Dear Research Colleagues:

Many of you have contacted School/College Deans’ Offices, the Graduate School and the Office of Postdoctoral Education with questions regarding the efforts of graduate students and postdoctoral fellows engaged in mentored research while under the **Limited Business Operations** plan.

Similarly, numerous graduate students and postdoctoral fellows have contacted us in the past several days with concerns related to their dissertation defenses already scheduled, delays in their research productivity and interruptions in ongoing studies, and laboratory resources, including research animals. They have also shared concerns that mentors’ expectations may be outside of the guidelines put forth. Students and postdocs are experiencing significant stress, and some have personal health and family concerns that are magnified at this time.

As noted in the guidance for mentored research sent out on Friday, March 13th, 2020 from the Office of the Vice President for Research, it is expected that research mentors articulate a plan for their trainees and allow flexibility due to illness or other personal concerns. **As of now, there is no plan to close research laboratories. Absolutely NO CHILDREN should be in laboratories at any time.**

**Mentor Guidelines:**

- Clearly communicate which studies are absolutely critical and which lab members should do these experiments. Crucial experiments include those in progress that must be completed within a specific timeframe to avoid major data loss, those needed for an upcoming dissertation defense, and/or maintenance of research animals, cell cultures, liquid nitrogen, CO2 tanks, etc. over the coming weeks.
- Do not start any new studies.
- Curtail all studies that are not immediately necessary and can be postponed for the next few weeks.
- All trainees and laboratory personnel who are not involved in the most crucial studies should be instructed to read, analyze data, and write manuscripts, grants, thesis, and dissertation proposals at home.
- All trainees and laboratory personnel must keep their cell phone on them at all times.
- Trainees and laboratory personnel should let faculty mentors know when they are in lab and when they leave.
- When several trainees and laboratory personnel need to be present in the laboratory, best practices for social distancing must be used, including staggering work times, working 6’ apart, and limiting interactions. However, no one should work alone. If that is unavoidable, work when there is someone in an office on the same hall.
- If no one in your lab is able to be on site, there may other lab personnel who would be willing to check on your lab. If you are in your lab and see that a package has been delivered outside an empty lab, please secure it somewhere safe (especially if needing to be put in fridge/freezer), and contact someone in that lab. Further, if you are on the floor and hear a beeping alarm (freezer, incubator, etc.), please notify someone if no one is present. **Collaboration will be key at this time, so be sure everyone’s contact information in your lab and on your floor is readily accessible.**
Research Supplies:

- Purchase Orders (POs) for urgent research supplies will be approved at the level of the School/College Dean’s Office, except for the SOM, which will be approved at the department level due to the size of the School.
- Shipping and Receiving will be fully staffed unless research supply orders dictate otherwise. Those with questions regarding the delivery of their shipment will need to contact Shipping and Receiving at upstrack@uab.edu.

We are aware that these measures may slow the pace of significant research, but we greatly appreciate your efforts to work together during this challenging time. By enacting these measures, we can play a small role to “flatten the curve” in terms of spreading the virus and consequently be able to get back to our research as soon as possible. This is a quickly evolving situation, so please watch for updates regarding our policies and guidelines.

Also, please be mindful of the additional stress being experienced by you and your lab members. They need strong support, patience, and guidance during these unprecedented times.

We appreciate your thoughtfulness and leadership. Please reach out if additional information or assistance is needed.

Best,

Lori McMahon, PhD., Dean, Graduate School
Lisa Schwiebert, PhD., Senior Associate Dean, Graduate School/Office of Postdoc Education
David Schneider, PhD., Associate Dean, Graduate School
Tika Benveniste, Ph.D., Senior Vice Dean for Basic Sciences, School of Medicine (SOM)