



October 11, 2016

Dear Research Community:

The Association of Public and Land-Grant Universities (APLU) Task Force on Laboratory Safety recently sent a letter to all APLU institution Presidents and Vice Presidents of Research calling on them to renew their commitment to a strong culture of safety and to convene campus leadership teams that will develop a campus-wide safety agenda.

We are proud to highlight the actions our University has already taken to strengthen the safety culture in research. In 2014, we communicated our expectations for conducting safe research; we administered a Research Safety Survey to better understand the current safety practices, perceptions, and attitudes within our research community, and to identify our strengths and areas for improvement; and we formed two new committees, the Laboratory Operations and Safety Committee (LOSC) and the Research Support Oversight Committee (ROSC), to address and advise senior leadership on the management of research-related safety risks and the support needed.

Safety remains a core value of our institution, and it is an integral part of the responsible conduct of research. We are committed to the ongoing process of fostering a positive safety culture. In light of the APLU recommendation to consider risks beyond the traditional research lab, we are expanding the expectations for conducting safe research to include all field research sites, instructional labs, art studios, performance art spaces, and machine shops. It is our expectation that all faculty, students, and staff working in these areas will:

1. **Demonstrate a Commitment to Safety** – Lead by example. Foster an environment where all students and staff are encouraged and empowered to voice safety questions and concerns.
2. **Assess and Plan for Hazards and Risks** – Take the time to systematically assess risks and plan for the hazards identified.
3. **Implement Controls** – Take action to control your risks. Establish and enforce safety rules.
4. **Complete Safety Training** – Ensure that all researchers, students, and staff have the knowledge and the skill to safely perform their activities.
5. **Strive for Continuous Improvement** – Managing safety requires ongoing reassessment, feedback, and reinforcement. Encourage reporting of near-misses and incidents, and use these as an opportunity to learn rather than to blame.

Going forward, the LOSC will develop an action plan based upon the recommendations outlined in the APLU's supporting document, *A Guide to Implementing a Safety Culture in our Universities*, and the results of our Research Safety Survey. We ask that you take the time to review this information available at the Office of Research Safety's [Safety Culture Website](#), and we invite you to engage in the conversation of strengthening the safety culture in our research

areas by sending feedback and comments to [labsafety@umd.edu](mailto:labsafety@umd.edu). We encourage you to take advantage of the tools and assistance offered by the Department of Environmental Safety, Sustainability and Risk. Please do not hesitate to contact them if you need assistance or have any safety related concerns.

Sincerely,



Mary Ann Rankin  
Senior Vice President and Provost



Amitabh Varshney  
Interim Vice President and Chief Research Officer



Carlo Colella  
Vice President for Administration and Finance