Dear Colleagues,

SVP David Kimball’s message to the Rutgers research community (please, see the attached) gives me an opportunity to wholeheartedly thank all Rutgers-Newark research staff, graduate students, postdoctoral associates and faculty for the conscientious response to the crisis and excellent compliance with the guidelines regarding the suspension of non-critical laboratory research and the total suspension of in person human subject research. Your collective response has been nothing short of exemplary.

As SVP Kimball’s team embarks on planning the complex and stepwise process of restarting our research enterprise, I must expand and stress a few important points:

- Until the first steps of recovery are possible, the suspension of all non COVID-19 and non-critical laboratory research must be strictly enforced. The overall outstanding compliance and responsible stance by the overwhelming majority of our colleagues should not be seen as an opportunity for a handful of groups to continue laboratory or field work albeit at a reduced pace. If these practices continue, the group’s building access will be revoked.

- The vulnerability and mounting stress of graduate students must not be underestimated. Under no circumstances should a graduate student feel pressured by the advisor to continue either laboratory or field work in the current environment. Students have been advised to report any such instances to the Dean of the Graduate School or the SVC for Research.

- It is the responsibility of the PI to provide adequate professional grade PPE to every person who has volunteered to carry out critical and essential tasks (animal care, cryogen handling, etc). If such equipment is not available to the group, the respective Chair should be asked for assistance.

- Those carrying out the limited critical and essential tasks permitted by the guidelines must rigorously observe all safety and cleaning procedures in respect for the wellbeing and safety of others. Shortages of relevant supplies should be reported to the respective Chair. Specific cleaning instructions should be developed as needed and communicated to the facilities via the Chair.

The Chancellor’s Office fully recognizes the extremely difficult decisions and sacrifices which had to be made in order to reach this level of safety and compliance. We are acutely aware of the depth of the impact on ongoing projects, thesis research and professional development of graduate students, postdoctoral associates and faculty, especially those at the pivotal stages of their careers. We are committed to facilitate a safe and thoughtful recovery of research operations and to mitigate these negative impacts to the best of our ability.

Sincerely

Piotr Piotrowiak, Professor of Chemistry
Senior Vice Chancellor for Research and Collaborations