office occupancy to a minimum. Therefore, faculty and graduate students should not be returning to their offices. The only personnel who should return are those who are engaged in laboratory-based research.
 - a. All group meetings, project discussions and seminars should continue to be conducted electronically (Zoom, Phone, FaceTime). River Campus questions about zoom should be addressed to the ITS help desk (585) 275-2000.
 - b. For remote access to computer networks contact:
ITS (River Campus) <https://tech.rochester.edu/>, (585) 275-2000
4. **Limits on laboratory personnel numbers. Laboratories are limited to 1 – 3 individuals per PI group** so that we can avoid over-crowding of public spaces in research buildings and limit potential cross contamination in research spaces with individuals with COVID-19 who are asymptomatic. While in the lab bear in mind these social distancing guidelines: separation distances should be 6 ft or more and no more than one person is allowed in a lab at a time per 250 - 300 sq ft of space.

Individual PIs can request exceptions to these limits but they must be approved by the Departmental Chair or Director and the Research Dean. Again, please remember that over-crowding concerns apply not just to individual laboratories but to building load as well.

PIs may wish to consider shifts if they want to involve more than 3 total lab personnel to always keep lab load within these guidelines. PIs should complete a template that lists lab personnel and shifts; these templates must be approved by Chairs/Directors. Department

Chair/Directors should send their approved templates to Greg Meyer (gmeyer@ur.rochester.edu) who will coordinate with facilities and building security staff.

Please defer where possible lab procedures requiring more than one person in close proximity. This includes training of new students – please try to envision new approaches incorporating remote learning or teaching using social distancing. If these procedures are absolutely necessary, please seek prior approval from your Chair/Director and please see the extra precautions needed under PPE (below).

5. **Deliveries.** For the initial AS&E reopening, PI's and their approved personnel should handle receipt of deliveries needed for their operation. This is not a general opening for support staff. If assistance is needed in receipt of larger items please contact Greg Meyer (gmeyer@ur.rochester.edu).
6. **Limits on office use and occupancy.** As noted above, office work should continue to take place at remote locations (at home). For those approved for laboratory work, and for rare research tasks requiring access to individual offices, office occupation should be limited to one person. If use is needed by multiple people, a shift schedule should be devised. For office spaces larger than 400 sq. ft., exceptions may be possible, but need to be pre-approved by Department Chairs with consideration of their impact on building loads and crowding of public spaces.
7. **PPE requirements.** Procedural face masks (note these are different from cloth masks) are required in all AS&E labs and common areas (hallways, restrooms, break areas). Face masks must be worn in public and any time there is more than one person in a given space, including times of brief interaction between co-workers or friends, and anytime another person is within six feet. (Employees working alone in their office do not need to wear a mask.) Clean and disinfect personal and shared work areas (desktop, keyboards, chairs, etc.) before and after use. Treat everything as if it is contaminated. Wash hands frequently. Avoid touching face, eyes and mouth.

For the special and approved cases of personnel working in close proximity, we have the following additional guidelines from University Health services: If the interaction is less than 5 minutes, no additional PPE beyond masks is needed; if the interaction is for longer, gloves and eye protection are needed. Acceptable eye protection includes face masks, goggles or disposable safety glasses (face masks and goggles should be cleaned after use).

8. **Availability of Masks and Cleaning supplies.** Sterilizing wipes and masks will be available at central locations in each of the AS&E Research Buildings. Lab workers so should be instructed by PIs to wipe down common touch points as they begin work and when their work is done. Details on the distribution nodes for these supplies in AS&E will be forthcoming. These nodes will also have supplies of safety glasses for approved experiments requiring close interaction.

9. **Lunch and breaks.** Approved individuals accessing labs are encouraged to eat in their offices (and not in labs) or locations where 6' separation is possible; disinfect public surfaces before/after eating. Occupancy of breakrooms and other areas of potential congregation should be limited either by signage and/or by eliminating seating (if not already implemented).
10. **General departmental office use.** Please note the AS&E initial access is limited just to laboratories. Access to, and use of common office facilities (e.g. copying machines, etc.) is not part of this phase of reopening.
11. **Human subjects research.** Guidelines for restart will follow a different time table; the plan and specific guidelines are available at:
<https://www.urmc.rochester.edu/coronavirus/coronavirus-research/guidance-for-researchers/human-subjects-research.aspx>
12. **Research occurring in the Library.** Although the physical spaces of the River Campus Libraries may not be immediately available, access to library digital collections, remote librarians, support for digital humanistic research, data services, and interlibrary loan services have been and will continue to be fully available to the research community. Remote access to SAS, SPSS, JMP, STATA, and Adobe Creative Cloud will be available. Limited access to labs within the library for AS&E faculty may be available, following the social distancing personnel guidelines above (i.e., item 4), with approval of Dean Mary Ann Mavrinnac. Questions can be directed to Dean Mavrinnac (maryann.mavrinnac@rochester.edu) or her designee.
13. **URNano.** URNano will have limited access to insure social distancing. Access requires approval by both Brian McIntyre (brian.mcintyre@rochester.edu) and Nick Bigelow (nicholas.bigelow@rochester.edu).
14. **Other lab interdependencies:** Before restarting your lab, identify other departments or labs that you receive services or support from and verify they can support your activities.
15. **Travel.** If travel restrictions are lifted by NY State and the University of Rochester lifts its travel restrictions, researchers can travel to pursue their research. When visiting other institutions, researchers must abide by that institution's guidelines. However, during travel, they must abide by the AS&E guidelines described above, insuring social distancing and use of PPE.
16. **Compliance.** We must all contribute to making social distancing in a laboratory setting work. If you see any congregations of people, please feel free to contact Greg Meyer (gmeyer@ur.rochester.edu). Please feel free to distribute this contact email address for reporting to your students.
17. **Wash your hands often and well!**