



Risk Management Case Study: Health Emergency

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Facilitator

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Health Emergency

Maplesap College is located in Maplegrove Maine, about thirty miles from Portland. It has a reputation for being conservative. It has no religious affiliation but its leadership and board have been dominated by centrist conservatives since its founding in 1905. Maplesap weathered the COVID-19 pandemic fairly well. With federal support, it had enough to pay for protective equipment and socially-distanced teaching and living during the pandemic. Though enrollment took a hit in 2020 and 2021, it recovered to pre-pandemic levels in 2022. With the virus receding, campus leaders, including President Joe Bishop began returning the campus back to normal. Students returned to classes unmasked and regained full access to classroom buildings, athletic events, and other activities that put them in closer contact with each other. President Bishop and the Maplesap senior team decided to require all community members to be vaccinated for the 2021-22 school year, only allowing documented medical or religious exemptions. The board and faculty approved and state leaders remained relatively supportive. All vaccination requirements were dropped in 2022-2023, again with little comment or complaint.

Early in the spring semester of 2024, a new and aggressive variant of the COVID virus emerged in the Northeastern United States. As cases spread regionally, Bishop and campus leaders recommended that they return to the 2021-22 requirement that all community members be vaccinated with the latest booster, only allowing for documented medical or religious exemptions. Unfortunately, two new trustees of the 20-member board objected strenuously; reporting that they had the backing of a group of parents and a small but increasingly vocal group of right-wing state legislators. They asserted that vaccine mandates restricted personal freedom and put the college on the slippery slope to totalitarianism.

Response and Risk Management

Q1 Identify the Problem and First Steps Needed/Triage

Q2 Identify Stakeholders and Response Teams

Q3 Communicate a Plan

Q4 Get Feedback and Assess Results

Q5 Reflect on Preparations

Scenario Changes

1. In reaction to public statements from the anti-vaccine contingent, a group of elderly faculty, who were all in a category more at risk from the virus, and their students hold a rally in support of the vaccine booster requirement. Hoping to find some middle ground, President Bishop suggested a policy where the vaccine booster was not required, but it was “strongly recommended,” and the university would encourage all students, staff, and faculty to receive it.
2. Before setting a final policy, the director of the CDC called President Bishop to propose a vaccine research study on the Maplesap campus.
3. You get news from the state police that a strange virus is quickly spreading and turning people into zombies.

Q&A Session



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