



# Research Space Guidelines

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VIRGINIA COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY SCHOOL OF MEDICINE

## Purpose

The VCU School of Medicine's Research Space Guidelines serve to document the criteria that guide the School's Dean in the distribution of research space among departments within the School of Medicine (SOM). The Dean is also guided by advice from the School's Research Space Advisory Committee (RSAC) composed of faculty members from both basic and clinical sciences departments appointed by the Dean. With input from RSAC, these guidelines will be reviewed and revised periodically to ensure that research space is utilized effectively and in accordance with changing goals, priorities and funding levels.

## Guiding Principles

- Assignment of space to medical school departments is made by the Dean who serves as final arbiter for space assignments within the SOM.
- Assignment and utilization of both research and non-research space within a department is the responsibility of the department chair. The Dean will intervene where space assignments within a department are inconsistent with these *Guidelines*.
- Assignment of research space to multi-disciplinary projects is made by the Dean in collaboration with respective department chairs. Multidisciplinary space occupied by a faculty member will be included in the room inventory of the department in which the faculty member holds his/her primary appointment.
- Research space assignments are not permanent. Space is assigned to departments, not owned by the occupants.
- Research space utilization will be evaluated based on criteria outlined in these *Guidelines*. The Dean will periodically meet with department chairs to review space utilization. Research space deemed "underutilized" may be reassigned by the Dean.
- Extramurally funded sponsored research will be given highest priority for assignment of research laboratory and research-related space.
- Non-university leased space, excluding patient care space, will be included in the department's room inventory.
- Unassigned research space will be recorded in the Dean's Office room inventory until assigned.
- Common space shared only within a department will be recorded in the department's room inventory and not ascribed to an individual faculty member;

common-use space shared among departments will be prorated among the user departments on a time-use basis. Shared resource facilities (see Terms and Definitions) are assigned to the Dean's Office.

## Research Space Utilization

The Office of the Dean will evaluate research space utilization at least annually. Department chairs are responsible for timely reporting of changes to their departmental room inventories. Members of RSAC, accompanied by a knowledgeable faculty or staff member designated by the department chair, will conduct on-site visits to verify the accuracy of departmental room inventories.

Research award dollars per square foot of research and research-related space will be used as the primary criterion for evaluating research space utilization. Departments will be evaluated on effective use of research space in comparison to the School's median research award dollars per square foot. If a department's aggregate dollars per square foot of wet and/or dry research space is more than 20% below the School's median wet/dry research dollars per square foot (excluding newly funded or newly recruited investigators and new research programs), the department will be considered "underutilized."

### Calculation of \$ per square foot

- Each research award assigned to the SOM in the InfoEd database is categorized as either "wet" or "dry" based on the nature of the research project and the requirement for rooms with specialized plumbing, utilities and equipment. Non-SOM research awards involving SOM faculty as co-investigators are also categorized as either wet or dry awards. Training grants are categorized as wet awards.



- Research awards are attributed to SOM departments based on the primary academic/contractual appointment of the principal investigator. An adjustment is made to prorate awards between departments where a co-investigator's primary/home department differs from that of the principal investigator.
- The ratio of wet to dry award dollars (direct costs plus facilities & administrative/indirect costs) is calculated for each SOM department/unit.
- Assignable square feet recorded in each department's room inventory is divided into "wet" space and "dry" space as follows:
  - ❖ Non-class labs and lab service rooms are categorized as "wet" research space.
  - ❖ 50% of office space is categorized as "academic" (non-research) space.
  - ❖ 50% of office space is categorized as wet or dry research space based on the ratio of wet to dry research awards.
- The mean and median \$ per square foot of wet lab and dry lab research space are calculated for the SOM and for each department/unit within the SOM.
  - ❖ Dollars per square foot of wet lab research space is calculated using the sum of wet research dollars (total costs) and the sum of wet research square feet

- ❖ Dollars per square foot of dry lab space is calculated using the sum of dry research awards (total costs) and the sum of dry research square feet.

**Example:** An investigator is assigned a 200 sq ft non-class laboratory and a 100 sq ft office. Her research in cell biology is supported by an NCI grant totaling \$100,000 for the current budget period. She also has an award from the Susan Komen Breast Cancer Foundation (\$25,000 per year) to support analysis of patient records. Her 200 sq ft lab is considered “wet” space. Half of her office space (50 sq ft) is considered non-research/academic space. Her NCI grant is classified as a “wet” award; the Susan Komen grant is classified as a “dry” award. Based on the ratio of wet to dry awards, 20% of the remaining 50 sq ft of office space (10 sq ft) is considered “dry” research space; 80% of the non-academic office space (40 sq ft) is considered “wet” research space. Total wet awards (\$100k) divided by total wet space (240 sq ft) yields \$417 dollars per sq ft of wet research space; total dry awards (\$25k) divided by dry research space (10 sq ft) yields \$2500 per sq ft of dry research space.



## Reassignment of Underutilized Space

A department defined as having underutilized research space will ordinarily be given one year to obtain additional research awards before space is reassigned; however, the Dean may take immediate action to reassign space that is demonstrably and chronically underutilized.

Department chairs should give priority to investigators who are funded 30% above the SOM median dollars per square foot and/or newly funded investigators and new recruits. Reassignment of underutilized research space assigned to individual investigators will ordinarily occur according to the following schedule:

- Investigators occupying research space who are not actively engaged in research (less than 4 hrs/wk with no or minimal funding) will be given 12 months from the time funding is lost to attempt to gain funding. If no attempt is made to gain funding within 12 months, the investigator’s research space may revert to the chair for re-assignment or to the Dean if the department’s average is below 80% of the SOM median and there are no other demonstrated needs. A 12-month extension is granted for investigators actively seeking funding.
- Investigators occupying research space in which the calculated research award dollars per square foot is more than 30% below either the SOM median wet dollars per square foot and/or dry dollars per square foot and the investigator’s research awards generate no indirect costs to VCU will be allowed 24 months to obtain funds that provide indirect costs; should he/she be successful to any degree, an extension of 12 months will be granted. In the absence of a grant submission, space will be reassigned at the end of the first 12 months.
- Investigators occupying research space in which the calculated research award dollars per square foot is more than 50% below the SOM median wet dollars per square foot and/or SOM median dry dollars per square foot but the research award sponsor(s) provides a substantial percent for indirect costs will be allowed three years to reach within 50% of the SOM median dollars per

square foot. Should there be no attempts within the first 12 months to obtain additional research award dollars, the grace period will be shortened from three years to one. Support from federal program projects or other large multidisciplinary research awards will be favorably taken into account.

## Requests and Approvals

- Individual faculty must submit requests for additional space through their department chair.
- Department chairs will make every effort to reassign space within the department to accommodate space needs before making a written request to the Dean for additional space.
- Requests for intra-departmental reassignment of research space will be made by department chairs to the Dean and will be evaluated based upon the *Guidelines*.
- Recommendations for changes in space assignments within an interdisciplinary/multi-disciplinary research group will be made by the group leader to the Dean after consultation with chairs of departments whose faculty will be affected; requests to the Dean must be co-signed by or include letters of endorsement from involved chairs.
- Written requests to the Dean must include:
  - ❖ Number of square feet and type of space requested
  - ❖ Specific room numbers to be released in exchange for additional space
  - ❖ Names of individual faculty and staff affected by the request
  - ❖ Detailed justification for the request
- Approval of requests for permission to recruit new faculty does not imply a guarantee of additional space assigned to the department. A written request for additional space should be submitted to the Dean in addition to requests for permission to recruit.
- On receipt of a written request from a department chair/interdisciplinary group leader, the Dean will conduct an assessment which may include review by RSAC.

Requests for additions or changes to non-research space shall follow the same guidelines described for research space requests.

## Appeals

Department chairs may submit a written appeal to the Dean within two weeks of the Dean's decision if he/she can provide additional justification for the requested action. In considering the appeal, the Dean may consult RSAC members. In the event of an unfavorable decision by the Dean, department chairs may appeal to the Vice President for Health Sciences.

Space assignments to individual faculty are the responsibility of the department chairs. Faculty members who believe the space allocated to them is inconsistent with departmental space assignment criteria and/or inadequate for the conduct of activities consistent with School objectives, may seek review by written request to the Dean.

## Terms & Definitions

**Dry Awards** – Research awards that do not require rooms with specialized plumbing, utilities, and laboratory equipment; such awards are often limited to computational research/analysis of patient records.

**Dry Lab Space** – For the purpose of these guidelines, the proportion of office space associated with dry awards (i.e., 50% of office space multiplied by dry research awards as a percentage of total research awards).

**InfoEd database** – Sponsored programs proposals and awards database maintained by the VCU Office of Sponsored Programs Administration.

**Research Awards** – Separately budgeted grants and contracts awarded for the specific purpose of accomplishing the stated research objectives outlined in a research proposal. Extramural awards are processed by the VCU Office of Sponsored Programs Administration. Intramural research awards are separately budgeted and specifically designated for University research. Research awards may support wet lab research, dry lab research, or research training.

**Research Space** – Wet and dry laboratories, clinical research space, common areas housing equipment and core services, and research office space used primarily for the purpose of conducting basic or clinical research.

**Research Support Space** – Research offices and laboratory service rooms that directly support research activities including common-use rooms used to house equipment (e.g., tissue culture rooms) for multiple investigators.

**Shared Resource Space** - Research space housing specialized service facilities including shared resource facilities (i.e., "core" laboratories) organized to provide specialized services to the research community. Shared resource facilities are usually designated as such by the University.

**Wet Lab Awards** – Research awards that require non-class labs equipped with specialized plumbing, utilities and laboratory equipment for basic research such as the analysis of biological materials.

**Wet Lab Space** – For the purpose of these Guidelines, all non-class labs and research lab service rooms are considered "wet" lab space.