

Executive Summary COVID-19 Campus Planning Committee

“Together, we are UB – Spring - 2021”

As the University at Buffalo prepares for the Spring 2021 semester and beyond, it does so with additional challenges tied to the unpredictable course of the pandemic, new knowledge about best health and safety protocols, and new directives from the State, SUNY, and Erie County. Even so, the COVID-19 Campus Planning Committee is confident UB will fulfill its mission.¹ Excellence in this mission's achievement continues to serve as a context for all of our COVID-19 planning.

The charge for the Campus Planning Committee (23 members) for Spring 2021 and beyond calls for us to coordinate the work of five separate subcommittees (137 members) to include Academic Continuity, Retention, and Completion; Faculty and Graduate Professional Research Continuity; Student Experience and Wellness; Faculty and Staff; and Campus Operations. Our joint work is to inform and propose high-level recommendations on how we will operate the University within the scenarios defined by executive leadership – "return to normal – modified in-person – fully remote." Our charge was to address short-term planning (Stage 1: Summer and Fall 2020 semesters - concluded) and long-term planning (Stage 2: Spring 2021 semester and beyond).

The work to-date concludes the second stage of our charge, presenting a consensus to continue with the core principles and high-level recommendations presented in our Stage 1 reporting. It also outlines a way to operationalize the plan with assumptions that will enable multiple possible scenarios to be effectively implemented. Again, this stage of work on our charge includes this executive summary report and a slide deck documenting the COVID-19 Campus Planning Committee's detailed considerations of decision timelines, lessons learned, long-term considerations, principles, and recommendations about the operation of functional areas in Spring 2021 and beyond. Both Communications and IT planning are provided, consistent with the aspirations of the Committee. All the work is intended to inform the Strategic Financial Management Advisory Group; Screening, Testing, and Contact Tracing Protocol Committee; and the Executive Leadership Committee. In all, the planning we report on continues to engage a total of 180 faculty, staff, and students, not including the various working committees under the VP/CIO and the VP for University Communications.

We have established a planning process and engaged UB's expertise in a robust way that can continue to serve the University for as long as the COVID-19 pandemic persists.

Summary

Context and Method

As in the Fall 2020 opening planning, the Committee has addressed the "in-person modified" scenario as applicable to Spring 2021 as well. We still believe it is the most inclusive and complex, affording the ability to pivot to either of the other two scenarios flexibly. Preparation for all scenario variations would be enabled best by understanding how to implement delivering the in-person-modified condition. Absent timely decisions, the ability to implement several aspects of the modified on-campus experience continues to be challenged due to required lead times for procurement, staffing, course preparation, training, the logistics of course scheduling and registration, and other prerequisites to success. While we were able to navigate these challenges in the Fall, the Committee members continue to believe that decisions made "as soon as possible" will further reduce the cost, stress, and complexity in our work while facilitating the ability to deliver the mission and keeping the campus and community safe.

Core principles shared across sub-committees

The coordinating Committee and five subcommittees continue to share common ground on six key principles originally presented for Fall 2020. The principles are offered here with minor edits and variations on how best to implement the principles based on lessons learned from the Fall opening. Additional details are in the summary statements from each subcommittee, and more detail is in each subcommittee's slide deck report.

- **Principle #1: A Culture of Health and Safety** – Continue a strong, internalized, evidence-based, and accountable culture of health and safety among the UB community, protecting all UB faculty, staff, students, and visitors as well as the communities that host them.
- **Principle #2: Flexibility** - Sustain all aspects of campus academic programs, research, student life, faculty and staff well-being, and campus operations to be as flexible and elastic as possible within curricular, accreditation, and licensure requirements to address the unpredictable course of the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - **Return to "Normal"**: Always prepared for the entire UB community's full return to campus or at least for increased tolerance for density on campus.
 - **Modified-In-Person**: Always prepared to utilize the campus experience where we can.
 - **Fully Remote**: Always prepared to support the mission off-campus.
- **Principle #3: Equity and Inclusion** - Implement fair and transparent processes that meet the needs of special populations and encourage management and adjustment of HR and ER policies within the University's ability to deal with the consequences of actions taken in response to the COVID-19 crisis. Consideration should be given to further work on such processes, especially regarding essential workers who do not have the option to work remotely.

- **Principle #4: Financial Health** - Be mindful of the University's financial health to continue to deliver excellence in our mission over the short and long term.
- **Principle #5: Communications** - Use clear and consistent communication strategies as part of the broader effort to create a culture of care, compassion, and community.
- **Principle #6: We Are A Place-Based Education Campus that embraces and recognizes the need for remote-learning during the COVID-19 Pandemic** - Plan for off-campus operations even as we plan for value-added, in-person course and campus engagements according to safety and health protocols on campus.

Recommendations

Recommendations put forth by the Committee provide broad guidelines to accommodate the needs of individual units and areas across campus. A "one size fits all" set of blanket recommendations are not ideal, nor would it meet the objectives for the Committee for high-level recommendations. The recommendations that arise from the subcommittees embody the following framework:

- **Guidelines** – *Continue to refine and further develop a clear set of operational guidelines in each subcommittee area and provide evidence-based protocols for health and safety for the entire university community with a road map for implementation and compliance.*
- **Flexibility** – *Maintain a flexible academic framework and timelines that help assure excellence in our mission delivery.* The Fall 2020 experience is that flexibility has been unevenly implemented across the campus, contributing to some confusion. For example:
 - The flexibility to change course modality after registration created problems for some students and caused late cancellations in housing and dining.
 - A clear policy - that addresses an on-campus event decision-making hierarchy and thresholds for a gatherings' allowable size - needs further development.
- **A Modified In-Person Operation (Spring)** - *Operate as modified in-person for Spring 2021 if allowable by public policy. Create provisions for enriching both the on-campus and in-person instruction experience.*

The academic calendar proposal has been approved by the Faculty Senate and promulgated by President Tripathi. This includes a start date of February 1, with some exceptions, no Spring Break, and ends according to our normal schedule for the Spring 2021 semester. Flexibility on course modality should be reduced after course registration with oversight from Chairs and Deans.

Lessons learned from Fall 2020 are in each subcommittee report, reflected in both the slide deck and referenced in the summaries below. Shared insights with implications felt by most subcommittees include:

- Compliance with campus health and safety guidelines is very high.
- Our iterative methodologies based on changing conditions require continuous evaluation and assessment.
- Access to technology and related training for all is improving and still needs additional attention.

Successes

The successes from the Fall 2020 semester have informed the work of the COVID-19 Campus Planning Committee and are essential elements of the Spring 2020 plan. The shift of health and awareness resources to online formats, as well as online tools for managing remote instruction and the creation of online social activities, helped the entire campus community cope with stress and anxiety. That said, the overall impact of the COVID-19 pandemic continues to be difficult to mitigate. Issues experienced because of the COVID-19 pandemic remain serious and need constant attention. Thus far, that attention has resulted in the following successes:

- A robust set of Health and Safety Guidelines that were expanded and updated as the Fall semester progressed to include additional science-based protocols and state Department of Health recommendations in response to the evolving nature of the pandemic and the availability of new resources to keep the university community safe.
- Widespread awareness of and adherence to UB's health guidelines helped mitigate spread of the virus. The guidelines were supported by development of a Student Compliance Policy for COVID-19 and a university-wide public health campaign that included production of 30,000 campus signs to promote health and safety.
- A significant reduction of on-campus density was achieved through careful scheduling of courses and classrooms, carefully planned physical distancing within residence halls and campus facilities and support of a remote workforce university-wide.
- The modified in-person instruction format, with a mix of in-person, hybrid in-person/online or fully remote courses, was generally effective, with a majority of students surveyed indicating that the structure and delivery of courses was consistent with expectations.
- Faculty effectively transitioned to remote instruction, with more than 470,000 Panopto lecture hours viewed and 162,000 Zoom sessions totaling 91 million minutes.
- In-person clinical, lab and experiential courses required to obtain or maintain professional licensure were safely offered throughout the semester.
- The university's research enterprise resumed in-person activities at a lower capacity, and with required physical distancing.
- Elements of on-campus life and student experiences were successfully offered and maintained, including residence life, dining, student clubs and activities, libraries and campus transportation, by implementing and updating health and safety protocols throughout the semester.

- A set of rigorous testing and health protocols for UB Athletics was implemented, enabling the successful launch of Fall and Winter sports at the university.
- An innovative surveillance testing program was launched to monitor the prevalence of the virus among the university community. More than 31,000 tests were conducted, with a positivity rate of less than 1%, significantly lower than the regional positivity rate.
- The university's COVID-19 Planning and Response website provided timely, accurate and transparent communication to the UB community, generating more than 300,000 views during the Fall semester.

Longer-Range Considerations

- The hiring pause is adversely impacting the capacity to attend to the implication of increased student enrollment and our aspirations for increased diversity.
- Sustaining enrollments may require an ability to admit students in Fall, Spring, or Summer.
- If the pandemic continues, burnout dynamics will require systematic attention to mitigate negative consequences.
- We will need to derive an answer to the question, "What will be the post-COVID-19 mix of courses, schedules, and service delivery? What will we keep of the changes made; what will we adapt based on what we have learned?"

Academic Units: Faculty have invested considerable resources in creating content for remote learning. There may be some classes that benefit pedagogically by staying remote. Others will need to return to in-person instruction. Still, others will benefit from hybrid or other modes of instruction. *Units should consider what the post-COVID mix of course and service delivery should be.*

Service Units: Staff also has modified service delivery according to the academic mix of course and service delivery. Again, learning from the Fall 2020 semester experience suggests some operational efficiencies and improved campus safety opportunities for what to keep and what to change post-COVID-19.

Subcommittee summaries

Academic Continuity, Retention and Completion Subcommittee

Throughout the Fall of 2020, instruction is delivered in a modified in-person format, a mixture of in-person, hybrid, and remote instruction based on pedagogical best practices and the need to reduce campus density both in buildings and classrooms. Simultaneously, the campus has also established plans to facilitate a return to fully remote instruction for undetermined periods if a spike in infection rates led New York State and/or the Erie County Department of Health to issue stricter public health measures.

The Academic Continuity subcommittee recommends instruction during Spring 2021 be delivered in the same modified in-person format used this Fall. The recommendation is based on lessons learned from Fall 2020. It assumes access to classrooms will be determined by critical curricular goals (labs, clinical experiential learning, classes involving in-person, practical, performance, and research experiences, etc.) and University goals (research requiring

in-person components, such as graduate courses, and courses that contribute to retention and student experiences, such as first-year seminars and small group instruction). As was the case with Fall 2020, the modality of instruction will be determined through a distributed decision-making approach in which central administration sets guidelines and parameters, and academic units differentiate, within those guidelines, instructional modality, and how they utilize spaces in which courses are scheduled. **After the semester has begun, requests to change instructional modality should be vetted by departmental and unit leadership to avoid disruptions to students' schedules.**

To decrease overlap with the flu season and to accommodate SUNY guidelines, the Spring 2021 semester will begin on February 1, with no break days during the Spring semester. The Academic Continuity subcommittee recommends that flexibility be given to programs requiring clinical placements that may start before February 1. Some clinical and professional degree programs have their own academic calendars and would not be affected by these recommendations.

Faculty and Graduate Professional Research Continuity Subcommittee

UB's research and scholarly activities have continued throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. In March 2020, much research and scholarly activity transitioned to a remote environment, and since then, the University's research support, administration, and compliance infrastructure operated at 100% capacity remotely. In the Spring 2020 and early Summer of 2020, the University implemented a phased approach to Research Ramp-up. The ramp-up allowed labs and facilities to resume in-person activities at a lower capacity and comply with social distancing protocols. Still, it continued to require that work, which can be done remotely, continue to be done remotely. PIs have been given planning and guiding documents to assist them in completing their own Laboratory Operations Plans for the approval of their Department Chair and Associate Dean for Research.

By all accounts, the Research Ramp-up planⁱ has been successful in terms of research continuity and campus health and safety. The plan remains in effect for Spring 2021.

Faculty and Staff

As we approach the Spring 2021 semester and beyond, we will adhere to the principles established at the pandemic outset. Building a "community of care" emphasizing enhancing our faculty and staff's health, safety, and well-being continues to be of paramount importance to decision-making about our immediate and distant futures. We are committed to ensuring that faculty and staff will carry on their work with the security of knowing that the University will put safety above all else. We are committed to supporting our faculty and staff through flexible and remote work options when appropriate, which considers work/life balance, workplace needs, and equity. We recognize the need to support faculty and staff through continued professional development, policies such as the COVID-19 Tenure Clock Stop, and self-care initiatives that address concerns of burnout, stress, loss of community, and dislocation experienced by many of our faculty and staff. We are continuing to communicate with faculty and staff on multiple platforms to guide best practices for remaining healthy, working with department chairs and supervisors to assist in individual and team interactions, and provide opportunities for feedback and additional suggestions.

During this time, we will support faculty and staff development with university-wide efforts to enhance their skills in the classroom, in their leadership, and their overall effectiveness. We recognize that difficult financial decisions will be made as we adjust to this crisis. Still, we will take aggressive steps to treat all faculty and staff equitably, with sensitivity and respect. Despite these anticipated economic challenges, we will maintain efforts to retain our faculty and staff and pursue efforts, where possible, to hire new faculty and staff to advance the diversity of our community.

Student Experience and Wellness

As we plan for a safe Spring 2021 semester, the Student Experience and Wellness Subcommittee seeks to provide students with the support for the best and safest possible configuration of on-campus and high-quality remote learning. Our top priority has been and continues to be the UB community's health and safety and the health and safety of the communities in which our campuses are located. All of the mitigation efforts in place during the Fall will continue to be in place in the Spring, such as the required wearing of facemasks, social distancing, a prohibition on large gatherings, and mandatory testing and daily health screenings for defined student populations. Testing, screening, and tracing are critical components of our multi-layered, in-person strategies. They have allowed us to identify, track, and proactively mitigate the cascading consequences of a positive COVID-19 result.

The subcommittee supports opportunities for students that create experiences that enhance student learning and personal growth. We encourage student organizations to re-engage and plan to continue offering programs and services in a hybrid manner that allows both in-person and remote access to career services, advising and wellness programs, and counseling sessions.

Our residence hall and apartments will again operate at a reduced capacity for the Spring 2021 semester. In-person start will be delayed to 2/1/21, which allows our residential students to arrive and return to campus in a manner that encourages social distancing, following the current housing contract schedule. This strategy will also support planning around proof of and/or re-entry testing for all residential students or those who require an in-person class experience. On-campus dining services will be open to students, faculty, and staff. Seating in dining halls will continue to be offered at a reduced capacity to promote physical distancing. Also, mobile food ordering and touchless pay options will be provided throughout the campus.

Operations

Consistent with our approach to the Fall, the Operations group prioritizes the University's academic mission and high-quality research when planning for the Spring semester. Specifically, our team has emphasized the following, ensuring:

- The University maintains safety guidelines in classrooms, research labs, and student services;
- Screening and surveillance testing services are operational and efficient;
- Strategic procurement of PPE and continuation of vested construction projects;
- Service delivery models are transparent and meet campus expectations.

Current health and safety guidelines, technological enhancements, and policy updates made in the Fall 2020 semester continue to support maintaining a minimized staff presence on campus.

UB recognizes the need to be agile and to expect rapid changes to CDC, State, SUNY, "industry" strategies, and guidelines. As these changes come about, UB is committed to promoting and providing timely and consistent communication with the campus community, building trust and eliminating confusion, leveraging multiple communication channels, and providing strategy details several times leading up to implementation dates. UB will emphasize documentation and timely evaluation of critical processes against success metrics, adjusting processes as needed. UB will utilize experience gained in the Fall 2020 semester to balance a culture of compliance vs. necessary mandates for high-risk issues. UB recognizes opportunities to replicate successes achieved with centrally scheduled classrooms in departmental spaces. Too, UB plans to finalize policy, procedures, and approval hierarchies for conducting events on campus. Finally, UB will begin to prepare for increasing campus density, including increases to PPE supplies, dining and study spaces, transportation, and IT infrastructure (e.g., WiFi and printing).

UB is enthused and optimistic about the campus' long-term strategies following the pandemic. There are opportunities in transforming the classroom experience, reimagining the way we work long term, strategic procurement collaborations, shared administrative teams, and emergency response efforts.

Communications and IT Planning

Technology Support

In support of the principles and efforts outlined above, the VPCIO and distributed IT areas continue to rally together to meet the unprecedented technology needs of our faculty and students through the Summer 2020 and well into the Fall 2020 semester. Survey results and direct feedback from many constituents has revealed a strong comfort level with the various technology solutions provided both on campus and remotely. These solutions range from daily chatbot symptom attestations, instructional website tools and support, enhanced hybrid classrooms (approximately 100 completed by start of Fall 2020 semester) and loaner laptops/cameras for students and faculty.

Some metrics pointing to the successful use of these technologies are:

- UB has conducted over 162,000 Zoom sessions this semester totaling 91M minutes and averaging 10 individuals per session.
- Faculty have recorded over 470,000 Panopto lecture hours viewed (12 hours per session average).
- Touchless self-service printers were deployed across all three campuses for safe and convenient printing by students.
- The Buffalo.edu/TeachAnywhere website was completed and has become a popular site for technology/teaching support for faculty.

Some technology challenges have emerged during the Fall 2020 and the UB IT community is planning the following strategies to address during the remainder of the calendar year and in preparation for Spring 2021 and beyond:

- **Provide Faculty Training and Support for Specific Unique Course Needs** – The need for different instructional technologies for different class sizes, topics, and instructor teaching styles have become apparent during the Fall 2020 semester. For instance, the optimal approach for synchronous delivery (i.e. Zoom session) in a 20-person class can be substantially different than a 200-seat course. Recommended optimal Zoom settings for these different scenarios will be developed in conjunction with experienced faculty best practices and included in subsequent training sessions and website materials.
- **Minimize Potential for Zoom Disruptions** – Some universities have experienced significant challenges with inappropriate behavior or uninvited participants in classroom Zoom sessions (Zoom “bombings”). UB’s experience has been minimal but even a few instances can be disruptive. UBIT has created best practices recommendations for faculty to use in their courses to minimize the possibility of this happening at UB.
- **Expand Availability of Appropriately Configured Computers/Laptops** – UBIT has made more than 200 laptops available for loan to students who do not have a properly configured computer. These laptops have all been claimed by students resulting in a current backlog of 75 students on a waitlist. Although students via campus-wide surveys reported at the beginning of the semester very high percentage of adequate computers, the need has grown over the semester. The thought is the specific course computer needs were not apparent to students prior to class starting. UBIT will make available an additional number of laptops to meet this need going into the Spring 2021 semester.
- **Address Remote Operational Issues for Faculty and Students** – One of the most critical technology issues the UB faculty and students face is remote access to synchronous and asynchronous course materials. This is often caused by less than adequate broadband connectivity or digital configuration issues within their home network environment. UBIT and faculty/school experts will implement a troubleshooting website and possible helpdesk hotline to assist with configuration issues within the remote environment.
- **Add Chatbot Capability to TeachAnywhere Website** – Along with the UBIT help website, UBIT will implement a chatbot to assist faculty and students with questions pertaining to accessing/utilizing technology services provided by UB. This chatbot will provide more institutive direction in guiding constituents to the right solution and/or live expert on campus. This chatbot experience will also benefit the University beyond UBIT help assistance into other beneficial constituent areas beyond spring 2021.

These represent a few of the specific initiatives UBIT is focused on in preparation for Spring 2021 and beyond. The expanded teams of UBIT, CEI, Libraries, and school IT staff in conjunction with faculty and students will evaluate best practices in technology use for instruction, collaboration, and student engagement and ultimately provide prioritized strategies for future UB consideration.

The greater UBIT community continues to be committed to not only meeting but exceeding the technology expectations of the University through the challenges of this time.

Communications Strategy and Support

Building on our successful and collaborative efforts to instill confidence in and understanding of UB’s Fall 2020 semester plans and its comprehensive Health and Safety Guidelines, University

Communications (UC) will again launch and implement a communications strategy to provide all UB stakeholders the information they need for a safe and successful semester. UC's communication plan will support the objectives of UB's leadership for the Spring 2021 semester in close collaboration with university partners Student Life, University Facilities, Human Resources, Environmental Health and Safety and academic unit communicators. To ensure consistent regional and statewide communications, UC will continue to partner, as needed, with communicators at SUNY and the Erie County Department of Health.

UC's communications plan will focus on the key principles (outlined above) of UB's COVID-19 Campus Planning Committee and will be centered on best practices in crisis communications: accuracy and consistency of information, transparency, agile response to changing conditions and demonstrating responsibility and empathy at all times.

Communications strategy: To instill confidence, trust and understanding of/in UB's plans for the Spring 2021 semester, as well as compliance with UB's health protocols, the University will continue to deploy highly coordinated, multi-channel communications, providing all stakeholders with need-to-know information. The monitoring of the UB community's reaction to and understanding of UB's plans and protocols will be continual, timely and constant in order to respond immediately to questions and concerns.

Key messages:

- The health, safety and well-being of the UB community is our utmost priority.
- UB's health and safety guidelines have been strengthened, are evidence-based and will be updated throughout the semester in response to the pandemic.
- Benefiting from lessons learned from Fall 2020 semester, UB is implementing a comprehensive and flexible plan for the spring semester addressing all aspects of UB's mission and operation.
- UB's goal is to deliver the best educational and research programs possible, while protecting the health, safety and wellbeing of the university community.
- As we implement the plan, UB will provide concise information to all stakeholders and will provide timely updates whenever the course of the pandemic requires changes to the plan.

Primary stakeholders/audiences: current students, faculty and staff, parents, alumni, county and state health officials, auxiliary services and partners operating on campus.

Timeline: Planning and Coordination – November through February; Announcing Spring Semester Protocols – December through February; Spring Semester Communications Implementation – January through May.

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Mission

The University at Buffalo is a diverse, inclusive scholarly community dedicated to bringing the benefits of our research, scholarship, creative activities and educational excellence to local and global communities in ways that impact and positively change the world.

We view the three traditional pillars of the public higher education mission—research, education and service—as interdependent endeavors that continually enrich and inform each other. Groundbreaking research, transformative educational experiences and deeply engaged service to our communities define the University at Buffalo's mission as a premier, research-intensive public university.

Vision

Building on the existing strong foundation of academic excellence, knowledge and understanding, the University at Buffalo will advance into the nation's Top 25 public research universities, thereby expanding the scope of our reach and strengthening UB's world-wide impact.

ⁱⁱ See Research Ramp-Up document; attached

University at Buffalo: Research Ramp-up Plan

UB's researchers are passionate about their work and about the university. Thanks to our Principal Investigators, UB conducts premier research, attracts signature talent, leverages federal grant funding, and transacts licensing and technology transfer, all of which are critical to our position as a top-tier research university. They, like all of us, anxiously but cautiously await the ability to return to their work on campus.

It is in the same spirit that UB labs and research facilities closed – that of maintaining the health and safety of students, faculty, and staff – that they will eventually reopen. However, while the closure of non-essential research facilities occurred seemingly overnight, the same will not be true as we ramp up research activities at UB.

To that end, we intend to gradually increase research activity in a phased-in manner as state and local safety restrictions become more permissive. It is likely that research activities may be among the earliest to resume on campus. UB's Research Ramp-up process and progression through the phases will be determined by the UB President and the Vice President for Research & Economic Development, at the direction of the governor and SUNY Chancellor.

Essential Guiding Principles in Our Planning:

1. Follow the cognizant Local, State, and National Public Health Authority directives regarding social distancing and public travel.

It is fair to expect that there will be intermediate phases of increased allowable activity between essential activity and a full return to normal. These intermediate phases will each last a minimum of two weeks with the additional possibility of returning to more restricted activity if infection rates rise.

2. Protect the health and safety of the research workforce and our human research subjects.

Consider that safety within research spaces must be rigorously maintained and monitored, travel and field research may require special consideration, and all faculty and staff should continue to work remotely when possible. Researchers should plan for uncertainty as to when return to research spaces will be safe.

3. Minimize the disruption to ongoing research, thereby allowing PIs to implement research activities in ways that are consistent with their timelines and responsibilities to funding entities.

PIs are required to prepare detailed plans outlining safe return of research in their groups. Such plans will be submitted to Department Chairs and the responsible Associate Dean of Research (ADR) for approval prior to restart of activities.

4. Protect the careers of trainees and early stage researchers that are especially vulnerable to a prolonged shutdown.

Consider priority to those with time constraints: to complete degrees, with term appointments (e.g. post-docs), tenure or career reviews, and visa restrictions.

5. Protect undergraduate students in particular from unnecessary risks associated with returning to research activities.
6. Implement a fair and transparent process that ensures as rapid a research restart as the public health conditions permit.

Establish social distancing and density limitation guidelines for different kinds of research space. (e.g. biological sciences labs vs. social science or arts and music creative spaces).

7. Ensure as rapid a research start as public health and safety conditions permit.
Implement flexible scheduling and expanded hours to facilitate social distancing and reduce density. Plan for supply chain issues on restart (esp. safety gear). Ensure core facilities and support centers are ready for restart. EH&S and those designated as responsible for the various research spaces in buildings must work to ensure that the infrastructure and physical layout of spaces are compatible with the research plans prepared by PIs.

UB's Phased Approach to Ramping up:

UB Research Ramp-up Phase 1: Preparation (Community COVID activity has stabilized such that relaxation of restrictions for the region has begun, preparing for research return.)

- Safety guidelines are established for return that are specific to locations (community spaces, offices, labs and centers).
- Allow core facilities and service/support centers to design and implement plans to reestablish scalable activity (based on demand levels).
- Expand on-campus resource access while following established safety procedures (e.g. computer labs & libraries).
- PI Ramp-up Operating Plans developed and submitted for approval to Department Chairs

UB's Research Ramp-up Phase 2: Limited expansion beyond essential research (Community COVID activity continues to decline such that state and community restrictions are being further relaxed.)

- Expand beyond essential research activities to include time-sensitive research, e.g. grant expirations, trainees about to finish and graduate or move to next position, seasonal data, field research depending on site restrictions. These personnel priorities are determined by PIs and included in their operating plans.
- Should include guidelines for maintaining low-density measures issued by EH&S, perhaps staggered shifts or alternate days.

UB's Research Ramp-up Phase 3: Further research expansion, safety guidelines maintained (Community COVID activity continues to decline, reliable testing is widely available, regional restrictions are further relaxed.)

- Expand to additional research activities that can still be carried out while maintaining safety guidelines. Need to consider which non-essential human subject research can resume – will require that conditions provided in the Guidance for Human Subjects can be assured.

UB's Research Ramp-up Phase 4: Normalcy (Widespread testing and vaccine available? No or minimal community restrictions.)

- Return to normal activity.

Roles and Responsibilities:

The start of the ramp-up process and progression through the phases will be determined by the UB President and the Vice President for Research & Economic Development. In order to best consider and maintain health and safety guidelines, PIs will continue to be the responsible local authority in carrying out their approved research restart plans. They will have personal supervisory responsibility, which means that they are in charge and have authority over the research, scholarly and creative activities carried out in their lab, space, facility, classroom, etc. PIs are, therefore, responsible for assessing physical space and scenarios to understand possible dangers involved for themselves, staff, students, etc. Once they have assessed potential hazards, these must be either addressed in their plans or communicated to their department chairs and ADRs if higher action is needed.

As was the case when research facilities went into hibernation mode, PIs, Department Chairs, Associate Deans for Research, and Deans made critical decisions. The same is true of the research ramp-up phase: PI generated research plans need to be reviewed by their Department Chair and ADR prior to restarting research. Our objective is that this be a de-centralized process: PI to Department Chair (who may have to coordinate across buildings and facilities where their faculty operate), and then to Associate Deans for Research, and finally to Deans as necessary.

Detailed Phase Plans:

UB RESEARCH PHASE	GENERAL CONDITIONS	ANTICIPATED ACTIVITIES	TIME PERIOD
1	<p>Community COVID activity has stabilized or lessened such that NYS restrictions are being relaxed.</p> <p>Essential staff who are eligible to carry out in-person work return gradually but still at a low level compared to normal.</p> <p>(~10-30% of normal activity is expected)</p>	<p>This is principally a facilities ramping-up phase to prepare labs for restart using minimal staffing.</p> <p>Only essential research is permitted and should be approved by department heads and Deans.</p> <p>Human subject study restrictions still in place, field work or research requiring travel still highly restricted.</p> <p>Checklist is provided by EH&S to facilitate safely reopening labs.</p> <p>Guidelines for physical distancing in labs, disinfection, scheduling and PPE, etc. are in place and must be observed (see EH&S guidelines and Guidance for Human Subject Research).</p> <p>PIs and lab directors are responsible for using these guidelines to prepare operational safety plans for their lab spaces and activities and coordinating with their departments and ADRs for approval.</p> <p>PIs can utilize the EH&S supplied Laboratory Ramp-Up Checklist to prepare their labs and spaces prior to Phase 2.</p> <p>Central purchasing of face masks and cleaning/disinfection supplies in place; includes an allocation process based on stated UB priorities.</p> <p>Strict guidelines for disinfecting common spaces needs to be carried out by custodial services and communicated to staff for reassurance.</p> <p>Core facilities and service/support centers (including LAF) ramp up capacities, re-establish on-campus resource access.</p>	<p>Determined by UB administration pursuant to NYS guidelines -</p> <p>Establishing guidelines and plans should be ongoing until Phase 2.</p>

PHASE	GENERAL CONDITIONS	ANTICIPATED ACTIVITIES	TIME PERIOD
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2	<p>Community COVID activity is declining such that state & local restrictions on public activities are being further relaxed.</p> <p>In-person research activity gradually returns with staggered scheduling to a low-to-moderate level compared to normal.</p> <p>(<50% of normal activity is expected)</p>	<p>Expansion beyond essential research activities to include and prioritize time-sensitive research, (e.g. grant expirations, trainees about to finish and graduate or move to next position, seasonal data from field research depending on site restrictions; exceptions include those meeting human subject restrictions; research requiring travel is still highly limited.)</p> <p>Continue to work remotely whenever possible.</p> <p>Still no UGs or volunteers in labs except for essential employees. Maximum number of researchers who can be at research sites at any given time limited as required for social distancing. (See EH&S Laboratory COVID guidelines.)</p> <p>Implement staggered work schedules to help maintain low personnel density.</p> <p>Guidelines to maximize safety, including physical distancing, disinfection, scheduling, and PPE must be observed.</p> <p>Plans for sudden return to Phase 1 should be in place in case needed.</p>	<p>NYS and UB further lessens restrictions relevant to on-campus activities. Likely to be 1-3 weeks following start of Phase 1. (Note that these timelines are not predictable.)</p>
3	<p>New cases of COVID-19 are stably lower, COVID-19 testing and contact tracing fully meets clinical and public health targets, such that community/NYS restrictions are further relaxed.</p> <p>In-person research activity gradually transitions to a moderately high level compared to normal.</p> <p>(Up to 75% of normal activity)</p>	<p>Most types of on-site research are allowed, except as limited by restrictions for human subject research and travel.</p> <p>Continue to work remotely whenever possible.</p> <p>Continue staggered work schedules to maintain low personnel density.</p> <p>Guidelines to maximize safety, including physical distancing, disinfection, scheduling, PPE must still be observed in most instances.</p> <p>Guidelines established where physical distancing is not possible, including art and music studio spaces (e.g. mandatory COVID-19 testing, reliable treatments available, more stringent PPE requirements; guidelines to follow).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Expand to all research activities that can be carried out while maintaining safety guidelines. Resuming of human subject research activities will require that conditions provided in the Guidance for Human Subjects can be assured. Note that modifications in human subject research need to be approved by IRB. – Possible return of undergrads to labs (TBD by campus-wide planning efforts). <p>Plans for sudden return to Phase 2 should be in place in case needed.</p>	<p>TBD – will depend on continued relaxation of NYS and UB restrictions.</p> <p>Recommendations are wait 2-3 weeks after Phase 2 in order to allow for Phase 2 to be tested.</p>
4	<p>Vaccine or treatment widely available and shown to be effective; used in combination with widespread testing and identification of new COVID-19 cases, with quarantining</p> <p>In-person research activity close to normal.</p>	<p>No or minimal state restrictions.</p> <p>All types of in-person research are allowed, subject to travel restrictions and/or local conditions/restrictions.</p>	<p>TBD, but likely after 1/2021</p>

Supporting Documents:

- Human Subjects Research Guidance

- Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences Research & Scholarly Activity Ramp up Guidance
- EH&S Policy re: Lab occupancy under COVID-19 Conditions
- EH&S Laboratory Ramp-up Checklist
- PI Operation Plan Template
- Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document