



SUS Planning for a Post-COVID World: Lessons Learned, Best Practices, and Future Considerations

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Key Questions:



- Is the SUS response going to be a return to the status quo or adapting to sustained change? How do we build excellence and greater resilience for the future?
- What inherent limitations and weaknesses, and potential opportunities, has the global pandemic revealed across the SUS and how successful have we been in addressing them over the past year?
- What are the most significant “lessons learned” with relevance to higher education? What “best practices” have emerged across the SUS that we may wish to share and adopt?
- What might the post-COVID “new normal” look like for higher education in Florida, and what innovations are most likely going to gain traction and sustain in the mid- to long-term?
- How can the 12 SUS institutions collaborate most effectively in anticipation of a potential paradigm shift in higher education?

Planning Framework:



- Framework: *SUS Planning for a Post-COVID World. Lessons Learned, Best Practices, and Future Considerations* [January 2021],
- Academic Planning [March 2021],
- Faculty Success [March 2021],
- Student Access, Progression and Learning (academic continuity) [June 2021],
- Strengthening Campus Communities [June 2021],
- Preventive Health [August 2021],
- Administrative and Budgetary Considerations [August 2021], and
- Final Report and Recommendations [November 2021].



The Student Experience: Contributing Stakeholder Groups: (May 14, 2021)

- Council of Student Affairs,
- Student Health Services,
- SUS Counseling Directors,
- Collegiate Recreation,
- Deans of Students,
- Council on Equal Opportunity and Diversity,
- Council on Diversity and Inclusion,
- Student Disability Services,
- Admissions Directors,
- Student Housing,
- Florida Career Consortium, and
- Student Government Association.

Challenges:



- Student “connectivity” and “identity” with university leadership,
- Timely and specific communication and guidance in the face of uncertainty,
- Student adaptation to remote engagement and support:
 - Technology, connectivity and digital literacy – the digital divide,
- Increased incidence of isolation, stress, and drug abuse, along with the loss of a sense of campus community,
- Uninsured students,
- Housing and food insecurity,
- Adverse impacts on students with childcare/aging care responsibilities, disabilities, students of color, limited income and first-generation students,
- Student dependency on federal emergency financial aid grants and continuing expectations, and
- Reduced occupancy and lost revenue in student housing – facility design, isolation and quarantine.

Lessons Learned and Best Practices:



- Strengthened collaboration (and sharing of best practices) across the SUS:
 - Admissions,
 - Student health and mental health counseling,
 - Campus recreation,
 - Disability services,
 - Student housing, and
 - Career services.
- Leveraging digital platforms to support student access and student success:
 - Admissions – virtual college fairs and campus tours, OOS and international “visits,” and orientations,
 - Student health and mental health counseling – telemedicine and teletherapy,
 - Campus recreation – fitness classes, personal training, outdoor activities,
 - Disability services – digital accommodations, and
 - Career services – virtual career fairs, interviews, networking and internships.

Lessons Learned and Best Practices:



- Need for agile and evidence-based decision-making in response to continuing uncertainty and sometimes rapidly changing conditions,
- Sustained investment in online platforms, digital content, and technology-rich student support services positioned the SUS very well to respond to COVID-19,
- Mission critical and seamless collaboration with Information Technology was essential to delivery of student support services, and
- Online platforms will remain central to (a) remote work, and (b) professional development for student support staff.

Recommendations:



- Embed *the Student Experience* in the context of Student Success,
- Continue to strengthen student access to digitally-delivered support services,
- Establish clear expectations and policies for remote work by student support services staff,
- Strengthen partnerships with local public health authorities (for timely updates to university leaders; health education; contact tracing; resources for vaccine-preventable diseases; and screening for highly infectious diseases),
- Consider the feasibility of establishing a statewide “pool” of telecounselors for deployment in times of crisis,
- Design and sponsor systematic staff development programs in support of enhanced digital delivery of student support services,

Recommendations:



- Conduct a comprehensive assessment of the benefits and feasibility of mandatory student health insurance across the SUS, and
- Carefully examine and mitigate the potential adverse impact of diminished and/or digital support services (due to COVID-19) on student access and success.

Next steps:



- Business and Finance (work practices, auxiliaries, investments etc); Medical Schools and Health Sciences Centers (August 2021):
 - Medical School Deans,
 - Public Health Deans,
 - Council of Administrative and Financial Affairs,
 - Athletics and Other Auxiliaries,
 - Emergency Managers,
 - Police Chiefs,
 - Chief Information Officers,
 - Human Resources Directors, and
 - Financial Aid Directors.
- Final report and recommendations (November 2021).



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