

School of Medicine Wet Lab Space guidelines

Deans Office

May 2024

Research space is an essential asset for the CWRU School of Medicine (SOM) and its research community. In general, space is a fixed asset and only around the edges can we consider renovations, expansion of space, or leased space off-campus. For these reasons, a coordinated assessment and management plan is essential for the well-being of the SOM.

It is noteworthy that SOM provides space for researchers belonging to clinical departments at University Hospitals under institutional affiliation agreements, and under agreements approved by the NIH for the Cancer Center and CTSA. Unassigned space is also used by variety of trainees, including those in middle and high school, in medical school, and in residency and clinical fellowships across our four hospital affiliates. SOM provides shared resources and other expertise to the entire SOM community. Finally, SOM provides space for other work that benefits the school through federal, private foundations, and corporate sponsored research contracts. Shared meeting spaces, such as conference rooms and classrooms, will continue to be reviewed and upgraded. Needs and requests for renovation of teaching labs will also be scheduled and aligned with university teaching efforts.

In this context, equity of space allocation is critical. Moreover, space equity is a shifting target that experiences rapid changes that reflects the needs of individuals and departments, as well as shared resource facilities. Thus, it is not in the best interest of SOM to pursue and/or grant long-range promises that result in either empty space or the acquisition of unavailable space. Instead, SOM has developed a long-range plan that focuses on flexibility and real-time adjustments to accommodate the needs and coordinated efforts of SOM departments. Moreover, in compliance with the expectations of CWRU leadership to pursue space equity utilization across schools, greater emphasis will be placed on colocalization of programmatic and interdisciplinary research units across departments and between schools.

As individuals are hired, net alterations in FTE abundance need to be accommodated in a flexible and agile plan that readily accounts for periodic expansion or contraction (± 2 FTEs) of assigned investigator space. Since the fluidity of FTE adjustments is continuous, an inventory that updates and depicts the data and metrics used to advise departments on any needed redistribution of space should be provided to the Dean on an annual basis. Even in closed research lab spaces, such as parts of Wood, accommodations to allow expansion and contraction of assignments is necessary to increase space equity, including space sharing within closed research spaces. Equipment management (new acquisition, location, reduction/removal of unused, etc.), while critical to research, should also be proactively managed to prioritize optimal space for FTE work. Recognizing this current challenge, SOM has instigated an equipment oversight and location review in 2024.

Based on these overarching principles, SOM has developed a research space allocation framework (the “Framework”) that will emphasize the following:

1. The Framework is devised to assign space allocation in an equitable manner that reflects funded FTEs, which are defined as:

- a) PhD graduate students
- b) postdoctoral associates
- c) research assistants/technicians
- d) research associates
- e) research faculty

The quantity of FTE individuals will undergo annual assessment updates that link laboratory personnel to PI funding. The Framework will be provided to and validated by the individual faculty member, reviewed by department administrators, and provided to Chair and Dean’s office. Given the variety of funding sources available (IDC generating, start-up packages, endowments, gifts, UH sources, industry, etc.), IDC is no longer considered to be a reliable guide and metric for space determinations. Moving forward, the FTE model will provide an equitable starting point for all space assignments by Chairs across SOM departments.

2. Within the Framework, each FTE is assigned 1 desk and 1 research bench. Space for benchtop equipment, alcoves, specialized rooms (warm, cold, TC, etc.), storage spaces, and shared research space will be managed by the Dept Chair and reviewed by SOM.

3. Basic departments and the Cancer Center that function in integrating research, training, and education will maintain their current space assignments, with the Chair being responsible for space utilization according to the Framework and reviewed by SOM.

4. Clinical departments, together with units working under special use agreements for contracts, commercialization efforts, and funding supported activities will also have space assignments that align with the Framework and administered by the Dean’s office for management and allocation.

5. When new space allocations are required to accommodate new faculty and FTEs, or when a department elects to cluster faculty into larger research units or groups, the department will manage these space assignments within their domain by applying the equitable Framework guidelines.

6. When additional space is needed that lies beyond the confines of that assigned to a department, the Chair will submit a formal request to the Dean’s office that demonstrates Framework data used to justify the need. Specific options available to SOM under these circumstances are limited but could involve adjusting the space of other departments and units

(clinical departments), as well as pursuing the use of interdisciplinary space (future Robbins 3 renovation), space in CSE, CAS or ISEB. If necessary, SOM will consider space rentals and HEC for dry lab & education efforts.

7. Admin IDC return will be to the department even when a faculty member is placed outside the confines of departmental space. However, space IDC will continue to be allocated to SOM, which does not collect a space tax and covers all SOM space cost deficits.

8. SOM will pursue the formation of cross-departmental, interdisciplinary teams of high performing research clusters aligned with the SOM strategic plan and departmental hiring efforts. Cluster Directors (or Co-Directors) will be identified, and the research group will synergize around this leadership. All Cluster members will retain departmental faculty appointments and oversight, including grants management, space allocation (within the Framework), grant credit and assignments, and IDC benefits. All interdisciplinary clusters will be assessed according to the metrics used in evaluating SOM Centers, including periodic review and consideration of expansion, contraction, or closure through the Dean's office (Vice Dean Research and the Committee on Biomedical Research).