



UNIVERSITY of NORTH CAROLINA WILMINGTON

Memorandum

To: UNCW Research Community

From: Dr. Stuart Borrett, Associate Provost for Research and Innovation, and
Dr. Christopher Finelli, Dean of the Graduate School and Interim Executive
Director for Marine Science

Re: Research Update : COVID-19 : Phased Research Ramp Up

Date: May 20, 2020

Congratulations on successfully completing the Spring 2020 semester! With the COVID-19 pandemic and the physical closure of campus, this was a hard-earned success - well done! While research and scholarship at UNCW never stopped completely, the campus closure required a ramp-down of some research and restricted access to specialized facilities (e.g., laboratories), equipment, and field work. We are writing to you today to announce a process for a first phase for a research ramp-up at UNCW. This will not be a full return to standard operations. However, this will enable some additional research activities to occur as safely as possible.

The goal of this phased approach is to **keep the UNCW students, staff, faculty, and the broader community safe and healthy during the COVID-19 pandemic, while ensuring a successful research ramp-up.** In this first phase of research, ramp-up builds from the following starting points:

- Campus access remains restricted. Thus, any research and scholarship that can be accomplished remotely or from a telework/virtualized environment, should be completed off campus. This includes analyzing data, writing papers and proposals, and mentoring and team meetings. Research access will be granted only for use of specialized facilities and equipment, and only when they can be provided safely.
- The research ramp-up builds on the previous definition of *Critical Research Activities* as related to laboratory and field-based research, which included:
 - research related to COVID-19 and consequences of the pandemic
 - research that would be impossible to start or could not be restarted without significant investment of resources (e.g., time [> 1 year], finances [$> \$15,000$])
 - efforts to maintain or preserve living organisms and sensitive equipment
 - sponsored projects for which the sponsor is not providing flexibility due to the COVID-19 pandemic
 - activities specifically requested by a U.S. government sponsor to continue during this time
 - research that is time-sensitive and critical to graduate students experiments for graduation this calendar year.

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- Face-to-face human subjects research is not permitted.
- Travel outside of North Carolina is not permitted.
- As campus access remains restricted, research approval does not guarantee full-campus services. For example, current campus restrictions on HR, purchasing, mail service, library service, etc., still apply.

Procedure

Researchers whose work requires access to campus facilities can apply for expanded research access by submitting a **UNCW On-Campus Research Continuity Request (COVID-19)** through **InfoReady** (<https://uncw.infoready4.com/#manageCompetitionsDetail/1815397>). In addition to the questionnaire, applicants will need to include a draft Standard Operating Procedure based on [this example SOP](https://uncw.edu/research/documents/sop-for-cdme-lab-and-field-20200519.pdf) (<https://uncw.edu/research/documents/sop-for-cdme-lab-and-field-20200519.pdf>). These requests will be reviewed by an ad-hoc committee co-chaired by the Associate Provost for Research and Innovation and the Executive Director of Marine Science. The initial date for consideration is 12 p.m. on Friday, May 22, 2020, and subsequent applications will be reviewed weekly. Final SOPs must be approved and necessary PPE must be received (from EH&S) before work can begin.

This first phase of the research ramp-up is expected to be active while campus access remains restricted. Its continuation depends on the university, local, state, and federal guidance and the COVID-19 disease dynamics. Investigators should be prepared for further research ramp-up or ramp-down activities as conditions change.

For any questions about this process or safety concerns, please contact the Office of the Associate Provost for Research and Innovation at covid19research@uncw.edu.