

June 17, 2025

Mary Croughan

Provost and Executive Vice Chancellor

RE: START Committee on Optimizing Our Facilities Recommendation: Laboratory Swing Space

Dear Mary,

The START Committee on Optimizing Our Facilities Recommendation: Laboratory Swing Space was forwarded to all standing committees of the Davis Division of the Academic Senate. Nine committees responded: Faculty Welfare (FWC), Planning and Budget (CPB), Research (COR), and the Faculty Executive Committees of the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences (CAES), the College of Biological Sciences (CBS), the College of Engineering (COE), the College of Letters and Science (L&S), the School of Medicine (SOM), and the School of Veterinary Medicine (SVM).

Committees appreciate the recommendation to establish laboratory swing space. CAES, COE, and SOM note that benefits include less interruptions in research, reductions in delays during transitions, and the opportunity for departments to better understand the time and cost associated with potential lab renovations. However, CAES, SOM, and L&S express concern that this recommendation does not address core issues the campus faces with laboratory space. Additionally, CPB, SOM, CAES, and COR express concern regarding the logistics of establishing and maintaining swing space, while SOM and COR highlight a few other concerns regarding the proposal. COE, L&S, SOM, and CPB also provide a number of recommendations for the START Committee to consider.

CAES, SOM, and L&S note that the establishment of laboratory swing space does not address the core issues that the campus faces with laboratory space, including lengthy renovation times, which SOM points out may take six months or longer for minor adjustments, high construction costs, and burdensome logistics. CAES and L&S thus emphasize that swing space should not be used as a long-term substitute for laboratory space for faculty. CAES adds that without strong incentives and accountability for timely renovations, the proposal could delay proper integration of faculty into departments, which L&S emphasizes is a necessity. L&S encourages the placement of faculty offices with their departments regardless of where their swing lab may be.

CPB, SOM, CAES, and COR express concern regarding the logistics of the proposal. CPB and SOM note that the proposed swing space will likely be time-consuming, potentially expensive, and suboptimal for specialized research. CAES highlights that managing and allocating swing space would require careful planning to avoid unintended consequences such as space hoarding or underutilization, while COR notes that consideration of how to prevent certain spaces from becoming permanently associated with any one department is necessary. COR adds that it may be costly to move research equipment around campus and wonders how the proposed swing space would align with safety audits. CAES expresses concern regarding potential departmental resistance to shared use and the need for frequent upgrades to swing space.

SOM and COR raise additional concerns regarding a few other aspects of the proposal. SOM highlights that the proposal does not address efficiency, adding that there is a Space Committee within the Office of Research looking at space, design, and set-up of laboratory spaces. SOM suggests that the

START Committee on Optimizing Our Facilities may benefit from consultation with this Space Committee. COR notes that asking candidates in advance about their research needs may give the impression that those needs will influence the decision making process. COR adds that if months-long delays between a candidate's acceptance of an offer and the completion of final paperwork are widespread, it is essential to shorten that gap.

COE, L&S, SOM, and CPB provide several recommendations for consideration. COE suggests that DCM should have support from central campus to provide estimates to encourage departments to make use of this service and feels that swing space should be coordinated and controlled at the local rather than campus level. COE notes that it is likely that "any attempt to organize swing space centrally will result in a system that is slow, costly, and inefficient." L&S emphasizes the need for a space audit across campus to ensure that space is fairly distributed, while SOM recommends identifying potential swing space and evaluating its condition across both campuses. SOM adds that it is unclear whether establishing one pool of swing space across all Colleges and Schools would be more efficient and better manageable than establishing swing space within an individual College or School.

CPB notes that they are unable to endorse the proposal in its present form, highlighting that there are more cost-effective options such as interdepartmental coordination options and sharing spaces between new and established faculty whose research utilizes similar equipment and methods. CPB suggests that Schools and departments could develop and access a database that could be used to support temporary lab access for new hires. CPB adds that, for most disciplines, identifying mechanisms for shortening renovation time would be more cost-effective than equipping and staffing swing spaces. Lastly, CPB notes that it is unreasonable to limit access to temporary lab space to two years under special circumstances in which long renovation times are unavoidable; this could lead to unnecessary bureaucratic issues for new faculty.

The Davis Division appreciates the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,



Katheryn Niles Russ, Ph.D.
 Chair, Davis Division of the Academic Senate
 Professor of Economics
 University of California, Davis

Enclosed: Davis Division Committee Responses

c: Edwin M. Arevalo, Executive Director, Davis Division of the Academic Senate

April 2, 2025

Kadee Russ

Chair, Davis Division of the Academic Senate

RE: Request for Consultation on the START Committee on Optimizing Our Facilities
Recommendation: Laboratory Swing Space

Dear Kadee:

The Committee on Research (COR) has reviewed the START Committee on Optimizing Our Facilities Recommendation: Laboratory Swing Space. The committee notes the following:

This is a great idea; however, it may be costly to move research equipment around campus. How would this align with safety audits? We also need to consider how to prevent certain spaces from becoming permanently associated with any one department.

One member notes that it's not uncommon for candidates to keep a low profile if they are considering leaving another institution, but perhaps sharing this information with DCM doesn't breach confidentiality. More importantly, asking candidates in advance about their needs could give the impression that those needs will influence the decision-making process.

Another member notes that in their most recent search, there was a significant delay (several months) between the candidate's acceptance of the offer and the completion of the final paperwork. If this delay is a common issue, it seems essential to address and shorten that gap.

Sincerely,



David M. Roche

Chair, Committee on Research

February 27, 2025

Katheryn Russ

Chair, Davis Division of the Academic Senate

RE: RFC – START Committee on Optimizing Our Facilities Recommendation: Laboratory Swing Space

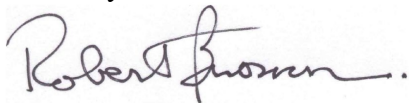
The Committee on Planning and Budget (CPB) has reviewed the **RFC – START Committee on Optimizing Our Facilities Recommendation: Laboratory Swing Space**. The CPB feels that the proposal for “swing spaces” may be more useful for certain disciplines than others and that a more cost-efficient approach would be to consider sharing space between new and established faculty whose research utilizes similar equipment and methods. Schools and departments could develop and access a database of research spaces/equipment/uses and underutilized spaces that could be used to support temporary lab access needs for new hires. Setting up a new lab space to conduct specialized research, with specialized equipment/supplies/containment areas and a dedicated lab manager can be very time-consuming as well as potentially expensive, and the CPB believes that, for most disciplines, identifying mechanisms to shorten laboratory renovation time and to facilitate procurement processes for key equipment would generally offer a more cost-effective solution than equipping and staffing “swing” facilities.

For special circumstances in which complex and long renovation times are unavoidable, it is unreasonable to limit access to temporary lab space to two years. Time limits for access to shared or temporary space could be problematic and lead to unnecessary bureaucratic issues for new faculty when construction/renovation times are prolonged.

Given potentially substantial costs and unclear utility of dedicated “swing space” to the broad majority of STEM/medical disciplines, coupled with less expensive shared space and interdepartmental coordination options and the severe budgetary pressures affecting the UC Davis campus at this time, the CPB is unable to endorse this proposal in its present form.

CPB appreciates the opportunity to comment.

Sincerely,



Robert Brosnan

Chair, Committee on Planning and Budget

April 14, 2025

Katheryn Russ

Chair, Davis Division of the Academic Senate

RE: Request for Consultation – START Committee on Optimizing Our Facilities Recommendation:
Laboratory Swing Space

Dear Chair Russ:

The Committee on Faculty Welfare has reviewed the RFC – START Committee on Optimizing Our Facilities Recommendation: Laboratory Swing Space. The committee did not see a substantial impact on faculty welfare.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Janet Foley', written in a cursive style.

Janet Foley

Chair, Committee on Faculty Welfare



Faculty Executive Committee

Faculty of the College of Agricultural and Environmental Sciences
Academic Staff of the Division of Agriculture and Natural Resources
Office of the Dean and Director of Programs

April 18, 2025

Re: START Committee on Optimizing Our Facilities Recommendation: Laboratory Swing Space

Dear Chair Russ,

Our CA&ES FEC appreciates the opportunity to comment on the recommendation from the Sustaining Teaching and Research Task Force (START) Committee on Optimizing Our Facilities regarding laboratory swing space, which would allow new faculty to continue existing investigations and launch new work with fewer interruptions.

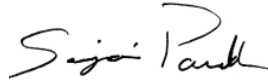
Providing temporary "swing space" for new faculty was met with cautious interest and significant concern regarding feasibility, effectiveness, and long-term impact.

Our FEC views the idea as a way to reduce delays and support faculty during transitions. However, this solution does not address substantial challenges—such as lengthy renovation timelines, high construction costs, and burdensome logistics. There is concern that the administrative and logistical burden often falls heavily on faculty, particularly principal investigators, rather than being managed by departments or central administration. It is unclear how this recommendation addresses this core issue.

There is also concern that swing space risks becoming a long-term, inadequate substitute for permanent solutions. Without strong incentives and accountability for timely renovations, this could delay the proper integration of faculty into their departments and perpetuate inefficiencies. Additionally, managing and allocating shared swing space would require careful planning to avoid unintended consequences, including space hoarding or underutilization. Concerns about departmental resistance to shared use and the need for frequent upgrades to the swing space further complicate the proposal.

While the idea has merit, it should not replace efforts to streamline and invest in the core renovation process. More detailed planning and campus-wide coordination would be needed for successful implementation.

Sincerely,



Sanjai J. Parikh
Chair, CA&ES FEC Committee
Department of Land, Air and Water Resources

CC:

Neil McRoberts (Vice Chair), Plant Pathology
Nitin Nitin (Secretary), Food Science and
Technology / Biological and Agricultural
Engineering
Catherine Brinkley, Human Ecology
Xiaoli Dong, Environmental Science and Policy
Kris Godfrey, CA&ES Dean's Office
Rachael Goodhue, Agricultural and Resource
Economics
Dan Kliebenstein, Plant Sciences

Bruce Linquist, Plant Sciences
Dragan Milenkovic, Nutrition
Luz Robles, Undergraduate student
Alison Van Eenennaam, Animal Science
Kira Waldman, Graduate student
Luxin Wang, Food Science and Technology
Rachel Wang, Graduate student representative
Helene Dillard, CA&ES Dean
Sue Ebeler, CA&ES Associate Dea
Brenda Nakamoto, FEC Administrative Assistant

START Committee on Optimizing Our Facilities Recommendation: Laboratory Swing Space

FEC: College of Biological Sciences Committee Response

April 18, 2025

The CBS FEC has reviewed the RFC, START Committee on Optimizing Our Facilities Recommendation: Laboratory Swing Space, and during discussions, members highlighted the push of Aggie Square even in a recommendation such as this, and how this seems to be another way to justify Aggie Square when it has cost so much and has so little utility.

Anonymized Comments from the faculty:

Availability of swing space while new faculty await renovations of their own lab spaces seems like a reasonable plan, though the devil will be in the details about identifying and modifying existing spaces to achieve that aim.

I'll note that I'm surprised and a bit concerned about the strong emphasis on Aggie Square space, which is not going to be a feasible solution for faculty on the Davis campus.

It also seems reasonable to improve communication between academic administrators and DCM to expedite the renovation process, though it does not seem like this includes solid plans for that.

April 17, 2025

To: Katheryn Russ
Chair, Davis Division of the Academic Senate

From: Michael Kleeman
Chair, College of Engineering FEC

RE: Comment on START Recommendation for Laboratory Swing Space

Dear Chair Russ:

The College of Engineering FEC has reviewed the START recommendation for management of laboratory swing space to help streamline the renovation of lab space for incoming faculty and to make better use of idle lab space. We agree with the first recommendation to consult with DCM early in the recruitment process so that Departments better understand the time and cost associated with potential lab renovations. We would suggest that DCM should have support from central campus to provide these estimates to encourage Departments to make use of this service.

We agree in principle with the second recommendation to create a pool of swing space that could be used for short time periods to provide lab space while renovations are underway, but we feel that this swing space should be coordinated and controlled at the local level rather than at the campus level. Deans of the Academic Units are best equipped to manage the space in their units. It is likely that any attempt to organize swing space centrally will result in a system that is slow, costly, and inefficient.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the START recommendation for management of laboratory swing space.

Sincerely,



Michael Kleeman

Chair, COE FEC

START Committee on Optimizing Our Facilities Recommendation: Laboratory Swing Space

FEC: College of Letters and Science Committee Response

April 18, 2025

The L&S FEC has reviewed the RFC START Committee on Optimizing Our Facilities Recommendation: Laboratory Swing Space. The committee would like to comment that this should not be used as a long-term substitute for laboratory space for faculty. New faculty need to integrate into their departments. Faculty offices should be with the rest of the department, regardless of where their swing lab may be. The committee also believes there is a need for a space audit across campus to ensure that space is fairly distributed.

START Committee on Optimizing Our Facilities Recommendation: Laboratory Swing Space

FEC: School of Medicine Committee Response

April 18, 2025

The SOM FEC reviewed this RFC on April 9. The comments included:

1. Within the SOM, there is a Space Committee within the Office of Research; they are looking at space, design, and set-up of lab spaces.
2. A major hurdle with space is the amount of time it takes for minor adjustments to space to be completed - they average 6 months or longer.
3. The proposal does not address efficiency; the Space Committee should be consulted as the work they are doing may be of benefit to this RFC originator.
4. There are benefits of creating “swing space” pool, including less interruptions in the research operations of new faculty whose permanent space is not ready yet and the opportunity for DCM to better plan to meet research space needs
5. The challenges include the flexible nature of the “swing” space (supposed to be as generic as possible to not require major changes between short-term occupants), which will likely be suboptimal for several specializations.
6. A careful revision of existing space pool would be needed across two campuses not only to identify potential swing space, but also to evaluate its current condition.
7. It is unclear whether establishing one pool of swing space across all colleges/schools would be more efficient and better manageable than establishing a swing space within individual college/school.

START Committee on Optimizing Our Facilities Recommendation: Laboratory Swing Space

FEC: School of Veterinary Medicine Committee Response

April 18, 2025

The SVM EC has reviewed the document and has no comments.