

## Guidelines of Research Relaunching – University of Maryland Eastern Shore

The fast-evolving nature of the COVID-19 pandemic has called upon Somerset County, the home of UMES and each of us. In response, we have taken a series of unprecedented steps to safeguard our community and ensure that we can accomplish our mission to care for those we serve. Today, we have arrived at another critical juncture in our response, and we will make careful decisions to reopen our research activity. Please keep in mind that the health of our faculty, and students is our top priority, and we continue to be guided by public health authorities and infectious disease and epidemiological experts at UMES.

Our suggestion is based on this reference from the links below.

UMBC: <https://umbc.box.com/s/h3gkmy6bgcw05lobd97a7iia91r2ty3z>

Johns Hopkins University: <https://hub.jhu.edu/novel-coronavirus-information/research-preparedness/research-preparing-for-minimal-on-campus-activity-by-march-18/>

University of Maryland Baltimore: <https://www.umaryland.edu/coronavirus/>

Considerations for Reopening Institutions of Higher Education in the COVID-19 Era – ACHA:

<https://www.careereducationreview.net/2020/05/considerations-for-reopening-institutions-of-higher-education-in-the-covid-19-era-acha/>

### Guidelines:

1. For the time being, Lab access will continue to be available for **essential personnel** only who perform critical procedures that require **regular personnel attention** to maintain laboratory viability (e.g., liquid nitrogen tank filling, animal support, maintaining novel cell cultures, and equipment). Inform your department chair ASAP who these people are.
2. Research relaunching will be performed in phases.
  - Phase 1: Faculty, postdoctoral fellows, technicians, and graduate students performing “Essential Research experiments and projects.”
    - PIs should immediately identify essential research experiments that are at a time-sensitive, critical phase, meaning that abandoning them would cause a major or irreversible loss in project momentum. This high-priority work should be a limited set of the current laboratory bench-based and field-based experimentation. This is voluntary and a waiver form will be necessary for return.
    - PIs should allow those research crew members or graduate students who can work effectively from home or who don't have any practical lab work to be the last to return.
  - Phase 2: Professional students
  - Phase 3: Undergraduate students
  - Phase 4: Summer research including high school students
3. Restriction of visitors: No visitors are allowed in labs. Special permission can be approved by the Department Chair.
4. UMES ID badge should be visible to other employees and security personnel at all times on laboratory and other research premises.
5. Contingency plan: PIs must ensure communication with students, postdocs, and staff, and review contingency plans and emergency procedures with them.
6. Lab safety: All researchers must observe safety protocol described in the CITI Training. A copy of CITI Training Certificate should be available in the lab. Personal Protection Equipment (PPE) such as facial masks, gloves, and lab coat is highly recommended. A safety training program will be scheduled by the UMES office of research. Time assignment: Researchers should be assigned by the PI to shifts, for

example, the morning (7-noon), the afternoon (noon-5 pm), and the evening (5-10 pm). This is particularly important when lab spaces have 2 or more occupants.

7. Distancing: It is advised at one researcher/200-300 Sq. Ft. or appropriate guidelines. It is recommended to have a work log maintained in the lab.
8. Use of University vehicles: No more than two individuals should occupy university vehicles at one time. If more than one individual is in the vehicle both must wear a mask at all times, and windows must be open, unless weather conditions preclude. All touch surfaces should be disinfected before and after each trip, and paper towels or wipes should be disposed of by the research team in a proper receptacle outside of the vehicle.
9. PIs should gauge individual lab crew risk factors while identifying employee willingness to volunteer to be the first returnee, and prioritize those with the greatest ability/desire to return.
10. PIs must conduct lab and other meetings virtually, even the lab crews or collaborators are on campus. If meetings cannot be conducted remotely, keep participation as per state guideline to fewer than 10 participants and enforce appropriate physical distancing and wearing of masks or face coverings. (see <https://governor.maryland.gov/2020/03/19/governor-hogan-announces-further-actions-to-slow-the-spread-of-covid-19-relaunches-maryland-unites-initiative/>)
11. Procure sufficient disinfectant products and cleaning supplies so those lab crew members can frequently clean often-touched laboratory benches and shared lab equipment such as pipettors, scales, incubators, freezers, refrigerators, door handles, etc. Where possible, doors to labs should be propped open to minimize handling of surfaces. This suggestion does not apply to cell culture rooms that must remain sterile, or rooms that contain environmentally-sensitive equipment.
12. Provide single-use cleaning tools such as sponges, brushes, towels, etc., and avoid as much as possible reusable cleaning items.
13. Health Screening: Researchers with the following symptoms of COVID-19 will be blocked to access the lab and other research premises (see <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html>).
  - Fever above 100.4°F
  - Acute onset of coughing or diarrhea
  - Sore throat and Shortness of breath

Initially this will be a self-reporting process as the university works towards implementation of better screening methods (such as the following, but not restricted to: monitoring temperature upon arrival in buildings, PCR and antibody-based assays, etc.)

14. PIs must promote prevention measures by posting the following strategies on lab/building entrances
  - Wash hands frequently.
  - Maintain physical distance: stay 6 feet apart at all times.
  - Know the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and what to do if symptomatic:
    - Stay home when you are sick (or leave work immediately) and notify your PIs/supervisor.
    - Try to memorize with whom you got in contact, and inform your PIs or supervisor.
    - Call your health care provider's office in advance of a visit.
    - Limit movement in the community and wear a face-covering in public.
    - Call your health care provider for instructions regarding return to work.