



Dear Colleagues,

As we transition to Phase II on campus next week, I have received inquiries about whether this transition will change any processes for TTU's research, scholarship, and creative activity. I wanted to address those questions for the entire TTU community.

After consultation with the Provost's Office, we have decided to continue requiring research groups to submit requests for a return to on-campus research under Phase II. The online form requesting a return to on-campus research can be found on the Office of Research and Innovation's COVID-19 web page (<https://www.depts.ttu.edu/research/covid-guidelines.php>). This process will allow TTU to identify individuals accessing specific research laboratories, offices, performance and creative studios, and common spaces used for research on campus. It will also enable us to provide these individuals direct input about the need for social distancing and hygiene in laboratory and studio environments, and about the need for added prescreening and health checks in all face-to-face human-subjects research.

Note: Research groups that have already received approval for return to on-campus research under Phase III **do not** need to submit a new application to remain on campus as we transition to Phase II. However, we do remind faculty and research supervisors who have received prior approval to periodically update the list of individuals actively conducting research on campus by adding new investigators (such as new graduate students) who join their programs and removing individuals who leave the campus. These modifications can be made by emailing the names of individuals who have left, and the names, R-numbers, email contacts, and personal phone contacts for individuals who have newly joined the group to Ms. Moriah Gonzales (Moriah.A.Gonzales@ttu.edu) in OR&I.

Finally, I have been asked whether it is possible under Phase II to relax the social distancing and enhanced hygiene requirements established for our laboratories and facilities under Phase III. No. We cannot relax social distancing requirements for common-use laboratory, studio, and shop spaces under Phase II. If spaces do not allow social distancing when full groups work simultaneously, we need to continue to assign shifts for the researchers using the spaces. I know this situation will be inconvenient and disappointing for researchers operating under these restrictions, and I am sorry that we need to continue operating under these conditions. But, the alternative would be shutting down an entire non-socially distanced research program for 14-days if one team member contracted COVID-19. We also need to remind our co-workers of the continued institutional requirement for the use of face coverings in all common/public areas of the campus.

TTU faculty, staff, and student researchers have been resilient and resourceful under the trying conditions we've experienced over the last four months. Our current levels of research proposal submissions, awards, and research expenditures all continue on a record pace. Those accomplishments are entirely due to your hard work and commitment to your scholarship. Thank you for this sustained activity, as well as your continuing efforts to maintain the health and safety of all TTU faculty, staff, and students.

Sincerely,

Joe Heppert
TTU Vice President for Research and Innovation