Lessons Learned from the CoVAC Initiative Mini-Grant Program – Year 2
July 2022

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The CoVAC Initiative is a project of the American College Health Association, funded by a cooperative agreement with the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

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Acknowledgements
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Additional gratitude to:

- Staff of the American College Health Association
- Members of the CoVAC Initiative Advisory Committee
- Members of the CoVAC Initiative Campus Engagement Working Group
- Grantee colleges and universities and their students
Introduction
The American College Health Association Campus COVID-19 Vaccine (CoVAC) Initiative, as described above, is funded by a U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) cooperative agreement award, CDC-RFA-CK20-2003 in operation from September 2021 – September 2022 (Year 2). ACHA program staff included:

- Robyn Buchsbaum, director, Strategic Initiatives
- Claudia Trevor-Wright, project director
- Heather Zesiger, deputy project director
- Sara Couppas, campus engagement manager
- Aisha Ali, special projects coordinator

CoVAC Initiative Mini Grant Program
The CoVAC Initiative Year 2 strategies included the Mini-Grant Program, which was active from December 2021 when applications opened until June 2022. Application processes were purposefully uncomplicated to encourage a wide variety of institutions of higher education (IHEs) to apply. The $3000 mini-grants were intended to increase COVID-19 vaccine confidence on campuses using various peer-to-peer marketing and communication strategies, including implementing the Student Ambassador Program Toolkit and Campus Vaccine Confidence Toolkit.

As in Year 1, applicants were asked about their proposed programs, communications strategies, how their program activities would further their health equity goals on campus, how students would be involved, the Pandemic Vulnerability Index score for their community, and more. The CoVAC Initiative’s Campus Engagement Working Group members reviewed the applications and where appropriate, provided feedback to applicants. Fifty-eight IHEs applied and 55 ultimately received mini-grants, including Asian-American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions, Community Colleges, Faith-Based Institutions, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Minority-Serving Institutions, and Women’s Colleges. Awardees were spread across 28 States (including the District of Columbia, from California to Connecticut. (See Appendix A)

In addition to funding, mini grant recipients were offered a variety of support services. Monthly meetings offered professional training on social media strategies, guest speakers, and opportunities for brainstorming with ACHA and their fellow grantees. ACHA staff shared resources, provided guidance, answered questions, and encouraged discussion among grantees during these meetings as well as on an email listserv. ACHA staff regularly used this listserv to share professional development opportunities, updated guidance from ACHA and the CDC, and new resources. ACHA staff also regularly provided 1-1 support to grantees on a variety of topics, from grant administration to strategic reallocation of grant funds.

This report summarizes the grantees’ final reports (due in May – June 2022) as well as the thoughts and reflections of ACHA program staff responsible for supporting the Awardees throughout the grant period. Please note this report references
information and outcomes that are not solely the result of CoVAC Initiative Mini-Grant Program related activities. Grantee institutions deployed a variety of COVID-19 mitigation strategies during the grant period, therefore the results described below are not directly attributable to the CoVAC Initiative Mini-Grant.

Highlights

Wide variations persist in campus COVID-19 policies, mitigation strategies, and outcomes. Each IHE is in a truly unique position, with different resources and restraints to manage. That said, grantees reported common challenges and successes.

- **Student engagement is critical to building, or rebuilding, the trust needed to increase vaccine confidence and compliance with mitigation strategies on campus.** Grantees who partnered with trusted leaders to advance productive COVID-19 conversations on campus reported good results, though some also experienced hostility and opposition.

- **COVID-19 presented college health professionals with a unique opportunity to work collaboratively with other campus stakeholders** – and the positive impact of such partnerships will extend beyond the pandemic. These gains may not be fully realized if burnout continues to drive college health professionals out of the field.

- **Grantees focused deeply on communications,** messaging broadly to the entire campus and reaching out to populations with specific concerns. Several reported tension between the need for consistency across departments and having others gatekeeping communications.

- **Communication channels and style evolved.** Some campuses reported in person engagement was strong, while others found digital spaces to be more effective. The tone of COVID-19 outreach has evolved. Community care and altruism remain common strategies, however, many felt comfortable integrating humor and levity.

- **Flexibility is still needed.** Although perhaps not to the degree seen in fall 2021, grantees continued to experience significant disruptions in institutional operations, and challenges with procurement and hiring. Updates in public health recommendations in response to variants and local conditions also required grantees to continually adapt their strategies.

- **Some grantees approached their program activities with a nuanced understanding of health equity,** while others continue to conflate equality and equity in a way that fails to address the disparate impacts of the pandemic on marginalized communities.

- **82% of grantees reported their vaccination efforts are better off than they were before the grant program**
Grantee Characteristics

Located in 28 states, the 55 Year 2 mini-grant institutions included a variety of institution types, including:

1 See Appendix A for more details on grantee institutions.
Grantee COVID-19 Policies & Efforts

Grantees were asked to describe the public health strategies and policies in place at the time of their final reports (May-June 2022), as well as what they expected for fall 2022. Most grantees offered COVID-19 vaccination on campus, whether through their own health services or community/commercial pharmacy partner, and most tracked COVID-19 student vaccination status. Requirements for vaccinations and masks varied, and we expect that variation will persist for the 2022-23 academic year.

Does your IHE require students to be vaccinated for COVID-19? (allowing only medical and/or religious exemptions)

- Yes, all students: 14
- Yes, but option to test instead: 7
- Yes, for students in high-risk settings: 6
- Yes, with philosophical exemption: 1
- Yes, with other exemption: 1

Will your IHE require students to be vaccinated for COVID-19 in fall 2022?

- Yes: 16
- No: 30
- Unsure: 6
- Yes w/ Philosophical Exemption: 1
Does your IHE track student COVID-19 vaccination status?
(N=53)

- Yes: 37
- No: 9
  - Voluntary Reporting Only: 4
  - Only Some Students: 1
  - Unknown: 1
  - Inconsistently: 1

Does your IHE have an indoor mask requirement?
(N=54)

- No, but it could return if conditions change: 25
- Yes, continuing: 9
- No, formerly did but unlikely to return: 8
- Yes, ending soon: 7
- No, never did: 1
- Faculty choice in classrooms: 1
- Yes, in clinical spaces only: 1
- Only for unvaccinated/unboosted: 1
Grantee Goals
Year 2 Grantees overwhelmingly reported focusing on increasing effective communication - getting credible information out to students, staff, and faculty where they are, from messengers they trust. Campuses tapped the tried and true digital or physical communication platforms (e.g., email, digital screens, bathroom stalls) as well as new and creative spaces (lawn signs, a COVID Dashboard website or electronic health record):
Smaller numbers of grantees used podcasts, campus radio, door flyers, and door-to-door canvassing to engage students. Other grantee goals related to:

- Increasing vaccine uptake (primary and booster doses) and increasing vaccine confidence
- Increasing voluntary testing or decreasing mandatory testing (as an alternative to required vaccination)
- Better understanding their campus’ needs through data collection
- Minimizing disruption to learning and student mental health caused by COVID-19
- Expanding student ambassador/peer health education programs.

Grantee Audience
All grantees reported focusing on student audiences in their programming efforts, and most also reached faculty and staff. Fewer reported including non-campus community members in their outreach. Most grantees focused on residential students, while fewer than half focused on commuter students. Several grantees reported focusing on subpopulations with lower vaccine uptake rates (e.g. athletes, underinsured/uninsured people) as reflected in their campus-specific data.
Grantee Activities

Grantees used mini-grant funds to achieve their stated goals in creative ways. Nearly all grantees used some funding for incentives to meet a specific goal (e.g., getting...
vaccinated, reporting vaccination status, engaging with an educational activity). The kinds of incentives varied widely. Some grantees saw immediate and overwhelming demand for visibility items (t-shirts, hats, water bottles, stickers, etc.), while others offered less visible services sought after by students (parking passes, YMCA memberships, tickets to sports events, etc.).

**Use of Grant Funds**

(N=55, check all)

- **Incentives**: 52
- **Compensation**: 35
- **Awareness/Promotion**: 33
- **Contest/Competition**: 4
- **Events**: 2
- **Training/Curricula**: 1
- **Vending Machine**: 1

Year 1, most grantees reported working with peer ambassadors in some way. Some reported challenges in hiring staff or peer ambassadors, however, many reported highly impactful activities and engagement by those hired with grant funds. Ambassadors wearing campaign branded t-shirts walked around campus engaging others in conversation, went door-to-door, tabled in high traffic areas,
demonstrated public health strategies on social media, talked in classes, attended large campus-wide events, and more.

Grantees also used funds to market and advertise COVID-19 mitigation services and policies. Several reported receiving feedback that signage was particularly helpful in reminding campus community members to get a booster vaccine this semester.

Grantee Impacts

Year 2 Grantees noted, similarly to Year 1 grantees, that the impact of their work had the potential to yield benefit far beyond the grant period and the campus community. Grantees who worked with peer ambassadors shared feedback they received from those students, describing how their experiences would positively shape their personal and professional lives. These students served as trustworthy and safe sources of information for their peers, being visible in spaces where staff and faculty may not be as effective. One grantee expressed surprise at how well student ambassadors were received despite the political climate in their state.

- Grantee efforts bolstered the credibility and visibility of college health professionals. Several grantees were formally recognized by their institutions for their efforts to combat COVID-19 on campus. One grantee’s student ambassador group received an award and met with their state’s governor and the U.S. Surgeon General.
- Grantees strengthened interdepartmental partnerships by collaborating with student groups, Dining Services, Athletics, Residence Life, and members of the faculty (especially those in health professions).
• Visibility items norming vaccination status continued to be popular, and as with Year 1, tabling/ personal outreach yielded productive conversations for many. Interpersonal communication was especially useful where grantees reported a sense that the campus had “moved on” from COVID-19.
• Increasing vaccine access continues to be critical – especially for staff and students who may have transportation or time constraints.
• Those who focused on social media communications reporting growing their following and engagement.
• Grantees who focused on data collection reported increased response rates and learning more about how best to reach their community.

Grantee Challenges
Year 2 grantees balanced a multitude of challenges in spring 2022, some at odds with each other. In addition to the common internal barriers reflected in the chart below, grantees managed external challenges posed by COVID-19 variants. The omicron surge hit campuses at the same time as audiences reported message saturation and pandemic fatigue. Post-spring break surges coincided with the rolling back of mask requirements. Some grantees reported a sense that vaccination had plateaued, and those who remained unvaccinated would be unlikely to get vaccinated regardless of grantees’ efforts. Others discussed the continued polarization and said anticipation of opposition actively frustrated mitigation efforts.

### Barriers to Program Implementation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barriers</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vendor/Partner Delays</td>
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<tr>
<td>Funding Delays</td>
<td>18</td>
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<tr>
<td>Capacity/Time</td>
<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Scheduling Challenges</td>
<td>17</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low Student Engagement</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opposition/Harassment</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff Turnover</td>
<td>6</td>
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<tr>
<td>Low Administrative Support</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications Gatekeeping</td>
<td>2</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Health Equity
Grantees were asked to review and incorporate the CoVAC Initiative Health Equity Statement into their projects. Responses varied widely within this cohort. As noted
above, many grantees are minority serving institutions whose primary purpose is to serve marginalized communities. Four grantees created materials in multiple languages based on the needs of their campus population. Several grantees focused on ensuring peer ambassadors were representative of the student population they serve. Some specifically mentioned providing vaccination services on campus to increase access for students or staff who had transportation or financial constraints, while others tailored efforts specifically to populations that were either underserved by the health care system or disproportionately impacted by the pandemic. That said, a significant proportion of the grantee responses mentioned that program activities were available to all campus community members equally. Health disparities and inequities exist at all IHEs, as they do in all communities in which they are located. We encourage college health and higher education professionals to pursue strategies that go beyond equal access to specifically serve health equity outcomes.

**Words of Wisdom from Grantees**
Grantees’ words of wisdom to their colleagues continuing to work on COVID-19 mitigation on campus include:

- **Keep going!** The work is good work, and there is still much work to do.
- **Be curious.** Understand what drives your community, and tailor your strategies to their needs.
- **Always partner meaningfully with students.**
- **Stay current** with the science and with what your peers are doing.
- **Plan ahead.** Expect disruptions and scheduling challenges.
- **Build a deep bench.** There are many potential partners on campus in this work, and the partnerships can extend to other areas.
- **Balance quantity and quality.** Sometimes the little wins yield big benefits.
- **Build a sustainable practice** for yourself. Make sure you are supported in supporting your campus.
- **Advocate for public health.** Your voices are needed to ensure people making decisions at the institutional and state levels have the information they need to make the best decisions.

**Insights for ACHA and the CoVAC Initiative**
Grantees reported feeling well supported by the ACHA staff throughout the grant period. The most helpful supports included:
Similar to feedback received from Year 1 grantees, this cohort suggested ACHA and the CDC could improve grantee experiences by:

- Expediting distribution of funds – delays were primarily caused by challenges within institutions rather than between ACHA and institutions, with some exceptions.
- Expanding the categories of permitted uses for grant funds (e.g., food, raffles, personal protective equipment, and gift cards).
- Extending the amount of time for grant activities; starting earlier and allowing no cost extensions.
- Providing more opportunities for sharing between recipients/cohorting.
- Requiring standardized data collection from recipients
- Centralizing giveaways
- Creating digital templates for vaccination efforts.

It was a privilege to support the institutions and the campus professionals administering these grants. The ACHA staff were both impressed and humbled by the dedication, creativity, and energy of the grantees. We thank them for their tremendous efforts to promote the health and well-being of their campus communities.
### Appendix A: Year 2 Mini Grant Awardee Institutions

Located in 28 states, the 55 mini-grant institutions include:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>Institutions</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alabama</td>
<td>Alabama A&amp;M University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arkansas</td>
<td>Arkansas Tech University</td>
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<tr>
<td>California</td>
<td>Ohlone College                  Porterville College   University of California, Berkeley  University of California, Riverside  University of San Francisco</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Connecticut</td>
<td>Southern Connecticut State University</td>
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<tr>
<td>District of Columbia</td>
<td>The University of the District of Columbia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Florida</td>
<td>Florida A &amp; M University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td>Kennesaw State University                  Wesleyan College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illinois</td>
<td>Benedictine University                  Illinois Valley Community College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indiana</td>
<td>Saint Mary-of-the-Woods College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kansas</td>
<td>Wichita State University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Louisiana</td>
<td>Grambling State University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maryland</td>
<td>Notre Dame of Maryland University   University of Maryland Eastern Shore</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>State</td>
<td>Institutions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Michigan</td>
<td>Madonna University</td>
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<td>Oakland University</td>
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<td>Minnesota</td>
<td>Minnesota State University, Mankato</td>
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<td>Missouri</td>
<td>Westminster College</td>
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<td>William Woods University</td>
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<td>New Jersey</td>
<td>Felician University</td>
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<td>New Mexico</td>
<td>The University of New Mexico</td>
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<td>New York</td>
<td>Le Moyne College</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Pratt Institute</td>
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<td>State University of New York at Albany</td>
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<td>State University of New York at Fredonia</td>
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<tr>
<td>North Carolina</td>
<td>Elizabeth City State University</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Davidson-Davie Community College</td>
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<td></td>
<td>North Carolina Central University</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Queens University of Charlotte</td>
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<td></td>
<td>University of North Carolina at Pembroke</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Wingate University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ohio</td>
<td>Mount St. Joseph University</td>
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<td>The University of Akron</td>
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<td>University of Toledo</td>
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<tr>
<td>Oklahoma</td>
<td>Southern Nazarene University</td>
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<td>Pennsylvania</td>
<td>Alvernia University</td>
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<td>Bloomsburg University of Pennsylvania</td>
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<td>Holy Family University</td>
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<td>Juniata College</td>
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<td>East Stroudsburg</td>
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<td>South Carolina</td>
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<td>University of South Carolina Upstate</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tennessee</td>
<td>Meharry Medical College School of Dentistry</td>
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<td>University of Tennessee at Chattanooga</td>
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<td>Texas</td>
<td>Tarleton State University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Virginia</td>
<td>Mary Baldwin University</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Shenandoah University</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Old Dominion University</td>
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<tr>
<td>West Virginia</td>
<td>Concord University</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wisconsin</td>
<td>University of Wisconsin Oshkosh</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Appendix B: Campaign Hashtags
(not including #Vaxforward):

- #keepourcampussafe
- #VAXforwardUNCP
- #DonsHelpingDons, #USFCAvaccinated
- #WCTEAMVAX
- #dolphinsdontletdolphinsswimalone
- #itpaystobevaccinated
- #StayWithThePack
- #keepourcampussafe, #doyourpart, #ipledgetokeepSUsafe
- #Boost-A-Lion, #Vax-A-Lion
- #VaxUp
- #doingmynpart
- #healthypratt
- #VaxThePack
- #VaxxthePack
- #vaccinesafetyadvocate
- # vaccinessaveslives
- #ErathEngaged
- #EveryDoseCounts
- #ReignResponsibly
- "Owls Strong"; "Vaxxed to the Maxed"
- #scsusstrong, #scsfightscovid, #endthepandemic, #healthycampus
  #staysafe, #gettested #getvaccintated
- #BUVaxForward
Appendix C: Select Grantees Insights

Communications
- “Word of mouth is best in some ways. We are a small campus with a family feel. Sometimes our population is distrustful of official communications. Letting students (peer educators) talk with each other and build trust is a positive way to get campus buy-in.”
- “Communication was really hard this semester because we are in a climate where Covid-19 was not seen as a pressing matter or still around; that the pandemic "is over" attitude.”
- “Many of our international students expressed thanks for the information that was specifically created for them to encourage them to get booster shots and to receive COVID shots.”
- “Social media was a win! We did really well with it. Tabling was much better than doing a large event. We wrestled with how many students were actually back on campus in person so instead of an event we just focused on smaller, more intimate interactions in targeted areas on campus.”
- “One of our student ambassadors shared her story with the local news.”

Health Equity
- “Our project addressed health equity by ensuring that our student population from primarily first generation and low-income, underserved households were intentionally reached. Our goal was to create a sense of community on our campus regarding COVID-19 education that would reach students’ respective communities. By taking this approach we were able to positively impact health outcomes.”
- “[Our peer ambassador program] is peer driven by an almost exclusively black group of students and evidence based. Peer educators offer unique credibility when interacting with their fellow students, and can assist administrators with getting credible feedback from the student population. The vast majority of students, faculty and staff are African-American at our HBCU. Black students and faculty were explicitly involved in every aspect of this intervention including the planning. This involvement of the target population was of the utmost importance in order for the program to be a success. There remains wide distrust of the medical community in Alabama from historical abuse from institutions such as the Tuskegee Study. This distrust is real and palpable and any intervention for African-Americans in Alabama must be inclusive.”
- “Our team felt that being able to keep as many students taking courses as we did was a success. We felt that considering our student population we would have lost a lot more students when the mandate was implemented but through our mitigation efforts we were able to keep them enrolled.”
Increasing Vaccination Access & Uptake

- “We underestimated the number of people who needed to be vaccinated. Before the event we were not thinking about contract staff but this provided a very convenient and easy space for folks who normally do not have easy access to vaccines.”
- “The Vaccination Block Party was well received by providing a party atmosphere surrounding a serious topic. This helps to build vaccination normalcy and acceptance—everyone wants to join in!”
- “Our last vaccine clinic we offered to the campus community, we had 13% of the vaccines given to athletes. Plus, 63% of the student-athletes surveyed, declared that they had been already vaccinated by the end of the Spring 2022. This is a major change from the low 40% that was reported in Mid Fall 2021.”
- “We also received many comments from faculty, staff and students about the convenience and that being a factor to get vaccinated/boosted.”

Partnership

- “The feedback received was very favorable for the [health fair] event. HR has even suggested that we partner to do the event again next year so that it is annual. More faculty & staff attended the event overall; however, out of the students that attended, they were mostly our dual enrollment students that needed the information to take home to their parents.”
- “We’ve been working hand in hand with our Student Affairs department..., who just created an initiative to tackle declining mental health due to the pandemic and help with mental fitness. Having a hands on team across campus who has helped us with this affair has been extremely helpful!”
- “We identified new strategies of connecting with students to provide education from Health Services through this process.”
- “We had great success building community through interactive activities and promotional items. Our Health Resources Fair invited 9 community partners to campus and engaged over 150 students! Also, one of our Wellness Ambassadors brought their therapy dog for some of duty, free pets which had us reaching a record engagement of 50 students for a single tabling event! We also had 12 students interested in joining the Wellness Ambassador program for this upcoming Fall 2022 semester!”
- “We were able to present our findings at our University Research Day. This was a win-win for all who were involved in the project.”
- “The best engagement from students was with incentives - not only in T-shirts but working with faculty for extra credit in participation of activities.”
- “Given the decentralized approach to addressing the COVID-19 pandemic upon campus return, there were many partnerships that needed greater development which impacted the effectiveness and completion of the stated goals. Overall, the student leaders were effective and provided great ideas to promote public health and COVID-19 policy adherence across campus.”
Engagement
Visibility Items

- “The colorful stress balls and pins/stickers with the logo "Vax For All That You Love" in English/Spanish/Arabic attracted more students to stop at our table and ask questions about the events. These incentives encouraged students to participate and learn about the facts and myths of Covid-19 and the vaccines.”
- “Students receiving the YMCA memberships was priceless. One student remembered me on campus because he got a membership and was just so happy to see me because of it. I was surprised how it has deepened my connection with students to even be affiliated with the Health Fair.”
- “Our give-aways were very well received. We gave away all of our t-shirts, and most of our sunglasses and stickers (approximately 75 of each item). The t-shirts were the most popular and according to our student ambassador, "everyone loved the design".”
- “[We are] a close community and the t-shirt design was influenced by a video the President made early in the pandemic; students loved this idea and we are STILL being asked if we will make anymore t-shirts!”
- “Being able to award parking permits to students for getting vaccinated was a something that has not been done before. It was well received by the campus.”
- “Survey was a large win - we had good participation and learned that a T-shirt give away was a significant incentive for students.”
- “We took student surveys-they really liked the idea of water bottles and baseball caps and so we created matching set and students who were vaccinated could come and get them-we were out of all that we ordered within a week; and students wore them around campus and everyone asked about where they got it and how they could get it and we had more students actively talking about vaccines which was exciting!”

Interpersonal Interaction

- “Through personal interactions with one student who self-disclosed they received their COVID-19 Booster solely due to our campaign interactions.”
- "We were hoping to more broadly get messaging out about covid vaccines, which we successfully accomplished through social media, tabling, fliers, emails, and formal events. We increased the rate of vaccination in a challenging political climate, all on a voluntary basis.”
- “Students enjoyed the fact vs myth questions about Covid-19. We added funny myths to get students to feel more comfortable talking about the Covid-19 vaccines...By adding a small dose of humor, students were more engaged and this attracted other students to stop at our table and see/hear what was going on.”
- “Students shared their enthusiasm in being together in person at the Wellness Fair, one of the first of these types of events this semester, especially after Omicron.”
- “While tabling at the COVID-19 testing site on campus, we had an individual come by the table to try and win a "Public Health Peer" Tote bag which he
wanted to use to ask another student out on a date. Our peers agreed that our swag are love magnets while getting the word out of our programs and services!”

Peer Ambassadors Recognition
- “[Our Peer Ambassador Group] was awarded the Lobo Lucy Award, which is awarded to student employees who have gone the extra mile in their efforts as they see the importance of their role and help their department run smoother. Due to this award, the...ambassadors were invited to meet with the governor and the U.S. Surgeon General.”
- “Our communications intern presented to the Centers of Disease Control and Prevention webinar highlighting our documentary: Why Not Get the Shot?”
- “Great experience for student ambassadors it energized them to better stewards of the community - University leadership impressed with student activities and pitched in more money for the cause.”
- “Our department won an award from the student body for Outstanding Programing and the COVID vaccine (events) was the main event mentioned. This is a huge win for us!”

Public Health Leadership Development
- “All of the student ambassadors involved are interested in pursuing public health services after graduation as a result of the program. Some wanted to specialize in emerging infectious diseases. One member from the audience said that they got vaccinated after seeing the myths/facts video and another member from the audience got vaccinated after seeing the COVID vaccine side effects video.”
- “A note from our student ambassador: "I am honored to be the VaxUp Ambassador and very proud at the same time that [our college] has such an excellent initiative to promote vaccine uptake of the college. At present, I am confident enough to proudly promote the vaccines wherever I go as I have learnt so much from this program.""
- “Students gained a lot of experience advocating for vaccine education and will carry their knowledge and experience on. We were able to reach others on campus in order to spread correct information. Our state is in the South and has lower than average vaccination rates and rampant spread of misinformation. We worked hard at the individual level to combat misinformation.”
- “Throughout our programming and events, we received a number of new students interested in joining the [peer ambassador] team and becoming an ambassador for the next academic school year!”
- “Students who attended the listening session shared many thanks on the opportunity to connect with peers and share some of their struggles throughout the pandemic.”
- “I was concerned about how well received peer-to-peer education would be, given the political climate in the state. I was pleasantly surprised and grateful the ambassadors were so well-received.”
“The COVAC project enabled the Student Ambassadors to learn how to communicate effectively with their peers who do not feel the same way they do about the COVID-19 vaccine. Another win for the project includes the number of social media followers for the COVAC project (more than 100 in a short time frame). Our Student Ambassadors are encouraged to continue this project during the summer and fall semesters.”

“One of our peer ambassadors was an exchange student from Sudan. She held a small event with several friends who were also international students. They played educational trivia games and she awarded them with t-shirts and PPE. We were very resourceful at acquiring materials to hand out at our tabling events.”

“Our lead Student Ambassador used the CoVAC Toolkit ideas and modified the ideas for our small college. She copied the posters, creating personalized ones using our students in the images and messaging. She also used our students’ images for all lawn signs - it was a huge success!”

**Challenges**

“Since COVID-19 cases were plummeting right when we started our events, it reduced the importance of the message. Our students seemed to be somewhat "over it" by the end of the semester/year."

“While we did not 100% achieve our goals for this grant, we did help students overcome the concern of not only the booster, but the vaccine in general, through multiple outreach attempts, educational events, and vaccine clinics. It is our opinion that the campus is at a point where those who are going to get the vaccine have gotten it, and those who have not are unlikely to change their minds.”

“The area we are located in is a very conservative place where in reality many people do not believe that covid has made an impact therefore, trying to speak on the matter after the mask mandates were lifted was difficult.”

“I feel the apathy towards COVID across campus affected the attendance at events. In reflection this may have been more effective during the fall 2021 semester. We only had 2 student positive COVID cases in the spring 2022 semester, which was very fortunate, but people were thinking about it much less and less concerned.”