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**A Call to Action: APLU Task Force on Laboratory Safety   
Releases Report & Guidelines Urging All Universities   
to Renew Commitment to Research Safety**

*Washington, DC –* Seeking to provide a roadmap for university-wide efforts to renew and strengthen a culture of research safety, the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities’ (APLU) Task Force on Laboratory Safety today released its [*Guide to Implementing a Safety Culture in Our Universities*](http://www.aplu.org/library/safety-culture/file). The task force also released a companion website, [www.aplu.org/researchsafety](http://www.aplu.org/researchsafety) intended to make the guide more accessible and allow for the continued sharing of best practices and other information to improve safety at research universities nationwide.

Designed for university presidents and chancellors who have pledged to commit their university to a renewed culture of research safety, the guide and website include 20 recommendations, each with an analysis of the alignment of the recommendation with other foundational reports, reading lists, tools, strategies, illustrative examples, and/or best practices drawn from a community of stakeholders. These resources were selected to help an appointed campus team navigate the process of strengthening their culture of safety.

“This is an unprecedented opportunity to align a distinct national need with the core purpose of great research universities,” said Taylor Eighmy, vice chancellor for research and engagement at the University of Tennessee, who served as co-chair of the APLU task force. “A culture of lab safety is integral to the discovery enterprise and all that is embodied in that process. I hope that each institution embraces this opportunity for positive change."

Mark R. McLellan, vice president for research & dean of the school of graduate studies at Utah State University and APLU task force co-chair added, “The key here is that this task force report will cause change to the campus culture that will inherently create a safer teaching, research and employment environment. And if done well on the campus level, these changes will be embraced broadly across our faculty, staff and students.”

In breaking the guidelines and website into 20 recommendations, the task force sought to provide a foundational resource that can be used by institutions regardless of the current practices they have in place to ensure research safety. Specifically, the guidelines seek to help research universities: 1) understand practical steps in implementing a ‘culture of safety’ in their laboratories; 2) document their commitment to laboratory safety excellence in order to benchmark against leading practice; 3) document their compliance with national, state, and institutional laboratory policies; 4) showcase their dedication to preventing and managing injury of individuals performing laboratory activities; and 5) limit the liability of college and university leadership by meeting established standards of excellence, including implementing mechanisms to document an institution’s commitment to developing and preserving a culture of safety and compliance.

“This terrific report could not come at a better time,” said Holden Thorp, provost at Washington University in St. Louis and chair of the National Academies committee that in 2014 wrote Safe Science: Promoting a Culture of Safety in Academic Chemical Research. “There is a strong movement building to make laboratory safety and safety culture a prominent part of the leadership agenda of every college and university executive and an indispensable part of science education and practice. The 20 recommendations of the report are all right on target.”

The report notes that instituting a strengthened culture of research safety starts with the vocal commitment and leadership of a university president; relies on faculty, students, and staff engaged in the discovery enterprise to adopt safer practices; and requires a campus-wide willingness to implement policies and practices that support a culture of safety.

The task force, which APLU created in coordination with the Association of American Universities (AAU), American Chemical Society (ACS), and Council on Governmental Relations (COGR), is comprised of senior research officers, environmental and health safety experts, and representatives from industry and national labs. In writing the guide, the task force actively reached out across the university and science communities to hear perspectives on strengthening the laboratory safety culture from over 20 organizations and 25 institutions.

“APLU is committed to collecting resources and best practices that can help our campuses move to a safer culture,” said Kacy Redd, staff lead for lab safety at APLU. “The companion website is intended to be a growing resource for implementing a culture of safety. We welcome additions to the toolbox.”

Recent and ongoing efforts by the U.S. Chemical Safety and Hazard Board, the American Chemical Society, and the National Academies reflect both concern and focus on the absence of a lab safety culture in universities and colleges. The necessity for institutions to keep their faculty, staff, students, and visitors safe during teaching and research activities is critical for their growth, success, and long-term sustainability. Significant events in recent years, including the death of a laboratory research assistant and a lab explosion that severely injured a graduate student has raised awareness and highlights the need for a national solution.

Those interested in contributing to the task force’s growing list of resources that support a culture of safety in teaching laboratories; shops, studios, and stages; teaching classrooms; and the field, can make suggestions [here.](https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/CNT9SM3)

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*The Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) is a research, policy, and advocacy organization dedicated to strengthening and advancing the work of public universities in the U.S., Canada, and Mexico. With a membership of 235 public research universities, land-grant institutions, state university systems, and affiliated organizations, APLU’s agenda is built on three pillars of increasing degree completion and academic success, advancing scientific research, and expanding engagement. Annually, APLU member campuses enroll 4.7 million undergraduates and 1.2 million graduate students, award 1.2 million degrees, employ 1.4 million faculty and staff, and conduct $42.7 billion in university-based research.*