



UNIVERSITY of NORTH CAROLINA WILMINGTON

November 6, 2020

Dear Colleagues,

I am feeling the stress. This point in the semester has always felt like crunch time. The exciting shiny luster of the semester has faded, and it is time to dig deep to complete courses, finish (start?) final projects and papers, encourage students and colleagues, and consider final grades. The semester end is in sight, but there is still much to do. This semester is further layered with the consistent COVID-19 pandemic challenges. These range from concern about friends, family, and ourselves becoming infected, struggling to adapt our working modes for those of us lucky enough to still have jobs, and other family challenges such as assisting children with learning from home and isolated and lonely elders needing care. We also need to acknowledge the deep anxiety some of us feel about what appears to be the fraying of our social fabric and the rancorous political environment of this week's election. I feel it, and I am sure many of you do too, and it is important that we acknowledge this reality.

Research Success

Despite the stress and challenges of the semester, we are accomplishing amazing and impactful research, scholarship, and creative work at UNCW. I deeply appreciate the congratulatory emails that Dr. Holman is sending from the Library to authors of recent publications. For example, recent scholarly publications have included investigations of the [impact of COVID-19 on women and resilience mechanisms](#), [music education](#), the [business of sports](#), [life satisfaction of black adults](#), the [gendered pipeline to political power](#), [black sea bass aquaculture](#), and [seagrass resilience](#). These examples just scratch the surface, but provide a sense of the breadth of work underway at UNCW. The Research and Grants first quarter [report](#) for fiscal year 2021 (July to September 2020) showed that UNCW faculty, staff, and students have submitted 69 proposals requesting over \$12 M to support research and programs at UNCW, and that 49 new projects were awarded a total of nearly \$4 M. These funds will fuel new discoveries, support applied learning for students, provide faculty with the time and resources to conduct new research, and contribute to solving problems critical to North Carolina and the world. I can't wait to see the impact of this nascent work.

Winter Break

As we wrap up the Fall semester, we are also planning for the Winter break and Spring semester. While I hope you will take the opportunity to rest and recover during the winter teaching break, this is often essential time for faculty and students to prepare for the next semester and to advance research and scholarship. With the exception of the official UNCW holidays (Nov. 26 and 27, and Dec. 24 – Jan. 1), campus facilities and services will remain open for research. As all UNCW employees are being encouraged to take time and exercise greater work flexibility between Thanksgiving and January 20, please make sure to contact the support

OFFICE OF THE ASSOCIATE PROVOST FOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

staff early for assistance and let them know of impending deadlines so they can provide the support you need.

Here are more operational details about the Office of Research and Innovation, the Library, and the Center for Marine Science.

Office of Research and Innovation

The [Sponsored Programs and Research Compliance](#) (SPARC) office, the [Research Integrity Office](#) (RIO), and the [Office of Innovation and Commercialization](#) (OIC) will be open and continue to operate remotely. Please let us know what we can do to best support your research. If you are working on a proposal, please consult the new SPARC [Menu of Services](#).

Library

Randall Library will provide modified virtual research services and contactless material pickup from November 30 – December 20, 2020 and January 4 - 19, 2021. For more details on services and hours, see: https://library.uncw.edu/news/finals_and_intersession

Center for Marine Science

Marine operations, seawater support, and core facilities will continue functioning, albeit with modified protocols to account for COVID-19 related safety measures. In the absence of further restrictions mandated by the state or by the university and with the exception of scheduled holiday closures, the Center for Marine Science will remain open and will continue to support faculty and student research. Anyone requiring access to core facilities during the winter break should contact the facility coordinator to confirm availability and scheduling needs. All facility users should adhere to posted guidance for room occupancy and foot traffic, as well as adhere to established COVID-19 protocols ([link](#)).

Spring Semester Planning

Preparing for the Spring semester, it appears that COVID-19 will still be active. As such, Spring research operations and activities are expected to be similar to the Fall 2020 semester. Campus will be open for research by faculty and students using the campus safety guidance and adaptations for operating during the pandemic (see the [summary of guidance for research](#) and the [Best for the Nest](#) guidance). Purchasing, hiring, and travel are expected to still be restricted and require additional approvals and time, similar to our current operations.

Depending on the virus dynamics, it is possible that we will encounter a scenario where campus needs to again transition to highly restricted access for all students and employees. For example, this would be necessary if campus, local, and/or state infection case counts surge and our health and safety officials return our community to a stay-at-home order. At that point, we would need to ramp down on-campus research similar to what we did in March. If we encounter this scenario, our assumption is that our collective primary goal will be saving lives, and on-campus research will largely pause in deference to this goal until conditions allow us to return to campus. While we are all hoping that we do not encounter this scenario again, I encourage all Principal Investigators to complete the [Research Continuity Planning Template](#)

created with [Environmental Health & Safety \(EH&S\)](#) as a tool to help research groups prepare for disruptions due to emergencies such as another potential pandemic, hurricane, or winter storm. Please contact EH&S if you have questions about the template.

Conclusion

While this has been a challenging semester, UNCW research and innovation continues to be active and productive. Well done! The institutional goal is to continue to provide you with the same access and support needed to keep your research programs on track, engaging students in high impact applied learning through research, and solving basic and applied problems that contribute to the public good.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stuart Borrett". The signature is stylized with a large initial "S" and "B".

Stuart Borrett
Associate Provost for Research & Innovation