



To: President Lee Bollinger, Executive Vice President Lee Goldman, Provost Ira Katznelson, Michael Shelanski, Daniel Driscoll

The unprecedented and intensifying outbreak of COVID19 has put enormous strain on all members of the Columbia Community. This situation demands the utmost care and attention to ensure the health and safety of all. The University leadership has appropriately communicated that research operations should be undertaken only by essential personnel at Columbia. Postdoctoral and Associate Researchers have likewise played a critical role implementing the ramp-down and have stepped up to contribute to COVID-19 research and triage work.

We believe we share the ideal that in this crisis, no individual should have to choose between financial security and the safety of self and community. We will continue to reach out to our membership about where University policies are not being uniformly or clearly implemented so we can bring them to your attention. We urge the University to adopt the following measures to protect employees and guarantee safe working conditions:

- Ensure that no employee is required to be physically in the workplace during the crisis unless the work is essential to be performed during the crisis *and* essential to be performed physically at the workplace.
- Communicate to all supervisors in the strongest possible terms that they must adhere strictly to newly-promulgated guidelines for what constitutes “essential” operations and that retaliation against employees who raise health and safety concerns is unlawful and shall not be tolerated.
- Establish immediate access to a hotline or other mechanism for individuals to report alleged violations of the COVID-19 essential employee rules, including the option of anonymous reporting.
- Workers that are essential must be notified of their essential role and be given specific instruction on safety procedures while in the workplace and what to do if they suspect they have COVID-19.
- Take all necessary action to inform any and all employees who may have been in contact with a confirmed COVID-19 case.
- Ensure the provision of, and access to, any equipment or technology necessary to engage in remote work.
- Ensure that no employee is evicted from University housing without adequate support for relocation.
- Ensure that the International Students and Scholars Office (ISSO) continues to operate at full strength virtually and communicate a clear prioritization scheme so that individuals with pending requests get service and a sense of how long it might take for ISSO to respond to their inquiries.
- Reimburse any out-of-pocket costs incurred for any work-related travel cancelled as a result of COVID-19.



In an effort to support the University's goal to comply with the state response, protect members of the community, and bolster attempts to combat the pandemic, the Union continues to check in with our membership to see how things look "on the ground". The transition effort so far has been extensive, nevertheless researchers across campus have continued to raise a number of questions and concerns about the impact of the rapidly-evolving crisis, including uneven interpretations of what constitutes "essential" work. We believe Columbia must make every effort to enable researchers to follow appropriate public health measures, without conflicting requirements from departments or labs.

We thank the administration for their good faith efforts and we expect that all members of the Columbia administration will continue to work to ensure that all employees, including Postdoctoral Researchers and Associate Research Scientists receive the guidance and support they need to be safe. We will be monitoring the situation closely as it evolves and will communicate researchers' additional concerns throughout this crisis.

Sincerely,

Columbia Postdoctoral Workers-UAW Bargaining Committee

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