March 15, 2020

Research Continuity Considerations for Research in the Social Sciences, Humanities, and Arts and Other Field-based Research.

Dear Colleagues,

UVA administration continues to attentively monitor worldwide coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2) and COVID-19 disease related developments. Important information and updates for the entire UVA community are provided through the UVA homepage and UVA COVID-19 FAQ page. See UVA specific research information available at https://research.virginia.edu/ResearchContinuity Sponsored Programs has also created a site for links to updates and guidance from specific sponsors (e.g., NSF, NIH) https://sponsoredprograms.virginia.edu/news,

The intent of this communication is to provide you guidance on preparing for significant and sustained disruptions to field-based research, social and behavioral science related research operations, as well as research in the arts and humanities because of possible widespread COVID-19 communal transmission. While it is difficult to predict the scale and extent of the disruptions, we anticipate that they will be extensive and have both near and longer-term impacts for faculty, staff, and students across many fields.

This particular document is intended to provide guidance to inform your planning efforts related to **social and behavioral sciences, humanities, arts and other field-based research**; however, we clearly acknowledge that each project is unique and will require careful planning. Because faculty work in so many different disciplines, research norms and practices vary significantly. A literary scholar will face different challenges than an economist who will in turn not face the same barriers as a researcher working with children in schools. A studio artist or musician will confront still different obstacles. This document complements other such guidance documents focused on laboratory and bench science, as well as clinical trials research, which are available on following website: thehttps://research.virginia.edu/ResearchContinuity.

Impact on Central Services: Most Relevant for Research in the Social Sciences, Humanities, and Arts and Other Field-based Research

IRB Operations:

Beginning Monday March 16th, the Vice President for Research office is requiring the following:

For all human subject research studies that involve direct subject contact, and that provide little or no potential benefit to subjects - human subject direct contact (face to face) must be paused until further notice in recognition of the COVID-19 pandemic. This directive is being made to decrease exposure for our staff, faculty and students, as well as research subjects/participants. All other aspects of the research that do not involve direct human subject contact may continue.

It is anticipated that certain types of human subject research will be allowed to continue. These include (but are not limited to):

1. FDA regulated clinical research that has the potential for direct health benefit to subjects.

2. Interventional/treatment trials that have the potential for direct health benefit to subjects.

Studies that do not meet the criteria of # 1 and # 2 above and that have no physical or direct subject contact. These are studies done via mail, phone, online, etc. or could be those involving things like review of medical records/ archival data/ public data sets or studies that are in the status of data analysis.

However, please be aware that we are considering a pause on all new enrollments as we continue to assess the situation.

We recognize that this request will significantly impact your research on multiple levels. Guidance as to how to manage research delays and sponsor requirements can be found at https://research.virginia.edu/ResearchContinuity. Please visit the website frequently as we will be making daily updates. It is the responsibility of the Principal Investigator/Project leader to notify subjects as needed.

If you have questions about your particular study (including assessing health benefit), please direct these questions to your school's Research Dean, to the VPRs office or to the SOM Clinical Research office (for SOM studies).

Research compliance committee reviews, such as the Institutional Review Board for the Social and Behavioral Sciences (IRB-SBS) may be delayed. Therefore, the IRB has recently provided updated information on what types of changes can be made without formal approval during this time; for details see https://research.virginia.edu/irb-sbs

OSP Operations:

- The Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP) expects to be able to submit proposals, even if personnel are working from home. Agencies may be flexible about deadlines under difficult circumstances beyond our control. However, if agencies are officially closed, proposals will likely remain in queue, pending resumption of agency operations. Please do not automatically assume that deadlines are or will be extended.
- We recognize that travel related reimbursements and planned research-related travel (e.g., conference attendance, data collection, in person meetings with research partners) are of significant concern for field-based researchers and their projects. If you must cancel travel, seek waivers and refunds directly from the airlines and hotels first. If airlines and hotels are not issuing waivers or refunds, employees can submit expense reimbursement requests through ExpenseUVA after the date of travel. For more information, please see the "Travel and Expense" website and the more specific "Travel and COVID" site. Some sponsors are releasing guidance on reimbursement related to COVID-19 canceled travel; this information will be posted on the https://sponsoredprograms.virginia.edu/news site. If you have a question that isn't covered on these sites, contact the travel team at travel@virginia.edu or 434-924-4121, or your departmental or research center

administrator. Please note that the reimbursement process may, however, be delayed longer than usual.

- The research administrative staff recognizes that there are significant concerns regarding deviations and changes to sponsored projects. This is an important issue and OSP will send updates as soon as we have any additional information. As we hear from federal funding agencies on any special considerations and allowable deviations on current grants and contracts, including information on reimbursements, we will be sure to disseminate the information to the UVA community through this site: https://sponsoredprograms.virginia.edu/news
- For non-Federal grants, we would need to approach each sponsor on a case-by-case basis unless they issue broader guidance.
- Faculty, staff, and students planning future travel should consider delaying the purchase of tickets, given various travel restrictions and advisements, particularly in light of the current University and international travel restrictions. When travel is planned, we encourage the use of University-based options for making those travel arrangements, rather than putting those charges on personal cards, to avoid the need to seek reimbursement. Refer to procurement guidelines and use TravelUVA to book travel to the extent possible.
- For other project specific questions, contact your School's Research Dean's office or departmental administrator with your questions and they will coordinate with OSP.

Other Research Related Supports:

- Ordering and receipt of research and field related supplies and materials may be delayed.
- Processing of visas by the federal government may be delayed, resulting in delayed appointments and global travel for faculty, staff, students, and visitors.
- Core research computing facilities (Rivanna and Ivy compute and storage) will continue to be available barring significant issues in the protected data computational resources (Ivy).
- Core facilities and other fee-for-service resources may not be fully functional.
- Library services that can be provided remotely, such as online journals, Virgo, reference service via chat, interlibrary loan, and instructional scanning will continue to be available, even if the Library is required to close as a public space. LEO delivery will be canceled if departmental offices are closed.
- Support from Facilities Management and contract service providers may be delayed.

Recommended Actions and Considerations for Mitigating the Impact on Your Research Team

- Faculty, staff, and postdocs engaged in research are permitted to continue that research, excluding direct interaction with human subjects as noted above. Principal Investigators can designate some of their research team members and postdocs as essential to the continuity of their research.
- Principal Investigators and research leads should develop a plan in case a significant percentage of your project staff is out sick or unable to come to work. Work assignments may need to be shifted for some staff and other project investigators to accommodate work from home options.
- Project investigators and paid staff (e.g., postdocs, research assistants) are expected to continue to full-fill their job responsibilities; however, accommodations in work location and duties should be made when possible.

- We anticipate that in most cases, graduate students whose research takes place in the University's labs will continue to have access to those facilities in consultation with their faculty advisors. Graduate students with appointments as research assistants should be in touch with their faculty advisors to learn about any changes to the activities of their research group.
- Offsite work options and reassignment of project duties should be planned to allow the research to advance.
- Research meetings involving students and other staff are encouraged provide a remote access option (e.g., Zoom). Students should not be required to return to Grounds to participate in research labs, meetings, or perform research duties.
- Faculty and research leads are also encouraged to consider altering work schedules for staff, faculty, and postdocs to meet the demands of the projects while limiting close contact with others.
- If a communication plan for your research team is not already in place, ensure that you have accurate and updated contact information for all team members so everyone receives timely information regarding changes to data collection procedures and project timelines.
- Consider cross-training research staff or other investigators who conduct similar activities to fill-in for those who may be out sick or unable to work. Ensure that these personnel have the appropriate training and supervision to execute the assigned duties in light of compliance requirements (e.g., IRB). Consider documenting critical step-by-step instructions for fill-in personnel.

Recommended Actions and Considerations for Mitigating the Impact on Your Field-based and Applied Research Projects

- For faculty whose research is impacted by travel constraints, the inaccessibility of research subjects or sites, and the widespread cancellation of professional activities, please be in touch with your department chair in order to discuss possible impacts on your research agenda for the coming months.
- We advise that faculty impacted by the disruptions brought on by COVID-9 begin working to identify and prioritize work that can be done in lieu of planned but necessarily cancelled research plans. Please also begin to think through with your chairs any long-term effects that such consequences may have on your academic and professional goals.
- To the extent possible, ongoing and planned research projects should continue to advance, acknowledging there may be considerable restrictions and access issues for field-based work, and the restrictions on direct interactions with human subjects noted above.
- Investigators should not assume that data collection will proceed as planned, and thus should develop contingency plans for cancellations, travel restrictions, and other access issues. Adjustments to the timeline and sequencing of activities will likely be needed for field-based projects in active stages of data collection.
- For projects that need to adjust data collection activities and/or project completion or intervention activities, carefully document such changes to the protocol and the reasons for those changes (e.g., limited access to participants due to location closure, travel restrictions, staff shortage). Some of those changes may require IRB or sponsor approval, and/or updates to pre-registration in the case of research trials. This may be particularly salient for field studies that involve experimental or longitudinal study designs, and those

which are sponsored. If your research plans require modifications to an IRB or data security plans protocol, please contact the appropriate committee office to get the review process started for the required modifications. Some modifications may not require approval. For details see https://research.virginia.edu/irb-sbs
    - For sponsored projects, PIs should consider communicating with their Project Officer for guidance and approval for adjustments to project timelines, scope of work, or site changes. Sponsor pre-approval will likely be required for significant changes to the project.
    - In the case of non-sponsored research and/or studies with more flexible timelines, investigators should consider postponing field-based projects and in person data collection efforts.
- Depending upon the nature of your research, you might consider prioritizing work that can be carried out remotely (e.g., writing, literature review, analysis of de-identified data).
- Consider using remote work technologies such as VPN (for work at home) and video and teleconferencing as an alternative for in-person meetings (prepare multiple options for communication). Students, postdocs, staff and faculty involved in research projects should be encouraged to gain remote access to information such as journals, existing databases, and research-related files so that they can work remotely as needed. For projects that previously had plans to go into the field this spring or summer (e.g., launch a new project, collect ongoing or follow-up data), researchers will need to develop a revised timeline for data collection or alter the data collection plan to another format (e.g., on-line, by phone).
- For staff who are largely field-based and their efforts cannot be reassigned during a project delay and the current "pause" on direct interaction with human subjects, please consult with your Department Chair, Center Director, and/or HR representative about possible project reassignment during this period of low activity and need for their effort.
- Maintain regular communication with study partners, subcontractors, and study sites to stay abreast of their own health risk status and local policies and procedures. It is important to recognize that other agencies and organizations (e.g., schools, community centers, agencies, organizations) may also have their own restrictions on staff time, travel, and access to data collection sites or otherwise restrict your access to participants.
- https://research.virginia.edu/compliance/compliance-programs/human-research-protection-program-hrppInvestigators should carefully review their data security plans with all students and staff on the project to ensure compliance with those plans in the event some individuals on the project need to work from off-site/telework. Data security and data-related compliance agreements (e.g., IRB) should be maintained during this and all other times. ITS is available to provide consultation on remote storage and data access, within the constraints of approved data use and security procedures.
- Maintain a sufficient inventory of critical supplies and materials that may be impacted by global shipping delays.

Preventive Measures:

- See the CDC's website for the most up to date information on safety and prevention measures.
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at minimum 20 seconds. Hand sanitizer may be temporarily unavailable due to supply chain demands.

- Remind team members to stay home if they are experiencing symptoms including fever, cough, or difficulty breathing. Decontamination of your workspace may be appropriate if an active member of your team is diagnosed with COVID-19. If you are experiencing symptoms, follow guidance for contacting medical professional.
- Although direct interactions with human subjects is currently "paused" by the UVA IRB, frequent cleaning of research tools, equipment, and data collection instruments (e.g., tablets, pencils) used in field-based research is strongly recommended.
- Shared meeting and lab spaces should pursue disinfection of commonly touched areas, shared materials, and surfaces (e.g., doorknobs, telephones, computers, manuals, desks) with effective disinfectants.