



**SAINT LOUIS
UNIVERSITY**

— EST. 1818 —

**VICE PRESIDENT
FOR RESEARCH**

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Dear Colleagues,

Saint University continues to closely monitor the outbreak of coronavirus disease, known as COVID-19. With the ongoing concern about the spread of this disease, laboratories and research facilities should begin to plan for the possibility of a significant disruption to normal operations.

Each laboratory or research facility is best positioned to create a continuity plan that will meet their unique needs. The guidance below is provided to facilitate the development of that plan. (Information related to personal prevention and health planning may be found at <https://www.slu.edu/health-advisory/index.php>.)

Research Continuity Guidance for Laboratories and Research Facilities

Assumptions that you can use for planning, based on a scenario with sustained COVID-19 community transmission:

- A significant percentage of your laboratory workforce may be out sick or unable to come to work.
- Orders for critical supplies may be delayed.
- Processing of visas by the federal government may be delayed, resulting in delayed appointments.
- Core facilities and other fee-for-service resources may not be available.
- Repairs performed by Facilities and other SLU and non-SLU service providers may be delayed.
- Decontamination of your workspace may be necessary in the event of a local illness.
- The University will communicate any disruptions to laboratory access.
- Essential research infrastructure, such as power and telecommunications, will be maintained.
- Comparative Medicine will maintain critical vivarium and other related functions.
- Environmental Health & Safety will maintain essential functions including.

Steps you can take now to ensure continuity of critical functions:

- Identify procedures and processes that require regular personnel attention (e.g. cell culture maintenance, animal studies).
- Assess and prioritize critical laboratory activities.
- Identify any research experiments that can be ramped down, curtailed, or delayed.
- Identify personnel able to safely perform essential activities.
- Ensure that you have access to contact information for your critical staff.
- Cross-train research staff to fill in for others who may be out sick or unable to come to work.
 - Ensure staff have the appropriate training.



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- Consider documenting critical step-by-step instructions.
- Coordinate with colleagues who have similar research activities to identify ways to ensure coverage of critical activities.
- Review contingency plans and emergency procedures with researchers and staff.
- Maintain a sufficient inventory of critical supplies that may be impacted by global shipping delays.
- Consider installing remote control monitoring devices for critical equipment (e.g., -80C freezers, liquid nitrogen storage dewars, incubators).
- Communicate lab closures and/or significant planned absences to Environmental Health & Safety, business offices, and other key administrative units, including DRC Building Manager, if applicable.

Measures you can take to prevent the spread of illness among your group if the risk of COVID-19 increases within the SLU community:

- Practice hand hygiene frequently: Wash hands often with soap and water for at least 20 seconds. If soap and water are not readily available, use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer that contains at least 60%-95% alcohol until such time you can get to a sink to properly wash your hands with soap and water. (Hand sanitizer is not a substitute for handwashing in the laboratory.)
- It is especially important to clean your hands after going to the bathroom; before eating; and after coughing, sneezing, or blowing your nose.
- Disinfect common laboratory areas and touchpoints with an appropriate disinfectant. This includes doorknobs, handles, freezer doors, fume hood and BSC sashes, light switches and telephones – including personal cell phones.
 - See EPA List of Disinfectants for Use Against COVID-19: https://www.epa.gov/sites/production/files/2020-03/documents/sars-cov-2-list_03-03-2020.pdf
- Remind staff to stay home when they are not feeling well.
- Consider alternating work schedules to meet the demands of the laboratory while limiting close contact with others.
- Identify work that can be done from home or remotely, such as data analysis.
 - Test and update remote work technologies such as VPN and Zoom conferencing.
 - Note: VPN access may be limited, and you may need to prioritize access for your group.
- Avoid in-person meetings. Use remote work technologies such as Zoom conferencing.

Other safety considerations:

- Ensure that individuals performing critical tasks have been adequately trained and understand who to contact with technical or safety questions.



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- Avoid performing high-risk procedures alone. When working alone is necessary, exercise maximum caution.
- Notify colleagues of your schedule when working alone for an extended period of time.
- Ensure that high-risk materials (radioactive, biohazards, chemicals) are secured.

Grant related questions:

- The Sponsored Programs Accounting (SPA) Group is reviewing questions relating to the allowability of costs associated with any disruptions to sponsored projects stemming from the coronavirus.
 - Send questions to departmental business offices that will coordinate with SPA Group.
 - In order for a cost to be allowable, it will require consistent treatment across all funding sources.
 - The federal funding agencies are working on a unified message in this regard. Once it is published, the SPA Group will share it with the SLU community.

Next Steps:

Although there are no known cases of COVID-19 infection at SLU, there has been a case in St. Louis County. The university is following guidance from the Missouri Department of Public Health, CDC, and other agencies, and coordinating closely with the City of St. Louis. President Pestello launched a task force, including SLU's infectious disease experts, to closely monitor the situation. This group, and the University leadership more broadly, continue to follow the lead of the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) as we work to maintain the health and safety of our community. [The SLU Coronavirus COVID-19 website](#) will be updated as new information becomes available.

Sincerely,

Ken Olliff
Vice President for Research