

## 2020-2021 RESEARCH CONTINGENCY PLANS

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**Goal:** To facilitate research activities to the greatest degree possible during the 2020-2021 academic year, while adhering to any federal, state, local, or institutional restrictions in place. The primary goal is to allow reasonable flexibility that would enable, to the extent possible, the continued research engagement of our faculty, graduate students, undergraduate students, and postdoctoral researchers. Our goal is to enable all forms of research, while maintaining a safe environment. The information found below provides overarching guidance for researchers, with particular emphasis on additional requirements for those with lab-based programs.

### **Considerations:**

- Access to campus facilities will be driven by federal, state, local or institutional restrictions.
- Supporting a broad range of on-campus research activity will require the availability of a baseline level of infrastructure support including, without limitation, Environmental Health and Safety (EH&S), Library, Custodial, UNIT, Public Safety, Mail Services.
- Restrictions on on-campus research may have negative impacts on the ability of graduate and undergraduate students to complete their degree/thesis/dissertation requirements without access to laboratories, physical library resources, and other University facilities. Career progression of postdoctoral scholars with limited appointment terms may also be at risk.
- Restrictions on research activity (whether on- or off-campus) may have continued negative impacts on faculty career progression that vary by individual circumstances.
- Research-related hiring will align with HR guidance. Currently this allows for case-by-case exceptions to the current hiring freeze approved by Office of the Provost.

### **Current Status**

As outlined on the current Research Updates and Directives: COVID-19 Pandemic [guidance website](#), the evolving pandemic situation is also impacting our research community. Villanova has a wide variety of research activity that happens both on and off campus, with some types of research more amenable to remote work. Our goal is to enable all forms of research, while maintaining a safe environment and adhering to any local, state, national or institutional requirements. The information found on the Research COVID-19 website provides overarching guidance for researchers, with emphasis on additional requirements for those with lab-based programs.

Currently, Villanova can support nearly all forms of research with appropriate adjustments for social distancing, PPE usage, and sanitation of work areas. In-person access to Library materials

remains limited to contactless pickup or virtual browsing. As of the posting of this document (October 9, 2020), the IRB has requested that only remote engagement of human subjects' research participants be allowed. This guidance will be revisited at an upcoming meeting of the IRB and any updates posted on the [IRB's COVID-19 Directives webpage](#).

Given that the pandemic is a continually evolving situation, it is prudent that Villanova plan for changing situations if cases rise and access to campus facilities is limited in some manner. Planning for the continuation of research activities considers three scenarios the university has to alter course in response to changing conditions.

### **Scenario 1 – Villanova moves to online learning, but campus housing remains open**

Campus access continues uninterrupted following the guidelines set forth for the Fall 2020 reopening. The campus health and safety plan is in place, with a need to wear appropriate masks and PPE, and stagger/minimize staffing in research facilities, as appropriate, to accommodate social distancing guidelines. Campus infrastructure (e.g., Library, EH&S, facilities, shipping/receiving, custodial, etc.) is functioning as normal.

In this case:

- Research activity can be maintained as per the late Summer and [Fall 2020 "Return-to-Research" plans](#).
- EH&S approval required for work in laboratory facilities.
- Any limitations to in-person human subjects research are determined by the IRB and communicated to the research community.
- Library access available through contactless pickup.
- No additional staffing or student restrictions in research facilities. Once properly trained (if applicable), both graduate and undergraduate students are free to participate in research so long as they adhere to University policy and campus and lab health and safety plans.
- Off-campus research is allowable, so long as researchers abide by any local/state/site restrictions at the research site and practice good hygiene, PPE use, and social distancing.

### **Scenario 2 – Villanova moves to fully online learning, housing limited or eliminated**

Campus access continues for faculty, staff and graduate students requiring facility access, but residential students (primarily undergraduates) are sent home and campus housing is closed or very limited. For those who remain on campus, the existing health and safety plan is in place, with a need to wear appropriate masks and PPE, and stagger/minimize staffing in research facilities as appropriate to accommodate social distancing guidelines. This scenario assumes that campus infrastructure (e.g., Library, EH&S, facilities, mail services, custodial, etc.) is functioning at or near normal capacity.

In this case:

- Unless limited by a local/state/national restriction or stay-at-home order, research activity can be maintained in campus facilities.
- Research that can be done remotely, should be conducted remotely.
- Research students who are reliant on campus housing may need special accommodations to continue on-campus research. This could be accomplished in several ways:
  - If possible, research students who need access to campus facilities to complete their work will be among those students allowed to maintain their on-campus housing. The current “Draft Plan in Case of Campus Closing in Fall 2020” includes this consideration, along with other students who may need to retain on-campus housing for other reasons.
    - Additionally, students enrolled in research-for-credit or capstone courses could be allowed to drop this course without academic penalty and re-enroll in that course (or equivalent) in a subsequent semester if available.
  - Student participation in research activities is not contingent on living on campus; students who wish to continue to do so may.

**Scenario 3 – Villanova moves to fully online learning, housing eliminated, local/state/national restrictions in place such as stay-at-home order, etc.**

In this case:

- AVPR Grannas will work with General Counsel to determine if any on-campus research activity would be legally allowable in the context of any governmental restrictions put in place. The goal would be to allow as much research activity as is safe, supportable by campus resources, and legally permissible.
- If it is determined that on-campus research activity can continue, this work would proceed under the same safety precautions as currently in place, with additional precautions or limits as may be necessary to align with legal and regulatory requirements, safety best practices, and availability of support staff such as EH&S, Facilities, Public Safety, etc.
- If it is determined that on-campus research activity must be stopped, Villanova will re-enact the Spring 2020 ramp-down procedure that occurred in March. For laboratory-based research, each return-to-research plan included lab-specific ramp down guidance, which should be followed. Only essential on-campus research activity and research facility maintenance activity will be allowed (as previously defined). On-campus research activity will resume when restrictions lift, using same return-to-research procedure as was in place in Summer 2020.