Office of the Vice Provost and Dean of Research

From: Kam Moler, Vice Provost and Dean of Research; Professor of Applied Physics and
of Physics

June 21, 2020

Dear Chairs and Institute Directors,

Going forward, we plan to send the weekly research continuity update at the beginning of the week rather than on Friday.

This week’s email includes information on:

1. Stage 2 Update
2. OMB Extension of Administrative Relief for Federal Grants
3. Outdoor small group meetings for researchers
4. Researchers returning to California
5. Child care for researchers during Stage 2
6. Link to FAQs for grad students and postdocs
7. Field research

Stage 2 Update
We can now confirm, as we shared in our June 5 message, that academic units may add some additional on-campus research activities when ready, beginning Monday, June 22 as we enter Stage 2 of our recovery. During Stage 2, essential on-campus research functions and associated support activities will continue to ramp up as a small number of additional researchers return to campus to conduct research that cannot be done remotely because it requires access to facilities or materials that are only available on campus. Most faculty and staff members will continue to work off-site, including theoretical, computational, and other researchers who have not yet been granted access to on-campus facilities, consistent with County guidance.

As Stage 2 begins, each academic unit may adjust research activity levels depending on staffing and readiness, while adhering to the broader Stanford guidance. PIs may gradually increase the number of on-site personnel in their labs with approval from the academic unit. Headcount will be limited mainly by laboratory space considerations, with up to one person per 250 square feet of laboratory space permitted. (Note that per Santa Clara County guidance, total building occupancy at this time is limited to 300 square feet per person based on gross square footage, which would include lobbies, bathrooms, hallways, etc.) Please follow guidance for Stage 2 for laboratory research in the Research Recovery Handbook.

Beginning in Stage 2, COVID-19-related basic research will no longer need approval from the Dean of Research Essential Research Functions Review Committee. This research must still receive approval from the normal relevant panels, such as IRB, APLAC and APB, prior to initiation of work, and must also comply with all guidance outlined in the Research Restart Handbook. COVID-19 research involving Human Subjects must still obtain approval from the COVID-19 Clinical Research Review Panel (CCRRP); contact Pooneh.Fouladi@stanford.edu for details.
As we move to Stage 2 level of campus access, this is a good opportunity to remind everyone that all on-site researchers and staff must continue to follow Stanford’s physical (social) distancing protocol, which is consistent with the County social distancing protocol. This includes maintaining physical distancing, use of face coverings, and frequent handwashing and use of hand sanitizer. Researchers and support staff returning to campus will be required to use the Health Check tool to report health status each day. They will also be required to take an online training course on COVID-19 hygiene best practices before returning to campus.

**OMB Extension of Administrative Relief for Federal Grants**

As you may know, the OMB issued a memo in March to federal agencies providing administrative relief for grants impacted by COVID-19. Most federal agencies issued policies and processes to provide various administrative, financial and audit requirement flexibilities to their grantees.

OMB issued a memo on June 18 extending the flexibility that allows salaries and benefits to continue to be charged to grants in accordance with the institution’s policy on pay continuance through September 30, 2020. It is important to note that the Stanford pay continuation policy goes through the end of August, so the flexibilities would only cover that period. The memo also includes new language requiring institutions to exhaust all available funding first, and we are working to get a better understanding of that language. Most other flexibilities, including allowing for late progress reports, travel cancellation fees, or delayed proposal submissions, were not extended.

**It is important for PIs to continue to document work performed and to notify OSR or RMG when salary continues to be charged to federal grants for those unable to work.** Please contact your OSR/RMG representative if you have questions.

Stanford administrators continue to review the new OMB directive and will share additional details as needed. We also expect federal agencies to quickly announce their policies and processes related to this new memo. We will communicate the details and provide guidance to Stanford’s research community as soon as possible.

**Outdoor small group meetings for researchers**

This week, we finalized the guidelines for occasional outdoor small group meetings, which we mentioned in our communication last Friday. These meetings can serve as an interim solution for theoretical, computational, and other researchers who do not yet have access to on-campus facilities. Meetings will be approved by schools and departments on a case-by-case basis, and they should be prioritized for work that cannot be done effectively through remote collaboration. Meetings must be scheduled via calendar to comply with contact-tracing requirements and should include information about where on campus the group will be meeting.

Outdoor group meetings must be capped at four people, and a faculty member must be present at all times to enforce compliance with masking and physical distancing. Group members are highly encouraged to bring their own seating, such as picnic blankets and foldable chairs. Restroom use is limited to facilities in department buildings that meeting participants are affiliated with if and when needed. The full guidelines will be available in the Research Recovery Handbook soon.

**Researchers returning to California**
We have received some questions about requirements for researchers returning from out-of-state to self-isolate. Stanford’s policy is that all individuals who have traveled outside the state of California must self-isolate for 14 days before returning to campus. This restriction is intended to help preserve the work that has been done in preventing the spread of COVID-19 through our region’s shelter-in-place efforts over the past several months. We will let you know if or when changes to this policy are made.

**Child care for researchers during Stage 2**
The WorkLife Office announced last week that they have begun to prepare for the reopening of childcare centers to support the university’s restart. The Stock Farm Road Children’s Center has been operating for clinicians, and one additional center will open on Monday, June 22. With capacity currently limited, spaces are being offered first to previously enrolled families who are returning to campus for the restart of research functions and associated research support activities. We know childcare is a challenge for many in our research community at this time, and we’re pleased that more on-campus child care services will soon be available to support researchers and their families. However, we want to emphasize that children are not allowed in any campus buildings, besides their designated child care center. For in-home care options, please find additional resources from the WorkLife Office.

**FAQs for grad students and postdocs**
Last week, two of us (Kam Moler and Stacey Bent) held a research recovery town hall meeting with graduate students and postdocs. We have compiled questions that were received and have posted them together with answers prepared with help from the staff of the Office of Postdoctoral Affairs and the Vice Provost for Graduate Education. These FAQs can be found here. We are keeping a link open where trainees can submit questions and will update the FAQs as needed.

**Field research**
During Stages 1 and 2 of campus reopening, any field research activities will require pre-approval by the department, cognizant Dean, and (where applicable) the director of the Jasper Ridge Biological Preserve or Hopkins Marine Station based on a written safety plan addressing COVID-19-related protocols. The field research working group is currently developing the request and approval process for field research; for now, please email Kristi Geerke <geerke@stanford.edu> with questions. Field research that involves travel more than 50 miles from Stanford campus or overnight stays away from home is further restricted by the current university travel policy and will be until at least September 1, 2020.

Stay safe and be well,
*Kam, Stacey, Tim, and Russell*

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Stacey Bent, Vice Provost of Graduate Education and Postdoctoral Affairs; Jagdeep and Roshni Singh Professor of Engineering

Tim Stearns, Chair of the Faculty Senate; Frank Lee and Carol Hall Professor of Biology and Professor of Genetics

Russell Furr, Associate Vice Provost for Environmental Health and Safety