UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA   ACADEMIC SENATE – MERCED DIVISION

COMMITTEE ON RESEARCH (COR)
Minutes of Meeting
Friday, May 29, 2020
3:00 – 4:00 pm - Zoom

I.   **Draft Guidelines for UCM Research Ramp-Up**

CoR Chair Scheibner, VCORED Traina, and VPDGE Zatz asked for input from CoR members on the draft UCM research ramp up guidelines in preparation of an FAQ document that will be created to accompany the guidelines.

VPDGE Zatz stated that the goal of the research relaunch is to allow faculty researchers who need to utilize campus facilities to relaunch their research activities within a set of protocols designed to mitigate risk. Human subject research, however, is dependent on the rules of IRB; this type of work is still considered too risky to resume due to the level of human contact. Approximately 150 faculty members are still conducting essential research, with 40 faculty members on campus at any given time. The goal is to expand to 500 faculty members conducting research on campus, with approximately 150 faculty members at any given time. The faculty was surveyed a few weeks ago about the nature of their research, their personnel needs, location, etc. The campus administration matched the survey responses to the campus buildings in order to map out logistics to the square footage of research space. The draft plan that CoR is being asked to review was drafted by the campus Research Relaunch work group to allow for research to be ramped up as long as the campus is certain that faculty or their students and research staff are not experiencing symptoms of coronavirus and are abiding by physical distancing and face covering rules. Faculty members' research teams have to be spread out both in terms of physical distance and shifts so that research space occupancy rules are not violated. Research personnel can work in shifts during the day, evenings, and on the weekends per the faculty members' discretion.

Faculty PIs will be required to formulate their own research plans that detail, among other things, who will be working in their lab space at any given time. The plans must be approved by department chairs, deans, VCORED, and the EVC/Provost. Faculty PIs will be responsible for monitoring their research space and their students, staff, and post docs to ensure that their teams are adhering to their own plan's protocols.

VPDGE Zatz emphasized that the draft plan that was formulated by the Research Relaunch work group applies to all university research space, which includes field stations, Castle, and campus. The details that still have to be finalized include monitoring when personnel are entering or exiting rooms, implementing a virus symptom monitoring mechanism, and signage in the labs and on campus. VPDGE Zatz stated that the work group has already received input from the campus senior leadership team and now requests input from CoR. After the work group

members revise the draft plan in response to input received, the next step is to hold a virtual faculty town hall next week before issuing a final version of the plan to the faculty. The plan is to open SE1 between June 15th – 17th and then open SE2. The 2020 research buildings will be opened after SE2.

VCORED Traina stated that he is working on drafting an FAQ to accompany the work group's policy document. He asked CoR members for potential questions that should be included in an FAQ. One question he already intends to include is who will provide sanitization chemicals and face coverings for faculty and their staff and personnel to use in the labs (the campus will). VCORED Traina added that he is also drafting an executive summary to accompany the policy document and FAQ.

VCORED Traina emphasized that campus facilities staff have a lot of work to complete in SE1 and SE2 before they can be reopened. SE2 may be reopened by the beginning of July. He pointed out that the core facilities in SE2 are still operable and will continue as such.

A CoR member stated that faculty moves to the 2020 buildings are not addressed in the work group's policy document. VCORED Traina answered that Facilities is crafting a separate document to address faculty moves to the 2020 buildings. However, he suggested adding a reference to the FAQ about how the moves will align with the research plan.

A CoR member asked how field stations fit in with the research relaunching process. VCORED Traina replied that field stations will have to operate under similar campus restrictions and guidelines. Yosemite National Park is a special case as it has residential facilities with visitors; the UC system still working on how to manage the residential field stations. One idea is to allow the residential field stations to open if the university can contract with a commercial cleaning company to perform deep cleaning in between sets of visitors. VCORED Traina suggested he could add this point to the FAQ. He pointed out that the university may have to defer to the federal government since the park is federal property.

A CoR member requested clarification on the requirement to wear a face covering on campus. VCORED Traina answered that employees and students must wear a face covering on campus at all times unless they are alone in a private office or equivalent private space. A CoR member asked whether the campus will offer a standard operating procedure for students who return to campus to work in a lab. VCORED Traina replied that there is an app that each lab member will have to use each day that documents their current health status. VPDGE Zatz added that it may be necessary to also institute temperature monitoring. This can be done in different ways. An individual could stand at the door to the buildings to check lab members' temperatures but that is likely infeasible. The campus could purchase ceiling thermometers similar to those used in some international airports but those are likely quite costly. Until a temperature monitoring mechanism is implemented, the work group is suggesting that faculty, research personnel, and students abide by the university-approved safety protocols.

VCORED Traina pointed out that the work group's policy document mentions a sign-in process for faculty research space. For the purpose of contact tracing in the case of a virus outbreak, it is

critical to monitor who is entering and exiting the labs. One suggestion is to create an exit key card system for the lab doors but this is not feasible; an individual's life would be in danger if there is a fire or accident and they cannot locate their key card to leave the building. UC Santa Barbara has printed QR codes on each door whereby as individuals enter and exit a building, the data is transmitted to a central database. VCORED Traina acknowledged that any monitoring system will have a few flaws but it is important to institute some kind of system. VPDGE Zatz added that faculty PIs need to account for situations when their students and research personnel decide to swap shifts. These details need to be worked out before June 15 and the reopening of SE1.

A CoR member asked about situation in which an individual in a faculty's research group is displaying symptoms of illness. VCORED Traina replied that this scenario has been discussed at length and potential solutions have been rapidly evolving due to issues of privacy. The campus needs to have a clear policy about this situation in order to mitigate risks. Private citizens must report symptoms to the county Public Health Department and that is what we may have to suggest for campus students and employees while we wait for a concrete campus wide policy. VPDGE Zatz stated that everyone on campus needs to understand that we are a community and we need to keep our community safe. We know that faculty care about their own research (their labs could be shut down if they violate health and safety protocols) but we also know they care about their students and colleagues.

A CoR member suggested that faculty PIs would benefit from clarification about the logistics of COVID-19 testing. VCORED Traina responded that the campus plans to be able to coordinate testing on-campus testing but that may not be in place until August or September. The CoR member asked what authority faculty PIs have under the law to require a lab member to get tested for COVID-19. VCORED Traina replied that he will confirm what faculty rights are in this situation. He added that, independent of the coronavirus, any employee who is ill and exhibiting symptoms should not be at work and faculty can ask them to leave. A CoR member asked how to handle this situation with students. VCORED Traina suggested that the institution can ask them to attest that they have no symptoms. But this may not be feasible given that individuals can be asymptomatic and still have the virus.

VCORED Traina then discussed situations in which faculty have shared research spaces with other faculty. In these situations, affected faculty members need to formulate a staffing plan in order to remain at the allowable occupancy rate. Faculty PIs have the responsibility to monitor the staffing levels to ensure they do not exceed the density threshold. The Research Relaunch work group will offer templates for faculty to use in drafting these shared space staffing plans. A CoR member asked whether a student or a faculty member could sit in an office to wait if they have a two-hour incubation period for a lab experiment rather than go home and return to campus. VCORED Traina confirmed that this would be allowed as long as they abide by physical distancing and occupancy rules. And, this scenario would have to be included in faculty PIs' research plans that are approved by department chairs, deans, VCORED, and EVC/Provost. VCORED Traina agreed that depending on what type of research faculty do, they and their students and personnel do not want to stay in the lab and be exposed to chemicals; it is

understandable that they would seek a private, alternative space to wait to finish the experiment.

VCORED Traina suggested that he will add to the FAQ that faculty members' presence on campus as it relates to research is only allowed if their work can only be done on campus and not remotely.

A CoR member pointed that in SE2, there is lab space that is currently empty due to some faculty already moving to 2020 buildings. For faculty who return to SE2 in July, can they occupy a lab space that was originally configured for four people if they only have two lab members as long as the PI states in the research plan that they are practicing physical distancing? VPDGE Zatz confirmed that such situations should be included in faculty's research plans.   A CoR member stated that it would be helpful for faculty who conduct many different types of research (theoretical, computational, etc.) to see examples of research plans in the work group's policy document. VCORED Traina agreed and stated that he will add this to the FAQ document. He added that, for equity purposes, the campus may ask faculty for evidence that they are rotating students and lab personnel's shifts so that the same students and personnel are not being made to always work the night and weekend shifts.

A CoR member pointed out the section of the policy that refers to reporting a lack of compliance. He asked whether there will be an anonymous reporting mechanism for students who are reluctant to report their faculty PIs. VCORED Traina and VPDGE Zatz agreed with this idea. VCORED Traina stated that Emergency Management would be notified of a compliance violation, but that someone on the monitoring team would go to the lab and check on the situation. Too many violations will get the lab shut down. It is important for faculty in shared research spaces to always be compliant so that their colleagues' work is not compromised. VCORED Traina added that the campus needs to formulate a communication plan for faculty, staff, students, and post docs so that nobody pressures each other to violate the rules.

A CoR member suggested placing cameras at the entrances and exits of the campus buildings to monitor occupancy rates given that it is illegal for cameras to be placed in labs. VCORED Traina replied that he believes the buildings already have cameras. He stated that the campus may have to designate an entry door and an exit door to minimize physical and have directional arrows on the floor to direct foot traffic. SE1 will be a pilot. Every building is different and Facilities staff have to complete a lot of work before the buildings are reopened. For example, the work group is recommending that Facilities staff increase the level of air exchange in the buildings if possible to make them more ventilated.

A CoR member asked if faculty PIs in a shared research space should submit a joint staffing plan. VCORED Traina responded that they can, or they can simply reference their shared space in their own, individual staffing plans. The coordination of schedules in shared research space is the most critical component.

VCORED Traina asked for CoR members' input on labs that contain several small side rooms that hold instrumentation. He suggested that the square footage in the research plans be defined as square footage in the main lab area and not the small side rooms. CoR members agreed.

VCORED Traina stated that faculty may require personal protection equipment for their research independent of COVID-19, such as for fire protection, radioactive materials, and caustic reagents. Faculty will have the same responsibility they have always had with regard to this protection equipment and purchase it off their grants. <u>This protection equipment supersedes the lower levels of personal protection equipment required for COVID-19</u>.

A CoR member stated that he has a server on campus that he would like to check on. Is he or a member of his lab allowed to drop by campus periodically to check on the server? VCORED Traina confirmed that he is allowed to do so, and suggested he add this to the FAQ. Any research activity that has been allowed under essential research operations can still continue. Faculty who are currently doing essential research will still have to design a new research plan for the ramping up of campus activities. VPDGE Zatz pointed out that while faculty PIs are responsible for monitoring and enforcing their research plans, it is understandable that they cannot come to campus regularly especially when dealing with child care. VCORED Traina suggested adding a reference to the FAQ that faculty are allowed to exceed the occupancy rule <u>temporarily</u> if they are simply dropping by their labs to ensure their students and personal are in compliance.

VPDGE Zatz stated that she will revise the work group's policy this weekend and VCORED Traina will draft the accompanying FAQ document. She asked CoR members to send them any additional input.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 4:00 pm.

Attest: Michael Scheibner, CoR Chair