Principles and Framework Guiding Phased–In University Research Activity at SUNYPoly*

Preface:

Our initial focus is on managing access to research spaces to be found on the CNSE campus and academic offices. Research labs include individual faculty labs, common use labs (L136 and 233, NFE 4907), and metrology labs), NEATEC training room (NFS 359) and the electronics lab (NFS 381).

1. Guiding Principles
    1. *Follow the cognizant Local, State, and National Public Health Authority directives to shelter-at-home and implement social distancing.*
    2. *Protect the health and safety of the research workforce, emotional as well as physical..*
    3. *Protect the careers of early stage researchers for progression or tenure review.*
    4. *Undergraduates are students first, researchers second.*
    5. *Implement a fair and transparent process for granting access.*
    6. *Ensure as rapid a research restart as the public health conditions permit.*
2. Phased and Permitted Activities
3. Tiers/Phased Approach

Guiding Principles

Overarching Goal: To keep everyone safe, while increasing research activity in a phased approach as safety measures becomes easier to maintain.

Our framework is informed by the following principles and observations.

Principle #1: *Follow the cognizant Local, State, and National Public Health Authority directives to shelter-at-home and implement social distancing.*

- Observation: Public health authority (PHA) directives have become more restrictive over time (recommendations, urgent recommendations, requirements, stricter identification of essential businesses and closures), as well as been updated with clarification of allowable activities like exercise, and use of face coverings, wherever social distancing cannot be maintained. We can expect that "loosening" will look like a similar process in reverse.
- Observation: Many experts agree that shelter-at-home should persist for 8-10 weeks, so for the Capital District we can assume this to continue through mid-late May. Other localities (i.e. Central New York) may loosen their restrictions more quickly.

* Liberal use of a draft guidelines developed by University of California was made in development of this document.

Nevertheless, higher risk groups—that can include older faculty and staff, or any age group with underlying health conditions—will likely benefit from a shelter at home longer policy.

- Conclusion: We can expect the State and National plans to influence the local decisions of City and County Public Health authorities based on local and regional conditions. It is fair to expect that between "only essential/minimal activity outside of the home" and "return to business as usual," there will be intermediate phases of increased access, with reasonable time between phase changes, with the possibility of returning to a more restricted phase should Covid-19 infections again rise.

Principle #2: *Protect the health and safety of the research workforce, emotional as well as physical, and the health and safety of our staff, faculty, and students.*

- Observation: No researcher or student should feel they are being compelled to work on campus or in the field during periods of broad shelter-at-home directives. Safety within laboratories must be rigorously maintained due to the added challenges of cleaning such spaces, with adequate access to PPE and other safety related supplies. Campus Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S) must be made aware of all research activities resuming within university spaces.
- Observation: Limited access is likely to persist for some time, and researchers will need to adapt to longer term access requirements including a planning document. State and National guidelines suggest that full back to normal access should only be restored once there is more pervasive testing and contact tracing capabilities. Ultimately establishing immunity, through serological testing or an effective vaccine, will facilitate a full return to business as usual, but it is recognized that this timeframe is not yet determined and must be balanced with guiding principles.
- Observation: Given that the relaxation of access constraints is locally determined, it may be especially challenging to ramp-up projects that are distributed across sites or which depend on international collaborations.
- Observation: A number of research projects have successfully and safely transitioned to being remote, requiring infrequent or no access to university spaces. While also recognized as important and essential, research that can be conducted remotely is not considered in the priority tiers discussed below. Furthermore, even if research can be conducted at home, we recognize that research productivity will be affected and is likely to be done in a less efficient way.
- Conclusion: Researchers should plan as best they can for the inherent uncertainty of when a return to research spaces will be done with reasonable safety and how future events might affect this.

Principle #3: *Protect the careers of early stage researchers.*

- Observation: To the extent that it is possible under the public health authority directives, as access restrictions are relaxed, priority to return to research spaces should be given to those researchers who cannot work remotely and are under time constraints to complete degrees, term appointments (e.g., graduate and postdoctoral researchers), or for tenure and other career reviews.

- Observation: In book-based and other impacted disciplines, extension of the tenure clock should be considered.
- Conclusion: Institutions should be sensitive to the consequences of reduced access to research spaces, including on-campus offices, and the dramatic impact this will have on careers, particularly of young researchers.

Principle #4: *Undergraduates are students first, researchers second.*

- Observation: Engagement of undergraduates in research should only be permitted under the most exceptional of situations. These may include the situation in which (1) the undergraduate student is an essential team member for the project, (2) the project itself has been authorized for access, and (3) the work of that student must be performed in person in the research space, and (4) no other work can be assigned to that student that can be performed remotely. These will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- Conclusion: For the safety of students and those they interact with, undergraduate students should adhere to shelter-at-home directives from the Public Health authority.

Principle #5: *Implement a fair and transparent process for granting access.*

- Observation: The policies on conditions and priorities for granting access should be rational, non-arbitrary, and made public.
- Observation: While the vast majority of people who have been granted access are following the social distancing rules and maintaining low density within research spaces, a small number of abuses may be inevitable. Enforcement will be by periodic inspection of authorized spaces by EH&S and the Academic Engineering Group (AEG), and security check in lists, badge access, and the engagement of Deans and Department/Constellation Chairs applying discipline to abusers.
- Conclusion: Social distancing and density limitation guidelines for different kinds of activities in research space will be distributed based on State and PHA guidelines and institutional needs.

Principle #6: Ensure as rapid a research restart as the public health conditions permit.

- Observation: To implement social distancing and to reduce density of research personnel in university research spaces, consider permitting7 day/24 hour building and lab access, schedule staggered work days or work shifts, plan to extend EH&S, janitorial, and facilities support as needed to enable round the clock operation of laboratories, research facilities, etc.
- Observation: Plan in advance for supply chain issues on restart. Under no circumstances should safety be sacrificed due to lack of adequate supplies, such as the type and quality of PPE.
- Observation: Researchers, EH&S, and AEG must work in concert to insure that local infrastructure and physical layout of research spaces within buildings are considered during ramp-up.

- Conclusion: Develop flexible work schedules, plan in advance for any supply chain issues, consider access to research facilities along with other space needs (restrooms, meals) to maximize social distancing, and coordinate across with EH&S and AEG.

Phases and Permitted Research Activities

Public health directives and the current state of the health care and Covid-19 public health response systems determine the timing as to when any given institution in its local context is permitted to move up or down between phases (See Principle #1 above). Before allowing greater researcher access to labs, and other research-required spaces, a plan for meeting social distancing directives is necessary.

Some elements to consider for such a plan may include (*this list is intended to be illustrative*): scheduled/work-shift access; required facial coverings for social distancing; maximizing distancing between occupants; depending on size of research space and nature of activity therein, density limits such as no more than 2 researchers per bench (if necessary), researchers maintain appropriate social distancing, maximum number of faculty allowed to enter into office or library spaces, maximum numbers of individuals per lab unless further density is justified and approved; disinfecting books or materials after use by researchers; disinfecting work surfaces after use; and so on.

Conclusion: Faculty will be asked to complete a re-opening survey, please take the following phased approaches into account when filling out this form.

PHASED APPROACH

A Phase 1 restriction represents access restricted to only the maintenance of critical research capability. We estimate this to be 5-10% of normal access.
A Phase 2 restriction represents access restricted to critical and high priority activities. We estimate this to be 15-35% of normal access.
A Phase 3 restriction represents a degree of relaxed access, as permitted by the public authorities, with priorities given to time-sensitive research activities. We estimate this to be 35-50% of normal activities. **We expect to be at this point in mid-late May, as permitted by State guidance.**
Phase 4 Re-evaluation
Phase 5 Re-evaluation
Phase 6 represents a return to business as usual, full campus activity.

PHASE	OBSERVED EXTERNAL CONDITIONS	SUMMARY & METRICS	CRITERIA	TIME PERIOD

1	**Situation unknown and changing**. COVID-19 hospitalizations on the rise, Testing limited, PPE shortages	**Only research deemed critical is allowed** Researchers must be designated as Critical to be on site On site research activity estimated at **5-10% of normal**	*Research facilities and field stations are closed, except where personnel are required to protect life safety and critical research infrastructure/capability* (maintaining cell lines, animal health, instrumentation, etc). • Minimum staffing. • Authorization for one time access to faculty offices to pick up books and materials, shut down instrumentation, etc. delegated to deans.	
2	Tracking of COVID-19 hospitalizations still on the rise, testing still limited, PPE shortages Initial Stay Home/Stay Healthy directive in place Hospitalizations are stabilizing in numbers and testing is increasing	**On-campus access allowed to maintain research capability or prevent catastrophic disruption** **COVID-19 related research encouraged** Researchers must be designated as Essential to be on site On site research activity transitions to an estimated **15-35% of normal**	*Research access limited to social-distanced essential personnel only for priority research activities*: • Life safety and critical research (as stated above) • "Critical Research", where a delay would have significant financial impacts or catastrophically disrupt the project or protocol. Finish up critical projects - no "new" projects can be initiated on campus.	3/16/20-present
	Preparations for next phase		• *Necessary core facilities are staffed and operational* • *Labs are able to purchase necessary supplies* • *Social distancing, facial coverings, cleaning measures*	

			understood and in place	
3	Local COVID-19 hospitalizations flatten, then drop COVID-19 testing capacity increases PPE shortages still exist Public health authorities & Governor relax restrictions on 'essential workers' Local schools still closed/ teaching remotely for rest of academic year	**Definition of "critical" relaxed to include time-sensitive research** Explore options for Humanities & Social Sciences All research that can be done remotely should continue On site research activity transitions to an estimated **35-50% of normal** ***Plans for sudden return to Phase 1 in place***	*Deadline-driven research activities:* • Experiments close to completion, or deadline driven, whose pause or deferral would lead to catastrophic delay or loss of research results. • Prioritize access for graduate students and postdocs close to completing their degree/term of appointment. • Prioritize research for completion of grants with end dates within 3 months ~Aug31, 2020 (where funding agency has not granted leniency). • <u>Core facilities</u>: restart facilities based on sufficient 'customer' demand (approved projects) where work cannot be done remotely. • Prioritize researchers with deadlines (tenure, degree completion, etc.) Some monitored access to offices for those at critical career points (tenure, promotion).	Potentially mid May – dependent upon State phased reopening plan
	Preparations for next phase		• *Core campus functions are staffed and operational to*	

			handle increased load (Security, EH&S, Metrology, AEG) • *Labs are able to purchase necessary supplies* • *Social distancing, face mask, cleaning measures understood and in place*	
4	Local COVID-19 hospitalizations continue to decrease COVID-19 testing capacity near maximum of needed capacity PPE more widely available Further relaxation of restrictions - standards for return to normal	**Gradually expand # of people on campus** while maintaining social distancing **On-campus research allowed, but labs/groups only allowed to operate at 50-70% total personnel capacity, with social distancing.** All research that can be done remotely should continue to be, including all seminars, group meetings, etc. On site research activity transitions to an estimated **50-70% of normal**	• Allow access to offices for faculty and grad students on application, 1-3 days/week to allow for psychological relief and family harmony. Must maintain social distancing and max occupancy per building.	TBD

5	New cases of COVID-19 are low COVID-19 testing is at maximum needed capacity PPE availability normal Further relaxation of restrictions - standards for activity based on ability to social distance Childcare options available for parents	**Continued expansion of research on campus** while maintaining social distancing On-campus research allowed, but **labs/groups only allowed to operate at 70-90% total personnel capacity, with social distancing** All research that can be done remotely should continue to be, including all seminars, group meetings, etc. On site research activity estimated at **70-85% of normal**	• Access to offices allowed generally, with attention to social distancing and cleaning • Access to general spaces and all labs with social distancing and disinfection of materials	TBD
6	Vaccine widely available and used in combination with widespread testing and identification of new COVID-19 cases, with self-quarantining No or minimal state restrictions	**All types of on site normal research operations are allowed** On site research activity **normal**	• Restart normal research operations	TBD

Additional Considerations for Ramp-up Planning

- Develop a checklist for restarting laboratory-based research. Start now to develop restart/safety plans based on the outlined phases - Plans should be flexible enough to enable the swift ramp down of research to an earlier phase in response to changing circumstances.
    - Plans must comply with physical distancing requirements and should provide for the lowest density of people reasonable to carry out research, and gatherings, including group meetings, and even one-to-one discussions should continue to occur virtually.
        - Consider staggering work schedules as needed to maintain low personnel density

- Plans for cleaning/sanitizing labs and research work spaces upon restarting work
    - Research teams utilizing shared space must coordinate their plans
    - Researchers should appropriately sanitize lab spaces after use in both faculty and common use labs.

- Any personnel returning from out of state must follow current guidance on 14-day self-quarantine prior to reporting to campus – these individuals should work from their place of quarantine to the greatest extent possible even if they are asymptomatic.
    - International graduate students that can't return, but are able to engage in federally funded (e.g. NIH) sponsored research activities are, by definition, foreign components. Consult with sponsored program office (SPO) and Office of internationals and HR when planning for the restart of research that necessarily involve graduate students in this situation

- DO NOT restart research that requires PPE without first ensuring/acquiring an adequate supply of PPE. Start ordering PPE now, if necessary, to have on hand for restart if current stock on hand is insufficient.

- Carrying out research should be limited to SUNY Poly employees and registered students – volunteers should not be allowed to conduct research until Phase 5 (or 6) is reached.

- All restart planning must consider the needs of employees/students with current disability accommodations or those who will require new accommodations.