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Actionable Insights

Advice from the ACHA COVID-19 Summit Presenters and Panelists

ACHA's COVID-19 Virtual Summit, Planning for Now, Building for the Future, July 28-29, 2020, was designed to focus on appropriate and grounded ways of addressing the health pandemic on college campuses. With attention to the range of health considerations facing medical services, counseling and mental health services, and health promotion and wellness services, presenters from throughout the nation addressed topics and issues relevant to campus personnel. The presenters were asked to provide actionable insights as part of their workshop sessions. Consistent with the action-oriented focus of the Virtual Summit, the insights provide broad-based as well as specific recommendations suitable for those in a range of leadership positions. These varied suggestions may help provide participants and their colleagues with direction to manage and improve their efforts to provide healthy and safe campus settings for students, faculty, staff, and others.

The insights are organized in five broad clusters, with the specific wording unchanged from that provided by the presenters. These insights came from 15 distinct workshops and were independently generated by the workshop presenters. A succinct summary for each cluster is offered to provide a contextual overview of the recommendations.

Note: These actionable insights are a product of the workshops conducted at the COVID-19 Virtual Summit, and do not necessarily represent the views of the American College Health Association, its employees, leaders, or members.

Administrators

The presenters' recommendations for administrators emphasize grounding with published guidelines, engaging health and mental health professionals, and incorporating student development strategies. Realistic expectations blended with active engagement, equity, and collective well-being are essential.

Actionable Insights for Campus Administrators or Key Leaders

1. One of the important upcoming negotiations between CAPS [counseling and psychological services] and the senior leadership team upon reopening should be to utilize ACHA and AUCCCD guidelines for safely reopening mental health centers to ensure that the campus re-opening plan has taken steps that mitigate and slow the spread of COVID-19 and safeguards the physical health and safety of students and staff.
2. When working with senior leadership, it is critical that health and mental health professionals are active participants on campus COVID-19 Planning & Review Committees, representing mental health needs and consequences and reiterating the connection of young adult development as central to the mission of higher education, especially as it relates to assessing current supports and the consideration of providing additional ones, paying particular attention to the public health perspective.
3. During the uncertainty of COVID-19 response, colleges and universities must prioritize the adaptation of health promotion and prevention programs to meet students where they are. This includes assignment of the right staff, professional development, and investment in capacities to meet students' needs.

4. Engage with the people on the ground and at all levels of campus leadership. Listen to the people doing the work and have realistic expectations.
5. Campus administrators should take student opinions into consideration by ensuring student participation on all planning committees related to COVID-19.
6. Examine decisions for any potential inequitable outcomes.
7. Creating an antiracist society is dependent on a collective commitment [that is] focused on work. This commitment is the responsibility of all racial and ethnic groups. In order to start the work towards healing, acknowledgment must first take place, followed by an ongoing active practice of identifying areas of improvement; through actionable steps an antiracist campus culture can be achieved.
8. Administrators need to fully understand the different policy issues that may arise as programs utilize telehealth.
9. An operational dashboard is the best way to provide a snapshot of the data being captured in the rapidly changing environment of the COVID-19 response. Dashboards provide visualization of data to tell a story. Design your dashboard to tell the story that you want and need to tell.
10. Burnout and emotional exhaustion were common among all types of health care professionals before COVID-19. The pandemic is a multiplier effect on stress.
11. One of the most important best practices approaches to support staff to prevent burnout is to create a culture of well-being consisting of interventions that target both the individual and the organization.
12. Two of the best ways to quickly and routinely reduce staff COVID-19 stress are: to share local and organizational data about the pandemic in a transparent way within the organization and to provide time and support for staff to enhance self-care practices that are effective for them.

Partnerships

The partnership recommendations highlight a strategic focus and teamwork, both on- and off-campus. Collaboration around data collection, use of dashboards, attention to the core mission, and attention to antiracism work are needed with systematic reviews.

Actionable Insights Regarding Partnerships

1. Partnerships among stakeholders both on-campus and off-campus play a critical role in addressing a public health crisis of this magnitude.
2. Dashboards may be external facing, for internal use, or both.
3. You will need strategic partnerships to succeed, not only for COVID-19 but also for reengaging with your core mission. Start brainstorming now about who that will be and what you will ask them to do, including needed budget enhancements.
4. The most crucial aspect of good working relations between health and counseling and wellness services and student affairs leadership is teamwork.
5. One of the most effective ways for ACHA and its regional affiliates to address the sweeping changes that COVID-19 has created in college health is for it to leverage its platform as the premier leader in college health along with the data it has about the attitudes and behaviors of college students to help shape some of the national discourse about the health (physical and mental) and well-being of college students.
6. Collaborate with campus stakeholders before, during, and after collecting data.

7. Antiracism work is not comfortable work. We will not realize sustained change by attempting to update or adapt existing university systems, cultures, or norms. The fight to end racism requires disruption and dismantling of White supremacist systems. White people will necessarily experience discomfort when examining and critiquing their role in perpetuating these systems.

Practitioners

Recommendations for practitioners overall highlight the importance of data, research, ethical standards, and governmental regulations. Professionals must remain flexible, be mindful of stressors, and prioritize self-care, while attending to antiracism work and engagement with ongoing data collection.

Actionable Insights for Practitioners

1. Practitioners must remain committed to designing holistic programs to address health promotion and prevention needs based on data, research, and the new online social environments where our market audience is available.
2. Ensure patient privacy and confidentiality, conforming to ethical guidelines and state and federal regulations.
3. Continue providing support for students while remaining flexible and adaptable to the changing situation and nourish your own self-care.
4. In line with “an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure,” be sure to anticipate that your work will be more stressful, and possibly less rewarding, so prospectively have in mind strategies to minimize stress and find reward.
5. The potentially most useful intervention for monitoring and learning about COVID-19’s impact on stress-related disorders and development would be to pay attention to what surprises you and use that to learn about the student’s strengths and needs, especially those associated with his/her COVID-19 situation.
6. Antiracism work is a continuation of work that has been occurring for quite some time. The bulk of the emotional, intellectual, and physical labor cannot be the responsibility of the individuals of color in your community. White people must dismantle White supremacy.
7. Assessment can be done well and provide useful results in a quickly changing environment.
8. Collect data to make sure your messages will work for multiple stakeholders. Messaging that works for staff will (likely) not work for students and vice versa.
9. Data integrity is important.

Student Health Services

Student health services recommendations stress grounded approaches to navigate handling regular services with emerging needs. Cooperation and communication are essential to manage expectations among staff and varied constituencies.

Actionable Insights for Student Health Services

1. A student health medical service reopening plan must be tailored, in accordance with current scientific knowledge and public health principles, to address the unique needs of the campus given the available resources.
2. You will reach the realization that your core mission is heavy lifting, as is COVID-19. “You can’t do everything, so what stays in and what gets sidelined for now?” Consider priorities for the student

populations that you serve, and how you can meet needs for routine general health care, sexual health care, routine vaccines including seasonal influenza, injury/sports related care, chronic care for special populations, student insurance, etc.

3. You will need staff buy-in, and it may not be easy. You are asking them to take on many new COVID-19 roles (diagnostician/clinician, tester, case investigator, contact tracer, problem solver, task force member, others). You don't really expect them to do Pap tests and suture lacerations, do you?
4. Communication within the health service team and to on-campus and off-campus constituencies regarding procedures, protocols and expectations must be clear, concise, and timely.
5. Telehealth is now a consumer expectation, and ambulatory health care administrators should be knowledgeable about some common deficiencies.

Students

Student-oriented recommendations emphasized continuous and timely communication and using a variety of approaches. Student engagement in policy and programmatic development, as well as with messaging and delivery, will enhance impact.

Actionable Insights Regarding Students

1. Communicate, communicate, communicate. Consistent timely messages across a variety of mediums are critical. These messaging needs to be vetted by students.
2. Students are not a monolithic group. They have a variety of concerns and needs. These concerns can only be addressed if students have a voice in decisions regarding reopening our campuses.
3. Students continue to play a significant role as operators in the implementation of programs and the shaping of policies that are relevant to their peer groups.
4. Engage students on your campus now and throughout the semester. Things are changing rapidly; their questions and concerns will be changing, too. Your campaign needs to be responsive.

Learn more [about the summit](#) and access [recordings and slides](#) from most of the presentations.

Please join ACHA for our next summits:

[Closing the Gap: Strategies to Promote Health Equity and Racial Justice on Campus](#), October 27-28, 2020

[COVID-19 Virtual Summit 2: 344 Days and Counting](#), December 8-9, 2020.

ACHA COVID-19 Resources: <https://www.acha.org/COVID-19>



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