



**Memorandum**

May 13, 2021

To: Deans and Research Deans; College/Institute Safety Committees

From: Andrew Weyrich, PhD, Vice President for Research  
Keith Squires, Interim Chief Safety Officer

Subject: Empowering College/Institute Safety Committees

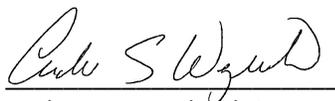
Safety Committees were required to be established in all campus colleges and institutes in January 2021. The directive to form these committees came from the Vice President for Research in response to a commitment made to the State of Utah following a 2019 audit of laboratory safety. The Office of Environmental Health and Safety (EHS) currently provides the primary support to these committees.

Although the committees were originally established by the VPR with a focus on research laboratories, campus “safety” crosses boundaries between academics, research, hospital/clinics, and facility operations both on and off campus, and impacts students, faculty, staff, and our surrounding community – it therefore requires a collaborative, holistic approach to be effective. The purpose of this joint memo from the VPR and the Office of the Chief Safety Officer is to direct colleges and institutes to empower their safety committees to be the local advocates of safety in all its forms to support an overall *culture of safety* across the University.

Active and empowered local safety committees are a way for the University to move from a **reactive** safety posture to a **proactive** one. As an organization, we need to transition from responding and reacting to past incidents, to focusing on anticipating and preventing future ones. Working safely, *being safe*, is not a “thing” to be accomplished or a box to be checked – it’s a process, a way of thinking, a culture. It is our expectation that the local college safety committees will be the primary “boots on the ground” in this endeavor, helping translate words and policies into actions and behaviors at the college and institute level.

To further this goal, EHS will be joined by several campus partners in actively supporting the safety committees. University Public Safety, composed of Police, Security, and Emergency Management, as well as UHealth Emergency Management, will routinely participate in the quarterly meetings of the safety committee chairs and provide guidance, resources, coordination, and training focused on creating and nurturing an overall culture of safety. On the college/institute side, the composition and scope of the safety committees should consider and reflect the wide range of safety concerns and diversity of stakeholders.

We welcome your feedback and invite you to contact us directly with ideas for improvement. Working together is the only way we will make real and lasting changes to the safety culture across the University.

  
Andrew Weyrich, PhD  
Vice President for Research

  
Keith Squires  
Interim Chief Safety Officer