

## **Southern Illinois University Carbondale**

Guidelines for submission and approval of a laboratory Research Re-Engagement (RRE) Plan to allow the Phased resumption of research and creative activities



This is a comprehensive plan that provides guidelines that facilitate the resumption of research / creative activity involving faculty, research staff, graduate and undergraduate students in compliance with the phased [Restore Illinois](#) plan put forward by the Governor of the State of Illinois. This plan focuses on actions that are necessary to ensure the safety of the faculty, staff, and students.

## PLAN GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The goal of this plan is to establish a set of conditions under which faculty supervised research / creative activities (R/CA) can be re-engaged. Based on the Governor's directives ([Restore Illinois](#)), illness prevalence surveillance information, and recommendations from state and local health officials, the university Executive Team will establish a process and time-line for the resumption of faculty supervised R/CA.

This plan is guided by the following principles:

1. Remain in compliance with all Local, State and National public health directives.
2. Protect and support the health, safety and welfare of our students, staff and faculty, as well as community members more broadly.
3. Provide for the re-engagement of R/CA as rapidly as public health conditions permit
4. Protect the assets and property of the university.
5. Maintain our commitment of fulfilling the university mission to provide teaching, research and service.

## OVERVIEW

Consistent with the plan put forward by the Governor of the State of Illinois ([Restore Illinois](#)) the re-engagement of R/CA on the SIUC campus will proceed in a phased approach where each phase progresses towards a full resumption of a normal level of engagement. Transition from one phase to the next will be determined by local, state and federal guidelines and public health conditions, as determined by the university Executive Team. While it is anticipated that the re-engagement process will proceed linearly from one phase to the next, deterioration of public health conditions may require a reversal to a previous phase.

In general, faculty who supervise graduate students, undergraduate students, or staff in any R/CA are responsible for devising and implementing a Research Re-Engagement (RRE) Plan for resumption of said activities. This plan should minimize, to the fullest extent possible, opportunities for virus transmission amongst personnel in the working environment and community members more broadly. Guidelines for the development of such a plan may be found in the descriptions of the phased re-engagement process below and in the RRE Plan Application.

The RRE plan must be documented in written form, submitted to the School / Department / Program Director for approval and copied to the Office of Research Compliance ([ORC@siu.edu](mailto:ORC@siu.edu)). In addition, faculty must provide assurance that they have/will discuss the details of the plan with all personnel that they supervise and that they will exert all reasonable effort to ensure that the plan is followed. Coordination between faculty in the development of RRE plans is expected to occur when shared spaces or equipment are used by multiple faculty groups. In these cases it is appropriate to develop and submit a single plan which encompasses all users of the shared resource.

As the phased re-opening proceeds faculty supervisors may require students and staff to return to the university to engage in supervised R/CA. In those instances where students or staff are members of a vulnerable population or feel that it is unsafe for them to return to the university working environment, faculty are encouraged to work with those individuals to provide appropriate accommodations or modifications, including but not limited to changes to the worksite or modified shifts, to address the safety concerns for those employees.

## PHASE 0-2

- This phase has been in effect since the issuance of the Governor shelter-in-place order on March 21, 2020. In accordance with the order all research and creative activities have been curtailed except those deemed “essential activities”.
  - Research and service directly related to the COVID-19 pandemic
  - Required maintenance and support of critical equipment
  - Required maintenance of critical biological or material samples
  - Support of research and teaching animal populations
  - Seasonally dependent agricultural research with critical implications for human and animal health, as well as food security
  - Laboratory or field work where discontinuation would result in loss of *significant* data and samples
  - Longitudinal or seasonal work where discontinuation would result in loss of *significant* data and samples
  - Research directly related to national security

(<http://research.illinois.edu/mitigating-impact-covid-19-research-enterprise> )

R/CA projects that meet one of the deemed “essential activities” descriptions may continue but must submit a RRE Plan to document the steps that will be taken to ensure a safe working environment.

- Internal doors in public spaces should be left open, whenever possible, to minimize the need for contact with high-touch areas (door handles). This recommendation does not apply to personal office doors or laboratory doors.
- Group meetings of R/CA personnel should be conducted on-line via Zoom or Microsoft Teams. In person meetings should involve a minimal number of personnel and must follow social distancing guidelines.
- Face masks, provided by the university or the individual, are required in indoor public spaces regardless of the ability to maintain social distance. Indoor public spaces include spaces anyone can access, such as reception areas, hallways, bathrooms and building lobbies. Face masks are also required in all areas where multiple people are present and social distancing is not possible.
- All personnel must remain home if exhibiting flu-like symptoms. Symptoms may include fever, dry cough, shortness of breath, chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat or chest pressure. Employees will be sent home if they exhibit flu-like symptoms while at work. Individuals should contact their medical provider or the SIH COVID-19 hotline at 1-844-988-7800 if they wish to be evaluated for further testing.
- Any personnel who has tested positive for COVID-19 is required to follow orders from County Public Health Officials. If the individual has been in contact with other personnel or community spread is detected within that R/CA space, the faculty supervisor should notify the School / Department / Program Director and the Campus Department of Public Safety. Such an occurrence will be cause for that space to be closed to access until cleaning / decontamination protocols have been applied.

- Travel restrictions will follow guidelines issued by the Governor's Office, IDPH and the CDC. Personnel are expected to notify their faculty supervisor of ANY travel outside of the southern Illinois region and to impose self-quarantine for at least 14 days if there is any possibility of exposure to the COVID-19 virus.

### **PHASE 3**

- The transition to Phase 3 will occur in accordance with the requirement of the Governor's Restore Illinois Plan ([Restore Illinois](#)) and as determined by the university Executive Team. This date will remain flexible and take into consideration changes in requirements issued from the Governor's Office, IDPH, or the CDC.
- Faculty supervised graduate students, undergraduate students and staff (personnel) engaged in R/CA may return to work in accordance with the faculty developed RRE Plan. During this phase, and to the extent allowed by minimal safety requirements, personnel will be reduced to approximately 25% of normal occupancy. Social distancing and proper protection / hygiene will be maintained.
- Other protocols described in Phase 0-2 will remain in force with the exception that the laboratory occupancy can be increased as described in Phase 3.

### **PHASE 4**

- The transition to Phase 4 will occur in accordance with the requirements of the Governor's Restore Illinois Plan ([Restore Illinois](#)) and as determined by the university Executive Team. This date will remain flexible and take into consideration changes in requirements issued from the Governor's Office, IDPH, or the CDC.
- Faculty supervised graduate students, undergraduate students and staff (personnel) engaged in R/CA may return to work in accordance with the faculty developed RRE Plan. During this phase, and to the extent allowed by minimal safety requirements, personnel will be reduced to approximately 50% of normal occupancy. Social distancing and proper protection / hygiene will be maintained.
- Other protocols described in Phase 0-2 will remain in force with the exception that the laboratory occupancy can be increased as described in Phase 4

### **PHASE 5**

- The transition to Phase 5 will occur in accordance with the requirements of the Governor's Restore Illinois Plan ([Restore Illinois](#)) and as determined by the university Executive Team. This date will remain flexible and take into consideration changes in requirements issued from the Governor's Office, IDPH, or the CDC.
- Faculty supervised graduate students, undergraduate students and staff (personnel) engaged in R/CA may return to work in accordance with the faculty developed RRE Plan. During this phase personnel may be returned to 100% of normal occupancy. However, the "new normal" will require that social distancing and proper protection / hygiene will be maintained.
- Other protocols described in Phase 0-2 will remain in force with the exception that the laboratory occupancy can be increased as described in Phase 5

## Steps to Follow for Research / Creative Activity Resumption

\*Note: useful information for consideration while completing these steps may be found at the CDC site: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/colleges-universities/considerations.html>

Faculty are required to develop and document a Research Re-Engagement (RRE) Plan for resumption of R/CA that is applicable to their specific situation. The RRE Plan must be documented in written form, submitted to the School / Department / Program Director for approval, and copied to the Office of Research Compliance ([ORC@siu.edu](mailto:ORC@siu.edu)). This plan should reflect a thoughtful consideration of how an environment will be established in the \*laboratory that will maintain a safe work environment and minimize the possibility of viral transmission from one individual to another. Faculty must provide assurance that they have/will discuss the details of the plan with all personnel that they supervise and that they will make all reasonable effort to ensure that the plan is followed.

(\*laboratory refers to any space in which R/CA is conducted involving faculty supervised personnel, including, but not limited to, on-campus facilities, field sites, off-campus facilities, service facilities, etc.)

In the development of the RRE plan the following steps should be completed:

1. Identify all laboratory spaces under your supervision that are targeted for R/CA resumption involving university personnel (graduate students, undergraduate students, staff, etc.), to include interactions of university personnel with community members. These laboratories may include: on-campus facilities, field sites, off-campus facilities, service facilities, etc. (All areas where these interactions could occur should be considered, including, for example, plans for transportation to and from a field research site, etc.)
2. Individual plans may be submitted for each space or a single plan may be submitted for multiple spaces. For shared spaces or facilities it is appropriate for a group of faculty supervisors to submit a single RRE plan that encompasses all personnel who use that space.
3. Develop a list of any university personnel who would be expected to access a given laboratory and include this list in the RRE plan. *This list should be comprehensive and may be used for contact tracing in the event an exposure occurs.*
4. Determine the Phase appropriate “occupancy limit” for the laboratory space. This determination will vary depending on the Phase (Phase 3 – 25% normal, Phase 4 – 50% normal, Phase 5 – 100% normal) and/or the type of laboratory (e.g. for on-campus laboratories and other physically constrained laboratories allow a minimum of 250 ft<sup>2</sup> per occupant). The “occupancy limit” should decrease if the laboratory occupants are routinely moving around the laboratory or frequently using community equipment. When in doubt, this determination should error on the conservative side with fewer individuals in a space rather than more.
5. Develop a schedule for the individuals who are expected to access the laboratory space which maintains the number of individuals in the space at, or below, the occupancy limit in a given phase. A description or an example of this schedule should be included in the RRE plan and be made available to all users of the laboratory. Please note, while changes to the schedule may be necessary due to changes in R/CA activity, the occupancy of the laboratory should never exceed the limit established for a given phase.
6. Secure sufficient Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) so that all individuals working in the laboratory are protected from exposure to viral transmission. Sharing of any PPE is strongly

discouraged. Entrance to a laboratory space should not be allowed until PPE for all personnel have been acquired and distributed.

- a. Face Masks are REQUIRED for all public spaces and it is recommended that they be worn at all times unless there are clear hazards associated with the wearing of a mask while conducting a specific research activity. Under the latter circumstance the masks should be replaced as soon as the specific research activity is completed.
  - b. Face shields or safety glasses are required for many laboratory activities and are strongly recommended as PPE for all university personnel conducting laboratory activities. Face shields or safety glasses must be made available to any laboratory personnel who wish to use them.
  - c. Disposable gloves are required for many laboratory activities and are strongly recommended as PPE for all university personnel conducting laboratory activities. Disposable gloves must be made available to any laboratory personnel who wish to use them.
  - d. Lab coats are required for many laboratory activities and are strongly recommended as PPE for all university personnel conducting laboratory activities.
7. Secure sufficient disinfectant / disinfectant wipes to treat all frequently touched areas, devices and equipment. Develop a set of procedures for disinfection of the commonly used surfaces in the lab. This disinfection procedure should be performed at the beginning of use of the laboratory by a given shift of personnel. The disinfection procedures should be in writing, should be made available to all users of the laboratory, and should be included in the RRE Plan. Entrance to a laboratory space should not be allowed until appropriate cleaning supplies have been acquired and distributed.
  8. Complete and submit an RRE Plan to your School / Department / Program Director and copy this plan to the Office of Research Compliance ([ORC@siu.edu](mailto:ORC@siu.edu) ). You will receive feedback on your plan which may include suggestions for improvement, additional issues in need of address, etc. Update the plan as needed to receive approval.
  9. Following final approval of your RRE Plan, schedule a virtual meeting with your laboratory personnel to review all requirements for R/CA resumption. This review should include 1) a clear statement of the occupancy limit of the laboratory, 2) a review of the schedule for individuals to use the laboratory, 3) notification of the necessity for laboratory personnel to have PPE, and 4) a review of the procedures for disinfection of the laboratory common surfaces and equipment. A review of personal practices to reduce virus transmission should also be included. This review should include 1) the requirement that personnel monitor their health and refrain from coming into the laboratory if they suspect that they have been exposed to the virus, 2) the requirement that personnel notify the faculty supervisor if they travel to any area or participate in any activity where virus transmission may have occurred, and 3) reference to the need for frequent hand-washing, social distancing and avoidance of facial contact. The review should also emphasize that, to the extent possible, work should continue to be conducted at home.