Date: March 16, 2020
To: UNT Research Community
From: M.R. McLellan, Vice President, Research & Innovation
Re: Research at UNT during this Health Crisis

Research at the UNT is a critical part of operations at this university and needs to be sustained to the best of our ability. At the same point, we need to maximize the safety and health of our faculty, staff and student researchers. This guidance document is an outline of expectations and rules regarding research in the current health emergency.

General Rules and Guidelines:

- All faculty, staff and student researchers at UNT are to follow all university-wide guidance and rules unless explicitly exempted for research purposes by the VPRI.
- Refer to official notices from UNT for updates on UNT announcements: https://healthalerts.unt.edu
- During this health crisis, all researchers should use a personal space distance of six (6) feet between themselves and the nearest researcher in all situations including across bench space AND no more than two researchers should be at a bench side at any one time regardless of the length of the bench.
- In non-bench related research space, the personal distance space should be used as a guide and in general, non-bench research spaces should be limited to max of 10 people so long as the six (6) foot personal distance limit can be maintained.
- All research laboratory operations at UNT fall under these guidelines and individual laboratories should seek clarification by their dept chair or other space authority regarding shared operations and implementation of these rules.
- Faculty can consider implementing a rotation time for research members to have access to shared spaces
- Implement a cleaning of work-space surfaces with appropriate cleaners (e.g. disinfectant wipes). This is of interest for shared equipment and computers.

Researcher Personal Health:

- Check your own health and be proactive. Consider taking your temperature in the morning prior to coming into work.
- All research personnel should stay home if you experience any symptoms.
• All researchers, if you are a caretaker of a high-risk individual or you yourself are of high risk, you should immediately discuss working remotely with your supervisor and HR.
• All researchers should maintain a social distance in the research environment
  o Avoid physical contact at work (e.g. hand-shaking) https://healthalerts.unt.edu
  o Keep all contact to a six (6) foot distance.

**In-unit Research Continuity Plans:**
• UNT is not, at this time, at a restricted access state.
• In an effort to be proactive, we are asking faculty with research space to fill out the “Research Continuity Plans” which will apply to your space during a more restricted operating mode. The template form was distributed by dept chairs as needed and should be returned to your departmental chair and pamela.padilla@unt.edu
• Develop a communication plan for your research group; include in your plan to contact your research group and disseminate information

**Research space best practices in this health crisis:**
• Be cognizant of your safety and the safety of others by ensuring social distance is maintained.
• Conduct research group and lab meetings only by Zoom video conference; refer to UNT website for information on how to implement Zoom conferencing https://online.unt.edu/zoom-access-faculty
• Allow for individuals, especially those within high-risk groups to conduct work remotely- utilize UNT work remotely resources, https://online.unt.edu/work and refer to HR https://hr.untsystem.edu/flexible-work-arrangement and CDC guidelines https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/specific-groups/high-risk-complications.html

**Research work conducted remotely:**
• No laboratory work should be conducted outside of the normal laboratory setting.
• When planning for remote working, remote employees must have a clear understanding of expected work while at a remote site. Examples of remote research might include literature searches, bibliography development, proposal preparation, paper writing, etc.
• Consider cycling thru researchers to provide a skeleton crew in critical laboratory operations where hands on actions must be accomplished in a highly restricted environment.
• All research supervisors should hold at least a daily zoom meeting with research teams operating remotely.
Travel related to research:

- Refer to federal and UNT guides
  - International travel is currently suspended—refer to UNT websites for updates: [https://www.untsystem.edu/international-travel-currently-suspended-due-covid-19-threat](https://www.untsystem.edu/international-travel-currently-suspended-due-covid-19-threat)
  - Domestic travel - refer by UNT rules and make decisions based on risk (e.g. travel by car) - [https://emergency.unt.edu/restricted-travel-exception-request-form](https://emergency.unt.edu/restricted-travel-exception-request-form)
- Research travel to field research sites can be permitted so long a social distancing rules apply.
- Hold off on making additional travel plans for 30 days or until changes in restrictions are communicated

Division of Research and Innovation services:

- All Division of Research and Innovation operations will plan to continue services to the UNT research community as normal using electronic means.
- In the event of movement to a restricted campus access the following individuals will have access to legacy paper files be a part of any skeleton crew:
  - GCA – Chuck Tarantino & Marsha Corrigan
  - RIC — Jamie Peno
  - Vivarium — Imelda Norton
  - RCA will operate fully remote with access to all files.

Grants & Contract Administration (GCA):

- Grant submission is priority and GCA will guarantee timely submission of grants so long as the full proposal is received by GCA four (4) full business day prior to the anticipated submission date
- GCA will monitor agencies for guidance if changes to their work processes change
- Faculty and research applicants should refer to the specific funding agencies for guidance and changes in proposal submission expectations

Research Integrity & Compliance (RIC):

- Human Subjects Protection
  - If you have active human subject research studies - [https://research.unt.edu/sites/default/files/IRB.Memo.16Mar2020.pdf](https://research.unt.edu/sites/default/files/IRB.Memo.16Mar2020.pdf)
  - RIC office is fully operational even if the University suspends operations for contagion control purposes. The UNT IRB email address used for inquiries and questions is being monitored with the same or greater frequency; however, responses to inquiries and applications that are not related to COVID-19 or its impact on research may be delayed.
  - If you have an IRB submission that is pending approval, please consider how this may affect your research and contact the office for assistance.
Animal Subjects Protection
  • If you have active animal research studies - [https://research.unt.edu/sites/default/files/COVID%20IACUC.pdf](https://research.unt.edu/sites/default/files/COVID%20IACUC.pdf).

Research Contracts & Agreements (RCA):
  • Full operations will continue as normal
  • Electronic only submissions