**Re-entry plan for research in the College of Medicine**

**Principles and Framework**

*Recommendations of the college’s committee on increasing activity in laboratory-based biomedical research*

May 13, 2020

**Directive**

* Increase the level of activity of laboratory-based research, including that involving laboratory animals. The goal is to restore research activities—agnostic to field or topic—across departments in a stepwise manner, ultimately to normal capacity.

**Principles**

* The overarching requirement is that all aspects of the plan are designed, implemented and maintained to meet guidelines from public health (CDC, etc.), the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the Drexel Office of Research and Innovation, and the Drexel Office of Environmental Health & Safety (EHS) to permit the work of faculty, staff, and students in a safe environment.
* All individuals to wear appropriate masks
* As dictated by the activities, individuals to wear other personal protection equipment (PPE)(see below)
* All activities will be conducted to maintain dictated social distancing (6 feet between people), in order to minimize risk of transmission of infectious disease
* Protocols will be followed for disinfection of laboratory surfaces and surfaces within University Laboratory Animal Research (ULAR) facilities
* After an initial approval process, chairs will have the responsibility and flexibility to manage the activity within their departments to meet the overall target metric (e.g., 33%, 67%)(see below)
* Studies from any field on any topic will be permitted, including initiating new experiments, with the understanding that the overall departmental target and governing requirements and guidelines are met.
* An educational program on COVID-19 disease characteristics, risk factors, and prevention will be required of all personnel

**Research planning, review and management**

* The initial plan to meet ramping up activity to 33% (then 67%) will be prepared by the department chair.
* The target percentage is determined at the level of the university
* Activity must be scheduled, distributed and maintained to meet the social distancing requirement.
* Person density recommendations may be developed, but the actual configuration of individual laboratories will influence the number of people who can work safely in any space.
* Research in any field or on any topic is permissible.
* New studies can begin if deemed necessary
* There will be priorities (e.g., work to complete long-term studies that paused; doctoral students close to completion of experiments; others to be defined)
* The chair will determine the studies that meet the priorities; other studies will fit into the remaining capacity up to 33%
* Scheduling shifts can help significantly in maintaining a safe level of activity, but chairs have the flexibility to use any scheduling strategy that they think will optimize safety and productive work in their own departments
* The department chair will submit the initial plan to the Vice Dean for Research for review, discussion and approval.
* The Vice Dean for Research will submit the approved plan for the department to the Executive Vice Provost for Research and Innovation, for review discussion, and approval.
* For laboratory animals, plans (including purchasing and breeding) must first be approved by the Executive Director of ULAR before being included in the overall departmental plan.
* After the initial approvals, for non-animal research, the department chair has primary responsibility and flexibility to manage activities within her/his department. the Vice Dean for Research and the Executive Vice Provost for Research are available for consultation, but new approvals are not necessary.
* After the initial approvals, any modification to the plan for the use of laboratory animals—including purchasing and breeding—must be approved by the Executive Director of ULAR.
* The same approach will be applied when a 67% level of activity is approved

**Preventative measures**

* Social distancing will be maintained
* Laboratory surfaces (including instruments) will be *disinfected* at the beginning of the day, between shifts/changes of personnel, and at the end of the day. If a person is symptomatic and coughs, sneezes or otherwise raises concern for contamination, it will be reported to the chair and EHS will be contacted for directions and assistance.
* All personnel (faculty, staff, students/trainees) will wear mask within the laboratory. The masks will be “community masks” when worn in situations that under normal conditions would not require a mask (e.g., preparation of buffer, pipetting non-hazardous material, running an HPLC). These masks will be for use in the laboratory only, as are laboratory coats. Instructions for cleaning will be provided.
* Laboratory coats will be worn using the same guidelines as under normal conditions.
* Higher level PPE (N-95 masks, surgical masks for work in the animal facility, face shields, disposable gowns in biocontainment areas or the animal facility), will be worn as indicated by best practice and applicable rules (EHS, CDC, etc.)
* Best practice for hand hygiene will be followed