

## Guidance on Summer 2020 Student Research

This guidance aims to provide some clarity regarding University and grant-funded summer research. Undergraduate research is the hallmark of a University of Richmond education. The current circumstances presented by COVID-19 will necessarily alter our past practices in this area and limit some of what is possible. Nonetheless, where possible, we are hoping to continue to support this important work even during these challenging times.

The Governor of Virginia has issued a stay-at-home order that may extend until June 10. **It will not be possible for summer research to proceed in a face-to-face fashion starting May 11, 2020.** At this point, we are hopeful that students *may* be able to return to campus on or after June 15 but, as the situation continues to change rapidly, there are no guarantees that this will be possible.

The summer research program is very important to the professional trajectories of our students, and our faculty. However, given that we are in the midst of a pandemic, some faculty may no longer be able to mentor students either in person or remotely, and some students may no longer be able to participate in the experience.

Faculty value the time they spend mentoring our students in research, but many things have changed over the last 6 weeks – faculty and students may be dealing with unusual personal challenges related to COVID-19. For these reasons and many more, the decision to continue to offer the student research experience depends on both faculty and students. In the first instance, the faculty member must decide if it is feasible with respect to their summer schedule and research goals. If the faculty member is able to proceed under one of the possible scenarios below, then the option to continue with the research experience this summer lies with the student.

Faculty need to consider three possible scenarios:

1. Where possible and with IRB approval when needed, research projects can be pivoted to online projects. Faculty will mentor students using online communication tools. For those projects that can be accomplished remotely, the faculty member can determine the start and end dates in coordination with their students. Research cannot start earlier than May 11, 2020.
2. Some projects require hands-on experimentation, some form of travel, access to archives, data sets or other resources that are not available remotely, or other face-to-face work that is not feasible in the current circumstances. It is possible, but not guaranteed, that these projects could begin on June 15 and end on July 31 (7 weeks). It is up to the faculty member to discern if their summer research mentoring fits within this altered time frame. We are delaying a decision on residency until as late as early June to allow for the greatest chance for on-campus activity this summer. We will continue to monitor state and national public health advisories. Should there be no return to campus this summer, **projects that cannot be conducted remotely would be cancelled.**
3. For some projects, it may be possible for the faculty member to adopt a hybrid of online and on-campus mentoring. These projects could commence remotely as soon as May 11, and if campus opens to students on June 15, could transition to on-campus work at that

point. If campus does not open on June 15<sup>th</sup>, the project would need to either end, or remain online.

The decision to convert, continue online, or cancel would be at the discretion of the faculty mentor.

Rising second- and third-year students for whom this is a first summer research experience are using their Richmond Guarantee. These students should discuss with their faculty mentor and should carefully consider if using their award (Richmond Guarantee) this summer is appropriate or if they might want to use their award another summer. This is especially true in scenario #3 above where the research experience might be as short as a 4-week remote engagement.

Dependent on agreement of their faculty mentor, any rising second- or third-year student who has been awarded a summer research fellowship, but who cannot participate in the summer experience for any of the reasons outlined herein, will be able to postpone their fellowship for research to summer 2021. Dependent on mentor availability, rising seniors may be able to postpone their support to the summer following graduation. Questions about rising seniors should be directed to Ben Broening (A&S), Crystal Hoyt (Jepson), or Joyce van der Laan Smith (RSB).

A student project should be postponed or cancelled if:

1. A student decides that they can no longer participate in the experience during summer 2020. Projects that include travel outside of the student's home community cannot be considered.
2. A faculty mentor determines that their project cannot pivot to online, 7 weeks on-campus is not long enough to accomplish the goals of the research or the faculty mentor cannot accommodate an extension into the latter part of the summer research period.
3. A faculty mentor determines that their project cannot pivot to online and is not able to risk the very real possibility that there might not be any on-campus research this summer.

Faculty should discuss their decision for summer research with each of their students; and, if students are continuing, they will need to sign a new contract based on those conversations.

New revised contracts and guidelines will be issued in the coming week. Signed contracts that have already been returned will be cancelled. New summer research contracts for students, where applicable, will be due April 17. If a student does not return a contract by the due date, we will assume they will not be using the funds to do research this summer. For those faculty-student teams who are adopting either a hybrid or post-June 15 on-campus approach, information regarding housing will be sent later in the semester, should that housing become available after June 15.