



UNIVERSITY of MARYLAND BALTIMORE

March 18, 2020

Dear Colleagues:

We have sent out several communications with regard to the escalating novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic with the goals of keeping you informed and protecting the health and safety of all of our employees to the greatest extent possible. We will continue to closely monitor the outbreak of the coronavirus disease.

Given the fluidity of the situation and the increasing numbers of COVID-19-infected persons, significant state-wide efforts were announced yesterday to mitigate viral spread through social distancing, including the closing down of all bars, restaurants, gyms, and movie theaters. Therefore, our laboratories and core facilities should immediately transition from normal operations to the Moderate Research Restrictions status described in this document. Each of us should rapidly move to protect people and research programs, as well as key reagents and equipment. It is possible that more restrictions will be forthcoming, and you should be prepared for that transition as well. These restrictions would be based upon a variety of current events and governmental mandates.

All faculty, staff, and students should continue to follow existing UMB advice for [Step 2](#) and [Clinical Activities](#).

We wish to emphasize four points:

1. Graduate Research Assistants (GRAs) are students first and foremost. Therefore, every effort must be taken to keep them safe, consistent with the University's efforts to protect all students on campus. Accordingly, GRAs should not be designated as essential and every reasonable effort should be made to have them engage with and continue their research activities remotely. [See guidance here](#).
2. Post-doctoral fellows are subject to these restrictions as well.
3. We urge you each to be very judicious on the classification of individuals as essential research personnel. Overuse of that category is counter to our objective of lowering the risk of COVID-19 transmission.
4. UMB is not discontinuing research. We are prioritizing research activities that can be done remotely (data processing, proposals,

publications, patents, reviews, research group meetings, administrative meetings, etc.) in the interest of our safety.

Moderate Research Restrictions: UMB is currently operating at this level. At this time, laboratories should ramp down activities significantly, conducting only research activities that are in a critical phase at this time. Critical phase means that abandoning them would cause a major or irreversible loss in project viability. Principal Investigators should carefully consider this criteria before approving the continuation of research, and where a doubt exists, should discuss the options with their chair, director, or dean. This high-priority work should be a very limited set of the current laboratory bench-based experimentation. [See guidance here.](#)

One objective is to reduce the density of people in research spaces in order to comply with social distancing guidelines. We expect substantial reductions in personnel achieved through staggering or rotating personnel. A target for large crowded laboratories is 30 percent occupancy and certainly fewer than 10 people at a maximum. Team up with other labs, so-called "Buddy Labs," to provide immediate close-by contacts for personal security or to cover animal monitoring in the event that an entire lab becomes quarantined.

- For animal research: [See guidance here.](#)
- For clinical research: [See guidance here.](#)
- For teleworking using laboratory electronic data: [See guidance here.](#)
- For laboratory compliance with regulations and policies: [See guidance here.](#)

Severe Research Restrictions: UMB is not operating at this level, but it may become necessary. All basic and animal research experimentation requiring a physical presence at UMB would cease and laboratories would move to maintaining important instruments, animal colonies, cell lines, and similar resources.

All UMB grant support services will continue to operate as is. Federal agencies are introducing significant flexibilities due to the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, the National Institutes of Health has built in flexibility for researchers and institutions related to grants administration, fiscal issues, and time periods for no-cost extensions, as well as delayed submissions and reporting. Please reach out to your program director as soon as possible with concerns and questions.

Thank you for your strict adherence to these new policy guidelines. Your cooperation and support is greatly appreciated.

Sincerely,

Bruce E. Jarrell, MD, FACS
Interim President
University of Maryland, Baltimore

Laurie Locascio, PhD
Vice President for Research
University of Maryland



UNIVERSITY of MARYLAND BALTIMORE

March 19, 2020

Dear Colleagues:

Throughout this unprecedented health crisis, we are continually assessing the safety needs of our community, and adapting our policies and practices accordingly. A critical requirement of the education of a great many of our students is their clinical or field placement. These are situations that must be managed with extreme care for the protection of not only our students and faculty, but also the people they serve.

Beginning Saturday, March 21 at the latest, the following policy applies to UMB students in their clinical rotations, field placements, and internships (whether in health, social work, or law):

- All in-person experiential learning activities with patients and clients must be halted and converted to virtual or other options that do not involve in-person activities.
- Group in-person activities with faculty for alternative experiences, inclusive of classroom simulations, formulary assessments, etc., are allowed if strict measures are taken to follow the 6-foot social distancing rule and documentation of that requirement is maintained.
- For field placements that occur in social work and other similar programs, these experiences will be converted to remote activities.
- Options that include activities such as distance simulation, special online resources, and online activities such as telemedicine, telehealth, and telebehavioral health and similar means of care delivery are encouraged.

Exceptions to this policy: Some UMB students have unmet graduation requirements that are critical in order to graduate on time this year. Innovative solutions should be sought to meet these needs. For example, clinical and field rotations for a small number of students that can be deemed extremely safe from novel coronavirus (COVID-19) infection for students may be considered. These solutions must be approved by the dean of the relevant school in consultation with the provost. Careful records must be kept documenting the decision, the safety of the situation, and explicit measures taken to assure social distancing.

Thank you for your vigilance with these critical matters of safety as we work our way through this challenging time.

Sincerely,

Bruce E. Jarrell, MD, FACS
Interim President



UNIVERSITY *of* MARYLAND BALTIMORE

March 20, 2020

Dear Colleagues:

We would like to further clarify the recently posted UMB guidelines for designation of laboratory graduate students and postdoctoral fellows.

Post graduate fellows are employees of the university and may be designated as Level 1 Essential Employees. They should be included in the Principal Investigator's plan for maintaining laboratory function and resources, but they should not be unduly burdened with these responsibilities when compared to other employees in the laboratory. Personnel safety is of critical importance and it would therefore be best to perform needed tasks by creating a staggered schedule for staff to minimize the number of people in the laboratory workspace and maximize the degree of social distancing.

Graduate Research Assistants (GRAs) are students first and foremost and therefore every effort must be taken to keep them safe, consistent with the University's efforts to protect other students on campus. Accordingly, GRAs should not be designated as essential and every reasonable effort should be made to have them engage with and continue their research activities remotely. We will re-evaluate this requirement in two weeks when we have more information about the impact and trajectory of this pandemic.

GRAs may not be assigned employee categories such as Level 1 Essential Employee.

Exceptions: Although it is possible for a GRA to be granted access to the lab for an extraordinary and exceptional reason, the bar is very high. Any proposed request must be approved by the dean of the appropriate school and the UMB President.

Sincerely,

Bruce E. Jarrell, MD, FACS
Interim President
University of Maryland, Baltimore

Laurie Locascio, PhD
Vice President for Research
University of Maryland