



UMCES PHASE 2.5 RESEARCH UNDER COVID-19

Greater numbers of UMCES employees are vaccinated, and the positivity rate for COVID-19 is decreasing in the communities surrounding UMCES campuses. In order to facilitate critical field and laboratory research over the summer, we will transition to Phase 2.5 research following recommendations and information from the CDC, State of Maryland, and University System of Maryland effective **June 1, 2021**. As with Phase 1 and 2 protocols, the safety and well-being of UMCES employees is our highest priority.

The University System of Maryland has announced that all students, staff and faculty must be vaccinated to work on USM campuses effective the beginning of the fall semester, at which point it is expected that UMCES will be able to fully return to campus. Some safeguards are expected to continue into the Fall including potential testing at the beginning of the semester. In the meantime, we strongly recommend that all UMCES employees be vaccinated against COVID-19 as soon as possible. Vaccination is the best way to help ensure the safety of all UMCES employees, their families and the communities that we work and live in. The summer of 2021 will be used as a gradual transition toward the Fall and we are updating our Phase 2 protocols as follows:

Phase 2.5 UMCES Protocols:

A. Teleworking for non-essential staff can continue

- Teleworking is allowed, but not required, for non-essential faculty, staff, and students even if they can complete their work duties at home. Seek approval from your supervisor before coming back to campus.
- In-person meetings will be voluntary for non-essential employees.

B. All staff on UMCES Campuses, field sites, vehicles, and vessels

1. Health Records and Testing

- Unless proof of vaccination is voluntarily provided to HR@umces.edu, UMCES employees who work on campus or in the field must have monthly COVID tests and submit them to hr@umces.edu.
- Before going to any UMCES facility or into the field, all employees must continue to fill in the daily COVID health screening questions. If you have any of these symptoms or a fever of 100.4 degrees or higher, stay home and notify your supervisor.
- Notify your supervisor and go home immediately if symptoms arise during the work day.
- Notify your supervisor and follow CDC recommended precautions if there is someone at your home who tests positive for COVID or if you have other potential exposure. Do not enter an UMCES facility during this period of time without consultation with a health professional and the Unit Director.
- Comply with any health screenings recommended by the CDC, State of Maryland, USM, and UMCES.

- Keep a daily record of individuals with whom you have been in contact.
- Individuals working together while social distancing and mask wearing do not have to disclose their vaccination status.

2. **Vaccinations**

- Please submit your proof of vaccination to hr@umces.edu as soon as possible.
- For those unvaccinated, you should plan to receive your first shot NO LATER than July 12, 2021 to be in compliance for the beginning of the Fall Semester.
- Acceptable vaccines are those that have been authorized by the [U.S. Food and Drug Administration \(FDA\)](#) and the [World Health Organization \(WHO\)](#), as well as vaccines that have been authorized by national regulatory agencies in other countries.
- UMCES will not accept vaccines that are given as part of clinical trials or that have been authorized by regulatory agencies in other countries but have been evaluated and rejected by WHO.
- Exemptions to the vaccination requirement are for religious or medical reasons only. For more information, please contact Lisa Ross (lross@umces.edu).

3. **Cleaning**

- Although transmission of the virus through surfaces is no longer considered the main means of transmission of the virus, it is still important to maintain your personal hygiene by washing hands thoroughly, using hand sanitizer, and other best practices.
- Follow instructions on cleaning checklists, use the provided disinfectants, and record cleaning activities on logs in your lab (Google Docs or log).
- Wipe down all surfaces touched in vehicles and boats before and after you use them.
- Use only the assigned indoor spaces.

4. **Use of campus buildings**

- The occupancy target for this period is to avoid exceeding **75%** designed capacity for occupied space. Each Unit is responsible for developing its own protocols and procedures for remaining within this target.
- There is no requirement to submit research protocols to the relevant Laboratory Director, but all local policies for logging building access and respecting capacities shall be followed.
- Social distancing, use of masks, and the best hygiene procedures must be applied when in the presence of colleagues or in common areas (hallways, bathrooms, shared laboratory space, vehicles, vessels) unless special permission has been granted to form a work bubble.
- Work bubbles may be formed by a request of the supervisor to the Unit Director. The request shall include the names of all staff involved and the UMCES facilities to be used or field/laboratory work. The Unit Director determines whether to permit formation of a work bubble to allow closer spacing between individuals.
- While working alone in an office or a laboratory, masks are not required.
- CDC guidelines no longer recommend wearing masks outdoors. If it is required that individuals need to be in within 3 feet of colleagues to complete outdoor work tasks then UMCES requires that masks be worn.

5. Travel

- For domestic work travel, no special permission of the Unit Director is necessary beyond filing a Travel Advance Request (TAR).
- International work travel requires approval of the Unit Director and should follow CDC, U.S. State Department, and State of Maryland regulations. Upon return, the Unit Director may request a negative COVID test before coming onto campus and/or apply other restrictions on access to common-use areas and facilities, on a case-by-case basis depending upon the location of the travel.

C. New Employees & Visitors

- Tour groups, outreach programs, and permitting use or renting public space to outside groups and in-person public outreach activities are not allowed at any UMCES facilities without approval of the Unit Director.
- All new employees who will be on campus must produce a negative COVID test taken within 2 weeks prior to coming on campus.
- All new employees hired after July 12, 2021 must be fully vaccinated before they can come on campus.
- Short-term new employees, such as hourly workers and paid interns, are allowed and must follow all protocols for regular employees including monthly COVID testing unless they have submitted their vaccination card to hr@umces.edu.
- Volunteer interns are allowed. They must hold an unpaid appointment so that they receive the daily health monitoring form and comply with UMCES testing policies or submit a vaccination card.
- New visiting scholars and collaborators are allowed on site but must provide proof of vaccination.

UMCES continues to pursue these common-sense protocols to sustain our research activities while keeping our communities and families safe. UMCES will continue to monitor the pandemic situation over the summer months and make adjustments as necessary.