

To: Deans, officers, senior administrators, and faculty, staff, graduate students, and postdocs in BSD, PSD, IME, and Department of Psychology  
From: Robert J. Zimmer, President, and Eric Isaacs, Provost  
Re: Office of Research Safety  
Date: April 9, 2014

The University of Chicago is one of the world's premier research universities due primarily to the outstanding faculty, students, and staff who engage in research and make fundamental discoveries. To properly support this exceptional research, we must in turn foster a culture that instills a serious focus on the health and well-being of all University personnel engaged in research activities. After several months of deliberation with deans and senior administrators, the University will now create a new Office of Research Safety to reinforce our institutional commitment to safeguarding our researchers and their programs. The new office will be situated within the Office of the Vice President for Research and for National Laboratories and will provide a research safety framework, subject matter expertise, and management of and training for research safety support activities for University personnel.

It must be noted that the new office will not conflict with or dilute the responsibility for laboratory safety that ultimately resides with principal investigators and their relevant deans and department heads. Research divisions will deploy laboratory safety specialists to act as the single point of contact for their assigned departments, principal investigators, and research teams on research safety issues, and collaborate and coordinate with the Office of Research Safety, the Animal Resources Center, and the University Environmental Health and Safety Office as needed. The Office of Research Safety will in turn develop the tools, systems, and specialized training necessary for research faculty and their safety specialists to manage their research safety programs more responsibly and effectively. The Office of Research Safety will also develop University-wide research safety standards, policies, and procedures under the oversight of a new Research Safety Policy Council, which will be chaired by the provost and composed of deans and other University leaders.

The first step in creating the Office of Research Safety will be to hire an Associate Vice President for Research Safety to lead the office. Donald Levy, Vice President for Research and for National Laboratories, will lead this search, and the successful candidate will in turn be asked to structure and staff the new office in collaboration with the divisions, the University Environmental Health and Safety Office, and, as appropriate, with Argonne National Laboratory, Fermi National Accelerator Laboratory, and the Marine Biological Laboratory. This search will get underway immediately.

We would welcome any comments and suggestions you may have in ensuring the new office is successful in meeting the needs and interests of our research community.