

Guidelines for Research Laboratory Space Assignments

Laboratory space is a valuable resource that is in high demand with short supply. Its equitable distribution is critical to the School of Medicine research mission. As such, no department, institute or center, member of the faculty, or staff has permanent rights to laboratory space. The Dean of the School of Medicine or his/her designee assigns all space based on the principles described in this document. Faculty members may expect to have laboratory space adjustments, gaining or relinquishing space over time as productivity and priorities change. The School of Medicine's longstanding, but inconsistently implemented space policy created a threshold of \$250 in externally funded direct costs per square foot of wet laboratory space¹ as the minimum standard for justified space. This document contains additional details regarding justification, policy, and procedures governing the assignment of space and its yearly reassessment. This document was developed in an iterative process involving the input of many stakeholders including senior leadership and School of Medicine faculty members [pending] and is supported by all chairs of basic health science and clinical [pending] departments. It is presented in its current form with the expectation that further modifications will be made as the process unfolds and in subsequent cycles.

Principles

- Equitable research space assignments require standardized criteria, considering both current faculty and future recruitment. However, criteria need to be flexible or they will fail to account for variable circumstances.
- Space assignment is governed both by research productivity and by research priorities, including factors such as whether that space is used as a core facility, its importance for strategic collaborations, the needs of current faculty members and opportunities for future recruitment.
- Many US medical schools have adopted research funding metrics to guide space assignment. A convenience sample of published guidelines was reviewed for this document. This review indicates that external funding of \$250 per square foot (direct costs only) is a highly reasonable minimum standard.
- Current members of the faculty who have less than \$250 in external research funding requiring bench space per square foot of laboratory assigned as "Research/Non-class Laboratory" or "Research Lab Bench" will be considered for laboratory space reassignment. Reassignment options include loss of all laboratory space, a reduction in space, and relocation to different space.
- The following factors will be considered as potential mitigating factors prior to decisions regarding reassigning space:
 - amount and most recent end date of last externally funded award
 - three-year funding history
 - pending awards
 - remaining balance of start-up funding, if any

¹Each comprehensive research space analysis survey (see below) captures total annual direct costs of external funding at the moment it is run regardless of project period start and end dates. Funding for prior or future years, for example of multi-year grants, is not part of this calculation. Thus, an NIH R01 grant of \$1,250,000 with funding allocated equally for five years is recorded as \$250,000, regardless of its start or end date, and is sufficient to justify 1000 ft.² of laboratory space.

- internal funding
- roles as co-investigator on grants
- function of the space with regard to other investigators, for example, as a core laboratory
- location and quality of the current space with regard to SOM priorities
- shared laboratory-associated space
- Additional factors of concern to affected faculty members
- All changes to assigned research space are considered in the context of the comprehensive research laboratory space analysis, described below under Process.

Process

Senior Associate Dean for Research and Research Training Review

- The Senior Associate Dean for Research and Research Training will conduct a comprehensive research laboratory space analysis at least annually.
- Initially, SOMTech will provide raw data for the analysis using software to match buildings and rooms to room usage categories, investigators, and external research funding. The data will include a preliminary value for external research funding per square foot.
- The Senior Associate Dean for Research and Research Training will review the list for accuracy and add additional fields to include known mitigating factors described above.
- This preliminary analysis will be shared with the Dean when complete.

Chair Review and Actions

- After conferring with the Dean of the School of Medicine, the Senior Associate Dean for Research and Research Training will provide to each department chair the list of faculty members from that department who are assigned laboratory bench space, highlighting those who are funded below the \$250/ft² threshold and the rooms involved. The chair will have time to conduct a preliminary review of the data prior to meeting with the Dean to review the document.
- The chair will be expected to meet with members of the faculty who are below the threshold, verify data accuracy, and to draft a plan for space reallocation.
- As part of the plan for each member of the faculty below the threshold, the chair may propose two options:
 - The faculty member is below the threshold, but reassigning some or all of the laboratory space in question is not recommended due to mitigating factors. These factors will be listed along with a timeline for achieving additional funding.
 - The faculty member is below the threshold and will have their research space reassigned. If the department has one or more faculty members who can justify an increase in space, or has an active recruitment in progress, the department chair may suggest a reassignment option.
- The plan for each faculty member below the \$250/ft² threshold will be incorporated into an overall departmental space proposal, which will be submitted to the Senior Associate Dean for Research and Research Training with a target date of 30 days from the meeting with the Dean. The chair can deliver the plan electronically or schedule a meeting for discussion.

Laboratory Research Space Committee Review and Actions

- A standing School of Medicine Laboratory Research Space Committee (LRSC) will be formed and convened and chaired by the Senior Associate Dean for Research and Research Training.
- The LRSC will consist of seven members of the faculty who have externally funded research and laboratory space that exceeds the \$250/ft² threshold. These faculty members will be diverse with regard to department, rank, and sex.
- LRSC members will serve for four years with two members of the initial committee rotating off each year.
- The charge of the LRSC will be to provide a peer review of the plans proposed by each chair and provide a determination whether to follow or modify each department's plan.
- Decisions are made by simple majority. At least five members, including the chair, must be present to convene.

Faculty and Department Chair Notification

- Based on the LRSC determination, the Senior Associate Dean for Research and Research Training will draft the appropriate notification for the Dean of the School of Medicine to review, sign, and send to the department chair and faculty member.
 - One letter will serve notice that the faculty member is below the threshold, but that there are no current plans to reassign some or all of the laboratory space in question. This letter will include an offer to meet with the chair (or Dean, if the recipient is a department chair) and the Senior Associate Dean to discuss the matter if the faculty member so desires.
 - The alternative letter will serve notice that the faculty member is below the threshold and that the chair (or Senior Associate Dean) will be scheduling a meeting to discuss space reassignment.

Appeal

- Any faculty member who receives notice of intent to reassign laboratory space will have 21 days from the date of the letter to appeal the decision in writing to the Senior Associate Dean for Research and Research Training, articulating the justification for the appeal.
- A committee composed of the Senior Associate Dean for Research and Research Training, the chairs of two research-intensive departments other than that of the faculty member, and two active researchers from the faculty of other departments will review appeals and report their findings to the Dean.
- If the Dean affirms the space reassignment decision, reassignment will begin no fewer than 60 days from the date of notification.
- Alternatively, if the appeal is upheld, the decision will be revisited when the next analysis is complete.
- The Dean reserves the right of final determination of space assignments.