

May 28 Town Hall follow-up FAQs

BUDGET

Will the budget deficits affect our benefits?

No. There is not an impact on benefit coverage and retirement formulas don't change. Note that federal legislation has opened up options for employees to access retirement savings accounts if needed during this crisis.

Why is UC making the salary gap between staff and academics wider by allowing merit increases to move forward only for academics?

Both non-represented staff and academics have been impacted by the salary freeze. There will be no merit for non-represented staff and the academic salary scales will freeze, meaning no across the board increases will occur for academic employees. However, 65 ANR academics are seeking a merit or promotion. Those that are successful will move up the salary table, which will mean an increase for that subset of total academics.

Will represented staff be affected by the salary freeze?

Pay for union-represented staff is governed by existing contracts. UC is in discussions with union leaders about ways to work together to address the financial realities facing UC.

Will there still be a budget for professional training?

Yes. This is a high priority as we explore how to change our delivery mechanism during and after the pandemic. This is not an area that we'd target for significant cuts; however, if we have to come up with several million in cuts, all areas may be impacted.

What are the detailed plans to address budget cuts? What is slated to be cut and what are the strategic decisions that are being considered?

We are working through the details of multiple scenarios and will know more once the State budget is finalized. UCOP and the campuses are working to define a menu of options that will be available to campuses and UC ANR as we each address our budget realities. Our people and our programmatic delivery are our top priorities.

Can you clarify if staff personnel actions such as reclasses or equities will still continue in 2020-21?

Equity, reclassification and stipend actions all fall under the salary freeze program. This means that any requests for equity, reclassification or stipend will be by exception only. HR will follow up individually for current actions underway. For new requests, please contact humanresources@ucanr.edu to discuss how the salary freeze will impact the action.

RETURN TO WORK

Can a supervisor decide if the staff is able to work from home or this is decided by the Director?

It should be a conversation between the employee, the supervisor and the Director, considering the employee's situation and the department's business needs.

Are there posters about safety information available to ANR offices for display?

There are links to informational posters and summaries of ANR's safety standards at <http://ucanr.edu/resume/>.

Which ANR locations are resuming in person work?

Counties are moving at their own pace, with more plans coming in daily. At this time we have approved Stage 2 safety plans for 25 UCCE offices and 4 RECs. The other 5 RECs continue limited essential research activities and facility operations.

What is the return-to-work plan for the Davis office? What is the start date for the Stage 2 protocols?

Bart Sapeta and his team are working with individual unit leaders within the building to identify those employees who need to be in the building to do their work. More information to come by June 12, 2020.

How can I access the Davis building to take home a few things that will help me be more productive working from home?

If you need something urgently, please contact Rhett Woerly for temporary access and/or to schedule a time when someone with building access could meet you at the building.

What is ANR's plan for buildings that primarily house administrative staff like 2nd St in Davis? Companies are moving office workers into permanent work-from-home status. Is ANR's vision to return admin employees to the office? If returning to the office is the goal, is this at stage four and is there a proposed time estimate?

Eventually, we will return to our office workplaces, but that may well look different than it did previously. For Stage 2, we are asking that those who can work from home continue to do so. At this point, we do not have a timeline for moving into future stages of in-person activity. It is assumed that under Stage 4, we will return to a "new normal." However, there is no doubt that COVID-19 protocols have impacted our assumptions and expectations regarding the cost and benefits of remote vs. in-person activity and it is possible that our ways of working will change.

Should we buy surgical or N95 masks for returning to work?

N95 masks are reserved for medical or other specific purposes where a respirator is required. The recommendation for face coverings is a cloth or paper non-medical mask. See: <https://ucanr.edu/sites/safety/files/323362.pdf>

Studies have shown that air flow and building ventilation systems (how much outside air is taken in, etc.) can be even more significant in spreading the virus amongst people inside buildings than touching surfaces. What is ANR doing to assess the ventilation systems in our buildings?

One of the questions on the Location Safety Plan asks is if the building HVAC system has been modified to increase fresh air, or any other measures. This may not be possible at many locations, but we will make or request ventilation system modifications where it is feasible. We are also coordinating with a UC Systemwide Facilities Management work group to review and implement recommendations for managing ventilation systems. Contact [Bart Sapeta](#) or [Brian Oatman](#) if you have questions.

Will the Stage 2 protocols we are implementing continue into Stage 3 and 4?

Most will continue, but there may be some modifications. The state and county guidelines for stage 3 are still evolving. For the most part, stage 3 involves reopening higher-risk businesses or activities that were not allowed to open in stage 2. Since ANR's operations fell within stage 2, we have begun re-opening. We'll provide details for stage 3 and 4 as soon as possible.

Many of us have cross-county work responsibilities and cross-county commuting is not recommended by many, if not all, counties right now. Is there any protocol in place/advice/suggestions for this?

Follow local safety procedures and public health orders. If you have approval for ongoing research projects that requires traveling into a nearby county, you should already have a safety plan in place for that.

Should staff working in the community follow ANR's safety protocols regardless of where they go in the community? If a site doesn't have safety protocols in place, what do we do?

When employees are working and representing ANR they need to follow the protocols for ANR-related activities in the community. Protect yourself as much as possible, and if a site is unsafe, you should remove yourself. Ideally you can open a dialog with the host or partner at the community site to educate them on ANR's safety standards and measures they could take to improve the safety of the activity.

If we have research projects that were approved as critical, since a plan was submitted prior to that approval, is a safety plan required for staff doing that research in the field?

We expect that each location will transition from the approvals for critical research to a Stage 2 Location Safety Plan. Each location Director must submit a Stage 2 Location Safety Plan and those employees approved as "essential" under Stage 1 will need to be included on a new Stage 2 employee list and will be required to now complete an online daily Symptom Survey each morning by 8:00 a.m. If any additional employees will be coming in or work activities expanded under Stage 2, the Location's Safety Plan will need to reflect that Stage 2 protective measures are in place.

Does the 10 person limit at events apply to only the events that we/UC organize or are we not allowed to participate in any events with more than 10 participants? Can we attend meetings hosted by other organizations that have more than 10 people?

The 10 person limit applies to events hosted by ANR. While we cannot control outside events, we still expect our employees to ensure that they follow safety protocols - wear masks, keep social distance. If an event is not organized safely, do not attend. You also need to be aware of and follow any local county limitations on events or gatherings. Some counties are expressly prohibiting gatherings of any size.

What are the criteria for being able to hold gatherings with more than 10 people?

We are waiting for more information about larger group gatherings as the state starts to move into Phase 3. This will be determined based on state and county public health orders and guidelines. We don't know yet if there will be additional mitigation measures required, or if it will be based on local prevalence of the disease.

If I am exposed to someone with COVID-19, does that mean I have to wait 14 days to return to work?

If you are exposed to someone with a positive diagnosis, you need to self-quarantine for 14 days in accordance with health guidance. Contact your healthcare provider and/or public health department for additional guidance in this situation.

What about wearing eye covering to prevent aerosolized droplets from entering the eyes when in groups?

This personal protective equipment is not required in the UC ANR Stage 2 Safety Plan. This type of protection is needed in healthcare or other settings where exposure to aerosols is more likely.

Will we be forced to get tested in order to return to work?

That is not part of our plan at this time. UC is developing systemwide guidance for testing. For employees, that guidance currently focuses on testing for individuals who are displaying symptoms of COVID-19.

When we go to the office, will our temperatures be checked? Or is it best to check our own temperature at home? Would it be best to buy our own thermometer?

We will not be checking temperatures at the office, but will require each employee who is working in-person to complete an online daily symptom survey. Employees will be expected to take their temperature at home to answer the survey.

When returning to the office, if our temperature is above the acceptable level, are we required to go into quarantine?

People with symptoms are advised to consult their healthcare provider, which could involve quarantine or testing, depending on their symptoms, condition, etc.

Will every employee be required to do the Safety Training/Survey even if not scheduled to return yet?

No; only employees who have been designated by their location director as “approved for in-person activity under Stage 2” (this includes all “essential employees” under Stage 1), will need to complete the daily survey. Note that once an employee is “approved,” he/she will receive the survey every morning by 4:00 a.m. and must complete it daily regardless of whether he/she will be working on-site that day. If you are working at home, you will only need to answer the first question on the survey, to report that status.

Does the employee training need to be done by volunteers as well? Can you clarify volunteer training requirements that the program staff should be working with their Director on?

As part of the plans, we ask which program volunteers are being reinstated for an in-person activity. There is a requirement that all volunteers be made aware of UC ANR’s Stage 2 Safety standards, emphasizing the 5 basic protocols. They are not required to complete the Training Survey, but the Director must ensure that all volunteers returning to in-person activity have received our Safety Standards summary and know that they must abide by the protocols when engaged in UC ANR activities. Locations may choose to set up a survey or other means to have volunteers acknowledge that they have received this information.

Can staff working from home get reimbursed for at-home cost such as cell phone bills, utilities, equipment, ergonomics, etc.?

Business expense reimbursements are subject to systemwide policies and being reviewed for consideration.

MASTER GARDENER- AND 4-H-SPECIFIC QUESTIONS

How are Master Gardener programs still providing services? I have partnered in the past with their volunteers and at this moment I think their services are very rewarding for students.

Helplines are still active. Events and curriculum have been moved online. Follow your local county office on social media and/or contact them directly for more information.

I work with UCMG Volunteers. In Stage 2 is there a restriction on age limit for volunteers? We had been instructed that at-risk volunteers or people over 65 cannot be considered for “essential maintenance.”

No, there is no age limit restriction. However, you should communicate [CDC risk factors](#) for volunteers, which include age, underlying health conditions, etc. The Master Gardener Program has developed short summaries of safety requirements to guide resumption of certain Master Gardener activities, such as work at farmers markets or demonstration gardens.

Does the safety guidance apply to 4-H activities?

Yes; please supplement your location safety plan with measures to keep 4-H activities safe and compliant with these standards.

If we have 4-H members or volunteers who attend an externally hosted event (i.e. fair), are they able to do so as members of the program and will they be covered by our program insurance?

If a volunteer or employee is representing themselves as a member of our program, they will be expected to follow all UC ANR safety standards. If they are acting outside of ANR's safety standards, then we may not be able to provide insurance coverage if an incident occurs.

Is a location safety plan required for each 4-H project leader site?

No, but your county's plan must include/list any planned in-person 4-H activities in general and you need to communicate ANR's safety standards with project leaders, adult volunteers, and youth members.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS – various topics

Will permanent staff impacted by limited on-site operations be redeployed into current vacancies?

UC ANR implemented the Recruitment and Redeployment program when we launched our telecommute and limited onsite operations status. If there are people who are not able to do their full duties, they can they be redeployed to fill vacancies. The HR recruiting team will work with employees and their supervisors to implement this process wherever feasible. Should an employee or supervisor have questions about the program, please contact humanresources@ucanr.edu.

Is there a hub of COVID-19 information for county offices?

The information hub for UC ANR COVID-19 resources is found at: <http://ucanr.edu/covid19>. There is detailed information about planning and resuming in-person activity at: <http://ucanr.edu/resume>. For information about your local offices, please contact your Director.

Some of us were unable to fulfill our participation in meetings with clientele that were scheduled in the spring. I am concerned about the impact of that in our annual report if we cannot find the opportunity to give those talks later in the year. Comments?

Counties recognize that we haven't been able to do the face-to-face meetings or events that we have in the past. However, it will serve us well to focus on impacts our work has had during this year in particular and even previously. In terms of merit and promotion, we recognize that in some cases people may not be able to do some items in their plan.

The UC Davis campus is facilitating collaborations across disciplines for COVID-19 funding opportunities. Are there plans for ANR to do that?

As we learn of COVID-19 funding opportunities, Vanity Campbell posts them on the Grants office website. If opportunities arise that appear well suited for UC ANR, we ask Vanity to reach out to individuals who might be a good fit for the program. If there are specific opportunities that someone

would like to see ANR respond to, please feel free to reach out to Vanity Campbell, Glenda Humiston, or Wendy Powers.

Given the systemic inequities highlighted as a result of the pandemic, what is leadership doing to approach responses to COVID-19 (and future decisions) with an equity lens ? There are major concerns regarding who bears the burden of salary freezes; implicit privileging of academics over staff; emphasis on virtual and online engagement when many clientele and audiences do not have access to reliable internet; promoting the easy way of serving audiences as opposed to identifying ways to serve the audiences we do not yet reach and need to support.

Leadership is actively exploring how to create more opportunities for diverse voices to inform program delivery and organizational priorities. More information to come.

How can we expedite ANR's online learning capacity and use of platforms? There are both HR specific skills and infrastructure - hardware and software - needs that when filled can really launch us.

Great question - these are all elements that are needed in our evolving virtual presence. In terms of skills, the Learning and Development site (with associated webinars) can provide skill building. We must identify what skills everyone should have versus what skills could perhaps sit with a smaller group that provides support. In terms of platforms, we are looking at other successful systems to help identify and develop the central platforms we need for collation and greater engagement with our content as well as other needed elements like HR and fundraising information/processes.

What is the link to the recorded Town Hall?

Recordings and PowerPoints for these meetings are posted at https://ucanr.edu/sites/anrstaff/All_Hands/

Where is the annual report housed?

<https://ucanr.edu/about>