

Anonymous University

Sector: Nonprofit | Size Range: 500-999 Employees | Interviewed: 6/9/2020

The Organization

The employer is a small, private university located in New Jersey.

COVID Task Force

The university's return to campus task force is chaired by their VP of Operations and VP of Student Life. The task force includes representatives from Health Services, Facilities, HR, Compliance and Risk, Athletics, Resident Life, Faculty, Academic Affairs/Registrar, and Campus Safety and Security. An HR employee helps prepare the agendas, minutes, and materials. The group meets for several hours per week and reports back to the full cabinet.

Safety Measures for the Administration

Almost everyone who is currently working is working remotely, and some employees have taken their desktop computers home. The task force has developed a spreadsheet and had discussions with supervisors on the extent to which positions require face-to-face contact. Supervisors were asked to develop plans laying out how employees in their areas could accomplish social distancing. Office environments vary in layout (cubicles vs. offices) and some departments only engage with students indirectly. They have weighed questions of which employees need to be on campus. The task force recently sent out a questionnaire asking employees whether they fall into the categories outlined by the EEOC in accordance with CDC guidelines including higher-risk groups, and they plan to follow up to those individuals.

Telework

The pandemic has caused the administration to reconsider their future approach to telework and sick employees. Even after a vaccine becomes widely available, it may make sense to ask employees to not come to the office if they are sick. If they are well enough to work but contagious, it will in many cases be possible for employees to work remotely. Supervisors may become more flexible about allowing intermittent telework, particularly for employees with far commutes.

Closure

The university evacuated the campus in March and extended their spring break to work out the transition to remote learning. At the moment, they are running their summer programming remotely.

Safety Measures Around Campus

The university has enhanced their cleaning protocols, improved their ventilation, and procured electrostatic foggers for their classrooms. They will be cleaning more frequently. The administration is considering the best ways to encourage social distancing on campus. As an example, the department of Student Life has been cataloguing the areas with the highest student congregation so they can make informed decisions on how to best encourage social distancing throughout campus. The administration has ordered masks for students, faculty, and staff and have emphasized personal hygiene and personal responsibility. They are branding their social distancing signage and decals to make the materials both informative and fun for students. The university is installing media equipment in classrooms to allow for synchronous learning and make it possible to stagger how many students are physically in class each day. They are installing acrylic shields in certain locations and offering face shields to all faculty and possibly other PPE to certain faculty.

Ensuring Access

Some of the university's students lacked access to reliable internet and devices, so the administration worked to ensure they could access classes. They gathered available laptops and chromebooks, catalogued them with the library, and offered them to students. They were able to cover the need with their existing technology supply since they had chromebook carts and laptop labs throughout campus.