PURDUE UNIVERSITY FORT WAYNE: APPROACHES TO SUSTAINING A SAFE AND HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT AT A REGIONAL PUBLIC UNIVERSITY

Jeffrey J. Malanson, Ph.D.
Director of Strategic Planning and University COVID-19 Point of Contact
Summary

This presentation offers a brief overview of Purdue University Fort Wayne’s efforts to effectively develop and implement a campus reopening plan based on the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s recommended COVID-19 mitigation strategies. Purdue Fort Wayne re-opened for in-person instruction and work at the end of June 2020 and has successfully and safely remained open throughout the pandemic.
Outline

- Purdue University Fort Wayne
- Scenario Planning for 2020-21
- Communication, Collaboration, and Solution-Oriented Responsiveness
- Health and Safety
- Proactive Planning for Fall 2021 and Beyond
University Background and Context

- **Fort Wayne, Indiana**
  - Population: 265,752

- **Comprehensive metropolitan public university**
  - 6,370 undergraduates (90% from Indiana; 49% from Allen County)
  - 509 graduate students
  - 318 full-time faculty
  - 715 full-time administrative, clerical, and service staff

- **Indiana University Fort Wayne**
  - Health Sciences focus; shares our campus; PFW and IUFW were a single university (IPFW) prior to July 2018
  - PFW provides courses and services to 1,055 IUFW students
SCENARIO PLANNING FOR 2020-21
Early Background

- The university closed all campus buildings and moved to fully remote operations—including moving all courses online—in March based on CDC recommendations and state and Purdue University policies.
- PFW is part of the Purdue University System, but most aspects of campus operations—including COVID planning—is campus specific.
Planning for 2020-21

- Staying remote for the 2020-21 academic year was not an option
  - Spring experience made clear that students wanted and needed in-person instruction
- Planning question: Is there a pathway to safely reopening campus and maintaining a low-risk environment for in-person instruction and work?
  - With the resources we have at our disposal?
Collaborative Scenario Planning

- Month-long scenario planning process (May 2020)
  - Leverage faculty and staff expertise to identify the opportunities and challenges associated with 8 scenarios for how the 2020-21 academic year could play out
  - 22 task forces; 140 faculty and staff (13.6% of university full-time employees)

- Rationale for approach:
  - Limited administrative capacity for planning on this scale
  - Broad engagement created awareness of planning effort and demonstrated the value placed on faculty and staff expertise and input
  - Helped build long-term buy-in and trust of planning outcomes

Purpose of Scenario Planning

Using the information developed through this process, university leadership will be positioned to make and communicate informed decisions about how to plan for Fall semester and respond in the event of future disruptions related to COVID-19.
Scenario Planning Task Forces

- Academic Success: Fall 2020 Beginners
- Academic Success: Graduate Students
- Academic Success: Returning Undergraduate Students
- Auxiliaries and Food Services
- Community Engagement, Governmental Affairs, Development
- Diversity, Equity, Inclusion
- DOE, HLC, ICHE, Disciplinary Accreditation
- Faculty Scholarship, Promotion and Tenure
- Fall 2021 Enrollment Funnel
- Health, Safety, Sanitation
- Human Resources

- Library
- Non-credit, Auxiliaries, Resident Organizations
- Non-lecture-based Instruction
- Student Housing
- Student Life and Experience, Athletics
- System Relations
- Teaching and Learning
- Coordination with IU Fort Wayne
- Mixed Modality Opportunities and Approaches
- Revenue Projections, Expenditure Modifications
- ROTC
Scenario Planning Outcomes

- 400+ pages of planning documents that have informed all aspects of subsequent university COVID-19 planning
- Themes that shaped implementation strategy:
  - Communication
  - Accommodations for students, staff, and faculty who can or will not return to campus
  - Student and faculty illness
  - New health, safety, and sanitation procedures
  - International students
  - Future transition(s) to hybrid/remote operations
  - Applied learning experiences
  - How to evaluate, compensate, and reward faculty and staff
Key Recommendations and Outcomes

- Campus would reopen for in-person instruction and work
  - Instructors would have latitude to move online or offer hybrid courses
  - Administrative units would have latitude to modify operations
- Maintain our normal academic calendar
- PFW Prepared Committee
- COVID-19 Point of Contact (CDC guidance)
COMMUNICATION, COLLABORATION, AND SOLUTION-ORIENTED RESPONIVENESS
Communication

- PFW Prepared website and weekly newsletter: [www.pfw.edu/prepare](http://www.pfw.edu/prepare)
- Directed outreach on instructional, student, HR, and other issues
- Social media and marketing
- COVID data dashboard and analysis
Communication

- Weekly PFW Prepared Q&A Sessions
- COVID-19 Point of Contact
  - Provide information, answer questions, respond to concerns
  - Coordinate work of various planning groups to ensure consistent decisions and messaging
- Regional media (TV, radio, print, internet)
- Community stakeholder engagement
- Goal: Get the right information into the hands of the right people at the right time
Collaboration

- Course scheduling, facilities, special events
- Instructional preparedness
- Educational Technologies Team
- Expanded crisis management group
- Significantly expanded and improved coordination across university offices
- Contact tracing protocol with the Indiana State Department of Health and Allen County Department of Health
- Goals: Ensure consistency in information and guidance, prevent redundant effort, maximize resources, encourage innovative solutions
Solution-Oriented Responsiveness

- **COVID-19 Point of Contact**
- **Multiple rounds of surveys**
  - First set of in-person instructors in summer 2020
  - All instructors in the first few weeks of Fall semester
  - All employees at end of Fall semester
- **Town halls**
- **Goal: Answer every question, fix every problem (that could be fixed)**
  - Recognition that our planning and preparation would not be perfect; commitment to finding solutions
HEALTH AND SAFETY
Health and Safety Protocols

- Face masks required for everyone on campus
  - In all campus buildings and outside when social distancing is not possible
  - 40,000 cloth face masks distributed to all faculty, staff, and students
- Events with outside participants limited to 25 people
- CDC and Indiana State Department of Health guidelines followed across all aspects of university operations
- ASHRAE guidelines followed for ensuring indoor air quality (6-15 air exchanges per hour)
Sanitation and Cleaning

- Hired a local company to provide an additional 30% boost to our cleaning staff
- All classrooms cleaned twice daily and public surfaces cleaned continuously
- All classrooms and department offices have a sanitation station with hand sanitizer, disinfectant, paper towels, and wipes
  - Hand sanitizer sourced locally (Fort Wayne and Huntington)
Building Configuration

- De-densified seating in classrooms, auditoriums, and common areas
- Revised pedestrian traffic management across campus to promote social distancing
  - One-way corridors and stairwells, dedicated building entrances and exits
PROACTIVE PLANNING FOR FALL 2021 AND BEYOND
**Proactive Planning**

- Started planning for Spring 2021 almost as soon as Fall 2020 began
- Deep-dive for Fall 2021 (and beyond) focused on:
  - Transitioning the university back from COVID operations to a better normal
  - Determining what that better normal should look like
- Academics and Student Support
  - Task force charged with developing recommendations on instruction; special focus on understanding and meeting / adjusting student expectations
    - Especially students new to PFW in 2020-21 and 2021-22
- Operations Planning
Proactive Planning

- Planning Principles
  - Live our Core Value of putting Students First
  - Create a better normal for our university
  - Embrace a wellness mindset

- Forward-looking conversations and reflection
  - Not just getting “back to normal”—not everything we did before the pandemic was necessarily optimal, logical, or rational
  - Learn from the past 12 months and define a better normal for our university
  - Empower people to embrace change in a way that we are often resistant to in academia
LEARN MORE

pfw.edu/prepared

Jeff Malanson, malanso@pfw.edu