Dear SOM MS and PHD Students,

We understand how disruptive the COVID-19 pandemic has been to your research and academic training, along with many other aspects of your lives. We also understand how eager students and advisors are to return to on-campus research activities. As I am sure you are aware, the importance of everyone’s safety necessitates a phased return to on-campus research.

You should have received several messages outlining our phased approach. Here, I provide an overview of key aspects of the phased return to research and research training for graduate MS and Ph.D. students in the School of Medicine.

- All students must follow all VCU, School of Medicine, departmental and program guidance at all times.
- MS and Ph.D. students can return to research and research training according to the staffing guidelines for Phase 2 of the OVPRI’s Return 2 Research plan.
- Although Phase 2 starts Monday, June 15, students should recognize that:
  - All research that can be performed remotely should continue to be conducted in that manner.
  - Students will not be able to return to their research training on campus on June 15 given the time required to complete the requisite steps below.
  - Students who do not feel safe or comfortable returning to on-campus work will not be compelled to do so. Students should contact me if they feel pressured to return.
- Before returning to on-campus research, each student must:
  - Complete the re-boarding module on Blackboard and provide their advisor with a screenshot or other documentation confirming completion of the module. This module is expected to be available to students very soon.
  - Coordinate with and be approved to return by their advisor and their advisor’s department/unit.
- While on campus, all students must:
  - Wear a face covering or mask. Upon returning to campus, students will be given a safety kit from their department or advisor. This kit will include cloth face coverings, hand sanitizer, disinfectant spray and safety information.
  - Maintain at least 6 feet of distance between themselves and others.
  - Monitor their health daily.
  - Clean and disinfect personal and shared spaces before and after use. Cleaning supplies will be available in numerous locations.

On behalf of the School of Medicine, I thank you for your patience and understanding as we phase in graduate student research and research training. Please feel free to reach out to me with any questions.

Sincerely,

Mike Grotewiel, Ph.D.
Associate Dean for Graduate Education
School of Medicine