UC COVID-19 Newsletter: November 2020

As COVID-19 continues to spread – with cases on the rise and new records being set daily – the University of California community remains focused on responding and adapting to the pandemic, while providing world class health care services and educational and research opportunities.

The cost of confronting the pandemic is climbing. From March through the end of October, UC experienced more than $2.66 billion in expenditures and lost revenue, and because California’s economy has taken such a big hit, the UC system could see additional, substantial losses, which further underscores the critical need for a fourth COVID-19 supplemental spending bill. A list of the University’s education, research, and tax and financing issues, including the need for additional support for states and territories, as well as health care priorities, can be found online.

Preparedness and Response
Critical operations continue at all UC campus and system locations, and our health centers continue to provide vital services to their communities.

- UC Riverside joined California COVID Notify, a pilot program to test a smartphone app that serves as a COVID-19 exposure notification system. The program is a joint effort between the UCs and the state of California to assess this free, voluntary technology for potential use by all Californians.
- UC Merced joined STOP COVID-19 CA (Share, Trust, Organize, Partner, the COVID-19 California Alliance), a coalition funded by a $4.1 million grant from the National Institutes of Health’s Community Engagement Alliance Against COVID-19 Disparities. The Alliance aims to raise COVID-19 awareness in California communities disproportionally affected by the pandemic.
- UC Berkeley launched a new social norms marketing campaign, #BearsCare, to encourage students, faculty and staff coming to campus to wear masks, wash hands and stay physically distant.
- UC Davis Health rolled out a rapid test that can simultaneously check for both the COVID-19 and flu viruses with results in as little as 20 minutes.
- UC Irvine researchers teamed up with the Orange County Health Care Agency to create the actOC, an antibody study that recently found that 11.5 percent of Orange County residents have antibodies for COVID-19, a percentage that is seven times higher than previously estimated.

Student and Campus Life
UC is committed to ensuring continuity and providing resources for its campus and lab communities.

- Three UCSF faculty were named to President-elect Joe Biden and Vice President-elect Kamala Harris’ COVID-19 advisory board, a panel of public health and scientific experts who will help guide the president-elect’s federal response to the pandemic.
UC San Diego recently published, “A Slice of Student Life,” an article sharing the experiences of students who chose to return to campus and how they are navigating hybrid instruction.

Recently, UC Santa Cruz published two reports sharing how the campus used institutional and financial aid awards received from the CARES Act.

Earlier this month, UC Santa Barbara hosted a symposium on graduate student research projects on COVID-19 and its impact. The event resulted from the $2,000 mini-grants graduate researchers received to study and address the COVID-19 pandemic.

Los Alamos National Laboratory, with coalition partners, developed Northern New Mexico STEAM Hub, an educational resource for New Mexico students learning remotely that includes a hotspot map for free wireless Internet access.

**Research**

UC researchers continue to advance understanding and develop new tools to address and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. Below are highlights of some of the efforts taking place.

- A UCLA-led international team of researchers developed and tested two strategies to control the COVID-19 pandemic that have fewer restrictions on economic activity.
- The Department of Energy’s National Energy Research Scientific Computing Center (NERSC), a division of Lawrence Berkeley National Laboratory, has allotted 2.5 million node hours on its Cori supercomputer and dedicated resources to support COVID-19 research, such as exploring how protein spike binding hijacks cells, creating novel treatments and developing bioavailable approaches with artificial intelligence.
- With funding from the CARES Act, Lawrence Livermore National Laboratory and its partners installed Mammoth, a new high-performance computing cluster that contains memory and data storage capabilities optimized for data-intensive COVID-19 research and pandemic response.

If you have any questions about this update or other issues, please contact Chris Harrington with UC’s Office of Federal Governmental Relations.