

May 12, 2020

To: UNM Main and Branch Campus Faculty Investigators

From: Gabriel P. López, Vice President for Research 

RE: Best practices during limited operations and preparing for return of non-essential personnel and students to UNM Main and Branch Campus laboratories, research facilities, studios, and fabrication spaces

Yesterday President Stokes announced continuation of our current limited operations at least through June 1st. During this time, please make sure that all essential personnel working in research-related facilities¹ that you oversee observe, to the fullest extent possible, the following COVID-Safe Practices (CSPs) as mandated by the State:²

1. Limit operations to remote work to the greatest extent possible
2. Arrange workplaces to provide for 6 feet of distance between individuals wherever possible
3. Close common areas where personnel are likely to congregate wherever possible, or modify them to minimize contact
4. Provide for all meetings to take place remotely whenever possible
5. All employees should be provided with appropriate face coverings and should wear them in the workplace³
6. Train all employees on daily cleaning and disinfecting protocol, hygiene, and respiratory etiquette (e.g., covering coughs)⁴
7. Make handwashing, sanitizer, and other hygiene support available to employees³
8. Screen employees before they enter the workplace each day (verbally or with a written form or app). Send employees home who are experiencing the following COVID-19 symptoms related to COVID-19 and direct them to obtain free testing through DOH Symptoms: Fever, cough, shortness of breath, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat and/or loss of taste or smell

¹ I define “research-related facilities” as laboratory spaces, fabrication spaces, studio spaces, and similar places where research and creative work takes place on campus or in settings in which UNM rents or is granted access for research and research-related activities.

² New Mexico Reopening Plan Preview, April 30th, 2020.

https://www.kob.com/kobtvimages/repository/cs/files/Plan_Preview_4_30_20.pdf

³ Because of the size and complexity of UNM, the capability of UNM units to provide such supplies currently varies widely; many supplies are currently on backorder. CRLS carries a limited stock of disinfectants and other safety gear. Faculty and staff needing access to research facilities are encouraged to secure their own high-quality cloth masks and sanitizer.

⁴ Capability of UNM units to provide training varies widely; UNM is looking into securing the best possible training materials. In the meantime a brief tutorial on donning personal protective equipment for biomedical settings is available at: <https://youtu.be/of73FN086E8>.

9. Prohibit employees with known close contact to a person who is lab-confirmed to have COVID-19 to return to work until the end of the 14-day self-isolation period
10. Minimize non-essential travel. Adhere to CDC guidelines and state orders regarding isolation following out-of-state travel
11. Adhere to all UNM, CDC and OSHA guidelines.⁵

The above CSPs have been prescribed by the State of New Mexico for all employers as basic precautionary measures. In addition, please make sure to abide by the following policies that UNM has implemented for individuals currently/recently working or residing on UNM Main or Branch Campuses:⁶

1. Any UNM main campus or branch campus faculty, staff, student or volunteer, who is currently on campus or has been physically present on campus anytime beginning April 3 and continuing throughout UNM's Limited Operations, and who is displaying signs or symptoms of COVID-19 illness (i.e., flu-like symptoms with fever > 100; cough; shortness of breath; loss of smell; or loss of taste), is required to self-report and may be asked to get tested for COVID-19 and to self-isolate. For self-reporting, go to https://lobowebapp.unm.edu/apex_ods/f?p=135
2. Any UNM main campus or branch campus faculty, staff, student or volunteer, who is currently on campus or has been physically present on campus anytime beginning April 3 and continuing throughout UNM's Limited Operations, and who has tested positive for COVID-19 is required to self-report that he or she has tested positive to COVID-19 and must self-isolate. Self-report at https://lobowebapp.unm.edu/apex_ods/f?p=135
3. Prior to returning to campus, any UNM main campus or branch campus faculty, staff, student or volunteer, who has tested positive for COVID-19 or has had symptoms consistent with a COVID-19 illness within 14 days of returning to campus shall be required to obtain an appropriate release from UNM authorities prior to his or her return to campus to work or to live. To obtain this release, faculty, staff, and volunteers should call EOHS at 505-272-8043, and students and student employees should call SHAC at 505-277-3136
4. Supervisors who become aware or suspect that a UNM main campus or branch campus faculty, staff, student or volunteer has either been possibly exposed or has tested positive for COVID-19 should immediately send the individual home and direct the individual to UNM's self-reporting site.

In addition to the above practices and policies, the following measures should be implemented depending on the type of research facility and density of essential personnel occupying them.

1. Utilize signs, stanchions and/or floor decals to support 6-foot social distancing, including one-way aisle traffic and separate entry/exit wherever possible

⁵ <https://cv.nmhealth.org/>, <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/index.html>

⁶ <https://hr.unm.edu/docs/hr/eeoc-ada-covid-policy-statement.pdf>

2. Utilize signage to communicate occupancy limits and to instruct personnel to wear face coverings
3. Maintain a schedule of stringent daily cleaning and sanitizing of high touch areas.

As the State Government prepares for relaxing “Stay-at-Home” orders for different categories of governmental functions and business, it is important for faculty investigators to begin to prepare for the *staged* return of non-essential personnel and students to UNM research-related facilities. In the coming days and weeks, the Provost’s Research Continuity Task Force will be developing and recommending best practices to be implemented in association with different stages of the return, and potential necessary retreat should flare-ups of the contagion occur. These recommendations will be based on input from subject matter experts at UNM and on our survey of best practices being developed at universities across the nation, and will be in alignment with state public health orders. We also intend to implement means by which you will be able to comment on these recommendations.

In anticipation of the first stage in relaxation of stay-at-home orders when certain non-essential personnel and certain students may be allowed to resume work in research facilities, please work to develop a Research Continuity Plan for the facility that you oversee. Components of this plan can include, for example:

1. Accommodation for nonessential personnel (students, research staff) who can continue to perform their research or other scholarly activity from home
2. Specification of how many individuals will be in a space at any given time
3. If necessary, a clear process to ensure work shifts do not accidentally overlap, while also maintaining physical safety in the facility
4. A listing of supplies that will be provided to maintain safety and their storage location: face coverings, lab coats, soap, hand sanitizers, cleaning materials, first aid kits
5. Procedures for frequent clean/wipe down of shared items, equipment, and work surfaces
6. A process to maintain access and activity logs in order to trace contact should someone become sick with coronavirus.

In developing your Research Continuity Plan, you may find the appended Inspection Checklist helpful. It is a model which SRS may use when conducting COVID-related safety inspections in the future.

Our goal is to ensure that we can continue our research, scholarship, and creative work in a way that is consistent with public health needs, the safety of our people, and our mission as a university. If you have comments on any of the above, please submit them to vpr@unm.edu.

Appendix: Model Laboratory Inspection Checklist

Laboratory Inspection Checklist

Building Name: _____ Date of Survey: _____

Lab Room No. _____ Dept.: _____ Surveyed by: _____

Check the boxes that are acceptable, and provide comments on corrections to be made.

	YES?	NOTES
1. Personnel Safety		
a. First Aid Kit		
b. Number Individuals in a lab space (Maintain a distance of at least 6 feet)		
c. Maintain Log of Everyone's schedule or shifts- Documentation		
d. Procedure to Disinfect/wipe down shared items- Documentation		
2. Everyday Disinfectants / Clean Supplies		
a. Disinfectants e.g. 1-5% Bleach, Quaternary Ammonium (Virex®, QUATRICIDE®), PREempt RTU (quaternary ammonium), or ≥ 0.5 Hydrogen peroxide Peroxide based (PREempt™ RTU). NOTE: Hypochlorite solutions (bleach) need to be made up on a daily or weekly basis.		
a. Soap & Paper Towels		
b. Hand Sanitizers e.g. at least 7060% Ethanol		
c. Other cleaning materials		
3. Personnel Protective Equipment		
a. Wear Mask all times		
b. Eye wear or Face shield		
c. Gloves		
d. Lab coats		
e. Wrap gowns (for BSL-2 or higher work)		