

Office of Sponsored Programs and Research
Interim Research Policy during the Coronavirus COVID-19 Emergency

This document addresses funded research and not independent research being conducted by students, staff and faculty.

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that can cause respiratory illnesses such as the common cold or more severe illnesses. The coronavirus that originated in Wuhan, China had not been previously detected in humans or animals and much is still unknown about it. The virus has been named ‘SARS-CoV-2’ and the disease it causes has been named “coronavirus disease 2019” (COVID-19). Basic information and recommendations for prevention and treatment may be found through the Centers for the Disease Control and Prevention (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/prevention-treatment.html>).

It is important to note that as of March 10, 2020, ULM has no plans to restrict access to university research spaces, but if illness or related impacts of COVID-19 interrupt operations of labs or broader campus operations and research, then we must be prepared.

General Statement. The northeast region of Louisiana has been recognized by the National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO) for its efforts to prepare and respond to public health emergencies. Simply stated, ULM students, staff and faculty are actively engaged in providing health services to the community. However, with regard to research, there are several points that must be made.

As such, the University of Louisiana Monroe (ULM) Office of Sponsored Programs and Research (OSPR) is offering the following concerning the COVID-19 as an addition to the Emergency Response Plan (https://www.ulm.edu/safety/documents/emergency_response_plan_8.6.19.pdf).

Strategic Policy. Safe-guarding the health, safety and well-being of the entire University of Louisiana Monroe (ULM) community is our most important objective. Thus, OSPR will err on the side of caution and work with all students, staff and faculty to ensure the continuity of their sponsored programs or research.

OSPR will coordinate all responses to funding agencies, e.g., federal, state, local, foundational or private, on behalf of researchers at ULM. To the extent possible, research should be conducted off-campus and/or on-line.

Strategic Areas. The OSPR has identified the following strategic areas to offer clarification during the COVID-19 emergency: on-going research, proposed

submissions, report or funding deadlines, meetings and communications, and international and domestic travel related matters.

On-Going Research. OSPR recommends that all research personnel prepare to conduct their research remotely, when possible. Thus, OSPR recommends: contact ULM Information Technology (IT) Support Specialist and Online Information (<https://www.ulm.edu/it/staff.html>) to ensure off-site access to files and programs and applications necessary to conduct research. Researchers should also have back-up files. If using a personal computer, make sure that it is updated and secure (use a two-step verification, for example).

Some files may need to be accessed remotely. OSPR recommends that researchers consider OneDrive (<https://support.office.com/en-us/article/video-create-files-and-folders-in-onedrive-work-or-school-e1f59717-2f02-494d-93c6-8ef9613e82ba>), SharePoint (<https://products.office.com/en-us/sharepoint/collaboration>), or Google Drive (<https://www.google.com/drive/>).

If research includes the undergraduate or graduate students, OSPR recommends that they be assigned tasks that ensure their health, safety and well-being. As such, international students may need special protection. Please be aware that OSPR does not support any discriminatory procedures targeting a student's country of origin.

ULM Online and IT will develop a Research Moodle page for you during this time (<https://www.ulm.edu/it/moodle-info.html>).

Submissions and Reports. In general OSPR expects that all researchers will be able to submit proposals and reports, even if personnel are working remotely. Most federal agencies strive to be flexible about deadlines under crisis circumstances beyond our control. However, if agencies are officially closed, proposals will most likely remain in a queue, pending resumption of agency operations, for example during federal budget-related shutdowns.

Ensuring data accuracy is critically important to both the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) for guiding prevention priorities and protecting patients, especially those effected by the COVID-19. Thus, all health-related researchers with pending submissions and reports are strongly urged to file such in a timely manner.

OSPR will follow all current policies and procedures for submissions, but will 'electronically' sign all reports via email approval and, where possible, provide an actual signature later. All forms may be converted to a PDF (<https://smallpdf.com/pdf-converter>).

As a note, policies related to reporting for the National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation may be found below.

Office 365 (<https://www.office.com/?auth=2>) has a range of applications to assist as well.

Meetings and Communications. Have all telephone and email communications available through your cell phone. If you are not going to work at ULM, have calls forwarded. Establish a Zoom (<https://zoom.us/home?zcid=2478>) or Skype (<https://www.skype.com/en/>) account in advance.

Travel. If faculty research involves international travel, please note that ALL such travel must be pre-approved by the President's Office and MUST conform to CDC Coronavirus Disease 2019 Information for Travel policy (See <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/travelers/index.html>).

Domestic travel should be limited and all travel plans must include buying a 'Cancel for Any Reason' (CFAR) policy. As a note, this policy does not cover 100 percent of all travel costs.

Required Researcher Response. OSPR requires ALL current funded researchers (e.g., sponsored programs or research based) to submit a Plan of Continuity (POC) by Monday, March 16, 2020. This POC must include the following:

- Researchers must submit names of key personnel who perform tasks related to high priority essential functions that will be used to quickly activate your continuity plan if curtailment is enacted. Provide list of funded projects and names and contact information for all personnel, including Graduate Assistants and Student Workers, working on funded projects.
- How the Researchers might operate with diminished personnel in your lab, as well as adapt to allow personnel or graduate assistants to provide remote work opportunities, as your operation allows. Consider a plan for alternative coverage by cross-training staff and faculty.
- Plan for timing of experiments or other longer-term activities.
- Plan to keep animals or biological cultures viable and healthy.
- List essential supplies with names and contact information of vendors. Note those supplies that are essential. Is your stock sufficient?
- Plan to maintain any gas supplies or equipment.
- Note special reporting requirements that would be triggered by a curtailment of your research operations.
- Note any special comments. For example, what kind of support would you need to execute your plan? Will you require additional time from the

funder to complete your research? Do you want OSPR to contact the funder on your behalf?

OSPR will submit an overall Continuity Plan to ULM President and Vice-President of Academic Affairs on March 17, 2020.

Important Links. The following resources may be accessed for additional information regarding COVID-19.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Travel Health Notices. <https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices>.

International Society for Travel Medicine. <https://www.istm.org/>.

Johns Hopkins Database. For tracking the spread of the COVID-19. <https://www.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/bda7594740fd40299423467b48e9ecf6>.

Louisiana Department of Health. <http://ldh.la.gov/index.cfm/page/3835>.

National Institutes of Health. Reporting Requirements. <https://www.niaid.nih.gov/grants-contracts/reporting-requirements>.

National Science Foundation. Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide. https://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappg18_1/pappg_7.jsp.

On-going university policies from across the US. This covers many issues not included here. <https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1VT9oiNYPyiEsGHBoDKlwLIWAsWP58sGV7A3oIuEUG3k/htmlview?usp=sharing&sle=true>.

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