

UNIVERSITY OF WYOMING
University of Wyoming Biocontainment Facility
Staffing Progress Report

December 1, 2019

To the Joint Appropriations Committee and the Joint Agriculture, State and Public Lands
and Water Resources Interim Committee

[Pursuant to HEA 51, 2019 Session laws, Chapter 80, Section 2, Section 067, FN 8]

During the 2019 Legislative Session, the Wyoming Legislature passed the supplemental budget bill, Enrolled Act 51, House, adding the following footnote to the University of Wyoming's appropriation.

Footnote 8:

Of this general fund appropriation, two hundred fifty thousand dollars (\$250,000.00) shall only be authorized for transfer to the University of Wyoming if a director of the biosafety level three (3) laboratory is hired and the laboratory is at least ninety percent (90%) staffed by March 30, 2020. Not later than June 1, 2019, the University of Wyoming shall submit a report to the joint appropriations committee and joint agriculture, state and public lands and water resources interim committee on the optimal staffing levels for the laboratory and a timeline for achieving the optimal staffing levels. Not later than December 1 2019, the University of Wyoming shall submit a report to the joint appropriations committee and joint agriculture, state and public lands and water resources interim committee of the university's plan to fully staff the laboratory.

The BSL3 laboratory has recently been named the University of Wyoming Biocontainment facility (UWBF) and will be abbreviated as such below. This name was chosen to emphasize that this is a university wide resource for the study of infectious diseases caused by select agents.

In August 2019, a new leadership structure in the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources, Department of Veterinary Science was implemented by splitting the current management role into two positions – one individual to manage the Department and UWBF, and a second to lead the Wyoming State Veterinary Diagnostic Laboratory (WSVL). The mission of the WSVL is to provide accurate and timely veterinary diagnostic testing, animal disease research, and education to veterinarians, students and the people of Wyoming. Dr. William Laegreid, formerly Head of the Department of Veterinary Sciences, is now leading the WSVL. Splitting the position has already resulted in improved services to stakeholders across the state by allowing Dr. Laegreid to focus solely on the operation and management of the WSVL.

As of September 1, 2019, Dr. Jonathan Fox is serving as Director of UWBF and interim head of the department. The UWBF is a facility specifically designed and constructed for the study of microbes (select agents) that may cause serious or potentially lethal disease in animals, humans, or plants, through airborne spread. Because of this danger, a specially designed lab is necessary for working with these microbes. This lab is critically important for Wyoming due to diseases in wildlife and domestic animals present in the state such as plague, tularemia, and brucellosis.

Use of UWBF requires approval by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC). This is a two-step process. First, the building needs to be commissioned by an agent experienced in the functioning of this type of facility. The final commissioning was received by the commissioning agent, Merrick & Company, as of November 25, 2019. The next step is submission of paper work to the CDC to demonstrate preparedness and to request an onsite evaluation.

When this second step has been completed successfully the University will then be able to use the UWBF for select agent research. Dr. Fox is in charge of moving the CDC accreditation process forward.

Recognizing the significant workload for staff and faculty in the Department of Veterinary Sciences, the Wyoming State Legislature and University of Wyoming President requested a review of the staffing levels for the UWBF and a timeline to achieve optimal staffing. To establish baseline staffing, the College of Agriculture and Natural Resources (College) requested information from comparable labs through the American Biological Safety Association (ABSA). Fourteen institutions responded, and results are summarized on the next page (Table 1 - a table replicated from the June 1, 2019 report prepared by Interim Dean Mark Stayton). Current staffing at the UW Biocontainment Facility is shown in the middle column with proposed additional staffing in the fourth column. The 14 responding institutions reported a range in total BSL3 staffing from 6- 38 individuals with a median of 14. Job titles and job descriptions vary significantly among institutions, so strict comparisons are difficult. However, these data provide a reasonable basis for estimating comparable staffing.

Based on this data, the College estimated that 100% staffing of the UWBF should consist of 9 staff members of whom 5 are already employed at UW. Three of the positions required to achieve 100% staffing, including the UWBF Scientific Director, are budgeted in the FY20 budget, two in the College's regular FY 20 budget, and the third position as an exception request to the University of Wyoming Board of Trustees added within the University's FY20 budget (Table 2- also from the June 1, 2019 report). The fourth position was requested by the College to be considered within the exception request to the state legislature for additional block grant funds (Table 2).

| Table 1 Comparison of Biocontainment Safety Laboratory* Level 3 Staffing (FTE) | | | | |
|---|------------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------------------|---|
| Personnel | Median of BSL3 Comparables* | Current UW BSL3 | Additional UW Requested | Overall total for 100% staffing at UW BSL3 |
| Principal Investigators | 3.5 | 0 | 2 | 2 |
| Responsible Officer | 1.0 | 1 | Madeline Dalrymple | 1 |
| Alternate Responsible Officer | 1.0 | 1 | Jonathan Fox | 1 |
| Administrative | 0 | 0 | 1 | 1 |
| Lab Manager | 0 | 1 | Denise Merrill | 1 |
| Maintenance/Engineers | 0.3 | 2 | UW Facilities Engineering staff | 2 |
| Janitorial | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| Security | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| Safety | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| IT | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| Lab Technicians | 1.5 | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Occupational Health | 0 | 0 | 0 | |
| TOTAL Personnel | 14.0 | 6 | 3 | 9 |

*14 facilities responded to our request for data. Use of the median seemed more representative than the mean. e.g. In the “Lab Technicians” category, five facilities employed between 8 and 21 professionals, but the other 9 facilities employed between 0 and 3 for a mean of 5.5 and a median of 1.5.

| Table 2. Budgeting the Four Additional UW Requested UWBF Salary Lines | | | |
|--|--------------------|--------------------------|--------------------|
| | FY20 Budget | FY20 UW Budget Exception | FY 21 Budget |
| Personnel | 90% BSL-3 Staffing | | 100% BSL3 Staffing |
| Principal Investigators | 1 | 0 | 1 |
| Administrative | 1 | 0 | |
| Lab Technicians | 0.33 | 0.67 | |
| TOTAL Salary Lines | 2.33 | 0.67 | 1 |

The College of Agriculture and Natural Resources has initiated the search process for the permanent Scientific Director for the UWBF. The search committee is in place and the search process is underway. This faculty member will oversee all select agent research within the UWBF, conduct research, and teach in the Veterinary Science program within the College. An appropriate candidate should be identified by March 2020. If the

individual is from the government or private sector s/he may be on site fulltime by March 30. If the individual is from a university, due to their spring semester commitments, a summer 2020 start date is more likely.

The College is meeting the staffing requirements by hiring an accountant (search complete and offer pending), laboratory technician (search underway), these two positions, with the Scientific Director, described above, will bring staffing to the 90% level.