A Framework for Restarting On-Campus and Field-Based OU-Norman Research and Creative Activity

Phase 2

Starting on March 24, the university operated its research and creative activity enterprise largely remotely, with only work defined as essential in the March 22 memo from the Vice President for Research and Partnerships (VPRP) taking place on campus (Phase 0). On May 6, the Office of the VPRP announced the first phase (Phase 1) of the restart of nonessential research and creative activity on the Norman Campus. During Phase 1 and starting on May 20, approximately 600 faculty, students and research staff were authorized to return to Campus.

On June 11, OU HR announced a plan for a July 6 return to campus for a limited number of staff not governed by the research restart plan. To maintain the momentum on research and creative activity, we are announcing Phase 2 of the restart process for on-campus and field-based research and creative activity. Phase 2 builds on HR’s memo of June 11 (found here), and expands the range of activities that will be considered for approval for return to research and creative activity relative to the first phase of the research restart plan. It will be open to all research and creative activity (not just sponsored research) that cannot be accomplished remotely.

For clarity, it is imperative that all employees authorized to return to campus to conduct research and creative activities as part of this second phase follow the guidelines described in the HR memo of June 11 as well as all additional requirements set forth by this memo.

There will be no PCR testing requirement prior to returning to campus for Phase 2 of the research and creative activity restart plan (although a voluntary program may be offered at a later date). Employees should follow the guidelines for symptoms checking and COVID-19 testing and isolation outlined in the HR memo of June 11 referenced above.

The following considerations will carry forward from the Phase 1 research and creative activity restart plan and will apply to this second phase of the plan.

- Consistent with the HR memo of June 11 referenced above, and with Phase 1 of the research and creative activity restart plan, anyone who can continue to carry on their research and creative activity from home or any other location not requiring access to the campus of a field site should continue to do so. Research and creative activities not requiring access to campus or a field site will not be approved in Phase 2.
- Activities that require more than 2 people per 500 square feet of workspace (research lab, studio, archive, etc.) to be completed will, in principle, not be authorized. Work should be staggered into appropriate shifts in order to meet this continuing requirement. However, if safety requirements demand a higher density of people in any given location, such requirements
should be clearly outlined in the conduct of operations plan as part of the justification for approval of the work.

The following modifications to the first phase of the research and creative activity restart plan apply to Phase 2:

- In Phase 2, human subjects research will be authorized (subject to IRB approval) so long as all participants in the study are able to use mandatory face masks. Participants in human subject research projects are also encouraged to avoid being together in close proximity (less than six feet) for periods in excess of 15 minutes (as per the CDC definition of covid-19 exposure).
- Requirements for safe field work will be set locally at the college level where the work is based and should be described and approved through the conduct of operations plan described below.
- Undergraduate students will be allowed to participate in research and creative activity as part of Phase 2.

As was the case for Phase 1 of the research and creative activity restart plan, an approved Conduct of Operations Plan (template here) will be required prior to the start of any work under Phase 2. The approval requirements and process will be identical to those described in the May 6 Phase 1 memo. Phase 1 COPs that have been previously approved will remain in effect. If you would like to include additional co-workers or activities to a previously approved Phase 1 COP, submit a revised Phase 2 COP that includes all members of your research team that should be considered under the criteria described in this memo, as well as any new activity (e.g. human subjects research, new field work, etc.) that needs to be added to the previously authorized work. As was the case in Phase 1, all COPs must detail the procedures for a quick and safe ramp down of activities should the need to do so arise.

All faculty, students and staff participating in Phase 2 agree to comply with safety and preventive measures detailed in the approved COP and any subsequent instructions from VPRP or the University President, understanding that a failure to do so may require immediate termination of the activity in part or in its entirety. Please remember that transmission of the SARS-CoV-2 virus may occur from people with no symptoms. At this time, in the absence of a vaccine, consider that everyone, including yourself, may be infected with the virus and always use all appropriate precautions.

Schedule for Phase 2

The Phase 2 cohort is expected to commence work on Wednesday, July 1.

The proposed schedule for the July 1 cohort (subject to change) is as follows:

- COPs due to Office of the VPRP from College Deans by 5 pm on Wednesday, June 24.
- OVPRP review of COPs.
- Notification via email or text to PIs of results of COP evaluation between June 29-30.

No additional COPs will be accepted for review or considered for approval by the OVPRP for Phase 2 after the Wednesday, June 24 deadline.