Dear Members of the HMS, HSDM and Harvard Chan School Research Communities:

Given the COVID-19 pandemic, our shared goal is clear: we must lower the risk of infection within our community by promoting social distancing and aggressively limiting the number and size of community gatherings to minimize the spread of disease, particularly to those who are most vulnerable.

Therefore, it is imperative that we eliminate or at least significantly reduce the number of physical interactions among our graduate students, postdocs, faculty and staff. We request your help in developing a rapid ramp-down strategy for the majority of our research activities to enable remote work to the maximum extent possible. We are taking this action in close coordination with other Harvard schools.

Each PI will be responsible for coordinating a strategy to ramp down laboratory research activities by Wednesday, March 18, with the expectation that this period of low productivity will likely last at least six to eight weeks. We will revisit this timeframe periodically as more information on the trajectory of disease transmission becomes available, and we will update you if this estimate changes.

To implement our goal, we are mandating that all group meetings, courses and scientific convocations be conducted virtually, per the University’s guidance. To minimize community interactions, we ask each lab to identify, in consultation with the department chair, no more than two or three key individuals to manage animal husbandry and essential experiments—those that if discontinued would generate significant financial and data loss. Please be prepared to implement your plans as soon as possible, or by Wednesday, March 18, at the latest.

We understand your research is critically important. During this period we urge you to devote your time to productive alternatives, such as writing grant proposals, reviewing articles, writing thesis chapters, conducting analyses, compiling data and/or synthesizing important research. This is a good opportunity to reflect and to work on books and research papers. Research group leaders are asked to identify specific contributions that individuals in their groups can make while working remotely.

We are facing a potentially catastrophic crisis for our health care system. This is our chance to act decisively, rise to the occasion and protect our community. The time to act is now, and your partnership and commitment to the greater good are essential.

Sincerely,

Dean George Q. Daley, Executive Dean Lisa M. Muto and the Preclinical Department Chairs
Harvard Medical School

Interim Dean Vicki Rosen