UMass Dartmouth Research Activity Response to COVID-19

1. **What is the current status of research-related activities at UMass Dartmouth?**

UMass Dartmouth’s research activities are continuing. We encourage all researchers, faculty students and staff, to work remotely as much as possible. Group meetings must be conducted by zoom or other virtual meeting technology. If possible, work that cannot be performed remotely should be rescheduled for a later time, in favor of work that can be performed remotely in the near term.

Students and other research staff may come to campus to retrieve books, files or computers that they need in order to work remotely. PIs should coordinate such visits to maintain social distancing.

For those projects that require the use of on-campus facilities, access to labs or other facilities may be requested. PIs should submit their requests by email to the Associate Provost for Research and Economic Development (Alex at afowler@umassd.edu) with copies to their Chairs, Deans and Zeina Madeiros (ZMadeiros@umassd.edu).

The requests must include:

1. A clear indication of which space or spaces will be accessed.
2. A list of all the people who will be using the identified spaces.
3. A plan for how appropriate social distancing (6’) will be maintained while people are using the space. This may involve scheduling people on different days or times so as to avoid crowding.
4. If the same space will be used by multiple people in different shifts, a plan for how the space will be sanitized in between users. Work areas and equipment should be sanitized by researchers (faculty, staff or students) after use is complete or at the end of each day.
5. If people will be conducting research when the PI is not present, the names and contact information for people who will be supervising the research at different times.

For labs that wish to remain open, requests should be submitted by 5PM on Friday March 20th.

Even for research labs that are open, time on-campus should be kept to an minimum. Activities such as writing, experimental design, reading and analyzing data should all be performed remotely whenever possible.

2. **What is the current status of research support operations on campus?**

The Offices of Research Administration, Research Support and Compliance will all be working remotely, but we do not expect any disruption in service. You should contact the staff primarily by email; but they can call you from remote locations and zoom conference if necessary.

LABS AND FACILITIES
3. Can I still work in the lab and use campus research facilities?
Yes. Campus researchers may continue to conduct their research on campus if they receive approval as described in (1).

4. What should I be doing to prepare for possible disruptions in operations?
Campus researchers should be developing plans now in the event there is a change in campus operations and/or personnel are unable to come to campus. Principle investigators/lab leads should develop a communications plan with designated points of contact for their research and update lab-specific emergency information (with current cell phone numbers in case access to campus is interrupted). See additional guidance below.

5. What should laboratory-based researcher be doing to prepare?
Research groups should make plans in the event campus operations are disrupted. Some steps to consider:

- Remind laboratory staff and students that safety standards must continue to be followed, including the requirement that no one should be working in a lab by themselves.
- Review emergency procedures with researchers and staff, and update signage and contact information.
- Ensure that high-risk materials (radioactive, biohazards, chemicals) are secured and freezers are labeled with emergency contact information and secure all waste.
- Assess and prioritize critical laboratory activities, and identify procedures and processes that require regular personnel attention (e.g. cell culture maintenance, animal care, human subjects contacts).
- Identify personnel able to safely perform essential activities and ensure that all staff have the appropriate training. Document critical procedures with step-by-step instructions.
- If possible, train research staff to fill in for others who may be unable to come to campus. Coordinate with colleagues to identify ways to cover critical activities.
- Identify research activities that can be delayed or completed without compromising the research project.
- Define shutdown processes in the event normal operations are halted.

6. What should I do if there is a spill or hazardous waste in my lab?
Public Safety and Environmental Health and Safety will continue to operate as normal and maintain all critical functions.

7. Are undergraduate and graduate students (paid or unpaid) who are conducting research projects allowed on campus to do so?
Yes, provided the PI has secured approval as detailed in (1).

8. Are Core and Shared Research Facilities still open?
Yes, but a plan must be submitted by the department supervising the shared facility. Departments should submit their requests to open shared facilities by email to the Associate Provost for Research and Economic Development (Alex at afowler@umassd.edu) with copies to their Deans and Zeina Madeiros (ZMadeiros@umassd.edu).

The plans must identify which shared facilities are requested to be open. The plan must identify an individual who will supervise the facility, schedule its use, ensure that social distancing is maintained and make sure the space is sanitized in between users. The supervisor may delegate day to day supervision to other people, but the supervisor should be the one accountable to make sure all the safety requirements are met. If a suitable supervisor cannot be identified, the facility will not be opened.

The supervisors of shared facilities will be the points of contact for researchers who wish to use the facilities. Researchers should contact the facility supervisor to schedule times for use. Scheduling requests must identify who will be using the facility, which equipment they will be using and for how long. Use of the facility without receiving approval from the facility supervisor is not allowed. Supervisors should make sure scheduling allows time for sanitizing equipment between users.

- No external users; external users may submit requests for work to be performed by UMassD staff.
- No training will be performed for either external and internal users.

**PROPOSAL SUBMISSION AND AWARD MANAGEMENT**

9. Will the Office of Research Administration still be able to submit my proposal to the sponsor?
   Even if ORA staff are working remotely, we expect proposals will be submitted on time if the researcher has complied with campus proposal submission guidelines.

10. If the sponsoring agency closes, will my proposal still need to be submitted on time?
    Currently, all federal agencies are accepting submissions as usual. If an agency closes, they will likely will continue to accept proposal but they will likely remain pending until the agency reopens (similar to federal budget-related shutdown procedures). In the event of natural disasters, agencies typically provide flexibility in submissions; see individual agency websites for additional guidance.

11. Will I be able to reach ORA staff?
    ORA staff will respond to emails and monitor phone calls as normal, even if they are teleworking.

12. Should I contact ORA early to let them know I plan to submit a proposal?
    Yes. PIs should always do that.
HUMAN SUBJECTS RESEARCH

13. Is the IRB Office open?
Yes. The IRB office is fully functional and operating as normal.

14. My research study involves face-to-face interactions with human subjects. Can I continue my research, and are research subjects from the community (e.g., children, their parents, other adults) currently allowed on campus?
Human subjects research that cannot be conducted remotely should be suspended effective immediately.

15. What do I need to do if I decide to temporarily suspend study activities such as enrollment, study procedures, etc.?
If the Principal Investigator decides to voluntarily suspend study activities, s/he should submit this as Reportable New Information to the IRB within 5 business days of the suspension.

16. Can I modify my study procedures in my project involving human subjects to incorporate remote alternatives?
If possible, you should plan for alternatives to in-person study visits (e.g., online questionnaires, phone surveys, etc.). However, these changes must be approved in advance by the IRB, unless they are necessary to eliminate immediate apparent hazards to participants.

17. What if I need to modify the study procedures immediately in order to protect researchers and/or study participants?
If it is in the best interest of researchers and participants to eliminate immediate apparent hazards, the Principal Investigator may implement changes without prior IRB approval, however, this must be reported to the IRB as Reportable New Information within 5 business days of the modification.

18. Should I expect delays in review of protocols by the Institutional Review Board?
We expect the IRB to continue to accept and review protocol submissions, even if faculty and staff are working remotely.

RESEARCH INVOLVING ANIMALS

19. What should I be doing to prepare for a possible disruption in operations that affects my animal studies?
Researchers should be developing plans now in the event there is a change in campus operations and/or personnel are unable to come to campus. Activities that require regular personnel attention should be prioritized and planned for, and if possible, research staff trained to fill in for others who may be unable to come to campus. Coordinate with colleagues to identify ways to cover critical activities. Research activities that can be delayed or completed without compromising the research project should be identified, and shutdown processes that
minimize the impact on the study should be considered in the event normal operations are halted.

20. Should I expect delays in Institutional Animal Care & Use Committee review of protocols? We expect the IACUC to continue to accept and review submissions, even if faculty and staff are working remotely.

RESEARCH-RELATED TRAVEL AND MEETINGS

21. Can I travel to a research-related conference? What about travel to do field work or meet with a colleague? Please follow the university guidance pertaining to travel. Currently all university sponsored travel has been suspended.

22. I have a grant to host a conference on campus. Will I still be able to host the meeting? All on-campus events are forbidden.

23. Can I continue to hold research lab meetings with my staff and students? You should not hold face-to-face meetings. Group meetings should be held virtually whenever possible.