

Guidance for continuity of sponsored projects regarding COVID-19 and remote work.

UPDATE SUMMARY

- Please work from home per University guidance.
- Transition labs and research projects to minimal operations.
- Anticipate new directives that may affect sponsored projects and associated personnel.
- Limit research activities involving human subjects.
- Prioritize student health.
- Supporting continuing work.
- Long-term impacts.
- Links for further guidance.

As Western Oregon University continues to assess operations amid COVID-19, externally funded sponsored projects and research activities must continue. However, limiting the spread of the coronavirus is the top priority. Researchers and project directors—including faculty, students, and staff—should follow the guidance below and consult with their appropriate college dean, the dean of Graduate Studies and Research, or the provost, regarding issues specific to particular sponsored projects and research efforts. This guidance follows Governor Brown’s executive orders (linked below) and applies to sponsored project activities conducted by WOU project directors.

Work from home.

Maintaining research continuity is a critical function and should continue. However, all project directors who are able to work from home should do so in consultation with their dean/supervisor and in accordance with current University guidance. Some WOU employees will need to continue working in WOU facilities to deliver critical services, such as laboratories and research spaces. Faculty who are not designated to continue working in a WOU facility should work from home in order to facilitate social distancing for others. Faculty should follow WOU’s guidance for travel. See link below.

Transition labs and sponsored projects to minimal operations.

Until further notice, every laboratory or sponsored projects activity should transition to a state of maximum social distancing of personnel. This level of operation should require only infrequent and short-term visits by critical personnel, for example, during on- and/or off-campus activities. Critical activities would be those that maintain the continued viability of ongoing projects, as well as unique specimens and collections, plants and animals or cultures; highly specialized analytical, manufacturing, computing facilities; and field-based facilities and laboratories. Project directors should consult with their department heads, division chairs, deans, or provost, as appropriate, to determine how best to transition labs and facilities. Any sponsored projects related travel should be canceled or postponed. Any questions related to refunds and/or credits offered and the allowability on grant funds should be directed to the Sponsored Projects Office.

Anticipate new directives that may affect sponsored projects and associated personnel.

When in a WOU facility, every project director should complete ongoing experiments as expediently as possible, while engaging fully in social distancing. Projects planning on starting new efforts should consider approaches that allow for postponing activities when possible or the cessation of operations with little notice, all while retaining the usefulness of collected data.

Limit research activities involving human subjects.

Given the need to practice social distancing, research that involves human subjects must be limited. Effective immediately, in-person study visits must be discontinued unless those visits have a direct therapeutic benefit to the subjects and are essential for the subjects’ health and safety.

Prioritize student health and safety.

WOU is committed to all students reaching their academic goals. Faculty should work with their advisees to devise plans for students to achieve timely graduation. If students are involved in an externally funded sponsored project, project directors should consult with their appropriate dean and with the students involved to assure the students' safety in carrying out the work. WOU will have no in-person instruction, and faculty should plan for no-contact with students during spring 2020.

Supporting continuing work.

WOU greatly values the work of faculty, staff, and students who are vital to grant-funded efforts. Please think creatively about how these individuals can continue to do meaningful work, even if operations are reduced or prohibited. Data analysis, literature searches, article and report-writing, and catching up on required training activities are all possible options.

Long-term impacts.

Reducing the scope of activities may lead to significant impacts, including impairing the ability to meet deliverables and the potential loss of revenue within designated operations of sponsored activities. Please document these impacts to the extent possible to inform the University's efforts to mitigate the negative effects on a sponsored activity. The Sponsored Projects Office will further advise on how it will collect this information.

Links for further guidance:

WOU Coronavirus website: <https://wou.edu/coronavirus/>

Governor Brown's executive orders: <https://www.oregon.gov/gov/admin/Pages/executive-orders.aspx>

Oregon Health Authority: <https://govstatus.egov.com/OR-OHA-COVID-19>

Polk County Public Health: <https://www.co.polk.or.us/ph/novel-coronavirus-covid-19>

Centers for Disease Control: <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-nCoV/index.html>

Some agencies have specific guidance, while others do not.

- Council on Governmental Relations: [FAQs Regarding COVID-19's Impact on Federal Awards](#)
- National Science Foundation: [Frequently Asked Questions About the Coronavirus Disease 2019 \(COVID-19\) for National Science Foundation Proposers and Awardees](#)
- National Institutes of Health: [NIH Extramural Response to Natural Disasters and Other Emergencies](#)

Even as it responds to the COVID-19 pandemic, WOU will continue carrying out sponsored project activities; supporting students in their work; and remaining loyal to all those who make WOU a great place to work, including our faculty, students, and administrative and support staff.

Sincerely,



Linda Stonecipher, Ph.D.
Interim Dean of Graduate Studies and Research