

RESEARCH INFORMATION SESSION

APRIL 20, 2020

#	Office	Questions
1	President	<p>Will UConn and UConn Health follow Governor Lamont's closure for non-essential employees?</p> <p>Answer: Consistent with the Governor's work-from-home Executive Order 7H, Section 1, UConn and UConn Health will continue the current telecommuting procedures and pay all full and part-time regular payroll employees until May 20, 2020.</p>
2		<p>How will the OVPR keep the research community updated and informed about decisions related to research?</p> <p>Answer: The OVPR will provide regular updates as information becomes available using its usual communication channels, including emails sent to deans, department heads, directors, research administrators, and PIs with active grants. We encourage everyone to check the OVPR website, as any updates will be posted there as well.</p>
3	OVPR	<p>When will research be "ramped-up"?</p> <p>Answer: The resumption of research will depend on the continued course of the pandemic, CDC guidance, lifting or modification of State restrictions on non-essential business, and the University and UConn Health's re-entry process. The current Executive Order extends through May 20, 2020 and this is being used as a target date.</p>
4	OVPR	<p>What is the University plan to restart research? In phases? If yes, what are the phases?</p> <p>Answer: A process is being put in place to ensure that resumption of research activity is done in a phased approach and in accordance with local, state, and federal guidance, including adhering to risk mitigation practices, limited access, and ensuring appropriate safety protections are in place. A research ramp-up plan and guidance will be available April 30, 2020.</p>
5	OVPR	<p>What guidance is there for REU programs (Research Experience for Undergraduates) and other summer research programs for undergraduates, such as the Health Research Program?</p> <p>Answer: Guidance on this topic can be found on the OVPR's COVID-19 resource page FAQs.</p>
6	OVPR	<p>We have a survey based study and all associated work can be done remotely or online. What restrictions or limitations can we expect for this type of research?</p> <p>Answer: Research that can be conducted remotely and without direct interaction with subjects can continue.</p>
7	OVPR	<p>When can field research resume?</p>

		<p>Answer: Resuming field research will be part of the phased ramp up process and consistent with the requirements of the location of the field site, state and federal guidance, and any travel restrictions.</p>
8	OVPR	<p>How will UConn accommodate the financial burden of continuing compensation costs during this period of little or no work, especially if there will not be sufficient funding left to conduct the required research?</p> <p>Answer: There are going to be many unexpected costs associated with the pandemic. The impact is going to strain resources at all levels of the University, and PIs should plan on using resources at their disposal (IDC and DCAA accounts) to the extent available. In addition, there are several initiatives at the federal level seeking supplemental funding to address the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on research programs. Updates will be communicated as they are available.</p>
9	OVPR	<p>Will internal funding opportunities (e.g., Research Excellence Program awards) still be available for projects that can be conducted without face-to-face contact?</p> <p>Answer: Yes, internal funding programs will continue as planned, including the REP. Internally funded projects will follow the same guidance and requirements as externally funded projects. Projects for which work can be conducted remotely can begin immediately. The start date for projects that cannot be done remotely will be determined by the status of the research ramp up process.</p>
10	OVPR	<p>Is the University working to loosen requirements, such as effort reporting?</p> <p>Answer: The certification language that researchers sign will be changed to acknowledge that effort during the period may include periods of little or no work, but that payroll charges continue to be allowable under sponsor guidance. The University is working with peers, associations, and UConn's Office of Governmental Relations to advocate and take advantage of administrative flexibilities available under federal guidelines.</p>
11	OVPR	<p>Can a process to allow limited access to the labs be put in place?</p> <p>Answer: Yes, as part of maintaining critical research infrastructure, a process is being established that will allow a limited number of individuals into their labs for a limited amount of time to conduct work that is important to support an upcoming grant submission.</p>
12	OVPR	<p>Is my grant automatically eligible for a no-cost extension? If so, for how long is the no-cost extension granted and is my grant eligible for supplemental continuation funding?</p> <p>Answer: Federal sponsors have adopted administrative relief granted from the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) for grants. OMB provided for agencies to extend awards which were active as of March 31, 2020 and scheduled to expire prior or up to December 31, 2020, automatically at no cost for a period of up to twelve (12) months. Sponsor guidance has so far stated that supplemental funds are not guaranteed. Specific guidance by sponsor is available on the OVPR COVID-19 resource page.</p>
13	OVPR	<p>Many faculty are concerned about graduate students, especially international students and the impact on their academic and professional progress if labs are not opened in the fall.</p>

		<p>Answer: Graduate students are integral to the University's research enterprise and are critical to creating a vibrant and intellectually engaging environment. Ensuring the success of our graduate students and postdoctoral fellows remains our highest priority. The Graduate School has issued guidance on the suspension of research and the impact on degree progress.</p>
14	OVPR	<p>What are the plans to test investigators, students, and support staff in the research domain as part of resuming research?</p> <p>Answer: The University will follow local, state, and federal guidelines and requirements.</p>
15	OVPR	<p>Is the University willing to give summer support to students who will have a delay in their projects, and won't be paid during the summer by their grants?</p> <p>Answer: Graduate students whose plans for the summer have been interrupted and are experiencing financial hardship should contact the Office of Financial Aid where additional resources and support are available.</p>
16	OVPR	<p>GA summer salaries on grants - is this allowed if research is still halted over the summer?</p> <p>Answer: Guidance was issued by the Graduate School and HR on April 23, 2020.</p>
17	OVPR	<p>For PI summer salaries on grants – do we need to reduce summer effort if labs are not open?</p> <p>Answer: Whenever possible, telecommuting should be pursued. Changes to planned work need to be made in consultation with Program Officers and documented via email and kept in local files. If there is a change in scope, the request must be formally submitted through Sponsored Program Services (SPS) and approved by the sponsor.</p>
18	OVPR	<p>Can research be continued as "essential" if delaying the work would cause significant delays (on the order of a year or more) in conducting/completing the work or the delay would prevent the work from ever being conducted?</p> <p>Answer: This is part of the current Critical Research Infrastructure process. A submission should be made using the form on the COVID-19 resource page.</p>
19	OVPR	<p>PIs need to inform departments by June 1, 2020 if they are continuing GAs in the fall. What happens if research is still halted and PIs have made offers?</p> <p>Answer: Academic departments were advised by the Graduate School and HR to delay making GA offers for the fall unless they are certain they can fund the assistantships, as the department will be obligated to honor the commitments once the offers are accepted. Academic departments are encouraged to make offers if the commitments are for teaching assistantships. For research assistantships, departments can follow similar guidance provided for summer research assistantships in making offers. For additional guidance from HR on these topics, visit the HR COVID-19 resource page.</p>
20	OVPR	<p>Apparently, there are four teaching scenarios being considered for the fall, relative to COVID-19 contingencies, ranging from opening as usual to cancelling re-entry to campus for fall semester. What measures are being taken to coordinate those teaching plans with research?</p>

		<p>Answer: The Executive Policy Group (EPG) is part of the University's Emergency Management Program and consists of executive-level leadership and key divisional leads who will provide guidance to make sure decisions such as these are made in a coordinated fashion.</p>
21	UConn Health EVP	<p>Is the 7th floor of the University Tower at UConn Health being discussed as a treatment site for correctional facilities, and as there are currently research labs on the same floor, will greater security measures be established? Additionally, will there be additional bio-containment measures established if this space is used for COVID patients?</p> <p>Answer: The 7th floor of the University Tower is not being considered as a treatment site for correctional facilities. UConn Health has and will continue to ensure that security measures are in place when treating Department of Corrections inmates who are patients at the hospital, which includes having DOC correctional officers guard each DOC patient 1:1, as well as having back-up security where indicated. Isolation and bio-containment measures are established in all UConn Health spaces where COVID-19 patients are seen and treated.</p>
22	OVPR	<p>In the past, the OVPR listed year by year for each department the total external funding. This was a very useful information. Is there a plan to do this again?</p> <p>Answer: The OVPR will continue to publish its quarterly report of proposal, award, and expenditure data, which is provided at the department, school, and campus levels of detail. To view recent and archive reports, visit the OVPR website.</p>
23	OVPR	<p>Many investigators significantly reduced their animal numbers. How will the IACUC address the number of approved animals to address this?</p> <p>Answer: The IACUC is aware of this issue and will develop guidance to address animal counts.</p>
24	OVPR	<p>What's the plan regarding salaries if the University remains closed into May? Will personnel continue to be paid on sponsored projects?</p> <p>Answer: Research will follow UConn and UConn Health decisions regarding pay policy, which extends provisions for paying salaried employees on paid regular payrolls through May 20, 2020.</p>
25	OVPR	<p>Are there plans to allow time-sensitive research to proceed on a limited basis for graduate students and will time-to-degree be extended?</p> <p>Answer: The Graduate School has advice and guidance addressing these issues on their COVID-19 website.</p>
Additional Questions Asked During Information Session		
26	OVPR	<p>What is the best way to contact the IRB office? Could IRB offices hold a virtual session to answer questions?</p> <p>Answer: The IRB staff are working remotely, and normal business operations are in place. Because most questions are project specific, the best process is to contact the IRB staff directly rather than a virtual session.</p>

27	OVPR	<p>Some research projects do not need any big instruments and can be done with small instruments in the PI's lab. Can we assume such projects could start at the beginning of the research start cycle?</p> <p>Answer: The ease with which projects can be restarted will be a factor in ramp up decisions.</p>
28	OVPR	<p>Will the University provide funds to help compensate for lost postdoc and staff time?</p> <p>Answer: We are working with the Association of Public and Land Grant Universities (APLU) to push for supplemental funding, and several proposals have been submitted to the federal government. Faculty should use their DCAA or IDC accounts to support students and staff where charges to grants are not allowed.</p>
29	President	<p>Will IDC/salary savings accounts be absorbed or taxed by the University?</p> <p>Answer: President Katsouleas reassured faculty that these accounts would not be taxed.</p>
30	OVPR	<p>Can you confirm that the hiring and spending freezes will not apply to external grant funded projects?</p> <p>Answer: Freezes will not apply to charges and hiring that are fully grant funded.</p>
31	OVPR	<p>For those who have donated their PPE supplies, and given current restrictions on placing new PPE orders for non-essential work, how will PIs be able to OBTAIN the PPE required for ramping up?</p> <p>Answer: The University will follow CDC and state guidelines regarding individual use of PPE. The OVPR will work with Procurement to identify sources for PPEs in the event of shortages.</p>
32	OVPR	<p>What about research staff? Are you coordinating with the NIH to continue funding to grant funded labs even if the lab is shut down?</p> <p>Answer: Research will follow the University and UConn Health decisions regarding pay policy which extends provisions for paying salaried employees on paid and regular payrolls through May 20, 2020.</p>
33	OVPR	<p>What items can be purchased and delivered to an individual's home?</p> <p>Answer: Orders and purchases for items needed to support ongoing research activities being done remotely can be delivered to the individual's home. Masks and PPE can also be purchased and delivered to an individual's home in anticipation of resuming on-campus activities. The Procurement website provides additional guidance.</p>

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS FOR OTHER UNITS RECEIVED DURING RESEARCH INFORMATION SESSION

#	Office	Question
1	President	<p>How is the university interfacing with Gov. Lamont's "reopening task force"?</p> <p>Answer: UConn is part of the task force. UConn's Executive Secretary to the Board of Trustees and Chief of Staff, Rachel Rubin, was invited to join the group's subcommittee focused on higher education and has already begun attending meetings.</p>
2	President	<p>Can the UConn officials decide something which is different from Governor's orders on return to work? What is the chain of command sequence in these circumstances?</p> <p>Answer: The University abides by the Governor's orders as they relate to UConn. UConn is a state agency, most members of our Board of Trustees are appointed by the Governor, and the Governor of Connecticut is the President of the Board.</p>
3	Provost	<p>The Spring semester of 2020 coincides with, unfortunately for me, my sabbatical leave. And am I simply out of luck with respect to (most of) my sabbatical?</p> <p>Answer: The Provost's Office is working on guidance in this regard. We are hopeful to be able to provide guidance for the deans, and for general dissemination to the faculty, by early next week.</p>
4	Provost	<p>Many faculty have expressed concern about future tenure reviews. Will there be some overall guidance, soon?</p> <p>Answer: A draft resolution will be considered by the Board of Trustees at next week's meeting. After the result of this meeting, the Provost's Office will follow up with guidance shortly thereafter.</p>
5	Provost	<p>Though many tenure track faculty members appreciate that the BoT is considering extending tenure clocks for a year, they are deeply concerned about their future scholarship and creative endeavors in the arts and humanities.</p> <p>Answer: A draft resolution will be considered by the Board of Trustees at next week's meeting. After the result of this meeting, the Provost's Office will follow up with guidance shortly thereafter.</p>
6	UConn Health EVP	<p>I was wondering if some system of checks and balances could be put into place at UConn Health so that only researchers who properly filed an exemption are allowed in.</p> <p>Answer: All non-essential personnel are either working remotely or have their manager's approval to remain at work. On various occasions some employees may need to go into the building. In these situations approval is granted by the manager prior to the employee going into work.</p>
7	UConn Health EVP	<p>What is the UConn Health policy and process if an employee that's been working in the non-patient contact areas is found or suspected to be COVID19-positive?</p>

		<p>Answer: UConn Health policies and processes regarding possible contact with a confirmed or suspected COVID-19 infection are based on CDC guidelines. UConn Health provides additional information and guidance on their COVID-19 resource webpage. Any staff with concerns regarding possible COVID-19 infection should contact the COVID-19 Call Center at 860-679-3199.</p>
8	Controller /Bursar	<p>When will the credit to the tuition be posted?</p> <p>Answer: Housing and Dining charges will be posted to the students' fee bills starting mid-week next week (4/27).</p>
9	EPM/OIRE	<p>The CARES Act gave UConn \$21,500,845 of which, \$10,750,423 is the minimum allocation that can be awarded to students as "emergency financial aid grants." Is this accurate and if so, when will it be distributed?</p> <p>Answer: The information regarding the institutional funding, including \$10.7M for grants to students, is accurate. Once the CARES Act grants are established, a communication will be shared with the community describing how UConn will approach distribution of the monies.</p>
10	Graduate School	<p>Who at the office of financial aid should graduate students contact?</p> <p>Answer: Students experiencing unexpected financial hardship due to COVID-19 are encouraged to reach out to the Office of Student Financial Aid Services at financialaid@uconn.edu.</p>
11	Graduate School	<p>Will the graduate school consider special dispensation for PhD students who were close to finishing but cannot complete a final experiment or two due to labs being shut down for an indefinite amount of time?</p> <p>Answer: Students who require additional time to complete their degree requirements may request an extension of their conferral deadline by submitting the Request for Extension of Terminal Date for Degree Requirements form to graduatedean@uconn.edu.</p>
12	Graduate School	<p>What will happen to those graduate students "forced" into extra semesters by the research shut-down?</p> <p>Answer: Unfortunately, the Graduate School is not in a position to offer a blanket assurance with respect to extending funding, but we are committed to working very closely with departments, deans, and individual PIs to do everything we can to ensure that students have the funding they need to complete their degrees. Any requests for extended funding will by necessity have to be reviewed by the relevant people on a case-by-case basis, student by student, because every individual student's circumstance will differ.</p>
13	Graduate School	<p>Are you advising faculty advisory committees to be lenient toward graduate students who have lost months of dissertation research?</p> <p>Answer: We would encourage faculty to be lenient toward any request for extensions based on COVID-19. We hope that programs will do everything possible to find funds to help students complete their research.</p>

14	Graduate School	<p>Should students plan to stay another semester with the possibility that the labs will still not be open in the fall, and with the prospect that they will have to pay for their own tuition after losing guaranteed program funding/stipends?</p> <p>Answer: Students can enroll in one of the several continuous registration courses offered through the Graduate School, which are zero-credit courses. These courses allow students to maintain active enrollment, access to university resources such as email and the library, and require a flat fee instead of tuition charges.</p>
15	Graduate School/ Global Affairs	<p>If US immigration laws do not allow international graduate students to return in the fall and they can't to be paid if they are working from home, does this mean that their admission would be deferred automatically until the Spring 2021?</p> <p>Answer: Deferral to a following semester is not an automatic process. With approval from the program, a student may defer admission up to one full academic year from when the application was submitted.</p> <p>A request for a deferral should be made through the Accounts & Forms area of the student's Application Status page. We strongly encourage requests from graduate students who have not been appointed as a GA to be made prior to the first day of the semester. Graduate students who have been appointed as a GA must submit their requests prior to the start date of their appointment.</p> <p>Students may also request approval for a late arrival. A form to request approval of a late arrival for both incoming and current students will be available in June 2020. For students who hold graduate assistantships, a late arrival could impact the ability to retain that assistantship appointment. Such situations will be reviewed on a case by case basis.</p>
16	Human Resources	<p>Have there been confirmed Covid19 cases of people working or living on Campus and what is the communication and contact tracing protocol for employees who work in area where someone is tested COVID positive or exposed to someone who is COVID positive?</p> <p>Answer: Human Resources has been made aware of a number of presumed or confirmed cases of COVID-19 among employees and contractors working on campus and when reported. Human Resources, following the protocols issued on March 23 to the entirety of the University population, has instructed managers and supervisors to inform employees who may have had close contact with individuals infected or presumed infected with COVID-19 while addressing privacy concerns of their ill colleague. Please refer to the HR COVID FAQs on the UConn coronavirus website.</p>
17	Human Resources	<p>Will there be any alternative housing options for workers who need to quarantine themselves from vulnerable loved ones?</p> <p>Answer: For front-line clinical care provider at UConn Health, guidance has been posted about temporary housing to protect families from exposure to COVID-19 at work.</p>
18	Human Resources	<p>With less than two weeks remaining before reaching the initial end date for stay-at-home/research closure for the University, when can we expect an update on this?</p>

		Answer: Consistent with the Governor's work-from-home <u>Executive Order 7H, Section 1</u> , UConn and UConn Health will continue the current telecommuting procedures and pay all full and part-time regular payroll employees until May 20, 2020.
19	Human Resources	<p>A special payroll technician is limited to 1 year in this category. Will this 1 year cap be extended by the length of time that the research shutdown lasts?</p> <p>Answer: The collective bargaining agreement permits an extension of the 1 year appointment for an additional 6 months, however, the total time cannot exceed 18 months.</p>