

PRINCETON UNIVERSITY

Office of the Dean for Research

To: Members of the faculty and staff who are responsible for laboratory research

From: Pablo G. Debenedetti, Dean for Research

Subject: Halting on-campus research activities

Date: March 21, 2020

Dear colleagues,

In recent days we have come together as a community to support each other and to find ways to conduct research while minimizing on-campus activities. Thank you for all the efforts you have made to reduce your laboratory activities and switch to virtual interactions.

As you know, earlier today NJ Governor Phil Murphy announced Executive Order 107, including a statewide stay at home order. Though guidelines laid out by Governor Murphy do allow us to continue to provide on campus services and continue our teaching through remote instruction, they do present challenges when it comes to aspects of our research enterprise. In light of this, and the need to ensure the health and safety of our community, the time has come to halt all non-essential on-campus research activities.

Thus, I am asking all faculty and facility directors who are responsible for on-campus research activities to proceed with shut-down procedures for all “non-essential” on-campus research activities.

Most of you have already planned for the orderly shut-down by submitting a Research Essential Operations Plan. Let me remind you of the key points:

- **Essential Research:** Some of you have requested continuity of on-campus research whose interruption would have unacceptably negative consequences. These requests are currently under review, and my office will inform you by

Sunday whether your application for continuity of essential on-campus research has been approved or not.

- **Critical Maintenance and Monitoring:** Several have submitted critical maintenance or monitoring procedures that require regular attention from a person to maintain laboratory viability. For example, providing animal support, maintaining shared computational equipment, and maintaining equipment that requires gas or cryogen monitoring/service, such as deep-storage freezers, electron microscopes, mass spectrometers, and incubators. These requests are currently under review, and my office will either confirm approval by Sunday (this is the expectation in the majority of cases), or request further clarifications, as needed.
- **Completion of shutdown procedures:** If you have not already done so, please complete shutdown procedures by the close of business on **Monday, March 23**. Please note that the Governor's Executive Order allows laboratory researchers to perform essential operations on-site. You may find this [checklist](#) for shutting down your laboratory and the checklist for shutting down your [Biosafety cabinet](#) useful.

In calling for this step, I want to acknowledge the sacrifice that you are making to suspend research activities, whether it is delaying experiments or terminating those in progress. We have not made this decision lightly or without recognition of what it means for researchers at Princeton, including our talented graduate students, postdocs, and other research staff.

It is important to remember that graduate students and postdoctoral researchers should *only* participate in on-campus essential activities (including critical maintenance or research that is allowed to continue because it is deemed essential) if they choose to do so. *Under no circumstances* should a graduate student or a post-doctoral researcher be compelled to perform on-campus activities against their will. The academic deans in the Office of the Graduate School, Dean Christine Murphy (Natural Sciences and Engineering) and Dean Geoffrey Hill (Humanities and Social Sciences), are available to discuss these issues with students.

Where possible, continue to interact virtually and hold meetings online — both to carry out scholarly activity and to promote the academic and emotional well-being of your lab members. We hope that your remote research activities flourish during this challenging time.

The health and safety of our Princeton community are at the forefront of our thoughts and planning efforts. The University will continue to support our research community and to maintain essential on-campus research functions during this uncertain time. Our veterinary care staff will continue to maintain the health and welfare of our research animals, and the offices that support research and environmental health and safety will continue to function. We appreciate your commitment to the shift to virtual scholarship and your dedication to the well-being of our Princeton research community.

Best wishes,

Pablo

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Where to find information:

- The latest guidance for students, faculty and staff is available on the University's [COVID-19: Coronavirus Information](#) website.
- A template and instructions are available for the [Research Essential Operations Plan](#).
- The Office of the Dean for Research has a list of [research-related FAQs](#).
- The Office of Research and Project Administration (ORPA) lists [Frequently Asked Questions](#) related to sponsored research.
- The Graduate School has issued [COVID-19-related guidance](#) on seeking emotional support, financial assistance, housing, travel, and other topics.
- The municipality of Princeton has established a website at princetoncovid.org.
- The [State of New Jersey Department of Health COVID-19 Website](#) provides information on coronavirus cases and health resources in the state.
- Send questions to researchplan@princeton.edu.