

# Covid 19 Mitigation at Universities

## ***- In this report***

### **1. RESEARCH OVERVIEW** - What I did

- Background
- Goals and objectives
- Approach and participants

### **2. RESEARCH FINDINGS** - What I learned

- Key findings
- Personas

### **3. NEXT STEPS** - Where to go next

- Recommendations

WHAT WE DID

# Research Overview

***WeHealth* is currently  
targeting universities as  
potential customers**

WeHealth is interested in working with universities to help mitigate the spread of COVID 19 on their campuses. They currently work with two universities within the state of Arizona and are looking to expand to other campuses.

## What we set out to learn

### - Goal

Understand the experience of university staff developing and implementing COVID 19 mitigation strategies on campus, and identify challenges, needs and key stakeholders.

This research can help:

- Inform the strategy that will be used to target universities
- Identify opportunities for WeHealth

### - Objectives

- Understand the current Covid-19 response strategies that are being implemented on university campuses
- Identify key decision-makers on university campuses
- Understand barriers that universities face when implementing strategies related to the mitigation of Covid-19 on campuses

## Research approach - What we did

### Secondary Research

Secondary research was conducted to identify any research done previously on the topic, in both academic and grey literature, and understand the existing mitigation strategies on university campuses.

→ Findings were used to develop interview questions

### In depth 1-1 interviews

4 participants, University Faculty and Staff

The remote interviews were **Semi-structured** and focused on experiences and challenges with COVID 19 mitigation strategies. Each interview was **35 minutes** long.

→ 2 additional informal interviews were conducted during recruitment that helped inform some of the findings

## Interview Participants

1 - 1 Interviews

**1** Director of Health Promotion

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**2** Safety Officer & Emergency Manager

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**3** Assistant Vice Chancellor Wellness & Inclusion

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**4** Assistant Vice-Chancellor, University Relations

WHAT WE LEARNED

# Research findings



## Key findings

### THEME

### INSIGHT

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Health of Faculty

The health and wellbeing of vulnerable faculty and staff is a major concern. At some institutions, the accommodations for faculty are very minimal, and some feel as though they will be putting themselves or their families at risk by returning to campus.

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Emphasis on  
Vaccinations

One major shift in mitigation strategies, is that there is a focus on getting as many individuals on campus vaccinated, universities are providing incentives for vaccinations and also emphasizing vaccination in their communication campaigns.

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Communication  
Strategy

The communications department plays a major role in the implementation of Covid-19 mitigation strategies across campus. It is a critical area and helps ensure that strategies are effective.

## Key findings

THEME	INSIGHT
At Home Testing	The Binax at home Covid-19 tests have significantly impacted contact tracing efforts. Those who test positive via these tests are less likely to report their results.
Case Investigation	Although contact tracing primarily occurs through the public health department, some universities have their own case investigation process. At the University of Arkansas, not only do the case investigators manage individual cases but they communicate secondary instructions to faculty and staff about how to proceed.

## Health of Faculty

- There are two groups in particular that were mentioned:
  - Those who are at high risk of contracting COVID-19
  - Those with with young children who cannot be immunized or with family who are at high risk
- At some universities faculty is not informed if a student in their classroom has tested positive

*' Many students feel like they are young so if they get it, they will be fine but you know faculty that will be interacting with many students and some are vulnerable so that is what worries me. '*

## Communications department is a key stakeholder

- A large part the response has been just making sure people have the information that they need
  - Communications and marketing was cited multiple times as a key part of the implementation process
- There is also a concern about information overload and fatigue, that is results in individuals missing important information about campus policies and procedures related to Covid-19

*'We involve our communications department. So that's a kind of critical area of communications and marketing in terms of getting the word out. '*

## **BinaxNOW COVID-19 Antigen Self Test is impacting contact tracing efforts**

- Individuals who use the at home testing kits, are less likely to report their results to the university or health department
  - They do not receive information about how to share results
- This also impacts the ability of to inform individuals about next steps including information isolation and quarantine measures

*'The challenge is now a lot of people are doing the at home Binax tests. So they're not talking to a nurse and they have no idea of anything. Health Department doesn't get those reports. So when we're getting them, that's when the health department finds out.'*

## Focus on getting as many individuals on campus vaccinated

- Campuses are focusing their efforts on encouraging students to get vaccinated
  - Vaccination Campaigns
  - Vaccination Incentives
- While other strategies are still in place, with vaccinations available the emphasis on mitigation strategies such as social distancing has declined

*'We have really been emphasizing vaccinations, we are vaccine advocates.'*

## Response to exposure notification technology

*'No I don't have experience with exposure notification technology...I assume it would be useful because for contact tracing it can take a lot of work and we need multiple workers. '*

*'No, because most of that is handled through our Student Health Services. They run like a medical clinic. And so they're kind of doing all of that. '*

*'I believe Google has this set up so that if you opt into the system, you will be notified if you were in proximity with someone who tested positive. I haven't had any experience with this. '*

## Case Investigation Process

### Collect Information

Date and location of testing, symptoms, living situation, list of classes, characteristics of classes, places visited on campus etc.

### Provide Information on Next Steps

Projected release date, resources on campus counseling services and health services, Covid-19 leave, workers' comp

### Notify Faculty and Staff

Associate Dean of Major, Facilities Management, Campus Living, Athletics, Library, Faculty etc.

### Communicate Secondary Instructions

Template provided to faculty to share one of them is for probable close contact and the other for possible close contact

40-45 minutes



## Personas



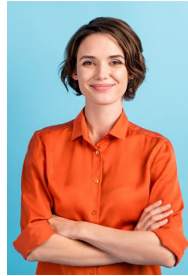
**Carol**

President/Chancellor

**Responsibilities:** Approves and directs all policies, objectives, and initiatives for the institution.

**Obstacles:** Balancing different interests and perspectives, especially in states where the legislature is banning mandates.

**Needs:** Support to ensure that their decisions are aligned with the mission and goals of the university, while managing the expectations of internal and external stakeholders.



**Monica**

Vice President for  
University  
Communications

**Responsibilities:** Produces news and information resources for the university.

**Obstacles:** Evolving information and difficulty with centralized messaging and transparency.

**Needs:** Responsible for preserving university reputation, and needs support ensuring that individuals feel comfortable returning to campus.



**Thomas**

Director of Health  
and Wellness

**Responsibilities:** Oversees health promotion and educational outreach, and campus-based health services.

**Obstacles:** Understaffing and often juggling a lot of different roles and responsibilities especially with Covid-19.

**Needs:** Responsible for on campus contact tracing and case investigations, so needs support with this process.

MOVING FORWARD

# Recommendations

## Recommendations

- 01 Engage with Faculty** - In the outreach process it may be useful to engage with faculty, as they are some of the biggest advocates for implementing effective Covid-19 mitigation strategies on campuses.
- 02 Support Communication Strategies** - With policies continuously changing consider how WeHealth can support centralized communication on campuses.
- 03 Support Vaccination Efforts**- Consider ways to support vaccination campaigns and processes on campus