

**The Office of Research, Strategic Initiatives, and Economic Development
The Office of Sponsored Programs
Interim Research Policy during the Coronavirus COVID-19 Emergency**

This document addresses funded research and has no direct bearing on independent research being conducted by students, staff, and faculty.

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that can cause respiratory illnesses such as the common cold or more severe illnesses. The coronavirus that originated in Wuhan, China had not been previously detected in humans or animals and much is still unknown about it. The virus has been named, "SARS-CoV-2," and the disease it causes has been name, "coronavirus disease 2019" (COVID-19). Basic information and recommendations for prevention and treatment may be found through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/about/prevention-treatment.html>).

It is important to note that as of March 16, 2020, SU has no plans to restrict access to university research spaces, but if the spread of COVID-19 interrupts the operations of labs or broader campus operations and research, then we must be prepared.

General Statement. Following Governor John Bel Edwards' announcement regarding the suspension of instruction at all K-12 public schools in the state until April 14, 2020, the senior leaders of Southern University and A&M College took action on Thursday, March 12, 2020 to proactively address rising concerns regarding COVID-19. The decision was made to cancel regular face-to-face meetings and classes from March 16 - 21, 2020 and begin hosting virtual or web-enabled instructional delivery for ALL classes for the remainder of the semester. With regard to research, however, the ORSI and OSP have decided to provide a set of guidelines for the research enterprise.

Southern University and A&M College's Offices of Research, Strategic Initiatives, and Economic Development (ORSI) and Office of Sponsored Programs (OSP) are offering these strategies concerning COVID-19 as an addition to the University's Emergency Response Plan (<http://www.subr.edu/assets/subr/SACSCOCFifthYearReport/CS3.11.3/EmergencyResponsePlan.pdf>).

Strategic Policy. Safeguarding the health, safety and well-being of the entire Southern University and A&M community is our most important objective. Thus, ORSI and OSP will err on the side of caution and work with all students, staff and faculty to ensure the continuity of their sponsored programs or research.

OSP will coordinate all responses to funding agencies, e.g., federal, state, local, foundational or private, on behalf of researchers at SU. To the extent possible, research should be conducted off-campus and/or on-line.

Strategic Areas. The ORSI has identified the following strategic areas to offer clarification during the COVID-19 emergency: on-going research, proposed submissions, report or funding deadlines, meetings and communications, and international and domestic travel related matters.

On-Going Research. ORSI recommends that all research personnel prepare to conduct their research remotely, when possible. Thus, ORSI recommends: contact [SU Division of Information Technology](#) to ensure off-site access to files and programs and applications necessary to conduct research. Researchers should also have back-up files. If using a personal computer, make sure that it is updated and secure (use a two-step verification, for example).

Some files may need to be accessed remotely. ORSI recommends that Researchers consider OneDrive or SharePoint accessible through your SU Microsoft Office 365 account. Instructions on installing an MS Office 365 can be found [here](#).

If research includes the undergraduate or graduate students, ORSI recommends that they be assigned tasks that ensure their health, safety and well-being. As such, international students may need special protection. Please be aware that ORSI does not support any discriminatory procedures targeting a student's country of origin.

It is the ORSI's plan to collaborate with the SU DOIT to develop a Research Moodle page for you during this time. Once that has been accomplished, the Research Moodle information will be provided. Please monitor the [ORSI webpage](#) for any updates.

Submissions and Reports. In general, ORSI and OSP expect that all Researchers will be able to submit proposals and reports, even if personnel are working remotely. Most federal agencies strive to be flexible about deadlines under crisis circumstances beyond our control. However, if agencies are officially closed, proposals will most likely remain in a queue, pending resumption of agency operations, for example during federal budget-related shutdowns.

Ensuring data accuracy is critically important to both the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) for guiding prevention priorities and protecting patients, especially those effected by the COVID-19. Thus, all health-related researchers with pending submissions and reports are strongly urged to file such in a timely manner.

ORSI and OSP will follow all its current policies and procedures for submissions, but will "electronically" sign all reports via email approval and, where possible, provide an actual signature later, if required. All forms may be converted to a PDF.

As a note, policies related to reporting for the National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation may be found in the **Important Links** section.

Research-Related Meetings, Workshops and Communications. ORSI recommends that all research-related meetings and workshops be postponed until we have received further guidance from the SUS President. Along those lines, the ORSI and OSP will cancel any face-to-face meetings with individual Researchers for a two-week period, ending March 30, 2020.

If there are special or extenuating circumstances that may cause undue impact on project research activity/results, Researchers will still be able to meet with ORSI and OSP staff via Zoom. To arrange a Zoom hosted meeting with an individual ORSI and/or OSP staff member, please contact them at their SU email addresses and copy both ORSI@subr.edu and OSP@subr.edu on all requests. As always, staff members may be contacted by phone. Please leave a message for a return call. The list of ORSI and OSP staff member email addresses and phone numbers is provided below:

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ORSI also recommends that **Researchers** have all telephone and email communications available through your cell phone. If you are not going to work at SU, have calls forwarded. Please request an SU enabled Zoom account through the DOIT <http://www.subr.edu/subhome/51>.

Travel. If faculty research involves international travel, please note that ALL such University sponsored travel has been suspended by the President's Office until further notice. Please see guidance from the [U.S. Department of State](#) and the [CDC Coronavirus Disease 2019 Information for Travel policy](#).

Suggested Researcher Actions. ALL currently funded Researchers (e.g., sponsored programs or research based) should maintain an individual Plan of Continuity (POC), providing such to OSP and their respective Deans and department Chairs. As appropriate, the Research POCs should include the following:

- Names of key personnel who perform tasks related to high priority essential functions that will be used to quickly activate your continuity plan if curtailment is enacted. Provide list of funded projects and names and contact information for all personnel, including Graduate Assistants and Student Workers, working on funded projects.
- How the Researchers might operate with diminished personnel in your lab, as well as adapt to allow personnel or graduate assistants to provide remote work opportunities, as your operation allows. Consider a plan for alternative coverage by cross-training staff and faculty.
- Plan for timing of experiments or other longer-term activities.
- Plan to keep animals or biological cultures viable and healthy.
- List essential supplies with names and contact information of vendors. Note those supplies that are essential. Is your stock sufficient?
- Plan to maintain any gas supplies or equipment.
- Note special reporting requirements that would be triggered by a curtailment of your research operations.
- Note any special comments. For example, what kind of support would you need to execute your plan? Will you require additional time from the funding agency to complete your research? Do you want OSP to contact the funding agency on your behalf?
- OSP programmatic operations (i.e. pre- and post-proposals, including new awards, modifications, no-cost extensions, etc.) will be forthcoming. The detailed plan will be posted on the OSP website at www.subr.edu/OSP.

It is anticipated that funding agencies will release agency POCs that would address some of the questions posed. We will forward such guidance as we receive it. **Any changes to this interim plan or the dates included herein will be posted on the [ORSI and OSP webpages as needed](#).**

Important Links. The following resources may be accessed for additional information regarding COVID-19.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Travel Health Notices.
<https://wwwnc.cdc.gov/travel/notices>.

International Society for Travel Medicine. <https://www.istm.org/>.

Johns Hopkins Database. For tracking the spread of the COVID-19.
<https://www.arcgis.com/apps/opsdashboard/index.html#/bda7594740fd40299423467b48e9ecf6>.

Louisiana Department of Health. <http://ldh.la.gov/index.cfm/page/3835>.

National Institutes of Health. Reporting Requirements.
<https://www.niaid.nih.gov/grants-contracts/reporting-requirements>.

National Science Foundation. Proposal & Award Policies & Procedures Guide.
https://www.nsf.gov/pubs/policydocs/pappg18_1/pappg_7.jsp.

On-going university policies from across the US. This covers many issues not included here.
<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1VT9oiNYPyiEsGHBoDKIwLIWAsWP58sGV7A3oIuEUG3k/htmlview?usp=sharing&sle=true>.

Emergency Contact.

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