

**PLANS FOR PHASED EXPANSION OF ON-CAMPUS OPERATIONS**  
**THE VIRGINIA INSTITUTE OF MARINE SCIENCE**

**June 12, 2020**

In developing plans to expand on-campus operations in a safe and new normal way, we must set a path forward that emphasizes employee safety and is achievable. While efforts and sacrifices in the Commonwealth and our society seem to have slowed the spread of the virus, we need to remind ourselves that it is still present. It is essential that as we begin to ease some of the restrictions to return to campus and expand our in-person research, education, and advisory activities in the next phase, we remain vigilant, cautious, and measured. We will take a phased, systematic and strategic approach understanding that work environments will be dramatically different (new normal) compared with those before the pandemic.

The path forward will not be business as usual. We must remember to continue to practice physical distancing, telework when appropriate, wash hands frequently, not touch our faces, wear a face covering when required, and remain home when not feeling well or experiencing COVID-19 symptoms. These measures, as well as the ones outlined below, are meant to make necessary adaptations to our campus, work, and learning environments with the primary goals being the health and safety of our campus community and expansion of in-person research, education and advisory activities. As this pandemic continues to be very fluid, various elements of this plan may change. This plan is derived from the most recent and current policies and guidance.

**GOVERNING QUESTIONS:**

At a time of extreme uncertainty, it is important to ask what immediate, creative actions should we take to ensure VIMS remains resilient over the next two years. In very pragmatic terms: how do we fulfill our mission and vision to (1) make seminal advances in understanding marine and coastal systems through research and discovery, (2) translate research findings into practical solutions to complex issues of societal importance, and (3) provide new generations of researchers, educators, problem solvers, and managers with a marine-science education of unsurpassed quality, while protecting the health of the entire VIMS community.

**UNIVERSITY/INSTITUTE GOALS**

On March 19, 2020, William & Mary President, Katherine A. Rowe highlighted the university's goals for navigating the pandemic:

1. Safeguarding the health of students, faculty and staff;
2. Ensuring students complete their classes;
3. Maintaining the university's critical research and other operations; and,
4. Joining in the national effort to slow the spread of COVID-19.

VIMS Dean and Director, Dr. John Wells reiterated to the VIMS Community on April 3, 2020 a message regarding research that had been sent previously to the VIMS faculty.

### **PRESIDENT'S PRINCIPLES FOR REOPENING CAMPUS**

On May 6, 2020, President Rowe stated these principles for re-opening William & Mary for the new academic year:

1. Prioritization of the health and safety of the entire campus community;
2. A focus on creativity and flexibility; and,
3. Collaboration across the University.

### **GATING CONDITIONS FOR PHASED EXPANSION OF OPERATIONS**

1. For nonresidential campuses, as well as science labs, libraries, and many graduate programs, the gating criteria for business and commercial operations should apply.
2. As a nonresidential campus, VIMS will require symptomatic students, faculty, and staff to get tested prior to returning to campus; the Virginia Department of Health (VDH) testing recommendations (dated 5/28/20) for colleges and universities include:
  - a. Establishing a testing strategy that assures students, faculty, and staff have access to testing as needed.
  - b. At a minimum, colleges and universities should have the ability to identify individuals reporting illness and provide or identify access to testing for symptomatic students, faculty, or staff.
  - c. Additionally, colleges and universities should have the ability to isolate cases and quarantine close contacts of cases. VDH recommends having a low threshold for identifying anyone who may be exhibiting any signs or symptoms of COVID-19 ([www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html](http://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/symptoms-testing/symptoms.html)).
  - d. As individuals are identified, colleges and universities should ensure they are separated from others until test results are available or longer if the result is positive and to identify and place their close contacts in quarantine.
3. VIMS will continue to develop plans that meet or exceed all state and university guidelines related to reducing risks associated with the spread of COVID-19.
4. VIMS will ensure that students and employees have access to required PPE.
5. Specific work plans will be developed for all activities related to operations, research and teaching to ensure that activities fulfill the plan requirements.

### **GOVERNOR'S DIRECTION, EXECUTIVE ORDER 65 – PHASE TWO**

Institutions of higher education are encouraged to continue remote learning where practical. However, such institutions may offer in-person classes and instruction, including labs and related practical training, provided they comply with all applicable requirements under the "Guidelines for All Business Sectors." No institutions of higher education shall hold or host gatherings of more than 50 individuals. Specifically, E.O. 65 indicates that:

1. Safer at Home
2. Vulnerable individuals (employees) are strongly encouraged to stay home
3. Social Gathering – no more than 50 people
  - a. *Note: The presence of more than 50 individuals performing functions of their employment is not a “gathering”. This applies to business meetings as long as the space where being conducted is large enough to comply with physical distancing requirements.*
4. Continue physical distancing of 6 feet or more
5. Strongly encourage to continue teleworking
6. Individuals are required to wear face coverings in indoor public settings

### **CURRENT RESTRICTIONS**

1. University Sponsored travel is prohibited through August 31, 2020 and likely further into the future. Permission granted to VIMS for out of state and overnight travel supporting research and advisory services. This travel will be reviewed and approved by the Associate Dean of Research and Advisory Services on a case by case basis.

### **BUSINESS OPERATIONS GOING FORWARD (UNTIL FURTHER NOTICE)**

1. The VIMS campus buildings will remain locked at this time.
2. All relevant University human resources and compliance policies will be strictly followed, including those modified by Federal and State requirements.
3. All employees are required to self-monitor themselves for COVID-19 symptoms. The Virginia Department of Health has created a website to help with this: <https://www.vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus/covidcheck/>.
4. Face-to-Face meetings should only occur if absolutely necessary. During in-person meetings individuals must wear masks and comply with physical distancing, except if they are eating. Continue to utilize Zoom or other virtual media to conduct business meetings even when individuals are on campus. (See additional details under use of classrooms and meeting rooms.)
5. All employees will be required to wear masks when walking through campus buildings and public spaces, during in-person meetings, and when the 6-foot physical distancing requirement cannot be met. Travel between buildings should be kept to a minimum.
6. Volunteers, who have been approved, will be permitted to work on campus and will be required to follow employee guidelines.
7. Undergraduate student program specifics will follow the W&M Undergraduate program guidelines.
8. Gathering locations such as: Sowers House, Abrahamson House, and Clayton House shall remain closed. The Galley and Davis Hall Kitchenettes will be restricted to a minimum occupancy. Tables and seating will be arranged to provide 6-foot physical distancing.

9. The VIMS Library will remain closed and will be re-evaluated for use prior to the Fall semester. Plans are underway for pick up and return of materials to occur one day per week.
10. Campus “Closed to the Public” remains in effect.
11. Visitors to campus – will be allowed by appointment only. Visitors should come to campus for the purposes of conducting business meetings that cannot be done virtually. Visitors will be required to wear face masks when travelling through public spaces, during in-person meetings, and where physical distancing cannot be met.
12. Contractors and Vendors – will be allowed by appointment only to make repairs or to perform service on critical equipment to provide additional information as to their safety plans for operating during the pandemic. Following are requirements of the vendor to provide/perform on campus:
  - a. The vendor shall provide to us their protocols for working within a COVID-19 pandemic prior to scheduling their visit.
  - b. Any vendor staff not feeling well or experiencing symptoms should not come to campus.
  - c. Confirm the day(s) and time(s) they will be on campus.
  - d. We require that the technician’s tools be disinfected prior to entering the building.
  - e. We require that they disinfect the piece of equipment prior to repair/service and at the conclusion of their work.
  - f. We require that they disinfect all surfaces that they come in contact with.
  - g. We require that anyone in the lab or service areas maintain the required physical distancing of 6 feet or more at all times.
  - h. We require that the technician will wear a mask while in the building(s).
  - i. We require that the vendor maintain a direct route from entering the building to the area to perform the service and departing the building. Any contact with surfaces along the way should be disinfected (i.e. stair handrails, elevator buttons, etc.).
  - j. Once the repair/service is complete, best practice is that the equipment is not used for 72 hours.
13. VIMS Sponsored travel
  - a. Comply with State and University Policies
  - b. Travel only for business operations and research and advisory activities. No travel to seminars, workshops, conferences, etc. will be allowed until further notice.
14. Food Trucks on campus – Not applicable at this time. Caterers are considered vendors and will be required to follow the guidelines above.
15. VIMS will discontinue routine cleaning of offices and labs. Individual offices are to be self-cleaned (i.e. hard surfaces, computer keyboards, etc.). Trash pickup continues in corridor.
16. In the event of a 2nd wave of outbreak cases, the Institute will follow State and University guidance for campus closure.

## RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

The guidelines defining critical research activities in response to the Gov. Northam's Executive Order 55 that were articulated in the April 5, 2020 memo from Mark Luckenbach to VIMS PIs, technical staff and, graduate students remain in effect until that EO expires (currently, June 11, 2020). With the expiration of that order on June 11<sup>th</sup> and the announcement of Phase Two last week by the Governor, we will need to think more broadly, realizing that our entire research enterprise is essential to all aspects of our mission. Our challenge lies in developing laboratory- and project-specific actions to conduct research in a manner that comply with guidelines and protocols articulated in this document. For some research programs and projects this will require creative solutions and perhaps significant alterations in the research plans.

Each laboratory group and VIMS Centers with research components must develop a written set of procedures that clearly spells how it will meet or exceed the guidelines listed below. The plans should include activities by all individuals, including the students, utilizing a lab. The conduct of field work must also be covered in these plans with a time horizon looking out to the end of the calendar year. These plans must be submitted to the Associate Dean of Research and Advisory Services, and be easily accessible to all members of the lab group.

**1. Minimize the time that more than one or two people are in a room at a time.** Reducing density and maintaining distances between people is a fundamental component of reducing the spread of the virus. In many cases we will need to alter work schedules to reduce the numbers of people in a laboratory and shared office space at a time (e.g., use of shared group calendar to manage lab use), organize labs in a manner that accommodates greater distancing, and re-think how we accomplish particular tasks. Bearing in mind that several people, all spaced 6 feet apart, working in a laboratory or other closed space that is not well ventilated carries some risk of spreading the virus, we will continue to work out protocols that minimize the time that more than one or two people are in such a space at a time.

**2. Masks must be worn at all times that a minimum of 6-feet of distancing cannot be maintained.**

**3. Employees and students working in laboratories will be responsible for thoroughly cleaning and disinfecting their workspaces before, during and after use.** Supervisors have the responsibility to ensure that these cleaning responsibilities are clearly assigned to individuals and that they are fully implemented.

**4. Until further notice there will be no more than two people at a time authorized in a VIMS truck, each required to wear a mask.** Travel to research sites in personal cars must also adhere to this density requirement. Thorough cleaning and disinfecting of all touched surfaces in VIMS vehicles, before and after use, is the responsibility of the users. Refueling of vehicles will remain the responsibility of the users.

**5. Though working at outdoor field sites generally poses less risk of spreading the virus, distancing guidelines should still be followed, and masks worn anytime this distance cannot**

**be maintained.** Careful consideration must be given to other risks of the field work that might be exacerbated by reduced crew sizes and distancing. Supervisors should conduct thoughtful risk assessment and reduction planning for all field research activities.

**6. Scientific diving operations for specific projects must adhere to the Dive Program COVID-19 Procedures and Guidance** developed by the VIMS Dive Control Board. Modifications to training and certification programs in response to COVID-19 are detailed in the procedures document.

**7. Research activities involving VIMS' small vessel fleet will require adherence to distancing requirements to the greatest extent possible and the wearing of masks and other appropriate PPE at all times that this is not possible.** For Gloucester Point-based small vessels, the general expectation is that the research team, not Marine Operations staff, will be responsible for operating the vessel and thoroughly cleaning and disinfecting all high-touch surfaces before and after use. If a research team needs a vessel operator, they should contact the Director of Marine Operations to request an exemption on a case by case basis. For Eastern Shore Lab-based vessels, users should contact Sean Fate to discuss their needs and operational plans.

**8. Research aboard VIMS' large vessels (*R/V Virginia*, *R/V Bay Eagle* and *R/V Tidewater*) must follow the guidelines developed by Marine Operations staff.** Project specific details for implementing these protocols must be established through discussions between scientific staff and vessel staff prior to sailing.

**9. Research conducted aboard third-party vessels** will generally require approval by the Associate Dean of Research and Advisory Services in consultation with the Chief Operations Officer and the Director of Marine Operations on a case by case basis.

For all operations aboard vessels, the most important risk reduction steps are those that we can take before boarding, namely self-monitoring for temperature and other symptoms by all personnel.

## **TEACHING ACTIVITIES**

The priorities for the VIMS academic plan moving ahead are:

1. Provide safe learning and teaching environments, consistent with public health and safety guidelines, and best practices that emerge moving forward;
2. Offer the highest quality experiences possible for students and faculty;
3. Increase resilience of the academic program in face of continuing uncertainty; and,
4. Develop a plan that is consistent with a "whole institution (VIMS)" level plan. The academic program plan must take into consideration the importance of continuity of research for VIMS, which is a critical component of the education and training of graduate students (and undergraduates) on the VIMS campus.

The VIMS teaching plan for Fall 2020 will continue to move forward as university guidelines are developed and released. It is expected that William & Mary will provide considerable local flexibility to the academic units, which will allow the School of Marine Science to implement a

school-specific plan. Most VIMS faculty have indicated an interest in teaching in-person this fall and most students want to be in the classroom, if possible. At the same time, with research being a critical component of the education and training of graduate students, VIMS faculty, students and administration agree that the benefits of in-person teaching should be considered in the context of our ability to maintain continuity of research. For that reason, final decisions on mode for individual classes on the VIMS campus will be made closer to the beginning of the fall semester. All VIMS faculty will focus between now and the beginning of the semester on adapting courses for remote/online delivery with an ability to quickly pivot to in-person teaching. VIMS has classroom capacity to proceed with in-person delivery with appropriate physical distancing. If a decision is made to offer a course in person, the course will also be available live via Zoom and, as appropriate, asynchronously via a recording. Faculty will develop course continuity plans based on guidelines similar to those used during the spring semester.

The Office of Academic Studies will provide further academic program guidance to faculty and students over the next two weeks.

### **USE OF CLASSROOMS OR MEETING ROOMS**

1. Whenever possible, eliminate the need for face-to-face meetings and non-graduate program education or training classes by using remote options, such as Zoom.
2. The VIMS Emergency Management Team (EMT) will set maximum occupancy for each class and meeting room based on room size and physical distancing requirements, recognizing that the more time people spend in a room, the greater the chance of spreading the virus. For this reason, a reduction in room occupancy rates is desirable.
3. Facilities will provide disinfectant wipes or other means for individuals to clean desks, tables and seats before and after use.

### **FACILITIES CONSIDERATIONS**

The following recommendations are provided for those on campus who are responsible for maintaining facilities or ordering materials and supplies:

1. Place plexiglass or other barriers in workspaces where people must face each other or are unable to be 6 feet apart. Such areas include the cashier window, Watermen's Hall front desk, Gift shop around cash register, and Academic Studies workstation.
2. Place appropriate signage at entrances and around buildings (i.e. COVID-19 symptoms, physical distancing reminder, wait here, occupancy, indicating how to proceed).
3. Remove (or tape off) chairs and desks to ensure proper physical distancing in conference, classroom and waiting rooms. Identify (by posting signage, normally 50% reduced) allowable occupancy in order to control workflow and/or establish maximum attendance.
4. Make face coverings available throughout campus.
5. Post maximum occupancy in common break areas and configure to accommodate appropriate physical distancing.

6. Provide sanitizing supplies for individuals to clean their areas before and after use.
7. Provide hand sanitizer at all building entrances, classrooms, and high traffic areas.
8. Identify frequently touched areas (doors, cabinets, etc.) and investigate options to implement no/reduced touch options, such as installing door stops (where possible), or sensor triggered doors and faucets/flushometers.
9. Monitor and secure inventories of PPE, hand sanitizers, wipes, cleaning products, and hand soap. NOTE: Facilities is responsible for products above that are specifically related to COVID-19 and not normal/customary PPE for lab research.
10. Increase the frequency and attention to the cleaning and disinfection of high traffic public areas and hard surfaces such as door hardware, handrails, switches, classroom seating, watercoolers, etc. in accordance with CDC recommendations.
11. HVAC System Preventions
  - a. Increase outside air (where possible) and not to impact humidity control.
  - b. Keep HVAC systems operating in most efficient manner
  - c. Increase Filter Changes (Frequency TBD)
  - d. Increase Preventative Maintenance activities (Scope being defined)

## **VIMS OPERATIONAL PROTOCOL FOR POTENTIAL COVID-19 CONTAMINATION**

### Here is how the process/protocol will work:

1. We have established a new email address: [EMT@vims.edu](mailto:EMT@vims.edu). This email is available for anyone in our campus community to notify the VIMS EMT of a suspected, presumed, or positive case of COVID-19. For the purposes of privacy, this email will be restricted to the following members of the Emergency Management Team (John Wells, Mark Luckenbach, Linda Schaffner, and Joe Martinez).
2. Once the email is received and reviewed, the relevant information will be forwarded to the VIMS Office of Safety and Environmental Programs, to contact directly the individual in question to obtain additional information via a questionnaire that has been developed. The responses to the questionnaire will aid in the creation of a response plan. The questionnaire includes:
  - a. When were you last on campus?
  - b. What buildings, offices, laboratories or other areas (including restrooms) did you frequent?
  - c. Is your office/work area currently secured?
  - d. What activities were performed while on campus (lab work?, microscopy?, data analysis?, field work?, etc.)?
  - e. Please list any and all VIMS personnel that you've been in close contact with over the past 14 days.
3. With the developed response plan, notifications to individuals and affected building areas will be communicated by the VIMS Office of Safety and Environmental Programs.

Here are some general ground rules:



1. If a VIMS faculty member, staff member, or student has been tested, either voluntarily or as directed by a health care provider, they are to remain off campus until the test result is provided, and to notify the VIMS EMT.
2. If a VIMS faculty member, staff member, or student was to test positive for the COVID-19 virus, that individual will require a release from a medical provider before returning to work and campus.
3. If a VIMS faculty member, staff member, or student is caring for someone who has tested positive or showing signs of COVID-19 they should remain off campus due to possible exposure.
4. Impacted areas will be closed and access restricted immediately for a minimum of 72 hours before the Advanced Cleaning Team will commence with decontamination activities. Based on the response plan, impacted areas may include offices, labs, building floors or the entire building.

## REFERENCES

1. [Virginia Department of Health Interim Guidance for Daily COVID-19 Screening of Employees](#)
2. [Reopening Guidance for Cleaning and Disinfecting Public Spaces, Workplaces, Businesses, Schools, and Homes](#)
3. VIMS Operational Protocol for Potential COVID-19 Contamination
  - a. [Local COVID-19 testing locations](#)
4. Dr. Mark Luckenbach's email dated 04/05/2020 related to Defining Critical Research
  - a. Addendum for approval of student critical research, dated 04/13/2020
5. VIMS Research Vessels (Large) [Fleet COVID-19 Policies and Procedures](#)
  - a. [Self-Assessment Form](#)
6. [VIMS Dive Operations COVID-19 Pandemic Procedures](#), dated June 12, 2020, version 6
7. Commercial Vessels, COVID-19 Protocols: Protocols currently under development
  - a. Fisheries Science Department
    - i. F/V Darna (NEMAP)
    - ii. F/V Carolina Capes II
    - iii. F/V Italian Princess
    - iv. F/V Celtic
    - v. F/V Polaris
    - vi. ESS Pursuit
    - vii. F/V Jersey Girl
    - viii. F/V Betty C
8. Governor Northam, [Executive Order 61](#), Forwarding Virginia, dated May 8, 2020
9. Governor Northam, [Executive Order 65](#), Phase Two, dated June 5, 2020
10. American College Health Association (ACHA), [Considerations for Reopening Institutions of Higher Education in COVID-19 Era](#), dated May 7, 2020
11. [Safe Workplaces: Guidance for State Agency Leaders in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic & Enhanced Safety Measures](#), published by Commonwealth of Virginia, dated May 13, 2020
12. [CDC – Considerations for Institutes of Higher Education](#), dated May 30, 2020
13. Governor Northam, [Higher Education Reopening Guidance](#), dated June 11, 2020