

College of Health Professions COVID-19 Contingency Plan

No./Title: COVID-19 Contingency Plan	Resp. Office: ACADEMIC AFFAIRS Approval Body: College Council	Effective Date: March 2020
Category: Academic/Student/Faculty/Research	Last Review: March 2020	Next Review: March 2020
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Related Policies:		

Introduction

Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) is a respiratory disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus. Depending on the severity of COVID-19's international impacts, outbreak conditions—including those rising to the level of a pandemic—can affect all aspects of daily life.

As an academic health science center with students engaged in course work, ongoing clinical rotations and patients who need our help, the University of Tennessee Health Science Center (UTHSC) must continue operations and meet the varying needs of our constituents. While moving into a modified operations status, the campus must maintain the safest, most well-organized and productive environment for all of constituents.

The College of Health Professions (COHP) Contingency Plan is developed based on traditional infection prevention and industrial hygiene practices set forth by The Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). The College will follow federal, state, local, and the UTHSC guidelines. The College will implement social distancing – which refers to avoiding mass gatherings, maintaining distance (approximately 6 feet) from others when possible, and staying away from congregate settings.

Purpose

The COHP Contingency Plan is meant to be a fluid document and the plan will be updated as new mandates and challenges arise. This plan is intended to provide direction for administrators, faculty and staff who should use this plan to make the necessary arrangements in their routine operations in workplace settings and to determine any appropriate control measures to implement.

Procedure

This section describes basic steps that every student, faculty and staff can take to reduce the risk of worker exposure to COVID-19 in the College.

Administrative Offices

The COHP will remain open to ensure its mission for delivering education to our students, service to the community and conducting research. The Dean's Office as well as every department in the College is open and fully operational. The major change is that business is conducted largely through electronic media and telephone rather than in person.

Communication

The College maintains and regularly updates a list of all faculty and staff in the college. The list includes names, email addresses and cell phone numbers for each faculty and staff member. The list is disseminated to the College at least once monthly or after every update.

Communication with Students

All programs must remain in constant dialogue with their students. The leadership of each program should meet with students face to face (if possible) or by zoom, and through zoom townhall meetings to keep them informed and updated with any developments.

Telecommuting for Staff and Faculty

Departments will rotate staff working at home with those working in the office as a way to keep the office open while keeping a minimum number of employees on campus. Fewer people on campus will reduce the chances of transmitting the virus. Staff are expected to work on specific tasks when they are not on campus. Staff will be evaluated weekly for productivity.

Faculty are permitted to come to campus, but in general are discouraged to do so unless approved by the Chair. This should not be out of convenience but rather for job related activities. Likewise, each faculty member is expected to submit a weekly report and responsibilities they need to fulfil. This includes faculty on research projects. Faculty with research labs are on campus for the research but can work on other things such as data analysis, literature review and writing from home.

All offices should remain responsive via email and phone. We understand not all positions or offices are conducive to telecommuting, but for those that are able and have approval from the Dean, will be receiving a letter from HR authorizing them to telecommute under the conditions outlined. Faculty and staff can be asked to return to work on campus at any point that it is clear the work at home is not functioning well.

Documentation and Expenses

The College and the Departments will maintain records of all communications, meetings, activities, training, expenses associated with this situation. Spreadsheet must be maintained and updated by business staff to track costs related to the outbreak in hopes to receive available relief funds if applicable.

Faculty and Staff Meetings

Everyone in the College should have a zoom account and faculty should be linked into zoom for meetings that they are scheduled to attend.

Academic Policies

All COHP policies pertaining to academic, faculty and student affairs will remain in effect during a crisis. The College will abide by all university, college bylaw and faculty handbook policies. The Dean reserves the right to suspend certain policies or parts of policies to accommodate the immediate needs for the faculty, staff and students.

Recognizing a crisis may affect research with patient populations, thus affecting faculty tenure and promotion plans. However, the potential for COVID-19 interruptions of clinical research will be considered within the context of the tenure and promotion evaluations for the following year especially if there is a long delay in resuming access to patients and normal clinical research. Significant interruptions are not anticipated to faculty conducting basic science research, but this too may change. The Board of Trustees will be considering language for extension of decisions for tenure if the COVID-19 challenges are prolonged.

On-Campus Services

With COHP's top priority being the health and safety of our students, faculty, and staff, the university will be restricting access to the College offices.

Academic Continuity

The AFSA Office has launched a website <https://uthsc.edu/afsa/academic-continuity/index.php> that will be updated regularly and will include the latest academic announcements from the Chancellor and Vice Chancellor.

Didactic Courses

Move face-to-face didactic classes to remote delivery for the rest of the semester or until further notice. Student attendance and participation is still required. This includes lectures, seminars, journal clubs, capstones, directed study, etc.

Incomplete grades can be entered into Banner for students who are unable to complete academic and/or clinical assignments by the end of UTHSC term. Institutional policy and timelines will be followed for converting the incomplete to a letter grade.

Course Examination and Assessment

All efforts are made to administer online examinations using available tools such as BlackBoard, ExamSoft, ProctorU, etc. Alternative assessment can also be considered such as writing essay or reflection papers.

Student Access to Campus and Laboratories

In an effort to prevent large groups from gathering on campus, student access to the College, MSB and GEB, SACS, library etc. will be withheld except for pre-approved

purposes. If the situation is escalated, Student labs on campus will be suspended until further notice.

The Center for Healthcare Improvement and Patient Simulation (CHIPS) is heavily utilized by the programs in the College. All activities scheduled at CHIPS must follow the protocols set forth by the center.

Clinical Education

The COHP will follow the guidelines established by the institution that all clinical rotations for students would proceed as usual under guidance from the sponsoring partner institutions. Students should abide by the rules of the rotation site. Students can refuse to go to any site, but the student must be informed that they cannot get credit for activity that they do not complete. Thus, if they choose not to participate in a clinical rotation, they will get an "Incomplete" grade and must complete the activities/assignments as defined by the course director prior to receiving a final grade.

If the situation becomes more critical, the College will allow each program to take the appropriate course of action regarding clinical rotations based on given circumstances of each program and cohort of students. Should clinical education in a program be suspended, the Program Director/Department Chair should first notify, in writing, the Dean and Associate Dean for Academic, Faculty and Student Affairs with this information, and also be prepared to extend the length of the academic program for those students who do not meet the minimum standards.

Program Accreditation

Each academic program in the College is expected to meet the requirements set forth by the respective education regulatory and accrediting agencies in this regard keeping the health and safety of our students at the utmost priority. Most accreditors have made accommodations and provided clarifications to the programs as to how students and programs can meet the standards for accreditation during this unprecedented situation. The College also believes we have the responsibility to ensure that our programs must meet the accreditation standards and our graduates are prepared to enter the workforce as entry-level professionals in the discipline.

COHP Clinics

UTHSC-directed clinics, such as OT, PT, and ASP will be closed until further notice.

Travel

Faculty and students are encouraged to reconsider personal international and domestic travel and to review and follow CDC travel advisories in their planning. Faculty and students who are planning on personal international and domestic travel must be registered with their supervisors and departments. Faculty and students who travel will be required to follow CDC-recommended self-isolation and quarantine guidelines upon their return to the US and before they can return to campus. These guidelines apply to travel

within impacted regions or layovers at airports in impacted areas. Self-isolation and quarantine may exceed 14 days. Students should understand and consult with their college regarding the impact that a self-isolation or quarantine period may have on their program requirements and any coursework that may be able to be completed online. Failure to register international travel or follow recommended CDC guidelines for self-isolation and quarantine will be considered a violation of student conduct and referred to the Office of Student Conduct and Community Standards.

Commencement

An alternative, most likely virtual, commencement ceremony will take place in order to confer degrees on graduating students. The College will host one event for all programs and will not include awards.

Nonessential Functions

All non-essential functions that are not deemed mission critical are postponed.

Open Houses

Students recruitment activities (open houses) could be conducted virtually. No campus visits or tours are allowed.

Faculty Searches

Upon approval, faculty searches that are underway can be conducting using virtual technology. On-campus visits will be suspended until the situation is cleared. However, COVID-19-induced reductions in state supported budgets to UTHSC will require that all faculty searches be suspended. Only mission critical faculty searches will be approved.

Information Technology

Information Technology Services (ITS) is confirming internet access and network infrastructure for telecommuting and remote classes; VPN issues with accessing network/shared drivee.

Federal Work Study (FWS)

Federal law includes a provision allowing an institution to make FWS payments under certain limited circumstances to students who are unable to continue working.

- If a student would like to continue working but is unable to do so because of closure, they are eligible to be paid FWS based on the hours they were scheduled to work.
- As the FWS supervisor, you must first identify the number of hours the student was scheduled to work each week based on their current assignment.

Research Activities

Clinical and all face-to-face research with patients/subjects is suspended unless otherwise stated by campus policy and the Institutional Review Board (IRB). Other types of research will continue (data based, large data analysis, wet lab research) and graduate students and

laboratory personnel are expected to report to the respective labs. Laboratory personnel will be permitted to conduct non-essential laboratory analysis or other work remotely.

Essential Student Services related to the College

1. Library resources are still available; librarians will work from home with virtual office hours
2. TLC will provide guidance for online classes and faculty support; Zoom, Mediasite and other resources.
3. SASSI sent students info regarding online resources and learning remotely
4. Students are referred to the UTHSC Bursar's Office with questions about tuitions and fees.
5. University Health Services Financial Aid will remain open.

Budgets and funding for the College and Departments

Funding of the College of Health Professions is critically dependent upon receiving its funds from UTHSC. A COVID-19 induced loss of state resources has resulted in a significant reduction to the financial support of the state to UTHSC. In the face of an unanticipated and significant funding shortfall beginning on or before the next fiscal year, the College of Health Professions must move quickly to plan for a restructuring that reduces our college expenditures. At the same time, we will attempt whenever possible to follow our Strategic Plan for strengthening our educational, research and clinical missions in the face of financial and budgetary loss for our Departments and College.

APPROVAL HISTORY

Effective: March 21, 2020

Approved: March 22, 2020, Dean