May 29, 2020

Dear Rutgers Researchers,

This email initiates a phased and safe Return to Research at Rutgers University. The plan described below has been developed by the Research Team of the University Emergency Operations Committee, comprised of 58 faculty and administrators. More detailed guidance on all aspects of re-imagining our university is contained in a draft document entitled ***Returning to Rutgers***, which has been shared with your deans and will soon be released.

This communication addresses the specific roles of Principal Investigators, department chairs, institute directors and research deans in the return to research process.

It is imperative that all researchers read this document to understand and support the safe and rapid return to full research capability at Rutgers. Those of you who are postdoctoral fellows, graduate students or research staff are directly impacted by this process, but you will not have specific input into the Return to Research Survey described further below.

Research Plan:
The research plan involves increasing university research capacity/density in 25% increments, then assessing the results before engaging the next phase; refer to the diagram below for more details. This is a method that a number of our peer institutions are initiating as well.

	Phase 1 "25%" capacity/density	Phase 2 "50%" capacity/density	Phase 3 "75%" capacity/density	New Normal 100%
Phase change triggered by course of pandemic				
Aspirational Timeline	May	June	July	August
Face Covering Social Distancing Enhanced Hygiene	Required	Required	Required	Not required
Density restriction for on-campus research	Only critical research allowed	≥ 6 ft distancing 1 pers/bay wet labs 1 pers/150 sqft	≥ 6 ft distancing 1 pers/bay wet labs 1 pers/150 sqft	No restrictions
Remote operation of research if possible	Required	Required	Recommended	Not required
Remote operation of research – at risk groups	Required	Required	Required	Not required

We are currently in Phase 1 (above), and operating with approximately 25% of our research capacity. In New Jersey, we have now clearly passed the peak level of infection in the first wave of the COVID-19 pandemic and are positioned to bring an additional 25% of our research effort back online.

Safety First:

Our overarching guiding principle throughout this process is safety; this is a shared community responsibility. We must carefully abide by protective social distancing and public health restrictions to minimize the possibility of an outbreak of COVID-19 on campus. The practices described here and to be released in ***Returning to Rutgers*** will follow New Jersey Department of Health and CDC guidance for managing public health. For example, face coverings, protective social distancing and enhanced hygiene and cleaning activities will be required on campus.

Testing & Monitoring of Symptoms:

A further strategy is to make use of viral testing and active symptom monitoring to contain and mitigate any outbreak of COVID-19 in Rutgers University research settings. A negative test for the SARS CoV-2 virus will be required for researchers identified as currently on campus. The RUCDR saliva test for CoV-2 virus will be administered at home using a telemedicine provider engaged by the university. In addition, all researchers identified through a Return to Research Survey as returning in Phase 2 and Phase 3 will receive the RUCDR at-home CoV-2 test *prior* to their return to campus. This will ensure that the returning on-campus researcher cohort is COVID-19 negative at the outset. Contact tracing will be employed in the event a researcher acquires a community infection; our on-campus tracing capabilities are being rapidly built out in parallel with the return to research efforts.

Return to Research Survey (https://go.rutgers.edu/ReturnToResearch):

The first step in bringing research back up to speed is to capture information on those research programs that must be run on-campus, along with off-campus programs that need to be restarted at other venues. The mechanism to achieve that end is the Return to Research Survey. Input from this survey will be used by the research deans and chairs to prioritize the return to research for all phases of return. **This survey should only be completed by Principal Investigators who are currently conducting research on campus as well as those who wish to resume research on or off campus.** Postdoctoral researchers, graduate students and researchers who are not Principal Investigators, should **not** complete the survey.
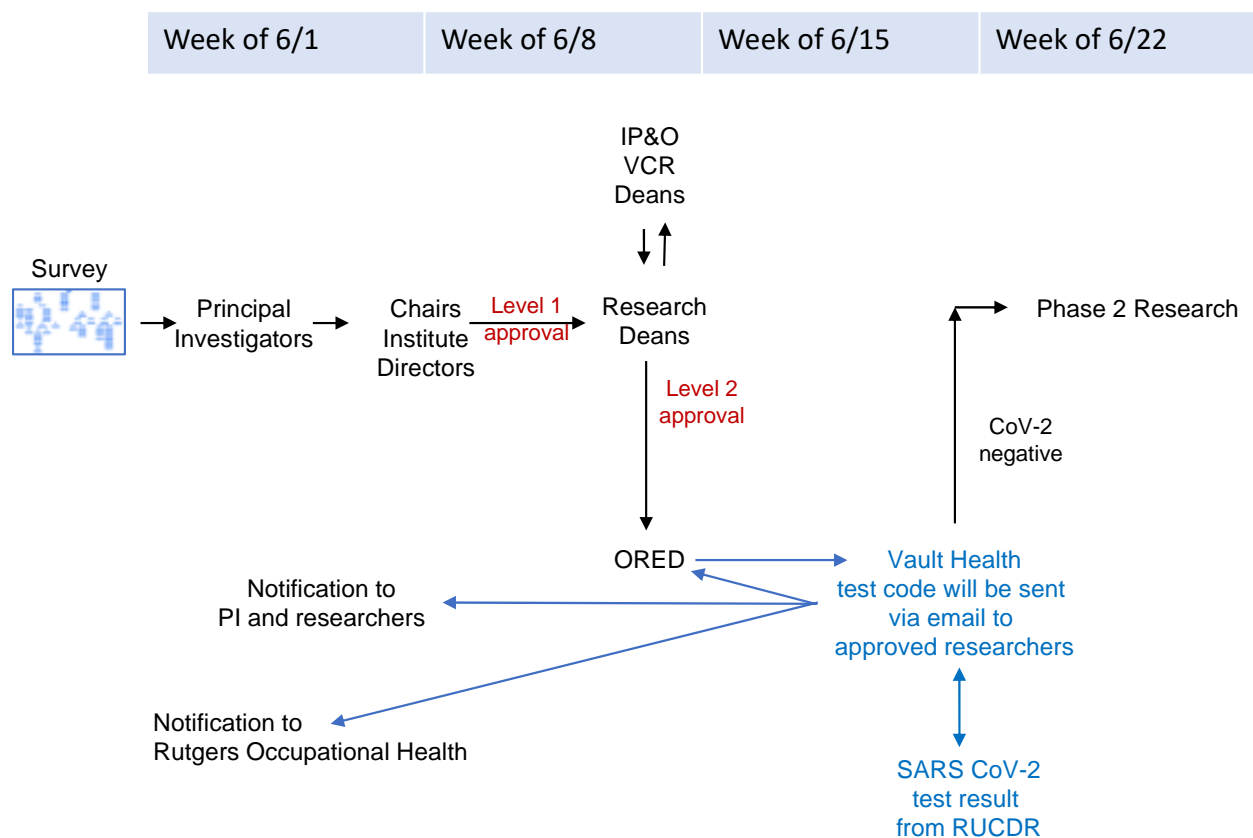
The survey has three main functions:

1) **To capture the prioritization by each Principal Investigator of the research they wish to re-engage.** Principal Investigators should prioritize *all* research, to allow a plan to be developed at the research dean level to scale up to 100% capacity. This sets up a conversation between the PI, the chair or institute director, the research dean and the school dean that will allow the research dean to determine the sequence in which projects should be brought back on campus.

2) **To share the research dean's decisions with campus and central functions** (e.g., ORED, IP&O) that are required to support Rutgers' research capability.

3) **To trigger the at-home CoV-2 test** for the entire research cohort being brought back on-campus.

A high-level outline of the return to research process is shown below:

Week of 6/1	Week of 6/8	Week of 6/15	Week of 6/22

IP&O
VCR
Deans

↓↑

Survey → Principal Investigators → Chairs Institute Directors — Level 1 approval → Research Deans

Phase 2 Research

Level 2 approval

CoV-2 negative

ORED — Vault Health test code will be sent via email to approved researchers

Notification to PI and researchers

Notification to Rutgers Occupational Health

SARS CoV-2 test result from RUCDR

Postdoctoral Researchers, Graduate Students, Research Staff:
No further action is required from you with respect to the survey. If your research project is submitted by the Principal Investigator and approved, you will be notified and provided a code for the at-home telemedicine CoV-2 test. Return to campus in Phases 2 and 3 is voluntary: *no one is required to return to their research setting during these phases of the plan*.

Principal Investigators:
Complete survey by 12:00 p.m. on June 5th.
Filling out the survey is the rate-limiting step. As soon as possible, visit https://go.rutgers.edu/ReturnToResearch. The form contains internal logic that will guide you through a series of questions that have been developed with the extensive input of faculty and research leadership from multiple disciplines representing the entire research community at Rutgers. Most important is the prioritization of your research projects, and the information that is requested around staffing those projects. This will allow the research deans and chairs to most impactfully sequence a return to research across the department and school. If your research project is approved for return in Phase 2 or Phase 3, staffing to support operations, provisions for cleaning and for hygiene will be supplied by the university.

Department Chairs & Institute Directors (Level 1 Approval):
Complete survey reviews by 12:00 p.m. on June 9th.
The Level 1 approver will receive an email link to the survey when completed by each PI. The responsibility of the department chairs and institute directors is to evaluate and judge whether the Principal Investigator's research plan is prioritized appropriately and is consistent with the protective distancing (social distancing), density and capability requirements of the phase. For example, Phase 2 should correspond to ~50% research density and capacity, and in all instances conform with protective distancing requirements. Approval at Level 1 will trigger the delivery of the pre-populated survey and Level 1 feedback to the Level 2 approver (or research dean).

Research Deans (Level 2 Approval):
Complete Plan for Return to Research Phase 2 by 12:00 p.m. on June 12th.
The research deans, or Level 2 approvers, will be able to view the survey and comments from all Level 1 approvers in their jurisdiction and can also access reports that summarize the surveys that have been compiled for evaluation. A list of the designated research deans is appended, and they are programmed within the survey as well.

The research dean will create an overall return to research plan in consultation with the dean, institute directors and department chairs. Acceptance or rejection of specific research programs in the research dean's plan will be communicated to ORED, and will trigger email notifications to the Principal Investigator and their research personnel informing them of the decisions. For researchers who are approved to return to research, it will trigger an email providing directions for accessing the at-home RUCDR saliva test through our telemedicine provider. A negative saliva test result is required for return to campus.

The Return to Research process described above is fundamentally a grassroots operation. Its success is entirely dependent upon the quality of input from researchers and its thoughtful application throughout the approval process.

I would like to thank you sincerely in advance for your diligent support of this effort to bring research back online at Rutgers University safely and quickly.

Best regards,

S. David Kimball
Senior Vice President, Research & Economic Development

Research Deans - Return to Research Survey

RBHS	
New Jersey Medical School	Debi Lazzarino
Robert Wood Johnson Medical School	Celine Gelinas
Cancer Institute of New Jersey	Ned Lattime
Ernest Mario School of Pharmacy	Renping Zhou
School of Health Professions	Gwen Mahon
School of Public Health	Katie Zapert
School of Nursing	Charlotte Thomas-Hawkins
School of Dental Medicine	Narayanan Ramasubbu
Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences Institute	Helmut Zarbl
Center for Advanced Biotechnology and Medicine	Martin Blaser
Public Health Research Institute	David Alland
Institute for Infectious & Inflammatory Diseases	Bill Gause
Clinical	Rey Panettieri
CAMDEN	
Faculty of Arts and Sciences	Howard Marchitello
School of Nursing	Donna Nickitas
School of Business	Monica Adya
Rutgers Law School	Kim Mutcherson
NEWARK	
School of Criminal Justice	Bonnie Veysey
School of Arts and Sciences-Newark	Denis Pare
Rutgers Law School	David Lopez
Rutgers Business School	Lei Lei
School of Public Affairs and Administration	Charles Menifield
Rutgers Graduate School-Newark	Taja-Nia Henderson
NEW BRUNSWICK	
NB Chancellor Reporting Units	Prabhas Moghe
SAS - Life Sciences	Lori Covey
SAS - Math & Physical Sciences	Thu Nguyen
SAS - Social & Behavioral	David Vicario
SAS - Humanities	Michelle Stephens
School of Environmental and Biological Sciences	Brad Hillman
School of Engineering	Susan Kilduff
Graduate School of Education	Wanda Blanchett
School of Communication and Information	Mark Aakhus
Graduate School of Applied and Professional Psychology	Linda Reddy
Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy	Clinton Andrews
School of Management and Labor Relations	Ingrid Fulmer
School of Social Work	Sharon Fortin