Requirements for Science 5 re-opening:

**Protocols and Procedures to guide Science 5 use:**

As we re-open Science 5, please note that Return to Research will be a gradual, phased process. All personnel are strongly encouraged to work from home on writing projects and other activities as much as possible. Time in the facility should be restricted to critical activities and should follow the priorities listed later in this document. In-person meetings are prohibited. We recognize that a key part of our mission is research training, which requires people working in teams. Note that training is not a specific goal for the initial phase of re-opening, and should be restricted to conditions/situations where it is absolutely necessary. Training team size will be restricted to 2 people wearing personal protective equipment (PPE; as detailed below), with social distancing where possible.

The terms of re-opening may require modification or be revoked should the staffing of Laboratory Animal Resources decrease to a level that cannot support the necessary service and care in accordance with Binghamton University’s AAALAC accreditation and OLAW PHS Assurance. Labs that do not comply with the guidance below may have their permission to return to work revoked. Moreover, at all times laboratories must maintain compliance with approved IACUC protocols. Any deviations for such protocols will require additional approval.

Representatives from the Science V Reopening Committee, supported by staff from EHS, will ensure compliance with Covid-related safety plans in Science V.

**General practices:**

- Approval through the Return to Research process and strict adherence to all terms delineated in the Return to Research application form and guidance are to be followed:
  - Per governor orders, masks or face coverings are required at all times in Science 5.
  - Social distancing (6 ft. minimum) protocols must be followed.
  - Room occupancy is capped at no more than 1 person per 200 sq. ft. (see below).
- At this point, return to work is voluntary, not mandated.
- PIs are required to provide soap and/or hand sanitizer near sinks and in other prominent locations (where possible). Personnel are encouraged to routinely sanitize hands.
- The PI is required to maintain a daily log of project activities and personnel check-in and check out schedule to facilitate contract tracing should an outbreak arise. This can be accomplished easily through Google Calendar, spreadsheets, or Google docs. Records should be retained for at least one year.
- PIs are responsible for informing their own personnel, and must have documentation (e.g., email confirming they have been informed of policies and procedures) for each person under their supervision.
- To meet social distancing guidelines, PIs are encouraged to coordinate with their students/personnel to establish work shifts that fairly recognize the needs of individual projects and personal circumstances.
- All researchers must screen for fever by thermometer (100 degrees or more) and symptoms of COVID-19 before entering or coming to campus. PIs should develop a method to document this step. Researchers with fever or any symptoms described above shall remain at home, report their illness to their PI, and contact their primary care provider.
- Sanitizing work surfaces is an assigned responsibility for all personnel. Workspaces (benches, shared equipment, door handles) should be sanitized at both arrival and departure by all personnel. PIs are responsible for providing appropriate sanitizer for their lab use (70%
isopropyl alcohol, 80% ethanol, 10% bleach, or other commercially-available cleaning agents).

- Note that the LAR offices in suite 153 will remain locked. Please call or email Penny, Bob or Kim as needed, since in-person meetings are prohibited except in unusual/emergency situations (pevans@binghamton.edu, 7-3836; rsnyder@binghamton.edu, 7-4905; kkal@binghamton.edu, 7-4170).

**Shared spaces and common areas:**

- **Shared wet lab suites** (rooms 105, 203, 303; ~1130 sq. ft.): A maximum of 5-6 people may work concurrently. PIs who share a wet lab suite will need to coordinate a common schedule for these rooms to ensure equal access to wet labs for all labs.
- **Other wet labs areas** (rooms 339, 340; 506-527 sq. ft.): These rooms are assigned to individual labs and can accommodate 2-3 people concurrently.
- **Necropsy suites** (rooms 217, 317; ~162 sq. ft.): Space requirements would dictate one person at a time. However, since procedures in these rooms often require small teams, 2 people may work in parallel with social distancing and appropriate PPE.
- **Procedural rooms** (range in size from ~65-120 sq. ft.): These rooms can accommodate only 1 person at a time.
- **Dry labs** (rooms 102, 103, 107, 201, 202, 205, 301, 302, 305; all less than 200 sq. ft.): These rooms are recommended as a “drop place” for personal belongings and should not be used as a workspace for more than one person. Food and beverages should not be consumed in dry labs, as personnel should be in the facility solely for critical experimental work.
- **Colony/Animal holding rooms** (typically ~200 sq. ft.): Colonies have an ideal occupancy of 1 person. However, since these rooms have high airflow and experimental protocols often require teams, a maximum of 2 personnel may work in each colony concurrently with appropriate PPE as per approved protocol and SOPs. Work on colonies will need to be coordinated with LAR to ensure room occupancy limits are not violated. Contact Duff at dgoff@binghamton.edu, or 7-2659 for schedule coordination.
- **Surgical suites** (rooms 139, 139A 225, 225A 325 & 325A; ~141 sq. ft.): These rooms are ideally utilized by 1 person at a time. With appropriate PPE as per approved protocol and SOPs, a maximum of 2 people can work concurrently only if they are performing procedures for the same project.
- **Breakroom** (room 200S; ~375 sq. ft.): A maximum of 2 people may use this room at a time.
- **Conference room:** closed until further notice.
- **Other common areas** (hallways, stairwells, freezer rooms, etc.): Groups are prohibited under all circumstances. When passing through or waiting during incubations/testing, conversations must be socially distanced and limited to not more than 2 people. Elevators should not have more than one occupant at a time. When waiting for an elevator, stand back from the door to maintain social distancing.
- **Faculty offices:** Closed until further notice. Exceptions must be requested as part of the Return to Research application process.
- **Bathrooms** are less than 200 sq. ft., allowing for one occupant at a time. Do not enter if already occupied.
- **Teaching labs** (suite of 12 rooms in 239, ~76 sq. ft. each): This suite is expected to remain dormant for the summer, since FRI and teaching labs will not resume until fall.

**Priorities for re-opening research in phases:**

**Animal Studies (in order of priority):**

- **Use of existing animals:** Many labs have rats that were acquired or bred prior to the pandemic, but that have been in a holding pattern for 6-8 weeks. In many cases, these animal subjects need to complete their experiments or they will be lost altogether. This window is closing very quickly because age of testing is a significant variable for many PIs.
- Note that at least 1 PI commissioned (and purchased) a large animal order from a commercial vendor. These mice have been generated and BU needs to receive them from the vendor ASAP, or substantial scientific and financial loss will be incurred.
- Acquisition and maintenance of transgenic lines, which are difficult to acquire and costly to maintain, should also receive top priority.

**Breeding:** A substantial number of PIs conduct studies with rats/mice that are developmentally timed and require breeding. At the time we shut down, many faculty were preparing a large breeding cycle to time rat births for the beginning of summer, a time when labs are experimentally very active. Because labs have lost 8 weeks of breeding, it is imperative that breeding commence as soon as possible. In most cases, this means re-pairing males and females and letting them gestate for 3 weeks (21-day gestational period in rats/mice), then waiting for them to achieve experimental age targets. The lag from re-pairing rats for breeding to first use is often 6-8 weeks, meaning that the first half of summer is already lost for developmentally-timed studies. Minimizing this passive wait time should be a top priority.

**New animal orders:** Acquisition of animals was suspended during the pandemic. Orders placed by Thursdays at noon typically ship the following week, and rats/mice then need to acclimate to the colony for 1-2 weeks (per approved IACUC protocols) before experimentation or use in breeding. Thus, there is a lot of passive wait time for both breeding (above) and acquisition of animals. Permission to purchase rats/mice (even if rationed by lab) would help bring research online faster. Note that even when orders are placed, there will be a lag of 1-3 weeks before lab personnel will be able to use them, and many commercial vendors are anticipating a surge in orders (and thus shortages) that threaten to further delay return to normal. Due to the wait time, LAR staff scheduling may need to be modified in advance to tend animals during acclimation, and may need to precede the scheduled return of lab personnel for animal experimentation.

**Wet lab work: (in order of priority):**

- **Critical analyses for existing samples:** Many labs have stored samples that were collected and degrading with every passing day. Examples include studies with fluorescent markers (decaying over time) for which tissue analysis must be completed, unstable chemical moieties in biological samples (neurotransmitters, etc.), and proteins that can degrade passively or enzymatically over time. Such samples should be the top priority for processing.

- **Sample processing to meet sponsor obligations:** Other stored samples may be chemically stable, but analyses are required for meeting sponsored project obligations. The ability to show satisfactory (preferably outstanding) progress is required for non-competing renewals. If progress is inadequate, sponsors often cut budgets from the next FY, which would essentially give back hard-fought grant money.

- **Collection of preliminary data:** One effective coping mechanism during this pandemic is for PIs to use the time to focus on preparation of grant proposals. This should be encouraged strongly. Grant applications require adequate preliminary data to compete successfully. Thus, preliminary data collection is critical to future sponsored research.

- **Analyses that will finalize a thesis/publication project:** PIs likely have theses/manuscripts that are close to completion and submission for publication. Progress in writing and submission of certain manuscripts may therefore be dependent upon last steps of data collection, which would then allow PIs (or their lab personnel) to continue making degree progress and publish their results. PIs are concerned about time-to-degree for their trainees.
and ensuring publications continue, as gaps in publication are among the most common criticisms relating to the PI/lab in grant reviews.