Rush University COVID-19 Response Playbook

RUSH UNIVERSITY

As of 5/14/20

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RUSH Overview:

Rush University System for Health (RUSH) is an academic health system in Chicago whose mission is to improve the health of the individuals and diverse communities it serves through the integration of outstanding patient care, education, research and community partnerships. RUSH is comprised of Rush University Medical Center, Rush University, Rush Copley Medical Center and Rush Oak Park Hospital, as well as numerous outpatient care facilities. Rush University, with a diverse student body of over 2,700 students, is a health sciences university with four colleges: Rush Medical College, the College of Nursing, the College of Health Sciences and the Graduate College.

On March 2, 2020, Rush University Medical Center activated the Hospital Incident Command Center, or HICS, in anticipation of the growing number of COVID-19 cases in the Chicagoland area. The HICS structure provided a centralized, methodical and organized system of acute issues and potential threats, in order to devise strategic, rapid and executable solutions. Additionally, HICS uses a high-level matrix of clear accountability while determining resources needed. The command center model is an effective management tool for organizing personnel, facilities, equipment and communication at the scene of an emergency. Command centers ae an effective, flexible and scalable emergency management tool — they can be established for emergencies of any size and adaptable to the specific incident.

Chapter 1

University Command Center

University Command Overview

As the HICS leaders began strategizing Rush's response, it became clear that the University would need its own dedicated command center team to respond the to the challenges that would impact our operations, learning environment and academic support structure significantly. On March 6, 2020, Rush University leaders formed the University Command Center (UCC), which included the University's president*, provost*, vice provosts, deans from all four colleges, as well as leaders from all essential units:

- Center for Teaching Excellence and Innovation (CTEI)
- Center for Academic Excellence
- Compliance
- Department of Marketing and Communications*
- Division of Student Affairs
- Employee Health Services
- Environmental Services
- Facilities
- Information Services (IS)
- Office of Faculty Affairs
- Office of Human Resources
- Office of Legal Affairs
- Office of Research Affairs
- Office of Student Financial Affairs
- Security

*Indicates members of both HICS and UCC

The primary goal of the UCC was to develop a comprehensive plan to ensure the continuation of course delivery and uncompromised quality of education, as well as critical clinical and basic research obligations during this crisis, while protecting the safety and well-being of students, faculty and staff. Several members of UCC were also HICS participants, which ensured that the university's plans were in alignment with HICS plans and provided the opportunity to share relevant information between the two teams. The UCC team met daily, was fully engaged and worked as a team to solve problems, provide change management, quell concerns and provide transparency related to the evolving situation.

Composition of University Command Center

Academic Affairs
Vice Provost, Registrar

Student Affairs
Vice Provost

Continuing Education
Vice Provost

College Leadership
Deans, Associate Deans

Research
Vice Provost

Legal
General Counsel

Finance
CFO

Executive Leadership
President and Provost

HR Business
Partner

Technology
SVP, AVP

**Facilities &
Environmental Services**
Directors

Community Engagement
Senior Director

Staff & Faculty Council
Chairpersons

Communications
AVP, Director

Compliance
AVP

Chapter 2

Business Continuity Checklist

Business Continuity Checklist

A major disaster can jeopardize the education of thousands of students while disrupting normal operations for faculty and staff. Therefore, planning and preparing for various types of disasters is critical for a university. A business continuity checklist can help University leadership mitigate a disaster proactively and efficiently. Our checklist played a pivotal role in our response to the rapidly changing environment during the COVID-19 pandemic.

1 University Command Center Setup and Operations

Identify University leaders and participants that will meet regularly to develop and execute plans for crisis mitigation

2 Board of Govenors

Create a cadence for regular reporting to the Board of Governors. Collaborate with the Board of Governors on fundraising and leveraging their network

3 Accreditation

Monitor changing requirements from accrediting bodies. Ensure that program changes are aligned with accreditation requirements

4 Facilities

Close facilities for non-essential personnel. Explore alternate use of facilities to address additional space requirements

5 Student Life

Address student financial aid, commencement, orientation, wellness, housing, events, health insurance in response to the crisis

6 Finance

Monitor local, state and federal grant opportunities. Track disaster related expenses for potential reimbursement from the government

7 Communication

Establish a cadence for regular communication to all stakeholders using a townhalls, website and social media. Request exemptions from state and federal laws to ease adverse effects of crisis

8 Research

Identify and prioritize research opportunities from federal, state and industry sources. Create policies to address funding issues resulting from disruption of normal laboratory and research activities. Assess new research protocols. Apply for NIH supplemental grant opportunities

9 Community Engagement

Map volunteer opportunities to interested students. Obtain appropriate waivers from participating students. Coordinate volunteer opportunities with office of Community Engagement

10 Metrics

Track number of people impacted globally, nationally and locally; number of courses scheduled; number of courses migrated online and number of new clinical trials

11 Education & Academic Effectiveness

Support students and faculty in migration to remote instruction. Expand and adapt continuing education and CME to include COVID-19 grand rounds and real-time educational opportunities. Assess the effectiveness and quality of education

12 Wellness

Educate students, faculty and staff on available wellness resources. Conduct periodic virtual wellness rounds to reinforce wellness and available resources

13 Human Resources

Create/modify policies to address work-from-home, PTO, leave, redeployment of workforce. Consider hiring freeze for non-essential positions

14 Technology

Assess the readiness for migration to remote testing and work from home. Support students and faculty with training and tools for remote instruction

15 Surge Plan

Create guiding principles for deploying faculty and students. Create a list of faculty and students available to assist with the surge and track their deployment

Chapter 3

University Communication Strategy

University Communication Strategy

The primary goal of internal and external University communications was to be completely transparent and timely with communication to all stakeholders. As the UCC made decisions regarding University operations, regular email communications were distributed to the University community related to class updates, changes on campus, FAQs, travel-related policies and services that were accessible remotely. University communications also included health information on the novel coronavirus and associated symptoms, the importance of social distancing, procedures on what to do if you begin to feel ill and tips for avoiding illness, including a video on handwashing. Important announcements were also distributed by the University and colleges on social media using Twitter, Facebook and Instagram.

Watch Video

Watch Video

In addition to University-wide emails, the deans sent regular communications to their students with college-specific updates. To help streamline COVID-19 communications, dedicated COVID-19 email addresses were set up for each college so students could submit questions and concerns directly to the deans.

A COVID-19 information page was created on the Rush University (www.rushu.rush.edu) public website to share health information, wellness resources, travel restrictions and updates, FAQs, remote learning and teaching instructions and copies of all internal communications. Students, faculty and staff were directed to this site in every internal communication. This site was also designed so that other stakeholders, including parents, could receive updates on what was happening at the University.

Chapter 4

Online Instruction

Online Instruction
(Assessment for readiness and flipping the switch)

When the COVID-19 pandemic hit Illinois, there were 325 active classes, clinical rotations and labs in progress at the Rush University campus. On March 9, 2020, the University held a virtual town hall during which members of the UCC and infectious disease specialists discussed plans for the University to transition all instruction to virtual platforms within a few days. 725 participants joined the session. Q&As were captured and any questions not fully answered during the town hall were addressed in writing and posted on the University website for those who could not participate live.

On March 10, 2020, the UCC decided to migrate all in-person classes to remote platforms for 10 weeks beginning March 13, 2020, with plans to monitor and reevaluate the situation based on community spread of the virus and the safety of students to return to campus. Several courses were already being taught online, and these continued unaltered.

To determine readiness for migrating onsite courses to a synchronous or asynchronous platform, Information Services (IS) hosted two successful "stress test" sessions with over 700 students participating. IS also upgraded network capacity and began offering 24/7 remote tech support to all students, faculty and staff. Both students and faculty were able to check out additional equipment from IS remote work and learning.

In addition, faculty completed a "teaching remotely survey" to determine how many courses were ready for remote instruction. The survey indicated that 57 percent of courses were ready to be taught remotely (green), 22 percent could be taught remotely but needed more time/support to transition (yellow), and 21 percent could not be taught remotely because they were clinical rotations or labs (red). IS and the Center for Teaching Innovation and Excellence created a support command center to work with faculty one-on-one to transition curriculum to remote instruction. The center was designed to remain available for the duration of remote instruction. A resource center was also created within Blackboard and published on the University website to assist faculty with migration of their courses.

The online curriculum was designed to mirror face-to-face class curriculum to ensure continuation of course delivery and uncompromised quality of education. Where possible, synchronous teaching was encouraged to provide instruction via WebEx or Zoom to be delivered in the same timeframe as the onsite courses. A comprehensive guide for online learning was also provided to students. Both students and faculty were surveyed throughout the remote learning period to assess the quality of the delivery of the curriculum and to identify and fix any issues.

With the number of COVID-19 continuing to increase in Chicago and the Illinois, in mid-April the UCC decided to continue remote teaching through the summer term.

Rush University Readiness for Remote Learning
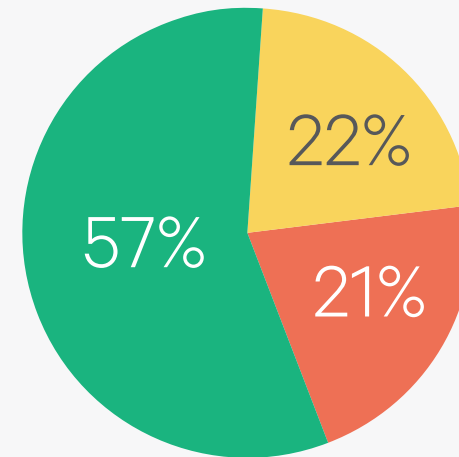
- Learning transitioned to remote platforms
- Remote learning possible with more transition time
- Remote learning not possible, clinical rotations or labs are required

Chapter 5
Facilities

Facilities

Armour Academic Center Closures for Non-essential Personnel

The campus closure was gradual over two weeks. Initially on March 6, Rush University decided to halt all on-campus events with more than 50 people in attendance. All scheduled events were reviewed and event organizers were informed if their events were being cancelled or postponed.

On March 13, having transitioned all learning and special activities to remote platforms, the UCC decided to restrict access to Armour Academic Center (AAC), the main University building, to essential staff, researchers and those students who needed access the building before and after clinical rotations. All meeting rooms, classrooms, study spaces and lounges were closed. Non-essential staff were advised to work from home, with managers determining essential staffing. Human resources modified the work from home policy and developed an attestation form to accommodate this rapid change.

Rush University remained completely open during the pandemic, but all services were transitioned to online access, including:

- Center for Academic Excellence (tutoring and academic support for students)
- Center for Innovative and Lifelong Learning (continuing education to support faculty and staff)
- Center for Teaching Excellence and Innovation (technological and instructional design support for faculty)
- Counseling Center services for established patients, as well as continued 24/7 access to the Rush Wellness Assistance Program
- Human Anatomy Laboratory
- McCormick Educational Technology Center (computer lab, technology check-out and 24/7 help desk support)
- Office of Mentoring Programs
- Rush Center for Clinical Skills and Simulation
- Rush University Medical Center Library
- Student Accessibility Services

On March 16, the University cancelled all clinical rotations for students, leaving fewer people in AAC. On the same day, the remaining on-site tech support staff moved to the Triangle Office Building on the other side of campus. With the novel coronavirus spreading in Chicago, a testing facility was opened on the first floor of AAC, resulting in the closure of the building on March 19, except for a few authorized personnel. The building closure included the closure of West Side Food Hall and the Rush Matthews Bookstore. Physical access to the building was restricted two entry points — the north entrance on the first floor and the east entrance on the fourth floor from the parking garage.

With the closure of campus, all Rush students and employees were required to sign up for the RU Alert system — an emergency management system that provides critical alerts on key decisions and events.

Additional Disinfection Methods

In late February, the University facilities team added more hand sanitizer stations throughout AAC, including by the elevators on each floor. Facility crews monitored soap and hand sanitizers stocks more often throughout the day and Environmental Services cleaning crews rounded more frequently to disinfect surfaces. Staffing was increased and procedures were reviewed and revised to help prevent spread of the virus on campus.

Other facility changes

The Rush Fitness Center temporarily closed on March 16. Member dues were prorated to compensate for all days the center was closed in March and April dues were not collected. Annual members were told their expiration date would be extended for the same number of days that the center is closed.

The few employees, faculty and students who needed to be on the Rush University Medical Center campus were provided free parking. Monthly parking fees were waived.
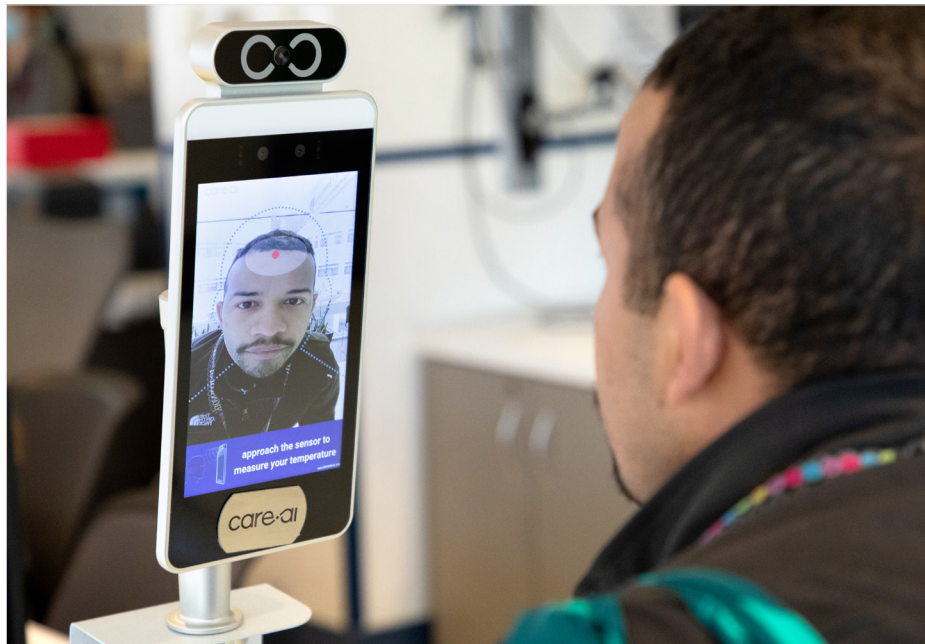
Chapter 6

Student Affairs

Student Life and Engagement

With all students off-site, the nearly daily student activities and special events on campus came to a halt. When possible, organizers converted their events to a virtual platform. The Student Life & Engagement team worked with student affinity groups to encourage them to organize online events. In addition, students had recently been provided with Office 365 software and IS developed a Quick Start guide to help students create virtual collaboration/study groups via the Microsoft Teams app.

Each of the colleges addressed student engagement in keeping with their traditions and adding new opportunities by leveraging social media and other virtual outlets. In the medical college, leadership quickly adapted one of the most significant and long-standing traditions, Match Day, to a virtual event. On March 20, deans and directors hosted an online celebration for the graduating medical students, with congratulatory messages from the dean and associate deans and a traditional countdown to 11 a.m. when students across the nation received their residency placements from the National Residency Matching Program. After students received their match results, Rush's clerkship directors held virtual meetings with students who matched in their medical specialties to congratulate the group and learn where each student would begin their careers as physicians.

Commencement

The Rush University 48th annual commencement for 800+ graduates from all four colleges was scheduled for April 30. It became apparent that the state of Illinois "shelter in place" order issued on March 21, which was vital in slowing the spread of COVID-19, would still be in place at the end of April. Immediately, the University Commencement Committee began work to develop a digital alternative. The committee invited graduating students from each college to help create a unique and engaging event that would recognize the graduates and include elements important to them. A vendor was selected to create a digital "flip-book" to share a few commencement traditions, such as a video of the keynote speech and awarding an honorary degree to the speaker and a video of the president of the university with a message to the graduates and their families. In addition, the digital flipbook included a microsite for each graduate, where they shared their favorite Rush memories and messages of gratitude, and received congratulations from their faculty. Graduates were sent their diplomas as well as Rush keepsake gift box containing the commencement's traditional printed program, a letter from University president and as a special gift this year, their graduation regalia.
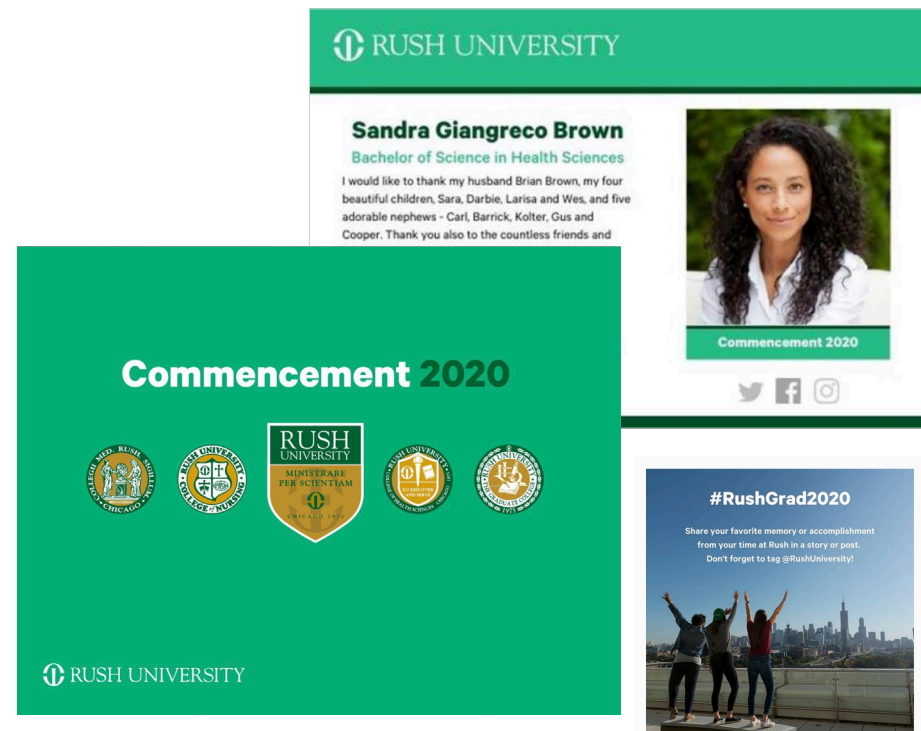
Health & Wellness

To ensure the health and safety for the entire Rush University community, access to free medical video visits was established for students, faculty and staff experiencing potential COVID-19 symptoms.

Students, faculty, employees and their families continued to have access to 24/7 support through the Rush Wellness Program, which provides telephone or video counseling and additional services. The on-campus Counseling Center for students, residents and fellows, converted its office visits to telephone counseling for its existing patients. Rush Wellness ramped up its services and messaging, and hosted Wellness Rounds — webinars for the entire Rush community that focused on advice to stay connected, avoiding the pitfalls of isolation, and the use yoga and physical activities to handle the stress brought on by the pandemic.

Community Engagement

Rush University students have always been active volunteers in the West Side community and elsewhere, and this remained unchanged once the pandemic hit Chicago. When learning moved off-site, students immediately found new ways to serve the community. One medical student created a crowd-sourced Google document so Pilsen neighbors could sign up to help immunocompromised people avoid crowded places. More than 30 neighbors volunteered to grocery shop, dog walk and even babysit for neighbors in need. Other students came together to baby sit, grocery shop and provide other household help to Rush and Stroger Hospital of Cook County clinicians who were busy with long hours of clinical work.

To ensure the safety and health of our students, all Rush-sponsored volunteer opportunities were reviewed and approved by Sharon Gates, senior director of Community Engagement at Rush University, or the college deans. All volunteers were required to sign a volunteer waiver, trained to perform their duties, supervised by Rush faculty and provided with the appropriate personal protective equipment.

Student Affairs

Subcommittees were created to case manage students and programs adversely impacted by COVID-19.

One process directly impacted by the pandemic was the offboarding of more than 800 graduating students. A team from student affairs and IS created a detailed online checklist to streamline the process for students as they exited the University. The checklist included information on how to return borrowed equipment, how to retrieve personal property from on campus lockers and financial aid counseling for student loans.

To help students who were financially impacted during pandemic, the student affairs team, in partnership with the Office of Philanthropy, created a COVID-19 Student Relief Fund. Students could apply for a one time grant up to $2,000 to cover expenses such as emergency travel, temporary housing, food, utilities, new technology for remote learning and storage fees. In addition, students living in the Tailor Lofts housing, apartment units run by Rush, were allowed to opt-out of their leases early, which allowed students to save money on living expenses and gave them the option to go home while the Rush University campus was closed to students.

Chapter 7
Research

Research

The university built a COVID-19 research website (www.rushu.rush.edu/research/covid-19-science) to provide a central resource for up-to-date scientific evidence and scientific research. The website included live pandemic dashboards with real-time data from trusted sources across the world, a curated selection of sources for COVID-19 published scientific evidence, including daily review of articles by students in the Rush COVID-19 Journal Club, and daily research updates on COVID clinical trials at Rush (IRB approved), COVID non-clinical trials at Rush (IRB approved), COVID research around the world and COVID funding opportunities.

Dashboard: Rush DataScience+

Dashboard: Johns Hopkins University

COVID-19 Rush Journal Club

Chapter 8
Finance

Finance

In order to track COVID-19 related expenses, new accounting units were established to separate University expenses from expenses incurred by RUMC. In addition, all employees were asked to track the time spent on COVID-related work so that the University could be reimbursed for this time by the federal government's COVID-19 relief funding.