

[Everyone List] May 29 update: Research reboot lite

Everyone <everyone-bounces@chem.wisc.edu>
on behalf of

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Fri 5/29/2020 7:15 PM

To: everyone mailman <everyone@chem.wisc.edu>

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Yesterday the Office of Vice Chancellor for Research and Graduate Education (OVCRGE) released their guidelines for Stage 1 reopening of campus operations with limited research restoration. This new guidance applies only to research activity that requires access to campus facilities. *All other requests to come to campus for essential instructional activities or other essential functions will continue to follow the guidelines from March 20 until further notice.*

There are several models being used by different schools, colleges and centers for the research reboot request process. The College of Letters and Sciences is using Path A, with an important distinction. A comprehensive building level plan must be approved before any individual PI or research team may apply through the VCRGE portal. I paste below an excerpt from Dean Wilcots' message that describes the college's approach:

"The core principles of Phase 1 are:

- Even as we begin this process our priority must remain the health and safety of all of our employees.
- All research that can be done remotely shall continue to be done remotely. This includes activity associated with the research programs that will gradually be restarting in June (e.g. lab meetings, data analysis, paper and proposal writing).
- We are asking the Departments provide a holistic plan for the entire building. *Individual PI or lab requests will not be considered without a comprehensive plan for the entire building.*

We and campus leadership acknowledge that our approach to resuming activity in our buildings may seem conservative especially with respect to some state and local declarations. By starting slowly, we will be able to make sure that we have the appropriate practices and precautions in place to safely continue to ramp up activity on campus over the summer and into the fall. Again, thank you for your patience and understanding."

I submitted the building level Chemistry Department Restart Plan to Associate Dean Gloria Mari-Beffa and Assistant Dean Chris Bruhn today. I am grateful to the hard work of the COOP team who worked together to compile this plan. There are details regarding the use of our laboratories that remain unresolved, and it will take a few more days to iron them out with L&S and campus leadership. I realize that it is hard to wait when other schools and colleges are proceeding differently than we are.

Please continue to be patient, and rest assured that those of us in leadership positions in the department are doing everything we can to advocate on behalf of all of you.

During low density Stage 1, which we expect will last through the month of June, graduating graduate students and postdocs or visitors with limited time remaining who require lab access to complete projects will receive top priority. Next, we will restore access to other groups, with preference to the laboratories of Assistant Professors. The process of restoring research activity to all groups will take time and patience, as our numbers per floor in Stage 1 will be very limited. We hope to be allowed to expand the numbers significantly in Stage 2, after the end of June.

Please do not plan to do any work on campus that can be done at home. More people in the building means a higher likelihood someone might come down with COVID-19. If someone becomes sick, those with whom that person came into contact will have to quarantine. If the university sees an increase in cases, they may change procedures and not allow more people on campus. Please only request to do research that is a low risk for COVID-19 infection. If people must be in close proximity to complete research, please wait to request access. A PI who applies for on-campus research does so for any and all members of the team who must be present.

Attendance for on-campus research will be voluntary. If you feel unsure or unsafe about returning you may continue to work from home. The decision to accept an offer to return to work in Stage 1 is entirely up to you – we want you to feel comfortable about the safety procedures that the department has implemented. There are no financial or healthcare penalties for preferring to wait for a later return. We expect a tightly-controlled limit on who may enter the building, and all who can work from home should continue to do so.

We share the same goal – to safely and effectively return to research – and we understand your need to know more about what will happen. We have been fielding a lot of questions for which we are still awaiting guidance from the college and campus. Please hold questions about the process until we share the department plan. Once approved, it will likely address many of your concerns.

For those that remain, we look forward to discussions in upcoming virtual town halls. As always, questions or ideas may be submitted through the suggestion box: <https://suggestions.chem.wisc.edu/>.

Judith

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