PSE Work Plan for Conte Reopening

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This document conveys PSE-specific guidance to Conte researchers and staff and is intended to augment current state and University guidance for reopening. By wearing proper personal protective equipment and practicing excellent hygiene, virus transmission risks will be minimized and lab research may be conducted effectively. Frequent air exchanges in the Conte lab wing, along with social distancing practice, will further reduce transmission risks compared to more congested work environments. Recognizing that practices should conform to re-opening policies and recommendations (see https://www.mass.gov/lists/safety-standards-for-laboratories) this document details recommendations for Conte workers. Individual research labs will also maintain their own plan specific to particular research environments, configurations, equipment, and space.

Appended to this document is a draft EHS check-list for lab restart.

Personal health. Conte researchers and occupants should stay home when ill, and during the pandemic's duration are encouraged to check their temperature on a daily basis before coming to work. Hand sanitizer should be kept by individuals at all times. In accord with campus regulations, a face covering should be employed *when social distancing cannot be maintained*. PSE will implement the following:

Action items:

1. PSE will supply hand sanitizer near exterior entrances, stairwell entrances, and in the elevator areas of Conte.
2. PSE will follow University and State health regulations on recommended work protocols and encourage its workers to perform daily temperature checks.
3. PSE will limit access to Conte to those who are approved by the PSE Head. Access to PSE must be approved by the Department Head.
4. PSE will add signs to every exterior entrance to describe the personal and public health expectations for those entering and working in Conte.
5. All people will follow University and State guidelines with regards to wearing face coverings when social distancing cannot be maintained.

Laboratory spaces. Safe laboratory practices should now be coupled with consistent attention to personal hygiene and laboratory cleanliness. PSE recognizes that social distancing in the laboratory is a balancing act, since working alone is inherently dangerous while overly concentrating research personnel in the laboratory poses virus transmission risks. Social distancing protocols and methods such as the *remote buddy* system (see https://ehs.umass.edu/how-implement-remote-buddy-system) will reduce the density of researchers in their laboratories.

Principal investigators and core facility directors will be required to develop a campus-approved laboratory reopening plan for their groups and facilities, with focus on social distancing. Such plans are to ensure that the floor area per laboratory researcher is at least 175 ft^2, with 6 feet of social distancing between fellow lab workers. In a typical Conte laboratory space, not more than two researchers occupy a lab at one time. In large laboratories, the number of researches could be

greater than two so long as the above standards are met. Working in shifts will reduce lab occupancy to appropriate levels.

Face coverings are required in labs as elsewhere on campus when social distancing cannot be maintained (see https://www.umass.edu/coronavirus/news/face-coverings-labs-faqs); exceptions are allowed for those with certain medical conditions. When necessary, a face shield can be worn over a face covering (and protective eyeware) to protect from chemical splashes, per usual lab practice. A face shield may provide additional protection in the event of unexpected coughing or sneezing from someone nearby. Cotton face coverings (i.e., masks or fabrics) may be preferred for researchers using flammable materials, pyrophoric compounds, or open flames. Face covering made of other materials, including most synthetic fabrics, pose higher flammability risks. Face coverings are not considered personal protective equipment (PPE), so there is no requirement for PIs/supervisors or the University to provide these; lab personnel should come to the lab with their own face covering as they would with other appropriate attire, *i.e.*, closed-toe shoes, pants, *etc*. Researchers should keep in mind that contamination of a face-covering with chemicals, which may result from touching the face-covering with a contaminated glove, poses serious health risks and thus a heightened level of awareness of chemical safety will be required during this reopening phase. In addition to flammability and potential chemical contamination, researchers should consider other potential complications introduced from face-coverings, including an impeded ability to communicate verbally with lab mates, and fogging of glasses and protective eye wear.

The sanitization guidance developed by EHS and CDC should be followed as labs are re-occupied and also between the designated occupancy shifts defined to reduce lab occupancy. These guidances are found at:

https://ehs.umass.edu/sites/default/files/CleaningProcedures%20For%20Labs%20and%20Offices.pdf and

https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/organizations/cleaning-disinfection.html.

Each group should identify the individuals responsible for sanitization, develop a written lists of the practices to be involved, and keep a log documenting when sanitizations were performed.

Non-laboratory space. PSE urges Conte occupants to use offices and meeting rooms sparingly. Some office spaces have few assigned occupants and naturally coincide with social distancing; more crowded office spaces will be occupied only in shifts. The maximum number of occupants for offices in the student/postdoc wing is two. Principal investigator(s) will create an office schedule for their groups. A common shared responsibility is cleanliness, since disinfecting of door handles and desks may reduce virus transmission.

Thesis defenses, group meetings, and seminars will be conducted in a virtual manner. Gatherings for lunch, snacks, and coffee will not be allowed. In general, eating in the Conte building is discouraged.

Following University regulations, face coverings will be required in public areas of Conte—corridors, elevators, stairwells, bathrooms, and shared offices—and the time spent in such places should be limited. To achieve appropriate social distancing, the maximum number of occupants in the elevators will be two, and stairwell use should be maximized.

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Lab Restart Checklist

The unprecedented nature of the COVID-19 crisis has led to unique challenges for the research community, including the need to navigate how to safely shut-down and restart lab operations. The checklist that follows can be used as a general template to help guide and inform the restart process. If you have questions about particular items in your lab or require any assistance, please contact EH&S at askehs@umass.edu or (413)-545-2682.

Building Infrastructure

- ☐ Flush eyewashes for at least 3 minutes and ensure water is not discolored or opaque.
    - Additional flushing may be necessary to clear any contaminants.
    - If the water is not clear and colorless after 15 minutes of flushing, contact the Solutions Center at (413)-545-6401.
- ☐ Run water down drains for 5 minutes to refill traps. Traps can dry out when not in use.
    - Sewage-like odors around drains can result from dry traps. This includes floor drains. If odors are present and remain after running water down the drains, please contact EH&S at (413)-545-2682.
    - Check drains for leaks. If leaks are observed, report these to the Solutions Center at (413)-545-6401.
- ☐ Check all fume hoods to ensure these are operating correctly. Report any issues to the Solutions Center at (413)-545-6401.
    - Fume hoods should not be in alarm
    - Move the sash to ensure the air flow adjusts properly and hood does not go into alarm when sash is moved.
- ☐ Check for lights that are not working. Report any non-functioning units to the Solutions Center at (413)-545-6401.
- ☐ Check for evidence of leaks and report these to the Solutions Center at (413)-545-6401. Examples of potential issues include:
    - Popping floor tiles
    - Wet or new discolorations on walls, cabinets, or ceiling tiles
- ☐ Report any observed changes in airflow or other indications of mechanical issues to the Solutions Center at (413)-545-6401. Examples of potential issues include:
    - Doors to rooms are difficult to open or shut
    - Unusual sensation of turbulence, rushing air, or stagnant air
    - Unusual sounds (e.g., grinding or high pitched whirring) in hoods or air handlers
    - Temperature or humidity extremes
    - Burning, rubber-like, or other unusual odors

Materials and Support Operations

- ☐ Ensure that staff or operations within your department or college that are necessary for the support of particular activities and CORE facilities are in operation or that there is a plan in place to otherwise cover the functions of supporting operations.
- ☐ Restocking activities in labs may place a burden on supply chains. Be prepared for delays in receipt and availability of consumables.

Chemical and Physical Hazards

- ☐ Check all chemical containers to ensure these are in good condition. Request hazardous waste pick-up through CEMS for any items that have cracked lids, are bulging, or show other evidence of degradation.
- ☐ Ensure all peroxide-forming materials are tested within the past three months for the presence of peroxides.
- ☐ Request waste containers through CEMS if these were removed from the lab during the closure prior to beginning any work that will generate hazardous waste.
- ☐ Check that all electronic and mechanical equipment is operational.
- ☐ Check belts, tubing that is under pressure, and other points of failure on equipment to ensure this is in good condition before returning to operation.

Biological Hazards

- ☐ Check that the biosafety cabinet turns on and is operating properly
- ☐ Ensure that necessary PPE (such as N95 respirators) are available for any future work before initiating related activities
- ☐ Clean all benches prior to beginning work again.
- ☐ Check all water baths, heating blocks, draws in refrigerators, controlled temperature rooms, etc. for bacterial growth and clean accordingly.
- ☐ Ensure waste containers in equipment and vacuum traps are empty and clean. Add new disinfectant to vacuum traps.

COVID-19 Precautions

- ☐ Only research activities that are described in research continuity plans approved by the department chair, dean, and Vice Chancellor for Research and Engagement may be conducted on campus per the guidance of the Vice Chancellor of Research and Engagement.
- ☐ Plan for halting research operations on short notice should that be necessary.
- ☐ Daily monitoring of one's health and well-being prior to coming to work can aid in early detection of infectious disease and is an effective measure to prevent community spread of COVID-19. All employees should review the COVID-19 Daily Self Checklist

before reporting to campus. If you answer yes to any of the questions, you must stay home, notify your supervisor and call or email the COVID-19 HR Response Team.

☐ Maintain social distancing while in labs and offices. Ensure there is 6 feet between you and others.
- Consider setting up clearly demarcated work stations to easily visualize and assist with social distancing.
- Consider foot traffic and areas around work stations. Creating one way traffic patterns and designated walking areas may be helpful.
- Set up use schedules and sign-ups for shared equipment.
- Consider relocating shared equipment away from occupied work areas.
- Consider working in shifts.
  - Divide lab into teams and alternate schedules
  - Consider proximity of assigned work areas
- Adhere to maximum occupancies guidelines where available and post these in areas.

☐ Wash your hands frequently and change gloves often.

☐ Clean high touch surfaces frequently following cleaning guidance provided by EH&S. Clean shared equipment after use. Disinfect reusable and shared PPE.

☐ Follow the University's guidance on face coverings. Per order of Governor Baker, face coverings are required in public spaces when social distancing cannot be maintained. See the FAQs on face coverings.
- When working with open flames, pyrophorics, or larger quantities of flammable materials, wear face coverings made of natural fabrics (e.g., cotton). Synthetic fabrics can melt to your skin, or in some cases burn very rapidly, in the event of a fire.
- Immediately replace face coverings that become contaminated or soiled.

☐ Advise lab personnel to keep a daily log of contact with others and places they go. This can assist with contact tracing later if necessary.

☐ Do not work alone in the lab for any hazardous activities. Work when others are present in the lab whenever possible while maintaining social distancing. Minimal risk activities can be conducted with a remote buddy system when necessary. Please contact EH&S for any questions regarding risk assessments or buddy systems.