COVID 19 Health and Safety Ethical Challenges in Academia

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COVID 19 Occupational Health Ethics Considerations

- What guidance and processes are needed for decision making during altered standards of care and practices and allocation of scarce resources.
- Non-routine circumstances.
- What are the best standards of practice to protect the largest number of students, faculty, and staff.
COVID 19 Occupational Health Campus Issues

- How to return to campuses without encountering adverse health effects
- Policies for dealing with the pandemic differ by institutions and local state, and federal guidance and laws
- Resource allocation and several related ethical challenges
Health and Safety Impacts of COVID 19 on University Campuses

- Limited resources for some campuses (community colleges, small colleges, minority serving institutions (MSI), Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)).
- Extensive plans to guard against a spread of the coronavirus on other campuses.
- Some campuses can afford to spend millions of dollars to try to limit the spread of the coronavirus.
COVID 19 Health and Safety Inequity Impacts on Colleges and Universities

- Students were sent home
- Loss of room and board fees
- Switching to online learning brought additional costs for colleges
- HBCUs and smaller colleges generally have smaller endowments that can be used as a financial buffer
Example Return to Campus Components

- A testing and tracing management plan;
- Changes to physical spaces;
- Frequent and ongoing cleaning in general spaces and residence halls;
- Travel restrictions;
- Event and gathering restrictions;
- Changes to policies around residence halls;
- Emphasis on personal behavior related to masks, social distancing and hand hygiene;
- Changes to the academic calendar and teaching modalities
Example University Asymptomatic Re-opening Protocol Limited Resources

- Students are being asked to take a COVID-19 test within the seven days prior to reporting to campus.
- Those test results are to be submitted via email, fax or upload through a patient portal website.
Controlled Asymptomatic Testing More Resources

- Before being allowed to move into their campus residences, students received a negative COVID-19 test at an arrival center, located in a selected off-campus hotel location.
- Faculty, staff and off-campus students were also tested at special centers located on school campuses before returning to the classroom or office.
Thinking Through Ethical Dilemmas

- What is ethically acceptable
- Ensure fair and consistent practices while providing enough flexibility to respond to challenges unique to your location
- Develop a framework for ethical operations
- One size may not fit all, modify as needed
Challenges and COVID 19

- Less specialized trained faculty (e.g., epidemiologists)
- Less ability to conduct in house testing
- Limited resources for type of data collected and analyses
- The reality of the disproportionate burden of some pandemics (like COVID-19) on minorities creates particular challenges that have to be considered.
Louisiana COVID-19 Health Equity Task Force

- **Charge**
- To provide recommendations relative to health inequities which are affecting communities that are most impacted by the coronavirus.
- The task force will examine opportunities which provide greater access to high quality medical care and improve health outcomes.
Louisiana COVID-19 Health Equity Task Force

- Goals/Outcomes
- Provide reliable and data driven information on COVID-19 safety and prevention;
- Provide the medical community with best practices and protocols for treating communities with underlying medical conditions and health disparities; and
- Ensure testing availability and ease of access for all communities.