COUNTY OF LOS ANGELES BOARD OF SUPERVISORS
ECONOMIC RESILIENCY TASK FORCE

WORK TEAM SECTOR: EDUCATION

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Introduction

As the Education Sector Work Team, we are grateful to the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors for its invitation to provide a framework for the County's colleges and universities to return safely to campus life. Our desire for this report is to provide the Los Angeles County Economic Resiliency Task Force with a) an economic rationale for the safe on-campus return for college and university communities, and b) a set of guidelines for protecting the health and well-being of our campus communities.

The intent of our collective work has been to help steer the County's institutions of higher learning through the COVID-19 pandemic. More than that, however, our hope has been to contribute to a cross-sector system for economic resiliency so that these guidelines together with those of the other twelve sectors may become a model for America's counties to move toward post-COVID economic vitality.

As the Education Sector Work Team, our overarching goals in completing this task have been:

- *Safety and Health:* Establishment of a safe environment for students, faculty and staff to deliver and pursue academic excellence.

- *Return to Campus:* Enactment of strategies and processes that will lead to a successful resumption of in-person campus life, including teaching, learning, research and co-curricular programs while continuing to improve online services strengthened during COVID-19.

- *Disease Prevention and Response Capability:* Creation of internal and external partnership networks and a stakeholder system capable of implementing guidelines to support and manage potential health obstacles or coronavirus resurgences.

- *Economic Restoration:* Gradual restoration of the pre-COVID-19 economic stability and contributions that Los Angeles County's institutions of higher learning bring to their campus communities, neighborhoods, cities, regions and beyond.

Rationale for Los Angeles County's Safe Return to Campus Life

Colleges and universities since March 2020 have been essential partners in our County's defense against the community spread of COVID-19 by modeling a successful transition to remote educational delivery, student services and business operations. Should these colleges and universities not resume face-to-face education in the Fall, the economic strains on many institutions could be damaging, or worse.

Assuring in-person campus operations enables institutions to continue keeping faculty and staff employed, provides a vital and necessary contribution toward Los Angeles County's economic ecosystem and guarantees a seamless path toward their students' graduation.

There are roughly eighty colleges and universities in Los Angeles County, serving a headcount of approximately 700,000 students through a myriad of educational programs. Considering this number of students and the corresponding number of employees supporting these students, higher education's County impact conservatively numbers over one million people. This tally is arguably more than any other county in America. In terms of economic impact, these institutions of higher learning have cumulative budgets in the tens of billions of dollars and employ several hundred thousand in their workforce. The University of Southern California and UCLA alone have combined annual budgets of $13.3 billion and employ 70,000 workers.

Healthy functioning colleges and universities are essential for the economic wellbeing of our County. Unless these institutions are able to provide for in-person courses and services with appropriate preventative health and risk-mitigation measures in place, they will be at a competitive disadvantage with colleges and universities outside of the County or State that have already been given the green light for their communities to safely return this Fall for in-person classes. All elements of our County will benefit from a deliberate and measured resumption of campus life, just as the County will benefit from the safe and appropriate opening of other industry sectors.

In addition to their economic contributions, college and universities have a critical role in the overall betterment of society. They stimulate intellectual capital, they graduate civic-minded students, they model how to live in and promote diverse communities, and they develop globally minded citizens. Colleges and universities offer a full range of programs and support services that advance societal health and well-being. With physical campuses in full operation, these critical services will continue to support the development of students' long-term positive, healthy lifestyle choices. Each year these eighty colleges and universities graduate tens of thousands of students who remain in the County and who for decades will make ongoing and valuable contributions.

Los Angeles County's colleges and universities include:

- One University of California institution, UCLA, with more than 45,000 students

- Five California State University campuses serving nearly 150,000 students: Cal State Dominguez Hills, Cal State Long Beach, Cal State Los Angeles, Cal State Northridge and Cal Poly Pomona

- Twenty-one community colleges serving over 333,000 students, including the Los Angeles Community College District which is the largest community college district in the nation, with 232,000 student enrollments.

- Forty-seven private colleges and universities[1] including California's largest private university, the University of Southern California with its 48,500 students.

- Eight for-profit colleges and universities, including California College of Music, DeVry University, LA Film, American InterContinental, Abraham Lincoln University, Fashion Institute of Design and Merchandising, Los Angeles College of Music and New York Film Academy.

Prohibiting students' return to campus would be unfavorable to the County's economic recovery. Most of our County's postsecondary educational institutions are seeking a safe return to their campuses for the Fall term, understanding their roles as:

- Contributing significantly as employers and economic drivers in their communities, the County and the State;

- Serving on the front-line of this pandemic through graduating students into fields of education and public policy, providing healthcare professionals and services, searching for cures and treatments and advancing other novel technologies and discoveries;

- Intertwining with sectors that depend on each other's viability for the collective flourishing of the County; and

- Providing a wide range of services, including instruction, utilities, dining, housing, recreation, telecommunications, computing networks, retail commercial activity, support services, and many others.

We should note that the COVID-19 health emergency has exacerbated inequities in our County, including underserved college students disproportionately impacted. Basic needs for these students such as food security, housing, employment, mental health services, access to technology and emergency aid can be restored with the safe return to campus life.

In implementing guidelines supported by the LACDPH, colleges and universities will be able to provide students—together with their families—the confidence to move forward toward a timely and successful graduation. These students, many of them as adult learners, from low income families or first generation, will then be able to receive their higher education degrees and fulfill their vocational dreams as contributing members to society.

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[1] The County's independent non-profit higher education institutions include Academy for Jewish Religion, AFI, Alliant, AADA, American Jewish, AMDA, Antioch, Art Center, Azusa Pacific, Biola, CalArts, Caltech, Claremont Colleges , Claremont Graduate, Claremont McKenna, Harvey Mudd, Keck, Pitzer, Pomona, Scripps, Claremont Lincoln, Claremont School of Theology, Colburn, Drew, Fuller Seminary, Hebrew Union, King's, La Verne, Life Pacific, Loyola Marymount, Marymount California, Master's, Mount St. Mary's, National, Otis, Occidental, Pacific Oaks, PRGS, Pepperdine, SCI-Arc, SCU, Southwestern, USC, UWest, West Coast Baptist, WesternU, Whittier and Woodbury

Recommendations for Los Angeles County's Safe Return to Campus Life

We have presented below a plan and guiding principles to preserve both the educational quality of our institutions and the health, safety and wellbeing of those who study and work there. We have considered these to be reasonable, data-based standards as the minimum expectations for a thoughtful and safe return to college and university campuses. In collaboration with the Los Angeles County Department of Public Health (LACDPH) and its directives and guidelines, attention to the following protocols will be expected of colleges and universities prior to a fall safe return.

1. **COVID-19 education & re-entry strategy**

   ▪ Issue a directive to the campus community and/or update the institution's standard of conduct policy to include mitigating the spread of COVID-19 and implement appropriate accountability systems to address non-compliance.

   ▪ Develop prior to re-entry campus training programs that educate all community members on disease prevention measures, on the campus health culture and on risk minimizing strategies, including training videos, bulletins, signage (e.g., posters and electronic displays) online and social media campaigns.

   ▪ Create specific plans and protocols to accommodate students, faculty and staff in vulnerable, high-risk populations.

   ▪ Establish a year-round health education campaign to promote/educate the campus community on universal precautions such as frequent hand washing, refraining from touching face and reporting COVID-like symptoms.

   ▪ Implement a robust communication plan and associated communication tools to ensure timely and accurate delivery of information for students and, as appropriate, their families.

   ▪ Develop plans for a phased re-entry of campus constituents with a focus on managing on-campus population density to adhere with physical distancing measures.

   ▪ Provide options for remote online education, including asynchronous delivery to accommodate ill or quarantined students, as well as those with technology or travel constraints.

   ▪ Emphasize to staff, faculty and students the importance of receiving an influenza vaccine prior to returning to campus to help health care professionals distinguish between the similar symptoms of COVID and the flu.

2. **Physical distancing & building campus density plan**

   ▪ Establish criteria in line with standards approved by the Board of Supervisors Economic Resiliency Task Force for other LA County sectors – such as restaurants, gyms and houses of worship – for all in the campus community and visitors to practice six-foot distancing and density for the following:

- o Housing facilities

- o Dining halls and campus eateries

- o Classrooms/laboratories/auditoriums

- o Library/study rooms

- o Administrative buildings/office space

- o Event centers/multi-purpose rooms

- o Sports facilities and recreational centers

- o Common areas/student gatherings/co-curricular activities/other

- o Limiting cross-directional movement in high-trafficked areas of campus

- ▪ Educate, encourage, and expect among all campus community members and visitors, adherence to directives on physical distancing as well as the use of cloth face coverings.

- ▪ Implement physical distancing signage, floor markings and barriers (e.g. plexiglass barriers in classrooms, dining facilities and other campus retail venues).

- ▪ Adhere to state and county standards on auditorium assembling.

3. **PPE and other supplies for students and employees**

- ▪ Develop campus criteria on when the use of cloth face covering or other protective equipment is mandatory.

- ▪ Use a risk-based assessment to identify and if possible provide types of face coverings and user categories (e.g., N95 or equivalent mask for medical professionals, N95 or equivalent for higher risk cleaning, provision of cloth face coverings for students and employees, provide proper enhanced PPE for those in clinical settings and/or research laboratories).

- ▪ Develop and distribute training on the appropriate use of cloth face covering or other protective equipment.

4. **Establish a thorough sanitization & air quality strategy** (When colleges and universities own buildings, adhering to these guidelines will be expected. When colleges and universities lease buildings, these guidelines will be shared with the proprietor)

- ▪ Sanitization and cleaning protocols must follow LACDPH guidelines for, but are not limited to the following:

- o Restrooms

- o Housing facilities

- o Dining halls/campus eateries and other campus retail venues

- Classrooms/auditoriums/laboratories

- Library/study rooms

- Administrative buildings/office space

- Sports facilities/event centers/multi-purpose rooms and recreational centers

- Common areas/student gatherings/co-curricular activities/other

- Hand sanitizers situated at the entrances to all major campus facilities and strategic placement of hand-washing stations elsewhere on campus.

- Promote preventative hygiene measures, including frequent hand washing and covering sneezes or coughs with a tissue.

- Review/test building HVAC and air ventilation systems and service and/or retrofit as necessary, implementing regular monitoring of building air quality input/output.

5. **Screening procedures & monitoring potential warning signs**

- Develop guidelines that will educate students and employees on self-screening.

- Evaluate and implement health and symptom monitoring measures, which are informed by public health experts and may include recording and reporting wellness, and/or a regular temperature-taking program based on an activity-centered risk assessment and institutional capacity (i.e., full scale and/or partial/selective groups such as athletes, or those in close contact).

- Develop and implement specific protocols and timely actions for students and employees who report symptoms or a decline in health which may be indicative of illness.

- Educate the residence life team, public safety department, and faculty, managers and supervisors across campus on steps to take if a member of the community exhibits flu-like symptoms.

6. **COVID-19 testing**

- Develop an institutional testing protocol for symptomatic students (based on institution's capability and capacity).

- Develop specific criteria around the procurement of test kits, testing strategy and notification to the applicable public health departments.

- Establish a memorandum of understanding agreement with local healthcare facilities and/or approved testing sites for institutions without health care services.

- Implement an appropriate testing strategy to promptly identify reservoirs of infection and measure community prevalence.

7. **Contact tracing capability will be congruent with the forthcoming LACDPH guidelines**

- Consider establishing adequate methods to conduct contact tracing (e.g., digital contact tracing app and/or manual contact tracing).

- Assemble a contact tracing team or otherwise solicit contact tracing services from the LACDPH.

- Develop processes and training programs for any internal contact tracing team.

8. **Isolation/quarantine capability**

- If students are housed on campus property:

  o Pre-determine isolation/quarantine location and capacity

  o Develop policy or procedures for comfortable self-isolation/quarantine.

  o Develop policy or procedures for hospitalization for more serious COVID-19 cases.

  o Determine core team that will implement and execute quarantine procedures.

  o Establish quarantine student support and compliance systems: meals, remote coursework, health services, transportation and monitoring/tracking affected students to promote compliance, etc.

- Ensure timely disclosure to the LACDPH team.

9. **Events, performances and athletic participation**

- Develop a plan to resume athletics and performing arts activities, including on-site training/practices, travel, competition events and performances, etc., ensuring protocols and processes are in compliance with LADPH and other governing body guidelines.

- Ensure events and gatherings are aligned with LACDPH phase protocols and establish corresponding campus repopulation guidelines.

- Intercollegiate athletics COVID-related regulations will be governed by the national associations and/or regional conferences, and spectator guidelines will follow County regulations on event gatherings.

10. **Safety & well-being of the campus community**

- Invite/request students with underlying conditions to pre-register with the campus health center. Give faculty and staff with underlying conditions the option to voluntarily register with Human Resources (HR). Establish reasonable practices and preventive measures to shield these community members from exposure.

- Include the local community in planning and programming services where possible (excess testing, meal services) to improve the health of the local population in which the campus interacts.

- Make known to all community members the available mental health services for supporting those with increased anxieties.

- To the best of the institution's ability, HR should consider implementing policies or guidelines for teleworking, rotating and alternative work schedules and other de-densifying measures to provide social distancing in all work environments

- Require international students to follow U.S. entry standards based on LADPH and other regulatory agencies guidelines including possible onboarding orientation and quarantining.

- Establish approval and reporting guidelines and return procedures for students studying abroad.

- Communicate institutional policy and behavioral expectations to eliminate race-based coronavirus discrimination.

11. **Resurgence of COVID-19 on campus**

- Establish notification procedures internally and to the LACDPH and other regulatory agencies.

- Create a COVID-19 resurgence response team.

- Develop a rapid response strategy for containment, options and specific plans to adjust operations as needed.

12. **Accountability and legal compliance**

- All actions must follow State and County orders and guidelines.

- Receive government-assured language around immunity from liability.

- Seek a Governor's blanket waiver for colleges and universities to protect from unnecessary litigation if these general standards are followed.

These above recommendations are intended to inform the framework for the best-practices guidelines Los Angeles County distributes. As this is a framework, we expect the spirit of the law to be considered along with the letter of the law. This document is making the case that each institution should be permitted to establish within the parameters of health professionals what is best for our campuses. That is, except for clear non-negotiable guidelines by the LADPH, college or university administrators may make data-based adaptations to these guidelines that would better suit the unique educational needs of their institutions while still preserving the health and safety community standards implicit in this guidance.

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