Summer SEH Research Reopening Plan

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Approval: Department of Anthropology Chair, Joel Kuipers

*This draft is subject to change
Phased Reopening of Anthropology Research at the GW Science and Engineering Hall

Consistent with the University’s phased reopening process beginning June 8th, 2020, the Anthropology Department has started planning for the resumption of research activities in its Science and Engineering Hall laboratories and facilities. Per OVPR guidance and state, and federal directives related to COVID-19, this document integrates guiding principles and processes for a department-specific Phase 1 reopening. Our reopening is (for now) limited to the Department of Anthropology spaces in the Science and Engineering Hall, and will occur in phases beginning with those on-campus projects and research activities approved by primary investigators, the Department Chair and the Office of the Vice President for Research. Reopening considerations will be different for individual laboratories and other Department of Anthropology Facilities. The guidelines described here will be amended as subsequent phases of reopening occur and as the fall semester approaches.

Important Resources

OVPR Impacts of COVID-19 on Research Activities
Department of Anthropology Summer Research Reopening Communications Page
Department of Anthropology SEH Research Re-entry Agreement

Departmental Reopening Principles

● The emotional and physical health and safety of students, staff, and faculty, will be prioritized. No person should feel pressured to return to a laboratory setting if they are uncomfortable doing so.
● Directives and guidance from local, state, and federal authorities to minimize disease spread and exposure will be followed, such as restrictions related to essential businesses, social distancing, reduced density, stay-at-home, and masks.
● Principal Investigators (PIs) remain responsible for providing direction and oversight of their projects,
labs, and/or research sites, and personnel including graduate students, postdoctoral fellows, and staff.

- The Department will formulate tentative plans and prepare to halt activities on short notice based on the latest public health and University guidance. Prematurely opening buildings may result in a sharp increase in infection rates that threatens the lives of the GW community and DMV residents.
- All schools and units will coordinate their plans to reopen with those of other schools and units sharing adjacent space as well as with central administration.
- The COVID Research Task Force(s) has been established to provide guidance and oversight for the reopening process. If research labs must ramp down again, appropriate protocols should be followed and the Laboratory Ramp-Down Checklist should be consulted. The Office of the Vice President for Research (OVPR) continuously updates information on the impacts on research activities here.

**Departmental Objectives**

- Safely resume limited research operations in the Science and Engineering Hall with protective measures and occupant health as a priority.
- Minimize staff exposure to potential COVID-19 cases to the maximum extent possible.
- Outline safe operating procedures that comply with public health guidelines and are consistent with University directives before Department staff, faculty, and students, resume regular research of any kind.
- Draft preliminary work schedules, and complete relevant assessments of our facilities before the resumption of research.
OVPR Guidance on Phased Reopening of Research (Phase 1)

The Department of Anthropology research activities will follow the phased reopening process outlined by OVPR.

Applicable sections are outlined here:

1.1 Essential Personnel & Approval

Only those deemed essential will resume on-campus work. Each PI or program director will determine who from their teams should return to work during this phase. Reasonable considerations for essential on-campus work include:

- Ph.D. students and postdocs who must complete experiments to meet a thesis deadline, submit a paper for publication, or submit a grant proposal.
- Graduate students and postdocs who are close to completing their degrees or terms of appointment. This includes students and postdocs working on analytical and computationally-oriented research.
- Principal investigators with grants within four months of their end dates, and/or where the sponsor is not flexible with no-cost extensions.
- Persons with certain expertise needed to operate instruments or procedures.
- Lab members who do not have time-based needs but would like to return to campus at least one day a week to enjoy some progress on their projects.

1.2 COVID-19 Risk Mitigation Strategy

- Limit population density to 12.5-25% of a lab’s or program’s staff within any area of SEH at one time.
- Maintain social distancing of at least 6 feet between people in laboratories and other shared spaces.
- All SEH occupants are required to wear face masks at all times, changing face masks when appropriate based on activity. The [CDC recommends cloth face coverings](https://www.cdc.gov/) to help slow the spread of COVID-19. The cloth face coverings recommended are not surgical masks or N-95.
The university will acquire and provide a stock of PPE, disinfectant materials, and protective barriers to individual departments who request them. The Anthropology Department submitted a request for these items as of June 5th and will make them available to SEH personnel as soon as they arrive.

- Practice frequent hand washing during and after lab work.
- Practice frequent decontamination of surfaces and work instruments following use with appropriate cleaning solutions (wait for the recommended contact time of the liquid to allow for the killing of microorganisms on the surface).
- Increase the frequency of disinfection of high-touch surfaces to include door handles, faucet handles, light switches, etc.
- Redistribute office and laboratory space to maintain social distancing requirements. This includes introducing protective barriers where appropriate.
- Refrain from congregating in common areas.
- Any persons who feel sick, or who develop or present COVID-19 symptoms should not report to work. Those who receive a positive diagnosis based on COVID-19 serological or clinical tests, if at any time within 14 days of last access to Department spaces, should disclose their condition to Health and Emergency Management Safety.
- Persons who have been in contact with someone exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms, or who know someone else who has been in contact, should complete the GW Possible Contact Form.
1.3 Laboratory Work

- Lab members should plan to use their time in the laboratory for hands-on instrument based work. All administrative (updating notebooks, reading, and writing) and data work should be performed remotely.
- Specific lab instruments and procedures may require additional PPE and cleaning protocols beyond those outlined here.
- Each laboratory facility and team should develop a calendar system to schedule work shifts throughout the week, including weekends. Shifts should be flexible and could range anywhere from 2 to 12 hours in length. An example would be to have specific people on campus on certain days of the week.
- Team members should communicate openly and often to coordinate and adjust schedules as necessary.

1.4 Principal Investigators Lab Directors

Faculty/PIs will:

- Survey students and research staff for special considerations and develop tailored plans and schedules for their lab instruments and spaces.
- Communicate their research plans to the Department Chair and OVPR before implementing them.
- Ensure that their lab personnel are compliant with Department-level, University-level and lab-specific safety protocols. This includes GW Chemical Hygiene, Biosafety, Radiation Safety, and OSHA policies where applicable.
● Provide contingency plans and configure ramp down procedures for emergencies and increased COVID-19 outbreaks.

● Be available for direct communication or appoint a safety person to be available on short notice in case of emergency.

● Provide proper PPE for personnel involved with those lab procedures that involve chemical, biological, and or mechanical hazards. Including surgical face masks, lab coats, gloves, and eye protection (safety glasses or face shields). Note, the level of PPE required for hazardous lab procedures differs from the level of PPE required for protection from COVID-19. As recommended by CDC guidance, until these items can be acquired primary investigators should halt procedures that require personal protective equipment that is temporarily unavailable due to global shortages.

● Keep track of extra funds incurred in providing PPE or other COVID-19 related protective measures for their teams.

1.5 Compliance and Continued Research Approval

● Department staff will assist PIs/faculty in monitoring compliance with the above safety protocols.

● Individuals who do not follow safety protocols will not be allowed access to labs and research spaces—No Exceptions.

● OVPR will impose sanctions on non-compliant labs including and up to the immediate shutdown of the laboratory.

● All labs must be prepared to immediately ramp down or shut down research activities if instructed to do so. Labs should maintain a ramp down checklist to ensure they can safely stop/ramp down research immediately if required. The OVPR and EHS have provided a guide (Laboratory Ramp-Down Checklist: Procedures for Safely Vacating a Laboratory.pdf) to assist in this process, should it be necessary.