



COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Impact on Oklahoma's State System of Higher Education

State Regents Chair Jeff Hickman
Chancellor Glen D. Johnson

September 20, 2021

Introduction

- The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has become a major disruption to colleges and universities, not only in Oklahoma but nationwide, and it has impacted almost every aspect of collegiate life, from admissions and enrollment to course delivery methods to college athletics.
- The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated many challenges already confronting our colleges and universities faced substantial challenges on many fronts prior to the arrival of COVID-19:
 - Demographic changes
 - Current and forecasted enrollment declines
 - Increasing costs, decreasing revenues, and declining public support
 - Changing delivery models
- Many changes thought initially to last only a few months seem to have become the new normal, raising questions concerning the future role of higher education and the long-term impact on its business models.



TIMELINE

Higher Education's initial response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

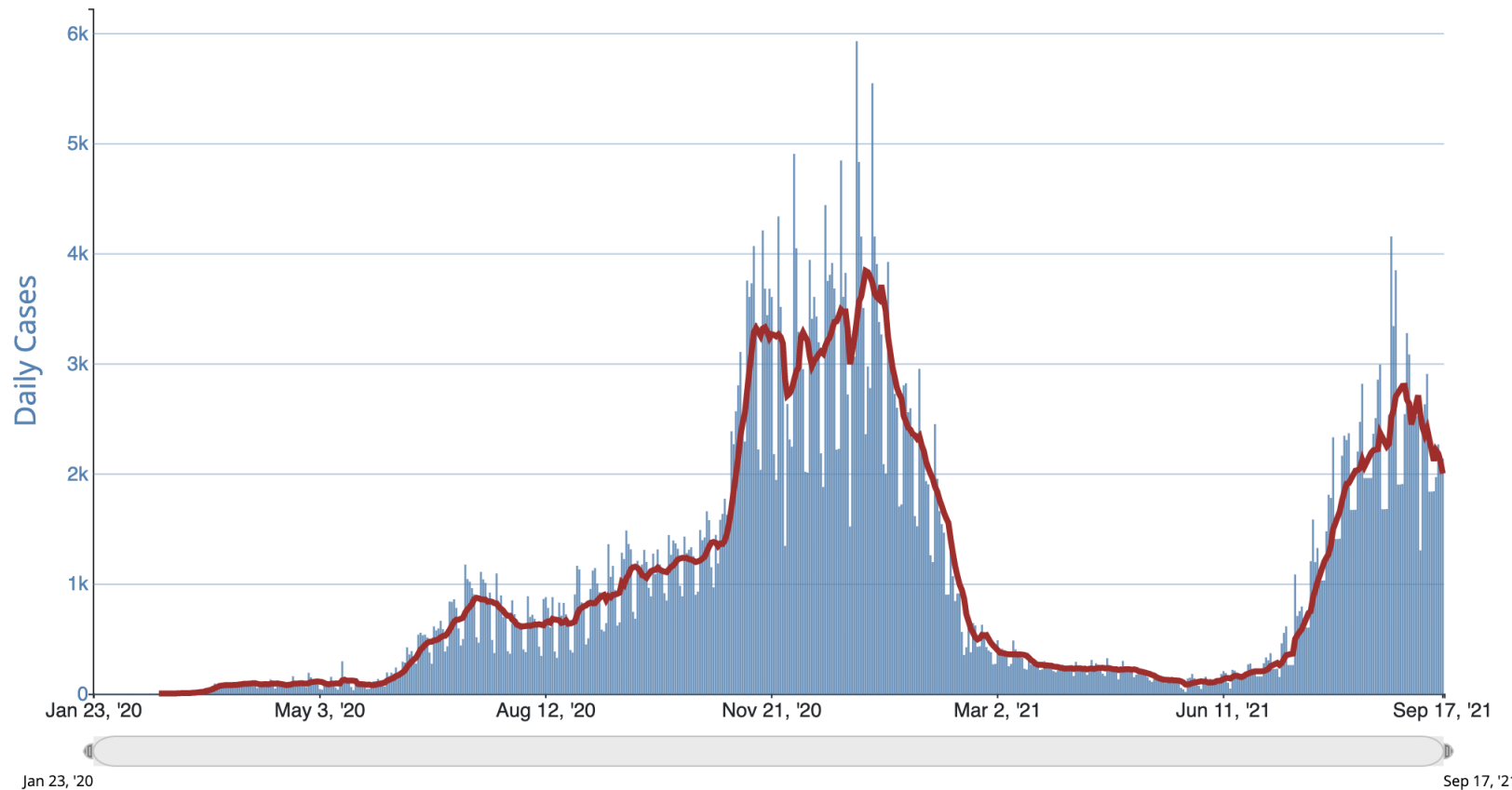
SPRING 2020: INITIAL RESPONSE TO COVID-19

- In March 2020, state system colleges and universities transitioned over 173,000 students from face-to-face class formats to alternative or online delivery formats immediately following Spring Break, with limited exceptions for certain courses
- Campus events were cancelled, rescheduled or transitioned to virtual formats (including commencement ceremonies)
- Campus housing and residence hall access was restricted to only those students with no other alternative housing options
- Food services were transitioned to “grab-and-go” options
- Flexible grading options, such as pass/fail, and other policy exceptions were granted to take into account learning disruptions caused by the pandemic

FALL 2020 AND SPRING 2021: THE “NEW NORMAL”

- The vast majority of Oklahoma’s colleges and universities re-opened campuses for the Fall 2020 semester with a mixture of course delivery formats (face-to-face, hybrid, online)
- COVID-19 mitigation strategies to protect the health and safety of students, faculty, staff and visitors included:
 - Pre-testing of students before returning to campus at the beginning of the semester
 - Facilitation of COVID-19 testing for students, faculty and staff and cooperation with local health departments to conduct contact tracing
 - Mandatory mask policies for all students, faculty, staff and visitors
 - Ample provision of hand sanitizer in classrooms and throughout campus buildings
 - Designated quarantine/isolation housing on campus for COVID-19 positive students
 - Decreased class sizes and relocating classes to larger classrooms to promote social distancing
 - Transitioning courses with large numbers of enrolled students online

SUMMER 2021 & FALL 2021: RESURGENCE



- Encouraged use of masks and social distancing indoors
- COVID-19 testing and contact tracing on campus
- Monetary incentives for students, faculty and staff to become fully vaccinated against COVID-19
- Quarantine for exposed students, faculty, and staff
- Courses ready to transfer online, if needed

STATE REGENTS' SUPPORT DURING COVID-19

Communication

- Facilitated weekly conference calls with college and university presidents to discuss COVID-19's operational impacts on the state system
- Facilitated communications between institutions and Oklahoma State Department of Health to access testing services and COVID-19 vaccinations

OneNet

- Over 20,000 Zoom licenses provisioned to support colleges and universities transition to online instruction
- Partnered with K-12 Schools and the State Department of Education to extend support to K-12 students as they transition to distance learning
- Worked with last-mile partners to respond to requests from schools for hot spots to send home with students

SREB Task Force

- Chancellor Glen D. Johnson co-chaired SREB's Postsecondary Education Recovery Task Force. to address challenges faced by colleges, universities, and students during the COVID-19 pandemic
 - The SREB COVID-19 Postsecondary Education Task Force brought together higher education leaders from the 16 SREB member states to address challenges facing colleges, universities and students during the COVID-19 pandemic and recovery.

ASSISTING OKLAHOMA'S RESPONSE TO COVID-19

1. Established partnerships with local county health departments to conduct COVID-19 testing, reporting, contact tracing and vaccine distributions.
2. Provision of over 28,000 Zoom licenses quickly by OneNet during the Spring 2020 semester to not only higher education institutions but also K-12 schools.
3. Donation of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) supplies from academic programs like nursing to local hospitals and healthcare providers. OU Medicine, the OU Health Sciences Center and OSU Medicine have all played critical roles in research, testing and vaccine development.
4. Both OU Medicine and OSU Medicine have served as designated COVID-19 hospitals.
5. The OU Health Sciences Center was engaged in early studies focused on utilizing convalescent plasma as a COVID-19 treatment protocol.
6. OSU Medicine collaborated with OSU Veterinary Medicine to convert a veterinary medicine laboratory to a dedicated COVID-19 testing lab and has expanded healthcare access to underserved communities through increased use of telemedicine.



CHALLENGES

Continued Challenges Facing Colleges and Universities

LEARNING DISRUPTIONS

- As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, colleges and universities experience a rapid, large-scale transition to online education
- Challenges with emergency remote teaching include:
 - Concerns about academic quality and rigor
 - Access to technology for both students and faculty
 - Lack of pre-existing digital competency
 - Student performance

OSRHE Policy Flexibilities

- Grading
- Oklahoma's Promise
- Concurrent Enrollment
- Title IV Financial Assistance
- Veterans/G.I. Bill © Benefits
- Admission and Assessment & Placement
- Electronic Delivery Approval
- Nursing
- Teacher Education
- English Proficiency Testing
- Online Biology Labs

ADMISSIONS & ENROLLMENT

Fall 2019 to Fall 2020 – National

Sector	% Change from 2019-20
Public 4-Year	0.2%
Public 2-Year	-10.1%

Fall 2019 to Fall 2020 – Oklahoma

Tier	2019-20	2020-21	Difference	% Change
Research Universities	62,747	63,090	343	0.5%
Regional Universities	59,754	58,144	(1,610)	-2.7%
Two-Year Colleges	83,646	79,358	(4,288)	-5.1%
TOTAL	206,147	200,592	(5,555)	-2.7%

STUDENT SUPPORT & RESOURCES

Many students are worried
about **basic needs**²



Paying bills **38%**

Successfully using technology for online classes **31%**

Having a safe and secure place to sleep every night **21%**

Having access to health care **15%**

Having enough to eat day-to-day **15%**

Virtual support services
are not meeting student needs³



Mental health services **37%**

Admin support (e.g. registrar, financial aid, etc.) **32%**

Technological support staff **30%**

Academic advising **25%**

FISCAL IMPACT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Financial challenges include:

- Lost revenues from decreasing housing capacity in residential facilities on campuses to promote social distancing
- Costs associated with making environmental adjustments to campuses to mitigate the spread of COVID-19 (e.g. touchless water fountains or sinks, installation of plexiglass barriers, sanitizing stations, upgrades to ventilation systems, etc.).
- Reduced revenues from cancellation of campus facility rentals, events and athletics.
- Costs of providing masks for faculty, staff, students and visitors.



STIMULUS FUNDING

Higher Education Emergency Relief Funds

STIMULUS FUNDING

CARES (HEERF I)

- \$126 million to Oklahoma's public colleges and universities
- 50% required to be spent on emergency grants to provide direct financial aid to students
- 50% allocated to institutions for costs associated with pandemic response

CRRSAA (HEERF II)

- \$193 million distributed to Oklahoma's public colleges and universities
- At least \$53 million required to be spent on emergency grants to provide direct financial aid to students
- Expanded institutional use of stimulus finding: defraying costs associated with COVID-19 (including lost revenue, reimbursement for expenses already incurred, technology costs, professional development and trainings) and student support activities authorized under HEA

ARPA (HEERF III)

- \$429.9 million to be distributed to postsecondary institutions in Oklahoma
- Funds can be expended through September 30, 2023
- 50% must be expended on emergency grants to students
- Added expenditure requirements for institutions to implement evidence-based practices to monitor and suppress COVID-19 as well as inform financial aid applicants about opportunities for aid adjustments due to unemployment or other circumstances



LESSONS LEARNED

Improving Higher Education in a Post Pandemic Era

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM COVID-19 PANDEMIC

- Several recommendations from the State Regents' 2018 Task Force on the Future of Higher Education have better positioned our colleges and universities for addressing the challenges arising from the COVID-19 pandemic:
 - Long-term fiscal viability assessments for each public college and university.
 - Increased emphasis on best practices in online education and scaling delivery of digital learning.
 - Enhanced collaboration between and among institutions, including consolidation of back-office administrative structures and functions.

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM COVID-19 PANDEMIC

- Online Education
 - There was consistent growth in online course and degree offerings in public higher education before COVID-19.
 - As we continue operations in the pandemic environment, we anticipate more growth in both online education delivery and a greater emphasis on telework.
 - One particularly challenging aspect in online learning is laboratory work – it is very difficult to deliver those experiences effectively in a remote learning environment.
- Future of the College Campus
 - It's important to note that nationally, surveys have shown that students prefer the brick and mortar, residential college experience, and student perceptions of the viability of exclusively remote instruction have been mixed.

KEY TAKEAWAYS FROM COVID-19 PANDEMIC

- Given continuing expansion and advancements in educational technology, the higher education landscape is changing. Our colleges and universities recognize that business models must adapt to embrace those changes.
 - Embrace differentiated instruction (face-to-face, online, hybrid models)
 - Focus on skills and outcomes
 - Redesigning assessments
 - Addressing non-academic barriers to student success (e.g., financial aid, academic advisement, access to technology)
- Regardless of the learning platform, our focus remains on academic rigor, educational quality and meeting Oklahoma's workforce needs.



QUESTIONS?