Dear Rowan Researchers,

As you are aware, we are working diligently at all levels of the university to ensure continuation of mission critical activities while minimizing physical presence on campus. First, we appreciate your understanding of this rapidly evolving situation and we thank all of you for the efforts you have already taken to develop plans for scale back of research that focus on social distancing and safe working environments. We are now moving to the next phase in addressing research at the university and we must ask that you minimize all on campus research related activities to only those activities that are absolutely essential.

All directors of research centers/laboratories and Principal Investigators (PIs) should immediately begin preparing for restricting on-campus research to essential activities that include:

* Work to maintain critical equipment and safe standby mode in laboratories;
* Work to maintain critical samples and animal populations; and
* Work that directly relates to COVID-19 that has a timeline for deployment that could address the current crisis.

We understand that the above criteria will be disruptive to scholarly activity and research productivity but these steps are necessary to ensure the health and safety of our faculty, staff, students, and those in the community. We are not discontinuing research at Rowan but during this period, we are requiring that research be conducted remotely unless it meets one of the above criteria. We ask that you immediately institute the following rules:

* Access to research laboratories should be limited to only essential personnel. If you have to do lab based research and it is work that is essential, please observe social distancing guidelines. You should only have a maximum of 10% of your regular staff at any time.
* PIs should immediately identify essential research experiments that are at a critical phase, meaning that abandoning them would cause a major or irreversible loss in project viability. This high priority work should be a very limited set of the current laboratory bench-based experimentation. Those PIs must obtain approval of their Dean to continue in person research.
* Some researchers may feel pressured to work in laboratories when they do not feel it is appropriate. We need to remind PIs that concerns like this should be addressed and taken seriously. No one should feel pressured to work in the lab during this period. We should be clear with undergraduate and graduate student researchers that they are not required to be present.
* PIs should also identify experiments that can be ramped down, curtailed or delayed, and implement those processes immediately.
* New lines of research or experiments may NOT be initiated at this time if such research requires active use of lab resources in person.
* Disinfection of common laboratory areas and touchpoints (e.g., doorknobs, sink handles, freezer doors, telephones) with 70% ethanol should occur at least twice daily for any labs that remain functional.
* Directors of research centers, laboratories and resources must develop and share with their Department Chairs and Deans their plans for safely shutting down equipment following appropriate processes should closure become necessary due to the evolving COVID-19 pandemic. All PIs must also develop plans for maintaining laboratory viability (e.g. liquid nitrogen tank filling, animal support, maintaining shared computational equipment). If you anticipate barriers or problems in these tasks, please notify your Department Chair immediately.
* External visitors are not permitted in labs at this time.
* Human subject research which requires in-person contact needs to be suspended. This applies not only to campus, but also in field work. Virtual interaction is permitted. Please contact our Research Compliance office to modify your IRB protocol to allow for virtual interactions.
* Make sure you have access to emergency contact information for your students, postdocs, and staff, and review contingency plans and emergency procedures within your group.
* Continue engaging in research activities that allow for teleworking. Take this critical time to write papers, dissertations, or grant applications. Use this time to analyze your results and publish your work. Use the time to work on manuscripts or thesis. It is also a good time to work on proposals. Staff in the Division of University Research is teleworking and will be here to help you.

**Please be aware that effective Friday evening, March 20, academic buildings and facilities will be locked to secure them given that there are fewer people present on campus. As such, only authorized persons will be able to gain access to research labs.**

We are committed to ensuring that these measures be in place only as long as are necessary for health and safety. However, Covid-19 and its impacts have been unpredictable. The next few weeks will be critical in trying to flatten the curve of infection and therefore it is critical that we all do what we can to ensure social distancing. We will continue to evaluate the situation and will provide ongoing updates. It goes without saying that this is challenging time for all and that in times like these, we must develop methods to stay engaged and supportive of our remote workforce and each other. We are looking for suggestions from you and will share them as we receive them.

Thank you.

Tony Lowman, Provost

James Newell, Senior VP, Health Sciences

Beena Sukumaran, VP of Research