



Creating COVID-19 Vaccination Plans

Key Considerations for Institutions of Higher Education

TRUST IS THE KEY INGREDIENT TO A SUCCESSFUL CAMPUS VACCINATION EFFORT.

- **Be transparent.** Begin or continue sharing COVID-19 infection and vaccination rates for your campus. Provide context to explain the current situation and guidance to motivate community members to reach a shared goal.
- **Be honest.** Be up front about what is known, what is not known, and what information was used to guide the institution's decision-making. Explain your rationale if recommendations or requirements vary for different members of the community. When strategies must change based on the best available evidence, as they inevitably do, take the time to explain why.
- **Speak plainly in all relevant languages.** Use simple and accessible language. Keep sentences short and prioritize the major points. Translate information into the languages commonly used in your community.
- **Clarify confidentiality and guard it carefully.** Explain what information will be shared with whom, and for what purpose. Assure confidentiality for community members concerned about repercussions from law enforcement, immigration agencies, or family members who disagree with their vaccination decision.
- **Include everyone.** COVID-19 vaccination campaigns must speak to every community member, including those who cannot or will not be vaccinated. Make exemption processes clear and emphasize the importance of everyone else getting vaccinated to protect these members of the community. Make sure images reflect the diversity of your campus. Place the information in many venues such that it is hard to miss - especially for people who will not seek it out.
- **Set expectations.** Tell community members how the campus experience will change with adequate vaccination rates, and what will not change if vaccination targets are not met. Focus on the gains to be had as well as the loss the community wishes to avoid.
- **Unify messaging.** Make sure everyone on the front line understands the basics and can answer the frequently asked questions about your COVID-19 vaccine strategy. No one will have all of the answers; however, everyone should know which resources to consult for credible information.

REGULARLY ASSESS VACCINE ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS.

The scientific research and recommendations regarding COVID-19 vaccination are constantly evolving. Attitudes and behaviors may evolve quickly as well. Avoid strategies that may unintentionally increase stigmatization or shaming of community members who are not vaccinated and leave the door open for those who can be vaccinated to change their position.

PUSH INTO PARTNERSHIPS.

Everyone has something to gain from an adequately vaccinated campus, and everyone has something to lose from a COVID-19 outbreak. In addition to the usual partners (e.g., local health departments, hospital systems, pharmacies, etc.) reach out to local businesses, civic and non-profit organizations, sports leagues, entertainment venues, artists, and more. Find out what they are doing to end the pandemic and how you can collaborate with them to maximize vaccination rates on and off campus.

LEVERAGE SHARED IDENTITY.

Build a social norm of vaccine confidence by making COVID-19 vaccination part of being a caring campus community member. Tie vaccination strategies to the educational mission of the institution. Solicit campaign names, hashtags, and slogans from the community for the community. Test vaccination messaging across campus subcommunities to ensure those messages resonate.

EMPHASIZE COMMUNITY STEWARDSHIP.

Faculty, staff, and students often live in the communities surrounding the institution, and it is clear that COVID-19 outbreaks do not respect campus boundaries. Remind campus community members of their responsibility of care towards neighboring communities.

CREATE CELEBRATORY MOMENTS AND TELL MULTI-MODAL STORIES.

Every community member should be able to see themselves or someone they care about in your campus outreach. Make the outreach personal to your community and place it in a variety of venues (visual, print, audio, traditional and non-traditional media, art installations, music concerts, etc.).

- Create vaccination sites that facilitate celebration, positive feelings, and meaningful reflection. Provide cues for community members to share their vaccination experiences with others including on social media.
- Encourage people to tell the positive stories of vaccination—including the lack of or mild/short-lived nature of side effects.
- Amplify trusted community members, including health care professionals, faculty, senior staff, student leaders, and people of color.
- Include community members with medical exemptions expressing appreciation for community members who are protecting them by getting vaccinated.
- Tell vaccine candidates that their campus cares about them and wants them to be vaccinated.

MAKE IT EASY TO SAY YES TO VACCINATION.

Assess barriers to vaccine access and uptake regularly, and act quickly to remove them. Be clear the COVID-19 vaccine is free of charge. Create and maintain multiple pathways to vaccination—offer walk-ins *and* appointments; have a hotline *and* an online scheduler. Encourage feedback from community members on their vaccination experiences. Be creative and engage volunteers who are eager to end this pandemic—aggregators can schedule groups, greeters can cheer people on and distribute stickers and buttons, outreach workers can text and call appointment reminders.

- Take the vaccine to high traffic locations and places where people are already comfortable.
- Offer vaccinations at times and locations aligned with the academic schedule.
- Give students, faculty, and staff clear permission to be excused from work, class, or assignments if they are experiencing side effects from vaccination.
- Proactively offer privacy and modesty options to increase comfort and access for those community members who observe faith traditions, have a trauma history, or require sensory accommodations.

MANAGE MISINFORMATION.

COVID-19 vaccine misinformation is abundant, impactful, memorable, and difficult to dislodge. Make credible information widely available. Validate the concerns people have without validating the misinformation. Empower community members to be active bystanders in interrupting the spread of misinformation.

PAIR POLICY WITH EDUCATION.

Mandates and requirements are effective in increasing vaccine uptake on campus. Regardless of whether a campus requires or strongly recommends COVID-19 vaccination, education and outreach must convey the importance of widespread vaccination as the best way to return to a full and robust campus experience. Anticipate that changes in policy are likely to lead to difficult conversations, and be brave in engaging those conversations. Strong leadership is critical. Senior administration should engage early and often with campus community members and partners regarding the entirety of the COVID-19 vaccine strategy.

BUILD FOR THE LONG TERM.

COVID-19 is not and will not be the only vaccine preventable disease with the potential to disrupt an institution of higher education, and COVID-19 vaccination is likely to become an annual effort. The systems used to vaccinate campus communities against COVID-19 in the coming months should be institutionalized and expanded. The trust we build now will yield exponential results in the future.

The [Campus COVID-19 Vaccine \(CoVAC\) Initiative](#) is a project of the [American College Health Association](#), funded by a cooperative agreement with the [Centers for Disease Control](#).



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