Campus Well-Being, Healthy Spaces

THE CHRONICLE
OF HIGHER EDUCATION

STIMULUS =
POSSIBILITIES

One of the most critical decisions academic leaders will make in a generation is how to best maximize the impact of their stimulus funds.

In 2020 and 2021, Congress passed three separate stimulus bills, collectively known as the Education Stabilization Fund. In total, these provided nearly $279 billion as relief aid for the education sector to offset the negative economic and social impacts of the pandemic.

These dollars have provided academic leaders with a rare opportunity — the chance to make a massive, ongoing difference in creating healthier and safer educational communities for students, faculty, staff and guests — all in a very short span of time.

In response, ABM worked rapidly alongside educational institutions to define and structure a core set of services that provide the greatest value to colleges and universities that receive stimulus funding. These facility services include solutions for campus-wide disinfection and janitorial needs, HVAC and indoor air quality (IAQ), energy efficiency and more — all contributing to a continuity of education services.

Our goal: To help maximize the impact of their stimulus dollars by creating both ongoing savings and revenue-generating opportunities that will last decades — all with a single provider, all within their current budget.

We are proud to partner with *The Chronicle of Higher Education* to deliver this special collection of resources on how to best maximize your stimulus dollars. The documents you are about to read explain the economical and educational benefits of taking an integrated approach to your facility services.

To put it simply, **Stimulus = Possibilities**, and ABM can help protect the health of your students and staff — while creating savings opportunities that enable you to redirect budget back to educational priorities.

Thank you for reading, and we hope to work alongside you soon.

Sincerely,

Joel K. Lowery

Joel Lowery
Senior Vice President
ABM

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Building Value

Campus Well-Being, Healthy Spaces

The Covid-19 pandemic has ushered in a new era of safety protocols and urgent re-thinking about how to guard the well-being and mental health of all campus constituents in the face of a public-health crisis. Classroom spaces and libraries are being altered for social distancing or hybrid learning; colleges are trying new approaches to requiring or incentivizing vaccinations; and institutions are prioritizing the emotional and psychological health of their students. Now, new variants of the virus threaten to undo the plans colleges have made for the fall.

This content collection gathers news and opinion articles from the pages of *The Chronicle* to highlight the challenges facing campuses as they reopen and document the steps they are taking to ensure the health of students and employees.

Cover photo by iStock

For questions or comments about the collection, email ci@chronicle.com

Colleges Envisioned a Near-Normal Fall Semester. Then Came the Delta Variant.

A month out from the new term, some colleges are responding to a Covid surge by changing strategy.

BY NELL GLUCKMAN AND FRANCIE DIEP

After a grueling 16 months of sickness, isolation, and remote teaching, professors in Arkansas were looking forward to the fall term. Loretta N. McGregor, a psychology professor at Arkansas State University, missed the energy of being on campus, and the lab help she'd get from undergraduate researchers. "One of the reasons we work in higher education is because of interactions with students," she said.

Stephen E. Caldwell, an associate professor and chair of campus faculty at the University of Arkansas at Fayetteville, has a child with medical conditions that mean "bringing Covid home to him is not

an option." But by May, after Caldwell had been vaccinated for a few months and cases were dropping, he felt ready to teach in person, with no mask.

With transmission at a trickle in the spring, and millions of Americans getting vaccinated every week, it looked then like colleges would realize a best-case scenario for the fall: a near-normal semester. But over the past few weeks, that prospect has begun to change.

The more-transmissible Delta variant of the coronavirus, plus relatively low vaccination rates in some states, have pushed new national cases higher than they've been in months. Reports that even vaccinated individuals may get and transmit the coronavirus, when they're exposed to enough of it, have undermined the security that vaccinated people may feel around unvaccinated colleagues and neighbors, even though "breakthrough" infections, as cases among vaccinated people are known, are less likely to be severe or passed on to others.

"One of the reasons we work in higher education is because of interactions with students."

In response, several colleges have made late announcements that they'll require their students, staff, and faculty to be vaccinated. The largest four-year public system in the country, California State University, announced this week it would enact such a mandate even though it had previously said it would wait for the Food and Drug Administration to fully approve the vaccines. It cited the variant as one factor in its decision. Colleges are also rethinking previously announced mask policies, in light of guidance on July 27 from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recommending that even vaccinated people wear masks indoors, in counties with higher case rates.

Meanwhile, in some of the hardest-hit parts of the country — like Arkansas — state laws are stymying colleges' ability to

wield vaccine and mask mandates to prevent infections.

"We're walking into a worse situation medically, and with less tools to combat it," Caldwell said.

Case Western Reserve University recently announced a vaccine mandate. In a message to the campus community, Eric W. Kaler, the president, noted that in recent months the university has tried pleading emails, small rewards, and then big prizes. But leaders couldn't get as many students, staff, and faculty vaccinated as they wanted. "We viewed it as an institutional priority to get a vaccination level that would allow us to have herd immunity and be able to be a safe place for in-person teaching and research in the fall," Kaler said in an interview.

Herd immunity has been a shifting and imprecise goal throughout the pandemic. The emergence of the Delta variant made Kaler and his team think they needed very high coverage. They're now aiming for 95 percent. Before their mandate, about 70 percent of students, staff, and faculty had voluntarily uploaded their vaccine cards.

Similar language and reasoning — the situation is worsening, and incentives haven't cut it — played into late-game vaccine mandates from Adelphi University, in New York, and Augsburg University, in Minneapolis, and the Vermont State Colleges system. At Adelphi, only 26 percent of students have reported being fully vaccinated against Covid-19. Administrators are aiming for 70 percent community wide, said K.C. Rondello, the university epidemiologist and a clinical associate professor

At Cal State, it was the realization that Food and Drug Administration approval wouldn't come in time, as well as climbing hospitalizations due to the Delta variant, that prompted Joseph I. Castro, chancellor of the system, to change course.

"Many of us thought that we were headed for daylight," Castro said. "But this Delta variant has created some ambiguity, and I think we need to watch it carefully and make the best decisions possible for students, faculty, and staff."

Many colleges didn't need any extra reason to require vaccines. Some were

doing so as early as April, according to *The Chronicle's* tracker of such policies. It's always been true that having a fully vaccinated campus "gives you a lot more options for what you can do," said H. Holden Thorp, editor in chief of the Science journals and a former chancellor of the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. However, he thought there was some ill luck involved: The Delta variant was "particularly badly timed" for the start of the fall term, he said.

Leaders at many late-mandating colleges that *The Chronicle* spoke with acknowledged a crunch to get people fully vaccinated. Case Western's Kaler, however, said that the five and a half weeks between the university's announcement and the first day of fall classes "feels like enough time to me."

"We're offering it for free on campus," he said. "It takes you 15 minutes to walk over, get a shot, and come back to work. It doesn't feel like you need months to get that done."

I n Arkansas, the situation is in some ways more dire than it was a year ago. Cases are up, and hospitalizations are at their highest point since January. Just over a third of state residents are fully vaccinated. But at the same time, some of the tools universities have used to mitigate the spread of the virus have been taken away. Gov. Asa Hutchinson of Arkansas signed bills in April that banned state entities like public universities from mandating the vaccine or mask-wearing.

In states where vaccination rates are lowest, colleges are relying on the same sorts of tactics that institutions like Case Western Reserve and Adelphi found weren't adequate to get anywhere near herd immunity.

Mississippi, which does not outlaw vaccine requirements at public institutions, has the lowest vaccination rate in the country. At Mississippi State University, administrators will place 16 different pop-up vaccine clinics throughout campus — at a welcome BBQ, in student residence halls, and near sorority or fraternity houses. Like many campuses, Mississippi

State also has incentives like meal dollars and book vouchers for students who show proof of vaccination. There will be a raffle for tuition credit.

"We've been in the vaccine business for a while at this point," said Regina Hyatt, vice president for student affairs.

But the university will not be able to house hundreds of students in isolation if there's an outbreak, she said. Last year, Mississippi State used nearby hotels to isolate students, but this year, those hotels are booked. Similarly, Texas Tech University has said it's requiring students who test positive for the coronavirus to self-isolate, but it won't provide space or resources to do so, the student newspaper reported.

The Delta variant is "particularly badly timed" for the start of the fall term.

In not requiring the vaccine, Mississippi State has plenty of company. Out of the more than 3,000 degree-granting institutions in America, only 611 campuses had enacted some kind of requirement as of July 28, according to *The Chronicle's* tracker.

In Arkansas, Caldwell isn't sure exactly how he'll structure his classes in the fall. He just knows that he's expected in the classroom, so he'll be there. McGregor said she would be relying on a combination of a mask, a face shield, and efforts to stay socially distant to teach. Both expect that between now and mid-August, their plans could change again.

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The Covid Precautions Colleges Should Take This Fall

Vaccines will be key to a successful opening, but it would be a mistake to ignore other safety measures.

BY KATE TRACY AND JAY A. PERMAN

PAT KINSELLA FOR THE CHRONICLE

After more than a year of restrictions due to Covid-19, people across the country are increasingly growing tired of wearing masks and isolating themselves. So it's no surprise that as vaccination efforts accelerate, more and more states — against the general advice of public-health experts — are lifting restrictions. The consequence is also no surprise: Covid positivity rates are once again surging.

Higher education is not immune to Covid fatigue. Most colleges are planning to resume in-person instruction this fall, a move supported by most students, who are largely

unhappy with an all-virtual learning environment and eager to have a traditional college experience surrounded by their peers.

Many colleges are counting on mandatory vaccination of students — and perhaps faculty and staff members — to reduce the Covid risk on campus. But even though widespread vaccination is, without question, our most effective means of protecting campus safety, few colleges have actually committed to such a requirement. And vaccination hesitancy is real: [Thirty-seven percent of adults under 45 say they won't get vaccinated](). While mandates or incentives may accelerate vaccine uptake, we must prepare for the possibility that a significant number of our students and employees will remain unvaccinated in the near term.

"We must prepare for the possibility that a significant number of our students and employees will remain unvaccinated in the near term."

Complicating matters is the fact that American colleges are magnets for international students and scholars, and worldwide access to vaccination is predicted to lag behind the U.S. About 1 billion vaccine doses have been delivered, and more than [80 percent of those doses have been distributed to high- or upper-middle-income countries](), meaning Covid-19 variants could continue circulating and creating unknown complications even in countries that achieve high vaccination coverage.

So while there's reason for optimism that the U.S. will achieve herd immunity in the next several months, it's unlikely that immunity will come in time for the fall semester.

Fortunately, higher education has a bigger collection of evidence-based tools to guide us through a successful return to in-person instruction than we did a year ago. And the most valuable tool among them — vaccination — doesn't supplant the others that many colleges have thus far

deployed with great success in preventing and containing Covid infection while campus density is reduced.

Here's what we will continue doing this fall at the University System of Maryland, even while resuming "normal" operations. We think other institutions should consider a similar strategy.

Tap in-house experts. As the pandemic spread last spring and our campuses shifted to remote learning and telework, we assembled expert groups to inform critical decisions. Workgroups were focused on key infection-control aspects of our "return to campus" last fall: Covid-testing and symptom-monitoring regimens, physical-distancing guidelines, masking and hand-washing protocols, and deep-cleaning practices. Having epidemiologists, public-health experts, and emergency managers on the workgroups ensured that decisions were evidence based.

In addition, meetings were scheduled several times a week between system leaders and campus presidents and cabinet members. This improved collaborative decision making and sped up systemwide dissemination of information and best practices. Now is the time for institutions across the country to start assembling similar groups for fall-2021 decision making.

Re-densify. Carefully. In the initial months of the pandemic, reducing density on campuses was one of few strategies available to limit Covid spread. Like many colleges across the country, our campuses offered most classes online or in a hybrid format. Dorm rooms were converted to single occupancy. Staff and faculty members were required to work remotely when possible.

Of course, reduced population isn't a sustainable — or desirable — long-term solution. Students miss the dynamic exchange of ideas that in-person learning provides. They miss the [social engagement and sense of belonging that enhances their college experience and improves retention](). It's why many colleges plan to return to full capacity this fall.

But it's critical that this re-densifying be guided by lessons learned. Colleges should consider their overall vaccination coverage

when deciding capacity guidelines. Keeping some courses in a hybrid format or adding course sections can reduce classroom density. Offering grab-and-go meals can depopulate dining halls. And requiring vaccination for residential students can make dorms much safer, even with full occupancy.

As institutions re-densify, tried-and-true prevention protocols — masking, hand washing, limits on gatherings — will be even more important in controlling viral spread.

Make it easy to monitor and report symptoms. In the earliest days of the pandemic — before testing was widely available — our campuses required daily symptom monitoring for early Covid detection. They developed simple, web-based tools that on-campus students and employees used to report CDC-defined symptoms. Positive symptom reports triggered further assessment and referral to testing for confirmation. Quick contact tracing in collaboration with local health departments and implementation of quarantine and isolation protocols contained spread.

Ideally, vaccinations among students and employees will make daily symptom reporting unnecessary, but they won't fully eliminate the need to monitor for infections, especially as more-communicable Covid variants emerge. At the least, institutions should maintain a passive, easy-to-use surveillance system — one that allows students, faculty, and staff to report Covid symptoms, and that automatically triggers assessment and testing.

Conduct surveillance testing. As last fall approached and molecular tests became more widely available, our campuses incorporated Covid testing into comprehensive plans for a return to in-person instruction. This included testing all students, both residential and commuter, before they arrived. That allowed us to establish a baseline positivity rate against which success in infection containment could be measured.

After arrival, our campuses conducted ongoing surveillance testing of students and employees to identify and respond to outbreaks. This surveillance testing allowed our campuses to remain operational throughout the fall semester, even as Covid positivity rates spiked across the state.

We then adapted our testing strategy in response to the prolonged Covid surge that stretched from the end of the fall semester into the start of spring. Using a combination of molecular and rapid antigen tests, we increased testing frequency — up to twice weekly — capturing at least 50 percent of on-campus populations with each round. Frequent testing with the rapid return of results enabled us to begin this spring semester with known and low campus positivity rates, at the same time that Maryland's statewide rate had surged above 10 percent. Well into spring, our campus positivity rates remain below 1 percent.

While twice-weekly testing might not be required come fall, colleges should continue surveillance testing of people on campus until herd immunity is achieved, with a priority on those not fully vaccinated.

College students can return to campus safely this fall — if we have sufficient vaccination among students, faculty, and staff, and if we sustain those practices that have gotten us through the worst of the pandemic: routine testing, symptom monitoring, density limits, rigorous disease-prevention protocols, and a commitment to learn from our own public-health and crisis-management experts.

Is it a return to normal? For the universities like ours that have followed these practices for a year, it's starting to feel that way. But if continued vigilance allows more students back on campus this fall, then that's a normal we are happy to live with.

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The Pandemic May Have Permanently Altered Campuses. Here's How.

Trends accelerated by Covid-19 may make more sense than ever in the future, experts say.

BY FRANCIE DIEP

One-way signs, sparsely furnished classrooms, and empty faculty offices are the norm now, but they won't last forever. Still, the pandemic may have permanently altered campuses in other ways, accelerating changes that began years before.

The Chronicle asked more than 40 architects, campus planners, and leaders in student life and housing about how several categories of campus spaces might look different in the future. As colleges navigate difficult financial straits, many interviewees predicted more public-private partnerships, and renovations instead of new construction — which can be less costly and more environmentally friendly. Overall, their answers paint a picture of future

campuses that are more adaptable, perhaps smaller, and focused on what's most valuable about seeing one's peers in person.

Classrooms

Even though online learning during the pandemic has had its hiccups, many of the experts *The Chronicle* spoke with expected hybrid classes to persist into the future. That trend will reshape the arrangement of classrooms.

Courses with at least some online, asynchronous components can be better for students who work or care for children during the day, who have health needs that are best taken care of at home, or who otherwise face barriers to coming to campus frequently. As students with more-diverse needs have enrolled in college, Doug Kozma, vice president and campus-planning director for the architecture firm SmithGroup, said he had seen "a really clear shift in space type."

"The changing demographics of America are front and center," he said. "Students of all different shapes and sizes need different spaces, and they need different access to those spaces."

Even "traditional" students — those who are easily able to attend college full time — want a greater ability to do things when it's convenient for them. "Everybody wants more flexibility," said Elliot Felix, chief executive of the consultancy brightspot strategy, "and flexibility generally means a mix of synchronous and asynchronous activities and more online."

Hybrid and online learning may also help colleges deal with shrinking budgets. When officials with the California State University system and Arizona State University spoke with *The Chronicle* in the fall of 2020, they expected their enrollments to grow but feared not having the funds available to build additional classrooms. Cal State saw a $299-million budget cut this year, a result of falling state revenues. Leaders at both institutions are looking to online learning to help fill the gap.

Flipped classes, in which students watch recorded lectures on their own before coming to campus for guided hands-on and group activities, were widely discussed and put in use before the pandemic. They might become even more common in the years ahead, which could stoke demand for flexible classrooms that can be quickly rearranged for different activities.

Large lecture halls, with their immobile and tightly packed seating, might decline,

The Swartz Center for Entrepreneurship at Carnegie Mellon U.'s business school has open, reconfigurable spaces for classes, workshops, and events, as well as for incubating new ventures.

or so many consultants hope, believing that they're not ideal for learning. "I typically say that when you have a large lecture hall, distance learning starts at the 10th row," said Persis C. Rickes, a higher-education space planner who runs her own firm. "You might as well not be in the classroom at that point, because you are not engaged." The realization during the pandemic that large lectures can work well online might push colleges to keep at least some of those courses in that format, several planners said.

In an atmosphere of scarcity, institutions will examine closely whether they're making the most out of their physical spaces and face-to-face time. "We're going to go into every room and we're going to say, 'Is meaningful connection going to happen in this space? Is something going to happen in this space that cannot happen online, that cannot happen at Starbucks?'" said Shannon Dowling, an architect with the firm Ayers Saint Gross. If the answer's no, the next question is whether the space is worth keeping.

Meanwhile, a move to more online learning might create the need for a different kind of space.

In 2014, the Georgia Institute of Technology started an online master's-degree program in computer science that costs most students around $7,000. To date, the program has graduated 3,795 students, most of them over the age of 25 and already employed.

Although they were not required to meet in person, students liked to do so anyway. They organized meet-ups in cities including San Francisco, Austin, and Bangalore. They formed groups like Nerdy Bones, for women, who made up 19 percent of the students in the fall of 2020. Administrators found that as many as 80 percent of the U.S.-based students in each cohort lived within a two-hour drive of one of 10 major population centers. That gave the administrators an idea: Build co-working spaces in those cities, where online students could work and meet one another. Each space, called an atrium, would have career and advising services too.

The university is in the early stages of developing several atria, including one in Georgia. But the need has become more urgent as the pandemic has moved more

Georgia Tech students online. Administrators are seeing that students are talking with their professors and with each other less than they did before.

"The sort of interactions that happen outside the classroom, those are all missing," said Stephen Harmon, associate dean of research for Georgia Tech Professional Education. "Even the ones that happen five minutes before class and five minutes after class, those informal learning opportunities are really important to building learning communities." Students report feeling isolated.

If more students take at least some classes online or in a hybrid format long after the threat of Covid-19 is over, Georgia Tech will want to find ways to make sure those students feel engaged, which just might mean creating more physical spaces for them.

Faculty offices

At Ayers Saint Gross, architects used to call faculty offices the third rail.

Many campus planners have long advocated for fewer traditional, individual, closed-door offices, and more shared workspaces for faculty and staff members, like what many private companies have. The idea is that open, common work rooms will foster collaboration and make instructors more visible and less intimidating to students. A few phone rooms, meeting rooms, and lockers could serve for whenever somebody needed quiet, privacy, and somewhere to store belongings.

Having fewer private offices could also save on heating and electricity costs. On average, 19 percent of campuses' indoor square footage is dedicated to offices, according to a 2007 survey (the latest available) of 276 institutions that are members of the Society for College and University Planning. (Only housing, at 20 percent, commands a larger area.) Using that much space more efficiently could make a big difference to a college's bottom line.

Especially if faculty and staff members will continue to work from home more often, leaving their desks unoccupied some days of the week, colleges could save by having people who come in on different

days share the same private office. As Paul Dale, president of Paradise Valley Community College, in Phoenix, Ariz. put it, it's a way of fitting "30 pounds of potatoes in a 20-pound bag."

Faculty members accustomed to their own offices can be loath to give them up, however. Private faculty-office space is a marker of accomplishment and prestige, said Luanne Greene, president of Ayers Saint Gross. Sometimes it's even written into tenure contracts. But with the pandemic-driven increase in working from home, Greene and her team have seen a shift.

"I've heard many faculty members on the phone going, 'Huh, maybe I don't need this private office space after all,'" Dowling said.

The University of Washington at Bothell is one campus where switching to smaller private offices and more shared workspace for some faculty members has turned out well. In 2015 the university hired 27 tenure-track faculty members — when it had only one or two private offices available. "We were in crisis mode," said Amy Van Dyke, director of physical planning and space management. Susan Jeffords, vice chancellor for academic affairs at the time, came up with the idea of moving some administrative units off campus, then reconfiguring that space as shared faculty work areas.

David Socha, an associate professor of computing and software systems who was on the remodeling team, suggested that it first find out who would be interested in occupying the new style of office. Faculty members who said they were interested included many members of his own department, who were scattered in buildings across the campus and wanted to be nearer one another. "We're a very social group," he said.

There were trade-offs: His colleagues would be giving up 140-square-foot offices

Open faculty offices for flexibility and collaboration are shared by the Johns Hopkins U. and the Maryland Institute College of Art at the JHU-MICA Film Centre.

for 80-square-foot ones. In return, they would get a big conference room and numerous smaller collaboration areas situated among their offices.

Socha said the trade-off was worth it. It's so easy to pop over to ask a colleague a question. Instructors often hold office hours in the collaboration areas, which can accommodate more students than traditional offices can, so the same questions don't get repeated as much. It gives adjunct faculty members a dedicated place on campus to work and keep their stuff.

Of course, few faculty members have gone to work on campus since the university shut down most in-person operations, in March 2020. Whenever they can go back, however, Socha is looking forward to it.

He credited the office plan's overall success to the fact that it "supports each faculty member's uniqueness." They can still personalize their 80-square-foot individual offices with posters and plants. And those who preferred their traditional setups didn't have to give them up. "If we really want the faculty to be their best, and I think that's what students want, then it's prudent to not force structure," he said. "We are not machines. The work we do really has to be creative." It helps if the office kind of feels like home.

At the James B. Hunt Jr. Library at North Carolina State U., an open layout with moveable tables enables reconfiguration based on how people flow and how busy the library is.

Student services, libraries, and administrators' offices

Outside of the faculty, planners have also advocated for more-open floor plans for administrators and staff offices. These kinds of spaces have also been subject to the trend toward consolidation in the quest to save money and retain students.

Where real estate is at a premium, colleges have moved non-student-facing functions to the edges of campus, or even off campus. Before the pandemic, university advancement and information technology were among the departments commonly located away from the campus core. In addition, many universities with large library collections moved less-accessed stacks out of campus libraries.

The result is space freed at the heart of campus for student services. Staff members at several architecture-and-planning firms said they've seen a trend toward one-stop shops for academic or financial support, for example, where writing and tutoring centers are housed in the main undergraduate library, alongside study spaces.

The library and its services may become even more important if more students take classes online. "Given some of their home situations, they may want to come on campus and use their laptop in the library to take advantage of the Wi-Fi," said Christine Wolff-Eisenberg, a researcher who has been surveying college librarians for Ithaka S+R, an education consultancy. "They may have families of their own and want some quiet space."

Or look at what Normandale Community College built just before it went remote in the spring of 2020. Worried that

first-generation students found its bureaucracy confusing, the college, in Bloomington, Minn., created an integrated office where students can come with questions for the financial-aid, records, and payments departments. Right inside the front door is a large, open space where the staff and coaches can answer most questions. For students with tougher queries, private consultation rooms provide space for coaches or staff members to meet with them. Complex questions that previously might have required students to stand in line at several different offices can now be handled in one smooth visit.

At least that was the plan. Covid-19 means the college hasn't had much opportunity to use the center as designed. Nevertheless, it has come in handy for those students who come to campus seeking help. The large welcome area has been good for social distancing, and staff members direct students to the consultation rooms to teleconference with coaches who are working remotely. The rooms are cleaned between visits.

The Covid-19 crisis has sharpened higher education's focus on low-income, first-generation, and other vulnerable students, who are dropping out of college in disproportionate numbers. Where smarter use of space can ease their journeys, architects say, expect those trends to continue.

Dorms and dining

As residential colleges reopened in the fall of 2020, many reduced the number of students who shared rooms in residence halls. Where they felt they could, they gave students their own rooms. Meanwhile, at some institutions that allowed roommates, residence halls became coronavirus hotspots.

Having seen their predecessors go through that experience, will future students be wary of sharing a bathroom with dozens of other people living on their floor? Willmore of them demand singles?

Many experts say there's long been a trend toward more privacy and single rooms. "It was driven by consumer demand," said Frankie Minor, housing director at the University of Rhode Island. "About 90 to 95 percent of our incoming students have their own rooms at home, so the concept of sharing space with anyone is a little unfamiliar and uncomfortable, initially."

In addition, colleges that find themselves serving more-diverse students may also want more single rooms. "There are students with learning differences. There are students with different medical conditions, mental-health conditions," said Dennis Lynch, an architect at Ayers Saint Gross who specializes in housing and dining. "Singles help give flexibility to be able to accommodate students with a variety of needs."

When the coronavirus pandemic arrived, it favored those institutions that already had more private-student housing. Minor is on the Executive Board of the Association of College and University Housing Officers-International, which has been tracking the capacity of college housing. The institutions that have been able to book their rooms close to normal levels — and therefore didn't take a big hit to that budget line — are the ones with more apartment- and suite-style housing, he said.

The University of Rhode Island eliminated triples for the fall of 2020, and ultimately decided not to bring the vast majority of them back. They were already unpopular with students, and administrators had discussed phasing them out. Covid-19 accelerated that conversation.

Minor thinks similar discussions are happening at institutions that, like his, had packed extra students in rooms to try to meet demand. The downside of the new arrangement may be that fewer people who want on-campus housing will be able to get it.

Rickes, the space planner, predicted more micro rooms, like the University of British Columbia's "nano suites," which pack a private bathroom, kitchenette, and Murphy bed/desk into 140 square feet. Such a shift might have further space-use implications. "You start pulling on that thread," Rickes said. "What happens if you have micro rooms? Well, you might see increased use of the library because students are looking for study space."

Other planners and housing officers pointed out that over the long term, many institutions can't afford to rent out their doubles as singles. In addition, barring an

infectious-disease epidemic, colleges may want their newer students, especially, to live with roommates.

At Presbyterian College, in Clinton, S.C., many first- and second-year students live in double rooms that share a bathroom with another double. The college believes double rooms teach students valuable lessons about thinking of others and help them make friends early on, said Andrew Peterson, associate dean of students.

On the other side of the country, the California State University institutions have traditionally been commuter campuses, but in recent years, they've sought to build housing that would allow more students to live like those at Presbyterian. "Even with the pandemic, campuses still have, in their five-year plans, additional bed spaces and are trying to increase the amount of lower-division students that are on campus," said Elvyra San Juan, assistant vice chancellor for capital planning, design, and construction.

To further improve retention, Cal State universities have also planned to include counseling, tutoring, and faculty living spaces in their residence halls, a trend architects say they're seeing nationwide.

In contrast, housing officers and planners say that the age of luxurious dorms, crammed with amenities that would seem to have little to do with academic matters, is over. It had already been declining, as students and families became more conscious of college costs and student debt. The current recession is the last nail. "You're going to see emerging a more heads-down generation," Rickes said. "They want to be reassured that they can get a job at the other end."

Other parts of student-life operations that looked very different in the fall of 2020 are expected to return to their pre-pandemic configurations as soon as possible.

In the fall, many dining halls were rearranged for grab-and-go meals, but in the long run, administrators want to see cafeterias as a place where students spend time together. "We haven't seen people disinvesting in them," said Kozma, the campus planner. "These are social spaces in which students make memories. They are likely not going to go away."
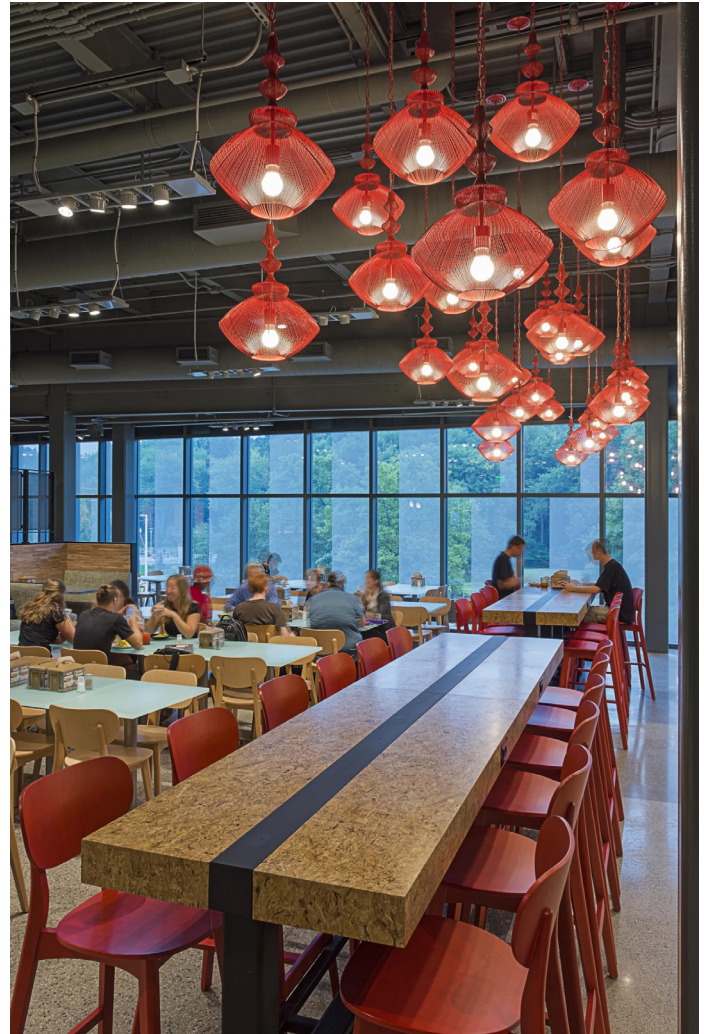
SMITHGROUP

During the pandemic, many colleges rearranged their dining halls for grab-and-go meals. In the long run, however, administrators want to see cafeterias return to being places where students can gather and make friends.

Outdoor spaces

There is one post-pandemic change in space use that campus planners see as an unmitigated improvement: Covid-19 has pushed colleges to make greater use of their wide green lawns, quads, and terraces.

As the coronavirus crisis progressed through the summer of 2020, it became clear that spending time with other people outdoors was much safer than doing so indoors. Several colleges ordered tents so faculty members could teach outside. Most of those came down as fall turned into winter, but across the country, in varied climates, administrators have made

Students chat in the outdoor classroom on the Tempe campus of Arizona State U., which provides many outdoor areas for study and socializing.

improvements in their grounds that they say they're glad to keep.

Colleges bought new outdoor furniture or made sure their existing picnic tables were in good repair. Arizona State built permanent aluminum shade structures to make hanging out under the Phoenix sun more appealing. Arizona State, Cornell University, and the University of California at San Diego are among the campuses that improved Wi-Fi coverage and the availability of outdoor electrical outlets.

San Juan, of Cal State, expects these Wi-Fi hotspots to stay even after the system returns to predominantly in-person instruction. In addition, she has seen constituent institutions submit requests for small amphitheaters and landscaping upgrades.

Before the pandemic, there had been a big push for colleges to better use their outdoor green spaces, which studies show can relieve stress and improve concentration. But tasks such as fixing shade umbrellas often fell low on the priorities list, said Peterson, of Presbyterian College.

Now those umbrellas have gotten respect, and the campus environment is better for it.

Francie Diep is a senior reporter covering money in higher education.

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Academic Libraries Led Universities Into the Socially Distant Era. Now They're Planning for What's Next.

SCOTT CARLSON

CHAD HAGEN FOR THE CHRONICLE

When the pandemic hit in March of last year, administrators at Davidson College approached the library, which had instructional designers on its staff. Could those designers and other librarians help shift Davidson's courses to an online format in the middle of the semester?

"It was all hands on deck," said Lisa Forrest, director of Davidson's library. "Even though the librarians may not have thought of themselves as instructional designers, I think everybody quickly learned that we were speaking a very similar language, and folks realized they all had a role to play in helping to transition those courses."

Within a week, those courses were online. Within another week, the library had moved its student- and faculty-research consultations online, while working on other resources: The library ramped up its digitization efforts, book-retrieval and

contactless book pick-up services, and self-checkout, including a service that allowed people to check out books from their phones anywhere in the library.

Forrest has been working to push the library to establish more digital collections and online services, and to do more outreach since she arrived at Davidson three years ago. The pandemic put those plans into overdrive.

"It showed us just how nimble and agile we can be when we need to be," she says.

In fact, over the past year, academic libraries across the country helped lead their institutions into the socially distant era — in part because libraries had already spent decades figuring out how to offer online services and get information to people who rarely came into the building. In that time, campus librarians have also grappled with the symbolism and role of the campus library, a structure usually situated in a prominent place on campus.

In 2001, *The Chronicle* published my article about the role of the library building in the online era, under the inflammatory headline "The Deserted Library." At the time, online resources were quickly supplanting paper materials, and some people wondered whether we would need libraries when patrons could get so many materials online. In a cover story that discussed the impact of that article many years later, *Library Journal* noted that one academic library director left her job at Bentley College when a senior administrator there came to the conclusion that academic libraries were obsolete.

That view, of course, was wrong. Providing paper books and journals is only one aspect of what libraries do. Libraries are social hubs on campus.

They are increasingly the location of classrooms, auditoriums, cafés, makerspaces, virtual-reality rooms, business incubators, and more. And librarians themselves are increasingly reaching patrons outside their walls.

In the past year, when many academic libraries were now literally deserted, they continued to support students and researchers on campuses. The emergence of the internet changed libraries. Will the pandemic change them even more?

Permanent Shifts?

The library that emerges from Covid-19 is likely to value its digital resources and services even more than it does now, according to library directors and scholars of the field. It's an overdue evolution, says Lisa Janicke Hinchliffe, professor and coordinator of information-literacy services at the library of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Yes, libraries had robust electronic resources and virtual services before the pandemic. But at many of them, technology was still at the margins of their activities, and staffing roles were still very much oriented around analog services and collections.

"The assumption should be that people never use us in person, except sometimes," says Hinchliffe. "The question is, will we go back to analog first and digital second, or
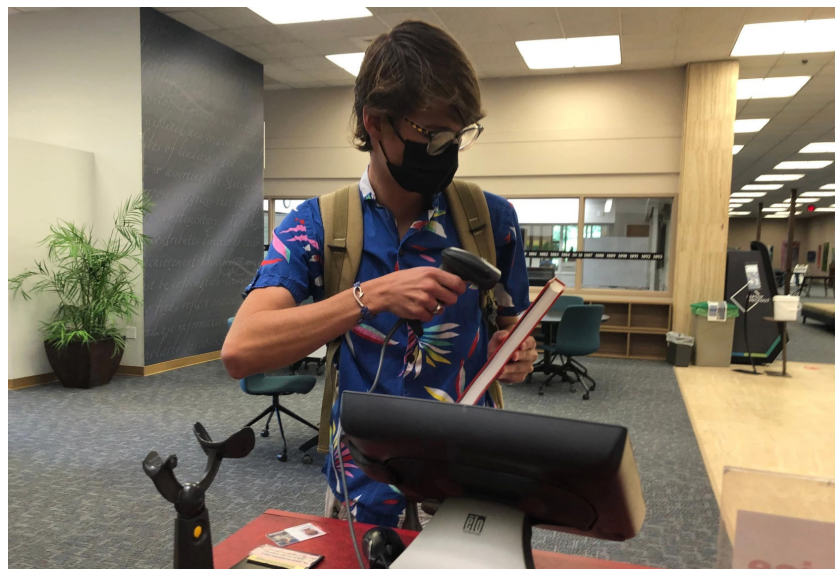
A student self-checks out a book from the library at Davidson College.

will we remain digitally first with the analog in a complementary, important, but not front role? I see the potential for this shift to digital-first to be permanent."

Most of the planning around how patrons will use their libraries focuses on what happens within a building, with remote services being a contingency if patrons don't come in, says Hinchliffe. The pandemic was an experiment in accelerating those services without planning and under duress. Libraries need far more-aggressive outreach programs to patrons and more careful curation of digital collections and e-resources, just to keep the library's expertise and resources in front of students and researchers.

"The more people work remotely, the less they seem to actually seek out the expertise of library workers," Hinchliffe says. "If we [wish to stay](#) '[in the workflow](#)'" — that is, to borrow from the library scholar [Lorcan Dempsey](#), to operate in the online environments where users work — "we probably need far more aggressive outreach programs than we currently have."

On his blog, Dempsey has said that the pandemic should push libraries to offer a "[holistic online experience](#)," apart from the physical space that now marks the value and identity of many libraries. "The forced migration online may mark a final transition into a more full digital identity for the library."

Certainly, in many cases, librarians noticed that the challenges of moving materials and services online paid off, with more participation among students and professors in library activities. Susan Goodwin, associate dean for user services at Texas A&M University at College Station, says the pandemic response has offered opportunities to rethink the library's processes and priorities. The librarians were already helping (and persuading) instructors to shift their course materials to more widely available online educational resources; the pandemic, says Goodwin, "only strengthened our resolve to continue to get the word out."

Consultations and workshops also moved to Zoom, and librarians found they were engaging with more people, from farther distances.

"We had all these participants from other campuses that now suddenly were able to sign up for these workshops that they otherwise would have had to drive to," Goodwin says. "I think our users are ahead of us. The faculty member in a distant building — we have a large campus — doesn't necessarily want to have to come over to the library to talk to an expert about their research. They'd rather connect from their office."

The same dynamic seems to be happening for events for the public as well. Before Covid-19, the library at the University of Rochester, like many academic and public libraries across the country, would regularly hold events with prominent speakers — and sometimes draw a meager audience.

"We'd have a Pulitzer Prize winner, but there's so much competition for people's time that if we happen to pick a night that something else was going on, we'd have 50 people," says Mary Ann Mavrinac, vice provost and dean of libraries at the university. The library moved those events to Zoom, and started drawing 200 to 400 people for some of them.

"And they've been from around the U.S.," Mavrinac says. She thinks the library could use such events to actively woo alumni and donors to support library projects, or the university overall. Consider the possibilities: Not just guest speakers, but discussions of items in the university's special collections or interactive sessions with university scholars. "The engagement is incredible, and they feel really connected to the university."

Complex Human Interactions

Convenience is key — and it has been for some time. Marie L. Radford, professor and chair of the department of library and information science at Rutgers University, says that one of her most-cited studies, from 2011, noted that people use virtual services because they're the most convenient option, not because those patrons are in a rush, as many people had assumed.

Radford has studied virtual reference services for 15 years, and many of the librarians she surveys while studying the field have been offering person-to-person online services for even longer. If colleges move

Charles Library at Temple U.

more of their own outreach and services to online platforms, they might learn something from the experience of their libraries over the past two decades, Radford says.

Online services might be more convenient, she warns, but they have their share of pitfalls.

"They seem deceptively simple because we live online now," she says, "but what's underneath there is the level of complexity about human interaction." Unlike face-to-face interactions, online interactions give users an opportunity to drop away easily; those providing service on the other end have to be aware of engaging them. Radford's studies indicate that patrons come to services like virtual chat with some anxiety — confusion about how to find the materials they need, or even what to look for — and making that human connection can be challenging.

"Now you ask a librarian, and we're behind this little button," she says. "They're not really sure who they're talking to, so you have to develop this rapport."

Remote work could have impacts on the internal culture of library organizations as well, something library directors are already considering — with few answers at this point. At Rochester, administrators are just beginning to convene university-wide discussions about who might be able to work part or full time from home. This raises important questions about equity: If someone gets to work at home, is that a privilege? How do you extend that flexibility to people whose work is based in the office?

During the pandemic, Mavrinac, of Rochester, has hired several people to fill vacancies in critical positions at the library; she is skeptical that those people can be integrated into the culture of her university from behind a screen at home.

"Most of those people have never met colleagues in person, and they don't have the same shared experience," she says. "I wonder about the nature of human relationships." Zoom is far too formal and requires scheduling, which are barriers; with everyone in the building, employees can serendipitously run into each other, and into students and researchers.

"There's an informality about being on site," Mavrinac says. "I'd like to understand

more about how relationships are built. I like to think we actually do need face-to-face."

Heart of the Campus

In many ways, academic libraries are among the most important public spaces on a college campus. A library building is often perceived as a campus's "heart"; Hinchliffe prefers the term "front porch," borrowed from the sociologist Tressie McMillan Cottom, for the way it emphasizes the notion of community rather than collections. For much of the public, a library is a "third place" much like a coffeehouse or a bar — a space that is neither home nor an office, but where people can gather to socialize, work, or simply be alone in public.

Joseph P. Lucia, dean of Temple University Libraries, believes that many of the academic functions of a library can be conducted online. Surely, students will take advantage of that for convenience, and certainly many faculty members prefer to be off campus if not needed in the classroom, lab, or office. It's not clear whether people will still prefer to work remotely after offices and public spaces reopen.

"We will have to work out what the social dynamics of the face-to-face environment look and feel like," he says. "If fewer people are on campus every day, will some of that urban density that was the characteristic of Temple's dynamism — just people everywhere — be diminished a bit? And what will the center of campus feel like?"

In the fall of 2019, Temple opened a new library building, the Charles Library. It was designed by the Norwegian architecture firm Snøhetta and sits along a crossroads of that campus, in a spot that can sometimes feel as crowded as Times Square during the height of the day, says Lucia.

Space affects mind-sets — something that has been as true of libraries as it has of churches or prominent government buildings over centuries. One of the themes of "The Deserted Library" and a number of related and follow-up articles was clear: The "deserted" libraries were often drab, poorly lit buildings. New, well-designed or renovated libraries often led people to rediscover these buildings, and to want to hang out within them.

"The Charles Library is an environment where you walk into it, and it has a feeling, a lightness, a lifting quality that is inspiring," Lucia says. "The design environment, the layout of spaces, the physical materials, and the way they fit together — the geometry communicates a sense of specialness. It takes from a deep history of library architecture, this notion that libraries should be spaces that inspire."

The library was designed in part around the notion of the *stoa* in classical Greek architecture — walkways, lined with columns, that were public marketplaces and community spaces. It was designed to be a social space, but a versatile one that could change with the times.

If you go back far enough, to ancient Egypt, Greece, and Rome, "libraries never were about books," says Craig Dykers, a founding partner at Snøhetta, which also designed the Bibliotheca Alexandrina. They started as outdoor spaces, he says, then moved to semi-enclosed spaces. They were sites of legal debates and community space before they became "semi-sabbatical" places where people sit alone at a cubby.

"In recent history, we have broadened that definition to be actually much more like the ancient libraries of Greece and Rome, to be highly active places," he says. "That type of action, that type of energy, that type of messiness is something the internet cannot replace, even in chat rooms. We'll yearn for that after the pandemic eases our fear of being with other people, and we will once again reoccupy libraries."

Scott Carlson is a senior writer who explores where higher education is headed.

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ADVICE

How to Make Mental Health a Top Priority This Fall and Beyond

Your institution is failing students, a professor argues, if it isn't helping them understand the links between stress, trauma, and learning.

BY MAYS IMAD

One afternoon while I was studying for my doctoral comprehensive exam, my mother called, sobbing, to tell me that someone I loved dearly had been killed in Baghdad. It happened after the U.S. invasion of Iraq — one of many incidents inhumanely labeled "collateral damage." I quickly ended the conversation and went for a walk, picked up red nail polish from a supermarket, and ordered Chinese food takeout.

With hindsight, it's clear I went into a dissociative state — an unconscious break in the normal connection between my thoughts, memories, feelings, actions, and sense of self. I behaved as if nothing had happened. I continued to study for my exam and "show up" to work in my lab. I studied for hours each day, but I was dismayed when I failed to recall what I'd learned the previous day. I remember wondering: Why can't I retain or apply the information? I scolded myself: "I need to stop being lazy and work harder."

Not surprisingly, a few months later I failed my exam. I was devastated, embarrassed, and scared. I apologized to my professors for wasting their time and the university's resources. Luckily, my graduate program offered a retake. I wasn't sure I should try again because I was convinced that something had happened to me neurologically that prevented me from learning. I told my family that I was thinking about dropping out of graduate school; I argued that I no longer had the intellectual capacity to become a scientist: "I must have become stupid over the years," I told my mom. Self-defeatism was a logical explanation for the decline I thought I was experiencing in my cognitive ability to retain — let alone apply — even the simplest of information.

Today, 17 years later, having completed my doctoral and postdoctoral training, I teach undergraduates, coordinate a teaching center, and conduct research on stress and learning. What I now know: The trauma of that shocking loss very likely caused my brain to become hijacked by strong negative emotions and slowed my prefrontal cortex — where motivation, decision-making, and problem solving are located.

I was reminded of my graduate-school hardships when Covid-19 hit the United States. Many colleges and universities began to offer webinars for faculty members on trauma-informed teaching during the pandemic. I participated in some of those webinars and facilitated many. They were long overdue, given the prevalence of trauma and stress among students *before* the pandemic. Faculty participants often expressed relief after these webinars: They appreciated understanding that the mental fogginess, exhaustion, and disconnect they'd been experiencing this year were a typical physiological response to an atypical situation.

In my own courses at an Arizona community college, at least 50 percent of my students lost their jobs last year.

Seeing their reaction, I began to wonder: Who is educating our *students* about traumatic stress and its impact on their learning and well-being?

In my own courses at an Arizona community college, at least 50 percent of my students lost their jobs last year. Many were breadwinners trying to hold it together for their families, yet most kept showing up to class to try to learn. In a national #RealCollege 2020 survey of 195,000 students, nearly three in five reported experiencing food insecurity, housing insecurity, or homelessness at least once in the past year. I began to offer webinars on stress and anxiety for my students and in April 2020 led a series of campuswide sessions on the topic. Much like the faculty participants, the students who attended these webinars were grateful to understand the physiology behind what they were feeling: that, for example, binge-watching Netflix did not mean they were lazy or apathetic; rather, it was a coping mechanism. Among the comments they emailed to me:

- This workshop "helped me to feel like I am normal and that it's OK to feel these things."
- "I feel bad for wasting my [math] professor's time," wrote one student, expressing remorse for not doing well in their course.
- "I know I am not stupid, but these unprecedented times make it difficult to focus and learn."

Reading such comments took me back to that lonely period when I feared I didn't belong in graduate school and should quit. How are we failing our students today by not helping them understand the connections between stress, emotions, and learning? Why aren't we teaching undergraduates about trauma, self-regulation, and mental health? Especially when research on stress and its impact on learning tells us that we can learn to regulate how we deal with adversity and, thus, mitigate its impact on our ability to engage and learn.

Critical to this endeavor of self-regulation is helping students to recognize that they are not alone, develop self-awareness, and learn about their nervous system. Their importance is captured in this comment from a colleague's student: "Knowing that I am not the only one with confusion … made me feel that I am not alone at this moment." Awareness that other students are also struggling can help alleviate that feeling of loneliness and helplessness.

The pandemic "caused a great amount of stress, if not trauma," said Sara Goldrick-Rab, a professor of sociology and medicine at Temple University and founder of a research center focused on students' basic needs for food and housing, in an email interview. "The pain associated with trauma is often undefined yet can have a powerful negative impact on the success and well-being of students."

Trauma profoundly challenges students' self-concept and can affect their self-acceptance, self-image, and self-esteem. To pre-emptively educate students about how stress can interfere with their sense of self is to empower them to protect themselves, said Gloria Niles, director of distance education and coordinator of the professional-development office at the University of Hawai'i–West O'ahu. "Understanding the basic functions of the brain," she said in an email interview, "helps students recognize and delineate their self-identity as a learner from their emotional, psychological, and neurological responses to extraneous factors."

This essay is a plea for colleges and universities to start — and sustain — proactive, holistic mental-health programs for students. Such initiatives are not merely about the effects of the pandemic, and go beyond trauma-informed teaching and learning. I am calling for higher education to cultivate our moral imagination where every student is seen, where we invest in the well-being of the whole student, and where we ground all of our work in an ethics of care.

A holistic approach to students' mental health includes preventative as well as reactive, interventive components. The proactive component entails, in part, validating and empowering students by teaching them about their neurobiology. We want our students to have a growth mind-set — to view failure as an opportunity to learn and grow. We want to cultivate an awareness that when something blocks their learning — such as stress — it isn't permanent, and it doesn't define them.

Let me put it another way. If we were in a clinical setting and we knew it would help diabetic patients to learn about their blood sugar — how to recognize what triggers its fluctuation and then regulate it — and we didn't equip them with that knowledge, we would be doing them harm. In much the same way, we need to accept that many students come to us with a pre-existing mental illness (acknowledged or not) and need help understanding how stress or trauma may trigger their symptoms. Given how mental illnesses are stigmatized, we need to assure students that they are not defined by their condition any more than someone living with diabetes is defined by that disease.

When students experience traumatic stress, it can limit their sense of agency and perpetuate unconscious beliefs about how learning works — for example, that intelligence is predetermined. A student

struggling to complete an assignment may readily adopt a self-deficit interpretation (e.g., "I must be stupid") versus a more self-compassionate understanding (e.g., "I am experiencing a lot of stress. My lack of motivation is not because I am lazy but because I am coping"). We have a moral obligation to help students see the distinction between those two interpretations, especially when the culture in higher education has long marginalized the essential role of emotions and emotional well-being in learning. Our work must intentionally and explicitly normalize asking for help. When students need help, including mental-health support, and don't seek it, we all suffer.

How are we failing our students today by not helping them understand the connections between stress, emotions, and learning?

What's required is a systematic approach to students' mental health and well-being, with an infrastructure that students can readily access on campus, well before the need becomes dire. A report published in January by the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine reached that same conclusion: Higher education, it says, needs "to take comprehensive, campuswide approaches to more effectively address mental health and substance-use problems among students and to develop cultures that support well-being."

Noshene E. Ranjbar, a clinical assistant professor of psychiatry at the University of Arizona and director of its Child and Adolescent Psychiatry Clinic, said in an email interview that an integrative approach to mental health "utilizes a bio-psycho-socio-spiritual framework to gather information and help the student understand their mental-health struggle in context of their whole self." Students need more than a number to a counselor they can contact when they are feeling distress. We need to interview and listen

to students. A holistic approach to mental health, she said "must be strength-based, trauma-informed, culturally sensitive, meeting the student where they are at."

For all of our talk about student success, persistence, and retention, we have fallen short of supporting students in a way they need to be supported and empowered. This mental-health work is not solely the purview of faculty members who, in fact, want more guidance on how to help students on this front. Nor is this work the sole responsibility of campus counseling or student-affairs deans. Mental health is an institutional issue. It is a societal issue. It is an equity and justice issue. Mental health is a human-rights issue. Moving forward, we in higher education can't afford shortcuts. It takes a village to advocate for restoring and maintaining mental well-being. Below, I offer a few approaches and initiatives for colleges and universities to consider:

First, do a self-study. To understand what your campus already is offering, answer the following questions:

- How much of your institution's budget is designated toward mental health? Is mental health one of the top budget priorities for your institution?

- Do you have a team of experts working on a holistic, culturally competent plan? Does the team include students?

- Is your team reaching out to local practitioners?

- Is your institution's mental-health plan aligned with equity and inclusion initiatives? Does your plan deal with intergenerational trauma? Traumas associated with oppression and racialization?

- Do you have patient advocates and an active chaplaincy who are trained in cultural humility? Do your campus police officers receive culturally sensitive mental-health training?

- Are your faculty members trained and empowered to work with campus therapists or counselors to advocate for their students?

- Have you hired an adequate number of therapists to ensure that their work doesn't fall on the shoulders of a select few?

Answers to such questions will help determine whether or not your institution is taking an integrative, proactive approach to student well-being.

Start your holistic approach with new students. Create a foundation by offering orientation sessions for incoming students on the neurobiology of learning and on how they can explore their optimal learning environment. Emphasize that learning is social and emotional. Be mindful not to suffocate students with "toxic positivity" nor to valorize grit. Normalize the idea that stress can feel overwhelming, and support students with evidence-based tools to deal with the stress and trauma.

Organize additional mental-health events throughout the year. Such events should build on what students learned at orientation — for example, teaching students about the autonomic nervous system; about stress and trauma; about sleep, movement, and wellness; and about how to regulate and protect emotions. Encourage students to continue to learn about the brain and how the brain is flexible and can work in our favor when we train it to do so. Start a campaign to encourage students to invite their family members to attend one of the mental-health events at your institution.

Invite faculty members to offer a first-year seminar on learning, emotions, trauma, and healing. Here's an example of one proposed at the University of Michigan. Encourage professors to collaborate on the seminar with local experts to introduce students to the concepts of self-regulation and community healing, and help them learn how to negotiate with their brain and act as an "amygdala whisperer." Such seminars present an opportunity to destigmatize mental health and learn more about how different cultures (for example, Indigenous communities) approach healing. Incorporate into the curriculum capstone projects in which students become mental-health and wellness ambassadors, helping educate their peers and others on the campus.

Hold a campuswide mental-health symposium every month. Use it to normalize mental-health care, to explicitly destigmatize mental illness, and to discuss its connection to equity and inclusion. Talk about potential sources of trauma — including high-stakes exams, proctoring, food and housing insecurity, and marginalization and oppression. Do a "show and tell" where you walk participants through how to seek mental-health support: How can they contact a therapist? A psychiatrist? What do they do if they can't afford the medication? Does your campus or city offer emergency funds? How can students apply and qualify for it? What telephone number do they call if they are experiencing grief or anxiety? Suicide ideation? How can they best help friends or colleagues in need? Invite the audience to program a 1-800 crisis hotline number into their phones.

Those five ideas are far from an exhaustive list. I invite you to share additional suggestions with me on Twitter using the hashtag: #holisticmentalhealthhighered.

I often think of my years in graduate school. I wish I'd known then about the effects of trauma so I could have understood what I was experiencing. I wouldn't have felt like I had to endure my crippling anxiety alone, in silence. I write this essay because I don't want students today to endure a similar crisis alone, in silence.

When we welcome students to our institutions, we are investing in humanity's future by helping them develop intellectually and socially. But part of our work should also be about helping them develop emotionally, nourishing their self-efficacy, and guiding them on how to deal with the inevitable challenges they will face in their lives. As Desmond Tutu's teaching reminds us: "My humanity is caught up, is inextricably bound up, in yours. We belong in a bundle of life. We say a person is a person through other persons." When students suffer, we all suffer.

Additional mental-health resources to consider sharing on your campus:

- [Active Minds](): a national organization focused on young adults and mental health.
- [The Jed Foundation](): a nonprofit that works with high schools and colleges to strengthen their mental-health programs.
- [The National Alliance on Mental Illness](): billed as the "nation's largest grass-roots mental-health organization."
- [The Anxiety and Depression Association of America](): an international nonprofit.
- Two essays on Thrive Global Community from June 2020, "[Pain That's Not Transformed, Gets Transmitted]()" and "[Time to Prioritize Indigenous Youth]()."
- For expertise on Black students and their mental-health needs: the [Association of Black Psychologists](), [Alkeme Health](), and [Therapy for Black Girls]().
- An [October 2020 book]() from Routledge: *Decolonizing Pathways Towards Integrative Healing in Social Work.*

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Student Success This Fall Will Depend on Faculty-Staff Cooperation

Seven ways to foster greater collaboration between the academic and student-support divisions of your campus.

BY LEE SKALLERUP BESSETTE AND JOSEPH P. FISHER

GETTY IMAGES

One endless year ago, administrators could plausibly think they understood "the college experience," because it was steeped in rituals, rhythms, and requirements that stretched back decades. The pandemic severed those connections along with any sense of normalcy — maybe forever. This fall, the academic and cultural experiences that colleges and universities aspire to offer will most certainly be new, but they will not be "normal," and we should avoid fanciful phrasings that seek to elide that reality.

At this point in the pandemic, many undergraduates have taken nearly 50 percent of their coursework remotely or in some hybrid format. Sizable graduate-student populations, particularly at the master's-degree level, will have experienced the bulk, or even all, of their coursework online. Many undergraduates will matriculate to a campus for the first time in the fall without the typical orientation.

How can we best support all of those students? How should we help those in labs and research groups? How should we run mentoring programs? Or supervise extracurricular clubs and activities? And, certainly, how best can we ensure health and safety within campus housing? The questions and answers about this fall are — as has so often been the case in the past year — unprecedented. From our perspective in campus leadership roles in student-affairs and faculty-support departments, we have some ideas on how to proceed.

Relying on past traditions to guide us in the new academic year is not a strategy that will work now. It is also well past time to recognize — in our programming — that the student population is not a monolith. There is no "ideal" student. Our programming has to reflect the lived realities of students beyond the pandemic, to help all of them return to our campuses feeling a sense of welcome and belonging.

What does all of that mean for those of us in student affairs? Our work is directly tied to a central and vital part of the campus experience for the majority of undergraduates (and many graduate students as well). Positioning student-support services as vital and valued in 2021-22 — with the personnel and resources to meet students' needs — should be a priority for administrators.

Another priority: Foster greater collaboration between the academic and support divisions of the institution. There are, and historically have been, meaningful intersections between the two. Now is the time to bring collaboration to the forefront of campus operations. Unless faculty and staff members work together toward the same goal — student success — no amount of targeted programming will overcome the very real deficits our students are now facing due to the pandemic.

Here are seven ways that faculty members can work with those of us in student-affairs departments to create the ideal conditions for student success:

- Expand orientation programs for new faculty members to include a dedicated strand on the role and work of student-affairs offices. Invite staff members to introduce themselves, to offer overviews of our offices, and to make it clear that we exist as resources for faculty members, as well as for students.

- Design a faculty-orientation program for adjunct instructors at a convenient time. Require their attendance, and pay them for their time. Make sure the program includes a dedicated section on student-affairs work.

- Department chairs should poll their faculty members to determine which student-support needs (mental health, disability-accommodation requests, academic preparedness) they see as most pressing for the coming academic year. Based on the results, chairs should invite staff representatives to give talks at department meetings on how to deal with these needs. This should be a top-down expectation to which department chairs are held. Adjunct faculty members should be invited to the presentations.

- Make greater use of faculty-in-residence expertise. By virtue of living with students in campus housing, these faculty members have a broad perspective on everything that students do, including, of course, at-

tending classes. Create formal lines of communication between such faculty members and their departmental colleagues, and with upper-level administration, so that everyone is moving in the same direction and in concert when it comes to holistically supporting students. Draw on the additional expertise of the residential-life office and, for religiously affiliated institutions, of campus ministry.

- When faculty members require students to do group work, make it part of the course curriculum to train students in how to do such work. Dedicate a class session or a lab meeting to this subject. Bring in the relevant staff members to give presentations to the class on how to communicate to fellow students (in a nonthreatening and inclusive manner), how to schedule group meetings, and how to mediate problems in a group (such as when one member isn't making progress on the group assignment).

- Consult with disability staff members about accessible curriculum design and invite them to speak to students about the importance of accessibility, particularly when they are involved in group work or are preparing class presentations. We should be modeling for our students while also requiring them to practice inclusivity and accessibility.

- Invite representatives of student-support offices into your classroom at relevant and meaningful times. Many professors design assignments in which

students have to interview campus staff members to "learn about" what they do. Why not position these staff members as instructional authorities by inviting them to present to students?

Peering into the months ahead, we have an opportunity to do things differently as we plan for a return to campus this fall. With a year of pandemic experience behind us, we can more confidently say that we know what worked, what didn't work, and — most crucially — how much work students and faculty and staff members should be expected to manage. We have an opportunity to pause and reflect on the journey that led us here and on the best ways to forge ahead. We have time to allow the future to catch up to the past.

Most important, now is the time to listen to your student-affairs experts and empower them to make the kinds of meaningful programmatic changes needed for this moment. We know your students, and we are already filled with great ideas on how best to help your particular population of students succeed.

If nothing else, the pandemic has accustomed all of us to working in unconventional ways. We should channel that energy and use it as the basis for new collaborative relationships in the future. What we have recommended here is a starting point.

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Downer Woods on the campus of the U. of Wisconsin at Milwaukee

A 'Trauma Informed' Return to Campus

How one university is creating space for people to process the pandemic's damage.

BY SARAH BROWN

As the University of Wisconsin at Milwaukee started to plan for an in-person fall 2021 semester, Adam Jussel pondered a complicated question.

The university, set a few blocks from the shore of Lake Michigan, had held some of its classes in person in the spring. So Jussel, the dean of students, already knew how to manage the public-health logistics. Now he was trying to look beneath the surface: What would a full return to campus *mean*?

When the university surveyed students on how they were faring last academic year, most of them said they were making it through their classes and obligations. But they didn't feel connected — to the campus, to their professors, or to each other.

Jussel summed up many students' feelings this way: *I'm hurting, but I just don't know what to call that.*

Many faculty and staff members, meanwhile, were feeling traumatized and overwhelmed.

So Jussel and a team of administrators, faculty members, and students started working on what he described as a "human centered and trauma informed" return-to-campus plan. The effort — which includes new training, meditation spaces, and guided discussions — aims to help people form meaningful connections again, take care of themselves, and process their emotions.

Jussel hopes the attentiveness to human needs will help spur a permanent shift in the campus culture.

In a grim budget climate for many colleges, it's easy to feel like there's little room to try new things. UW–Milwaukee is an example of how to thoughtfully — and realistically — bring students back to campus this fall.

"The lives of students have changed forever."

Over the past year, Scott Gronert has read through hundreds of pages of written comments from students and employees. Gronert, dean of the College of Letters and Science, is chair of a campus group that's been scenario-planning and conducting regular surveys since the pandemic began.

Some of the responses have been heartbreaking, he said.

"I feel very disconnected from my peers and I haven't really made any friends on campus," one student wrote. "It's just … lonely."

Another said: "Being isolated for so long makes it extremely hard to be motivated for school."

In a report last fall, Gronert's group emphasized that the university needed to figure out how to address the loss of community. "Just putting the people back together wasn't going to really work," Gronert told

The Chronicle. "The communities had been damaged in so many ways."

A separate survey, led by Jussel and Dimitri Topitzes, a professor of social work, examined the trauma experienced by about 1,000 faculty members, staff members, and student employees. About 40 percent screened positive for post-traumatic stress disorder. About 70 percent had at least one PTSD symptom.

What's more, many of UW–Milwaukee's students have suffered hardship as a result of Covid-19: the deaths of family members or friends, extra caregiving and household obligations, and economic insecurity. Milwaukee enrolls more Black, Latino/a, and Asian students than any other campus in the University of Wisconsin system. One-third of the students are eligible for Pell Grants, nearly 40 percent are first generation, and many work one or two jobs while going to college.

One particularly vulnerable group is the rising sophomores, who spent their first year of college mostly online. They generally understood how to attend their classes, said Aaron Dierks, an adviser in the honors college. But they didn't seem to know where to go if they had to fill out a specific kind of form, or if they needed a certain resource, or if they wanted to join a club. They hadn't found their "home" on campus. That's crucial for student retention and persistence.

"It almost felt like they had one foot in college and one foot still in high school," said Lauren Fleck, another honors-college adviser.

Fleck recalled a recent advising appointment with a rising sophomore who was simultaneously excited and conflicted about in-person classes. He "was really anxious and kind of terrified that he would be seen as a sophomore" who knows his way around campus when, in fact, he needs the sort of guidance typically reserved for freshmen, she said.

It was clear, Jussel said, that transitioning back to campus was going to be complicated — practically and emotionally — for many people.

One student put it this way in a survey: "I'm nervous to go back in the fall. I don't know what to expect. I don't even know what's normal anymore."

Jussel didn't want to pretend like everything was normal. He wanted to give people the space to talk about difficult experiences they'd had and ease back into the bustle of campus life, instead of "ripping the Band-Aid off."

But he wasn't sure what that should look like. So in March, Jussel turned to an unusual partner: the university's Lubar Entrepreneurship Center.

The center hosts "design thinks," collaborative brainstorming sessions that help people try to solve big, ambiguous problems, said Nicole Powley, the center's assistant director for programs. It was an ideal process for trying to answer Jussel's philosophical questions.

Around 40 faculty members, staff members, and students participated in the community-focused design think. They interviewed 150 people across campus — students, custodial staff, and others — about their experiences during the pandemic. The group organized the most striking quotes around themes. Then each participant dug into what it would take to solve the issue identified in a particular quote — for instance, a student reporting that they hadn't yet made any friends.

Emma Mae Weber, who served as student-body president last year and participated in the design think, said students were all over the map about returning to campus this fall. Many wished they'd been taking classes in person the whole year. Others wondered if they ever wanted to go back. Some remained nervous about contracting Covid-19.

"No matter how you felt, there was some form of fear," Weber said. Across the board, she added, "the lives of students have changed forever."

The design-think process produced a few concrete ideas for how the university might rebuild community. Since then, Jussel has convened most of the participants every two weeks to move them forward.

One suggestion was to develop a training session about trauma. Jussel teamed up with Topitzes, the social-work professor, and Jason Katte, assistant director of counseling services, to create a one-hour workshop on how trauma affects people, and how to react when someone shows signs of trauma. This month, they began offering the training for student-orientation leaders, as well as any interested faculty and staff members.

"I'm nervous to go back in the fall. I don't know what to expect. I don't even know what's normal anymore."

The sessions start out by defining trauma and explaining how prevalent it is on the Milwaukee campus, based on the recent survey data. The training then identifies tools that help people become more resilient against trauma, like social connections and mindfulness, and educates attendees on what post-traumatic growth can look like.

"We see a lot of people almost exhale because we're validating a lot of the feelings that they have," Jussel said. This fall, the university plans to have other opportunities, like guided discussions, for students, faculty members, and staff members to come together and process difficult experiences.

Jussel's group also worked with academic affairs to develop a trauma-informed tool kit for professors, offering guidelines for integrating care into their teaching. "We don't want to coddle and cater to our students to the point where we lose our mission," said Professor Topitzes, who's also co-founder and associate director of the university's Institute for Child and Family Well-Being. "At the same time, we want to honor their experiences so that they can bond with the institution at the same level, if not at a deeper level."

Beyond the trauma-education efforts, the university is designating a handful of spaces across campus for contemplation and meditation, or just getting away for a few minutes on a busy day. The goal, Topitzes said, is to transform a few existing communal spaces, like a room on the third floor of the student union, with

soft lighting, comfortable seating, and re-sources on meditation.

Jussel's group is also working with the campus chapter of Active Minds, a mental-health advocacy group, on a campaign promoting self care, especially for faculty and staff members. Formal meditation might not be for everyone, Jussel said, but a walk in nature might be: The campus has an 11-acre forest.

For rising sophomores, Colin Daly, the director of welcome programs, is mak-ing sure they know about resources that they might not have taken advantage of last year, like fall welcome events and peer mentoring. The honors college, meanwhile, is holding its first-ever sophomore-only orientation. The college will partner with the entrepreneurship center to get students interacting over games and team-building exercises.

"We didn't want these students to be lost," said Dierks, the adviser. "If we're go-ing to lose anyone, these are going to be the wanderers who don't know a whole lot of what's going on."

Of course, UW–Milwaukee hasn't an-swered all the existential questions about returning to campus. If students contin-ue to want more academic flexibility, like hybrid classes, how will that affect their connections with the campus and one an-other? Will the isolation brought on by the pandemic have lasting effects?

Jussel stressed that the university's ef-forts aren't going to solve everyone's strug-gles with disconnection and trauma. But he hopes their work will have an impact on how students, faculty, and staff perceive the institution.

"I hope they can say, This place cares about you," he said.

Sarah Brown covers campus culture, includ-ing Title IX, race and diversity, and student mental health.

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