

CAMPUS HEALTH & SAFETY

Universities in the Pittsburgh region have varied approaches to instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic. Within the city limits, different models have been adopted in response to the crisis. When schools closed in March, the universities switched to remote learning to finish the semester. By the fall, the schools had developed their own guidance and methods for adapting to the pandemic. By Donovan Harrell



THE UNIVERSITY OF PITTSBURGH developed the Flex@Pitt teaching model to allow for both in-person and remote classes, according to the university's COVID-19 resource website. This approach to instruction during the pandemic gives students the option to learn synchronously in real time through Zoom sessions and asynchronously with recorded classes, depending on student and faculty preference. Classrooms were also outfitted with cameras, monitors, microphones and speakers as a part of the Flex@Pitt model.

Pitt developed three operational postures for each of its campuses—High Risk, Elevated Risk and Guarded Risk—to make sure the university stayed in compliance with federal, state and local guidance. These postures change depending on several factors, such as the number of COVID-19 cases in Allegheny County and among faculty, staff and students. Pitt also adjusted its student code of conduct to account for the pandemic and has set aside about 179 beds to quarantine students who test positive, with the ability to add an additional 20 beds as needed.

"I continue to be inspired by the resilience, kindness and determination of our faculty, students and staff as we work together to navigate the very fluid situation brought about by COVID-19," Provost Ann Cudd said in a prepared public statement. "We are all eager to meet new people and explore the campus—and the world—more freely. We are trying all we can in the terrain we are in."

Researchers at the University of Pittsburgh School of Medicine and the Center for Vaccine Research are also looking into treatments for the virus while other researchers at Pitt examine the virus's community impacts. This work would contribute to the creation of a data portal that would help community organizations combat housing market crises.

CARNEGIE MELLON UNIVERSITY adopted in-person, remote and hybrid instructional models for its classes. As a part of this approach, the university installed new video and audio equipment in classrooms. Carnegie Mellon created three on-campus postures—Modified, Restricted and Essential—to describe the amount of in-person activity on campus as pandemic conditions evolve. Students also have to agree to abide by "A Tartan's Responsibility," an adjustment to the Carnegie Mellon Code that encourages students to take actions to minimize the spread of the virus.

If a student receives a positive test result, the university will offer support and contact tracing. It has also reserved private bedrooms and bathrooms in campus housing for infected students.

"Every member of the Carnegie Mellon community—students, faculty and staff members—has a shared responsibility to keep our community's health top of mind, while also allowing us to fulfill the university's core mission of education and research," Senior Director of Media Relations Jason Maderer said. "Our approach is guided by what makes Carnegie Mellon a leader in higher education: science- and data-driven, built on the latest technology and human-centered. CMU's COVID response follows industry best practices and demonstrates the innovation for which we are known."

CHATHAM UNIVERSITY has adopted various campus alert levels—Normal, Guarded, Raised and High—similar to other universities in the Pittsburgh region. In the Guarded Alert Level, residence halls, apartments and classrooms operate with additional safety guidelines. In the Raised Alert Level, housing, apartments and classrooms are restricted, with courses moving to a mixture of in-person and remote. In the High Alert Level, residence halls, apartments, classes and buildings are closed while learning is conducted remotely. The university also started the Cougars Care initiative to provide support, training and other resources to advance the safety and academic goals of students and staff.

Courses are delivered in on-site, hybrid and online models. On-site courses are offered in person. Hybrid courses have some online meetings to reduce in-person interactions, and online courses are completely remote.

"Our efforts are guided by the goals to protect community health, provide a quality academic and personalized education experience, and prepare our community to adapt and change based on the results of things within—and out of—our control," Bill Campbell, vice president of marketing and communications said. "Our community has embraced this historic challenge, and through their commitment and efforts, we are fortunate to have a low positivity rate six weeks into our term."

DUQUESNE UNIVERSITY created a series of COVID-19 awareness videos detailing new campus procedures to help mitigate the spread of the virus. The school developed a HyFlex system that allows for students to take classes on campus and remotely and enables the university to comply with local, state and federal guidelines while still offering students the option to take classes in person. As a part of this model, classrooms were equipped with new webcams and monitors. Overall, Duquesne reduced classroom occupancies by 40 percent and lecture halls by 20 percent, according to the university website.

CARLOW UNIVERSITY offers classes on campus, through a hybrid model, or using a completely remote model. So far, 70 percent of university courses are offered online, with the remaining percentage being offered through a hybrid format. The university also created multiple "movable" contingency plans that can change depending on the severity of the pandemic. Scenario No. 1 allows for on-campus classes and housing that follow government guidelines. Scenario No. 2 downsizes campus housing and moves classes to a hybrid—alternating in-person and remote—format to "de-densify." Based on the severity of the pandemic, Scenario No. 3 moves all courses online to make sure the university complies with federal guidance.

POINT PARK UNIVERSITY adopted a series of learning options to adapt to the pandemic. These include in-person, remote, hybrid and HyFlex formats as well as "blended" courses. Remote courses are offered completely online through both real-time and asynchronous instruction. In the hybrid model, students alternate between in-person and remote instruction depending on the day of the week, but classes do not have some students participating remotely and others in person at the same time. The HyFlex format combines in-person and remote participation in real time. Blended courses combine elements of both the HyFlex model and the hybrid model. **h**