

Skidmore College
Research Facility Reactivation Plan

INTRODUCTION & PURPOSE

Governor Cuomo announced the end of the New York “PAUSE” effective May 15, 2020 and a gradual reopening plan dubbed “New York Forward.” The plan allows New York to reopen on a regional basis as each region meets certain criteria necessary to protect public health as businesses reopen. Once a region is permitted to reopen, then businesses will be able to reopen in four different phases:

- Phase 1: construction; agriculture, forestry, fishing & hunting; retail trade; manufacturing; wholesale trade; and higher education research;
- Phase 2: offices; real estate; essential and Phase II in-store retail; vehicle sales, leases and rentals; retail rental, repair and cleaning; commercial building management; hair salons and barber shops; outdoor and take-out/delivery food services; and translations;
- Phase 3: food services; and personal care;
- Phase 4: arts, entertainment and recreation; and education.

Higher education research falls under Phase 1. Therefore, the Research Reopening Working Group has developed the following Research Facility Reactivation Plan (“the Plan”), which follows the New York State Department of Health’s [Interim Guidance for Higher Education Research During the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency](#) and [Higher Education Research Guidelines for Employers and Employees](#) (as of June 26, 2020).

The Plan includes the following Higher Education Research Guidelines:

- I. Physical Distancing
- II. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)
- III. Hygiene and Cleaning
- IV. Communication
- V. Screening and Testing

The purpose of the Plan is to provide Skidmore faculty, staff and essential visitors utilizing labs/studios with precautions to help protect against the spread of COVID-19 during the summer months (July-August 2020). The Plan is focused on health and safety measures pertaining to the reopening of research facilities on campus and is subject to change as additional guidance becomes available. This Plan does not apply to students working in the lab/studio, and rules and procedures governing our interactions with students will be forthcoming as those phases are announced.

CONTACT INFORMATION

The Research Reopening Working Group (RRWG) developed this plan in collaboration with Human Resources. The RRWG is responsible for implementation and monitoring the Plan. Any questions regarding this Plan should be directed to the RRWG at rrwg-list@skidmore.edu.

HIGHER EDUCATION RESEARCH GUIDELINES

I. Physical Distancing

1. New York State Department of Health (NYS DOH) guidelines state that for any work occurring indoors, employees must limit the total occupancy to 50% of the maximum occupancy for a particular area as set by the certificate of occupancy. The footprint of every lab/studio is different; therefore, in order to comply with this requirement, please refer to the physical distancing guidelines outlined in **#2 below** to determine maximum occupancy for your particular space(s).
2. Employees and essential visitors must maintain a distance of at least six feet among other individuals at all times, unless safety or the core activity requires a shorter distance.
3. Any time there is more than one individual in the lab/studio, acceptable face coverings must be worn (see section **II. Personal Protective Equipment** below for what constitutes acceptable face coverings). Wearing a mask at all times is encouraged.
4. The number of individuals needed to be in the lab/studio at a given time must be minimized. For activities that require only one individual to complete the activity safely, the activity must be limited to only one individual (e.g., only one individual present to feed animals).
5. The number of workstations (e.g., lab benches) must be restricted such that individuals are at least six feet apart in all directions (e.g., side-to-side and when facing one another). Additionally, employees may also employ physical barriers (e.g., plastic shielding walls) as long as they do not affect air flow, heating, cooling, or ventilation by contacting Loretta Greenholtz, Director of Environmental Health and Safety for Academic Affairs, at lgreenho@skidmore.edu. Physical barriers are not to be used in lieu of face coverings, but as additional protection in areas of high traffic and/or contact.
6. The use of shared workstations (e.g., “hot-desks”) must be limited to the extent practicable.
7. Measures must be taken to reduce interpersonal contact and congregation by:
 - limiting in-person presence to only those staff and essential visitors who are necessary to be on site;
 - limiting/postponing research activities which require person-to-person engagement in tight spaces;
 - adjusting workplace hours to minimize overlap between workers;
 - reducing on-site workforce to accommodate physical distancing guidelines;
 - shifting design (e.g. A/B teams, staggered arrival/departure times);
 - implementing lab/facility/equipment usage sign-up as appropriate;

- prioritizing tasks that allow for physical distancing over those that do not;
 - avoiding multiple teams or individuals working in one area by using signs to indicate occupied areas.
8. Employees should be encouraged to work from home when feasible. Employees who operate specialized equipment which can be controlled remotely should be encouraged to continue to do so.
 9. Per Skidmore's Chemical Hygiene Policy, employees should obey the two person rule when working in a lab/studio. If an employee must work alone in the laboratory, one of the following supervisory systems must be implemented to ensure incidents are dealt with promptly in the event of an accident.
 - a. Visual Checks
When one or more employees are working in isolation within the same facility, employees must carry out visual checks (at least hourly) by visiting neighboring rooms that are occupied by other workers.
 - b. Communication Checks
If no other employees are present on site, prior to working alone, employees must inform Campus Safety (518-580-5567) or another individual of their work schedule and arrange with them to carry out regular checks (at least hourly). Contact should be made at prearranged intervals, by radio, phone or e-mail.
 10. Working alone in the lab/studio is strictly prohibited if the individual is handling or manipulating hazardous chemicals or substances with which, in the event of an accident, the user would require immediate assistance from another person.
 11. Research activities involving human subjects will be allowed in cases where risk is mitigated. Specifically, human subjects must be considered when calculating facility capacity, and human subjects must wear proper Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and abide by physical distancing and other requirements for personnel outlined in this Plan, as applicable.
 12. All non-essential research travel is currently suspended.
 13. Non-essential visitors are prohibited from entering labs/studios. Only essential visitors are allowed to enter the facility. Essential visitors are limited to delivery drivers, 3rd party repair services, EMS, local authorities, and approved visitors (such as human subjects).
 - Faculty must inform individuals that work in the vicinity of their lab/studio of any essential visitors coming to campus at least 12 hours in advance by group email or text.
 14. Designated areas for pickups and deliveries must be established, thereby limiting contact to the extent possible.

II. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

1. In addition to the necessary PPE as required for certain workplace activities, face coverings will be provided to employees and essential visitors at no cost.
2. Acceptable face coverings will include, but are not limited to, cloth (e.g. homemade sewn, quick cut, bandana), surgical masks, N95 respirators, and face shields.
3. Cloth, disposable, or other homemade face coverings are not acceptable face coverings for workplace activities involving flammable materials or open flames. Flame-resistant face coverings or appropriate face shields are required when working with these materials.
4. For activities, that require a higher degree of protection for PPE (e.g., N95 respirators, welding helmet, etc.), employees and essential visitors should follow the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) of the lab/studio.
5. Face coverings must be cleaned or replaced after use and not shared.
6. Employees and essential visitors must review the [CDC's guidance on proper use of PPE](#) on how to adequately put on, take off, and discard PPE prior to returning to the lab/studio. Questions regarding the proper use of PPE should be directed to Kara Cetto Bales, Associate Director of Environmental Health and Safety for Academic Affairs, at kcetto@skidmore.edu.
7. Measures must be put into place to limit the sharing of objects, such as equipment, machinery, and materials, as well as the touching of shared surfaces, such as touchscreens or equipment; individuals must be required to wear gloves (trade-appropriate or medical) when in contact with shared objects or frequently touched surfaces; or, individuals must be required to perform hand hygiene before and after contact (**see section III.3**).

III. Hygiene, Cleaning, and Disinfection

1. Employees will be required to adhere to hygiene and cleaning and disinfection requirements from the [Centers for Disease Control and Prevention](#) (CDC) and [Department of Health](#) (DOH), as applicable.
2. Facilities Services does not clean lab/studio spaces (other than empty the trash and sweep the floors). Therefore, lab/studio workers are responsible for cleaning and disinfection of the spaces they occupy. Rigorous cleaning and disinfection of the lab/studio must occur at least every day, or more frequently as needed, followed by hand hygiene (**see #6 below**).
 - Regular cleaning and disinfection of surfaces or equipment must occur before and after use.

- Cleaning and disinfection of high-touch surfaces and high transit areas (e.g., doorknobs, cabinet pulls, light switches, lab equipment, and workstations) (excluding floors) should occur daily, or more frequently as needed.
3. Cleaning and disinfection must be performed with [products](#) identified by and registered with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) as effective against COVID-19 and will be supplied by Facilities Services.
 4. Lab/studio workers should contact Kevin Pock in Facilities Services at kpock@skidmore.edu to obtain disinfecting solutions and other cleaning supplies if they are not present in the lab/studio.
 5. Lab/studio workers must maintain a [cleaning log](#) that includes the date, time, and scope of cleaning and disinfection.
 6. Hand hygiene stations on site will be provided and maintained by Facilities Services, as follows:
 - For handwashing: soap, running warm water, disposable paper towels, and a lined garbage can.
 - For hand sanitizing: an alcohol-based hand sanitizer containing at least 60% alcohol for areas where handwashing facilities are not available or practical.
 - Soiled items, including paper towels and PPE, should be discarded in a lined garbage can.
 7. In the event an individual is confirmed to have COVID-19, cleaning and disinfection of the exposed areas will be provided by the College, with such cleaning and disinfection to include, at a minimum, all heavy transit areas and high-touch surfaces (e.g., lab tables, elevators, facility entrances, badge scanners, restrooms, handrails, equipment, door handles).
 8. Shared food and beverages is prohibited.

IV. Communication

1. The College affirms it has reviewed and understands the state-issued Higher Education Research industry guidelines and agrees to implement them.
2. Signage must be posted inside and outside of the facility to remind employees to adhere to proper hygiene, physical distancing rules, appropriate use of PPE, and cleaning and disinfection protocols. To download and print appropriate signage, please visit <https://www.skidmore.edu/fall-planning/signage/index.php>.
3. Faculty must conspicuously post this Plan (either hard copy or web link) in their labs/studios.

V. Screening and Testing

1. Per the [Reopening Safety Action Plan](#), mandatory daily health certification for employees and, where possible, essential visitors must be implemented. Employees and essential visitors will be asked to certify the following:
 - I certify that I had my temperature taken today prior to coming to work or at Campus Safety and that my temperature was less than 100.4°F.
 - I also certify that in the past 14 days:
 - I have not had a temperatures greater than 100.4°F; and
 - I do not have a cough; and
 - I do not have shortness of breath; and
 - I do not have any two of the following: fever, chills, repeated shaking with chills, muscle pain, headache, sore throat or new loss of taste or smell; and
 - I have not tested positive for COVID-19; and
 - I have not had close contact with a confirmed or suspected COVID-19 case; and
 - I have not traveled to one of the following states based upon Governor Cuomo's Executive Order 205, issued June 25, 2020:
<https://coronavirus.health.ny.gov/covid-19-travel-advisory>

Employees must submit their mandatory [daily health certification online](#). Faculty must obtain and maintain [hard copy daily health certification forms](#) from any essential visitors. Mandatory daily health screening is not required for any delivery personnel.

2. The College will immediately notify the state and local health department about the case if test results are positive for COVID-19.
3. The College has designated Human Resources (hr@skidmore.edu or 518-580-5801) as a central point of contact as the party for employees if they are showing COVID-19 related symptoms. Essential visitors should inform Skidmore if they experience COVID-19-related symptoms within 14 days after their visit, with symptoms defined in the questionnaire.
4. Lab/studio workers must maintain a continuous [close contact log](#) of every person, including essential visitors, with whom they have close contact. Close contact is defined as a meeting or discussion under 6 feet lasting a minimum of 10 minutes. Incidental or brief contact, such as passing in the hallway, is not considered a recordable event (e.g., deliveries that are performed with appropriate PPE or through contactless means). The intent is to establish an accurate record for traceability.
5. Lab/studio workers must email their [close contact log](#) to HR (hr@skidmore.edu) on a weekly basis for retention. If you have close contact with anyone sneezing or presenting any substantial symptoms of the virus, regardless of the time exposure, HR should be contacted immediately to begin the process of addressing a potential positive individual.

CONCLUSION

The College's commitment to the health and safety of its employees and other community members does not end with this Plan. The College will continuously monitor this Plan for compliance, will update it as additional guidance is issued by local, state and federal authorities, and will also continue to monitor COVID-19 in the state and region and make operational decisions that put safety first.