

University Senate Research Committee Meeting (online)
May 29, 2020

1:00 PM

In Attendance: C. Bonneau, J. Cooper, A. Crawley, A. Crunk, D. DeAlmeida, D. Harrell, M. Hravnak, G. Huber, M. Kenney, P. Morel, E. Oyler, L. Rodziewicz, S. Sant, M. Scott, A. Sethi, P. Smolinski, V. So, A. Stephany and W. Yates

J. Cooper stated certain areas of the University have restarted research such as the School of Medicine (SOM) and Pymatuning research facility. He announced that research restart for the University is planned for June 3rd and that detailed information from SVC Rutenbar's office will be provided on that date. The precise details of the approval process for research is not yet clear, but it is likely that Deans of individual schools will need to give the final approval for restart plans.

Concerning the SOM research restart:

W. Yates said that in the SOM there has been some confusion over day of the restart. P. Morel described the situation for the Department of Immunology which will restart June 1 and stated that lab directors submitted restart plans to their Chair which will then go to the Dean for approval.

M. Scott asked why is it the Dean's decision on when labs can restart, when they may not be familiar with specific research labs, or for labs located in clinical departments? J. Cooper said that there is a chain of authority in the process and the Dean has the final authority within a school. Detailed information on the process will be coming ou on June 3rd.

Several people expressed frustration at the lack of communication that faculty are receiving on the restart process, either from their Deans or the university as a whole. W. Yates stated that there needs to be standardization within a school, however in some schools Chairs have not been reliable in relaying information to faculty. P. Morel stated some of the task forces in different research restart areas have been developing different guidelines that, in some cases, appear contradictory. For example, shift work is encouraged but DLAR guidelines prohibit entry into animal facilities between 7PM and 7AM. W. Yates stated this is for the light/dark cycle to maintain animal health, but this may create a problem for researchers.

W. Yates said that Maggie McDonald is aware of the communication problem. S. Sant suggested there should be a single University web site to keep COVID information by date.

Concerning general research restart:

J. Cooper said that all research buildings will be ready to restart on June 3rd.

M. Scott asked if all labs will be able to restart at that time? J. Cooper said that there must be organization in deciding the timing for when specific labs can restart, and this will depend on the

approval process. M. Scott asked if University and UPMC labs will have different restarts? W. Yates said that UPMC will be in charge of their lab restarts.

Additional questions raised by the committee:

Parking: A Crunk asked about the availability of parking on campus, especially for people at risk and vulnerable to infection who are reluctant to return to public transportation. J. Cooper stated that the larger lots such as OC, O'Hara and Soldiers and Sailors will be open and if space is not available in these lots usually space is available in perimeter lots such as panther hollow.

Covid-19 testing and contact tracing: P. Morel asked if the university has a plan for widespread testing. Sethi stated that the School of Public Health was planning on PCR Covid testing for workers in GSPH. J. Cooper responded that PCR testing will not be going forward for the university as a whole.

Social Distancing: M. Scott asked what is the time limit for people to violate the 6 ft. social distance requirement? J. Cooper stated that currently there is no consensus maximum time limit for not maintaining the requirement and that certain situations require that people be within 6 ft. for short periods of time. CDC suggests 15 minutes but the local Wolff Center recommends 5 minutes. If people need to be closer than 6 ft for any length of time masks and goggles or face shields should be worn

Handling of infected samples: S. Sant asked if there are any special guidelines for the handling of human tissues that may be infected with Covid. P. Morel stated that, in general, human tissue samples are treated as if infected and that universal precautions are always used.

Covid-19 training module: S. Sant asked if there is any online training module on COVID. P. Morel said that a powerpoint presentation was being circulated, however, the presentation was incomplete in that links mentioned were missing. A. Stephany mentioned that some online training should be available soon. J. Cooper said he would discuss this with R. Rutenbar.

Sign in and out of labs: L. Rodzwick said that people should sign in and out of labs. J. Cooper stated that logs should be kept of lab entry. A. Crunk described how QR codes can be used for keeping a record of shared equipment use.

Compliance: D. Salcido asked how should individuals who are non-compliant with COVID safety guidelines be dealt with? J. Cooper responded that has been much discussion on this topic but no conclusive answer. One possibility is that the first offense will result in a reminder and the second offense will lead to a revoking of lab privileges. D. Salcido said that confrontations and non-compliance with mask wearing could be video recorded.

Action. Item: J. Cooper said that the issues of communication, digital training, authority for compliance, parking and vulnerable populations will relayed to R. Rutenbar. In addition, J. Cooper stated that he will discuss restarts of DLAR and the IRB and the availability of PPE with R. Rutenbar.

Other Business: A request was made for nominations for the Committee Chair. These requests should be sent to P. Morel and P. Smolinski

The minutes of the 24 April 2020 were approved as standing.

J. Cooper said that the electronic form of the conflict of interest disclosure will be implemented on June 15th with a completion date due by July 15th.

P. Morel stated that the work on updating the University's intellectual policy has been on hold with the University shutdown.

D. Salcido said that the frequency of meetings between University Senate leaders and University administration has been increased from monthly to weekly.

It was agreed that the research committee would meet biweekly during the restart process and the next meeting will be held in two weeks on June 12 at 1:00 pm and in four weeks on June 26 at 1:00 pm. These meetings will be online unless announced otherwise. An invitation to the zoom meeting has been sent out.

The meeting was adjourned at 2:05 pm.

Minutes submitted by P. Morel and P. Smolinski