

Dear Colleagues,

Vanderbilt University (VU) will be welcoming undergraduates to campus soon. Vanderbilt University Medical Center (VUMC) will continue to provide an attractive environment for VU undergraduates to perform research as part of their educational experience. To assure safety, regulatory compliance, and an optimal experience for students, faculty, and VUMC staff and patients, both VU undergraduates and the faculty who mentor them should be aware of the following updated guidance and terms.

For undergraduates seeking to conduct research with VUMC-employed faculty mentors, the undergraduate is welcome to reach out directly to potential faculty mentors, and together the faculty mentor and undergraduate will plan the research activities they will undertake. In a new process this year, these plans must first be reviewed and approved by the appropriate supervisory entity in VU, before they can be implemented. Like all research activities that are subject to phased research ramp-up review and approval, the submission, review, and approval of research plans involving undergraduates will be managed through a VU intake form completed by the faculty mentor via REDCap. For more information about submitting research plans or the research ramp-up review and approval process, please consult the [Resources for 4-Phase Research Ramp-up](#) on the [VU Research website](#).

After initial VU approval, and in coordination with Medical Center Relations (MCR), additional requirements specific to undergraduates and their VUMC-employed faculty mentors must be fulfilled before approved research plans can be implemented. MCR is the central VUMC point for **all** VU undergraduate students seeking a research experience at VUMC

(<https://www.vumc.org/medicalcenterrelations/>). To engage in research at VUMC, whether paid, unpaid, or for credit, participants and VUMC mentors must meet all requirements including:

- Approval from the designated VU central office for the research experience
- A succinct description of the specific research project that includes the location, educational objectives, goals for the experience, faculty mentor, and start and stop dates
- Completion of a VUMC pre-appointment background screen
- Clearance from VUMC Occupational Health Clinic
- Having and maintaining health insurance for the stated dates of the research experience
- Participant-signed VUMC Confidentiality Agreement, Emergency Contact, Release Form, Potential Hazard Summary
- Completed Statement of Agreement (participant, mentor, and department chair)
- Completed Faculty Responsibility Agreement
- Completion of the CITI Responsible Conduct of Research (RCR) module (<https://www.citiprogram.org/>) and VUMC Compliance Training (the VUMC Learning Exchange). Additional training may be required to work in the designated research area (<https://www.vumc.org/safety/>).

The MCR process above is initiated by designated administrative personnel in the department of the VUMC PI's primary appointment. Research experiences may not begin until all requirements have been met, and the VUMC department receives the appointment or approval letter from MCR. To initiate the process, please contact vumc.iso@vumc.org.

Until further notice:

- a. undergraduate students will not be granted access to clinical systems containing protected health information (i.e., eStar); and,
- b. non-VU undergraduate research interns and observers are not permitted on campus or to participate in remote research experiences.

The Vanderbilt University Medical Center Office of Research, Medical Center Relations, the Office of the Vice Provost for Research at Vanderbilt University, and the Ad Hoc Research Ramp-up Group are working closely and coordinating to advance the safe conduct of research by undergraduate students during the Covid-19 pandemic.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact ovpr@vanderbilt.edu or vumc.iso@vumc.org.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Pietenpol, PhD
Executive Vice President for Research

Julie Hudson, MD
Vice President for Medical Center Relations