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Engaging Undergraduate Nursing Students in University-Wide COVID-19 Prevention & Response: A Public Health Nursing Case Study

LEAD:

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Land Acknowledgements

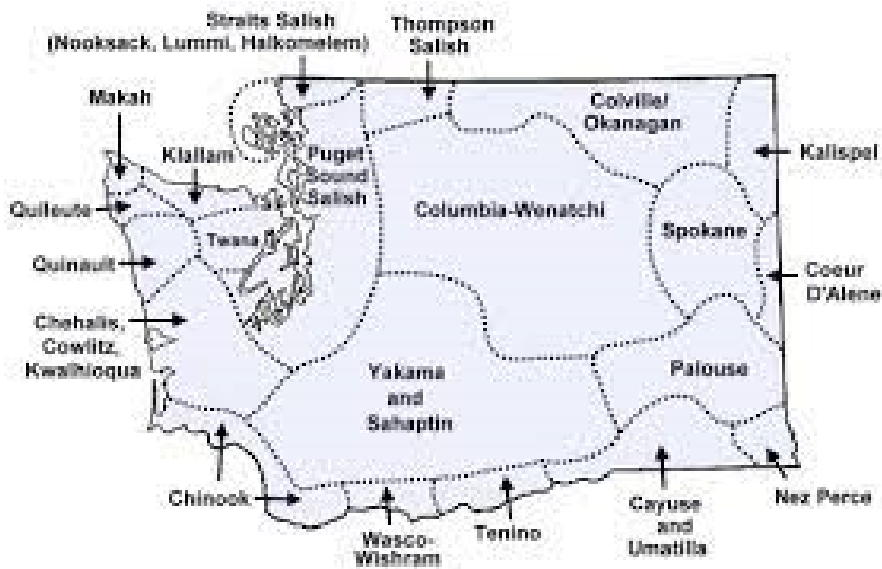


Image Description: A black and white line drawing depicting Washington state, divided into areas representing Native tribes that inhabit the state



Image Description: A color map depicting southern New England, including Massachusetts, divided into areas representing Native tribes that inhabit the area

Outline & Learning Outcomes

Outline

- Background
- Approach: Case Study
- Student Activities
- Lessons Learned
- Implications

I have no conflicts of interest to report

Learning Outcomes

1. Describe the benefits from engaging health professions students in on-campus COVID-19 prevention and response.
2. Explain the challenges of engaging health professions students in on-campus COVID-19 prevention and response.
3. Name at least two other possible activities for health professions students to engage with in improving the health of their campus community.



Background

- **The Challenge:** COVID-19 & Academic Year 2020-2021
- **The Academic Context:** Population Health Internship (PHI) and Student Activities
- **The Approach:** Case study of evolving campus response, incorporating PHI nursing students

→ The Challenge: COVID-19 & Academic Year 20-21

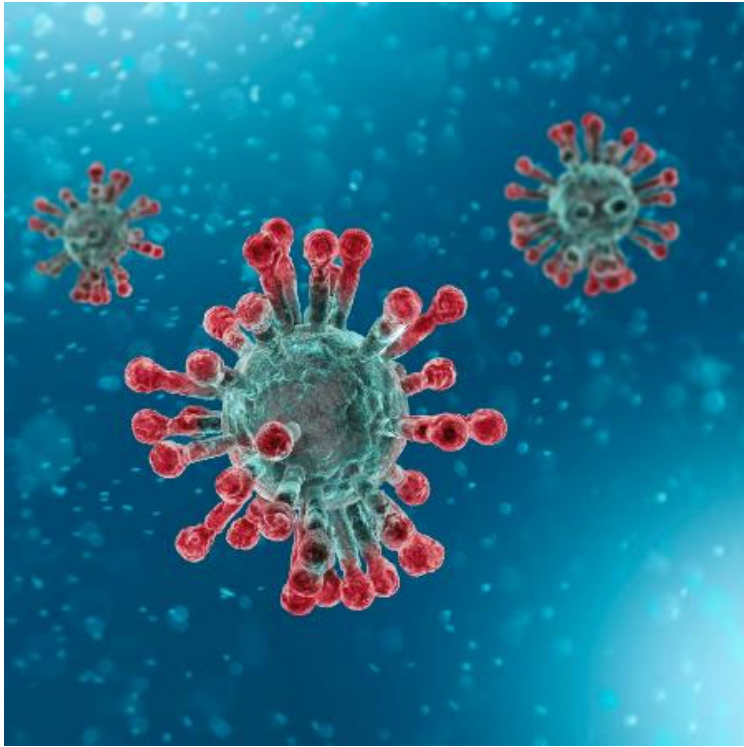
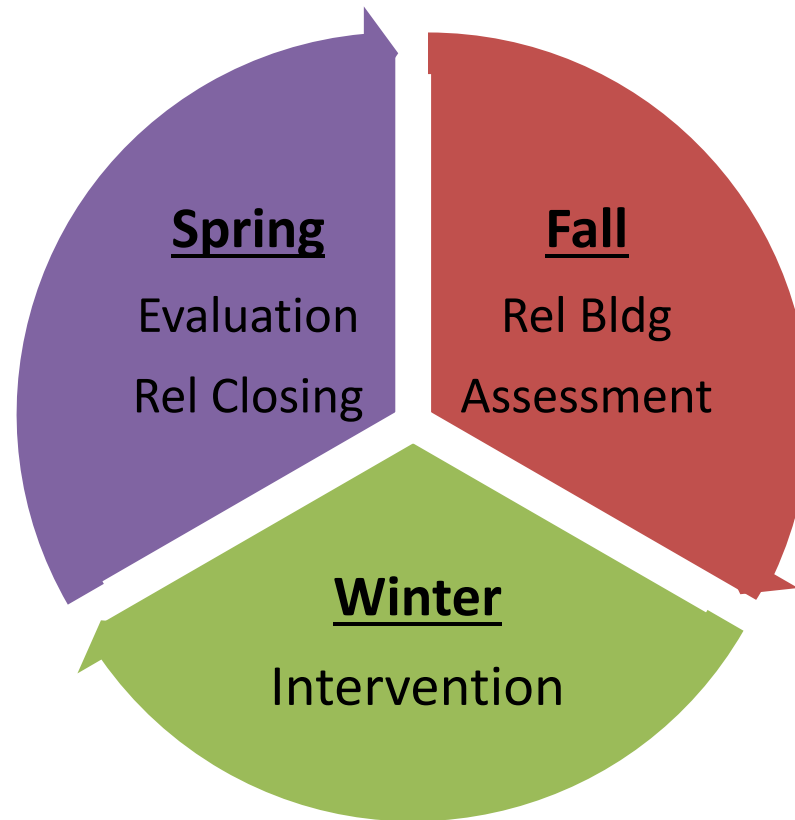


Image Descriptions: (left) A digital rendering of three microscopic coronavirus images appear on a blue background. (right) An aerial view of the Seattle University campus, showing a quad with a fountain in center surrounded by trees and buildings.

The Academic Context: The Population Health Internship



1 credit/qtr

30 hrs/credit

90 hrs/year

For more info about the PHI see: Fricas, J. (2021). A yearlong population health internship: Operationalizing an innovative model for population health nursing education. *Journal of Professional Nursing*, 37(3), 662-672.

Image Description: A separated pie chart with wedges in red, green, and purple, showing the quarterly organization of the Population Health Internship, in which students focus on relationship building and assessment in Fall, then move to an intervention in Winter, and conclude with evaluation and relationship closure in Spring.

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Population Health Nursing Student Activities (1 of 3)

Surveillance and Testing

Safe Start Welcome Center

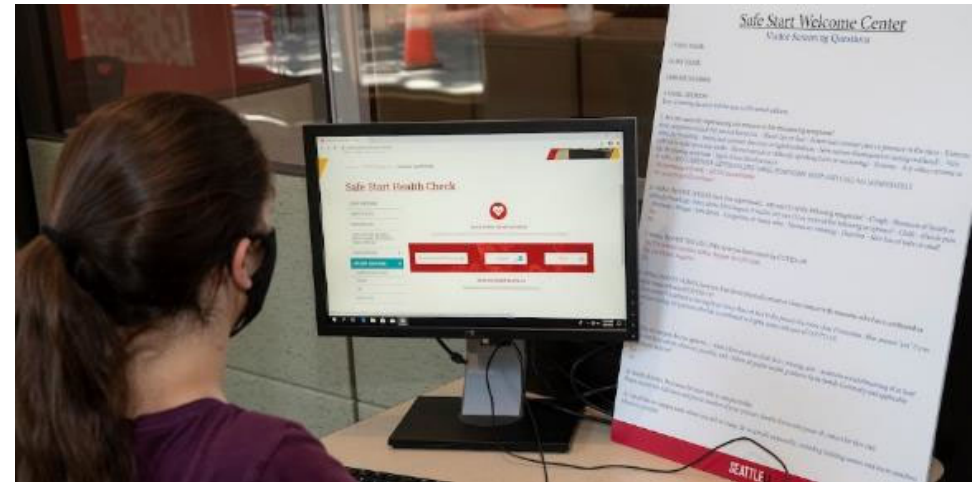
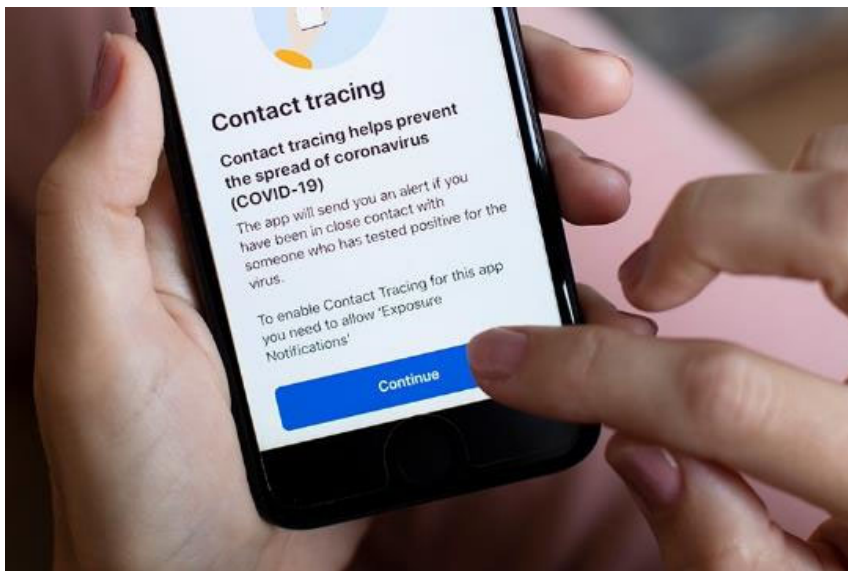


Image Descriptions: (left) A care provider wearing personal protective equipment swabs the nose of a patient who is lowering his mask. (right) A masked Seattle U student is shown from behind looking at a computer screen at the Safe Start Welcome Center, with a poster of the Welcome Center's policies to the right of the screen.

Population Health Nursing Student Activities (2 of 3)

Contact Notification and Follow-Up



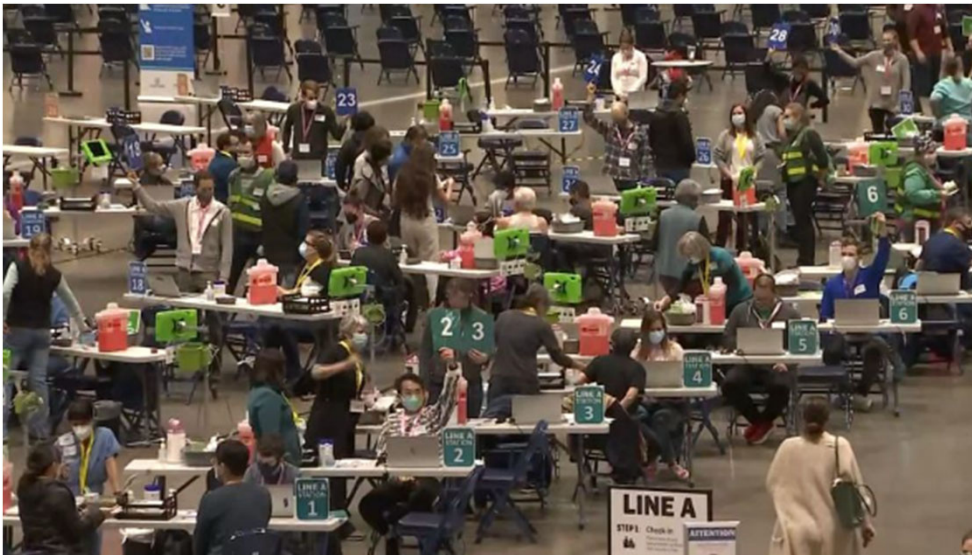
Athletics Department



Image Descriptions: (left) A close-up of a person holding a cell phone, which shows contact tracing information on its screen. (right) A Seattle U Women's Basketball Team athlete is holding a basketball and moving to make a shot while being guarded by an opposing team member in a blue uniform. There are two other athletes engaging in defense in the background.

Population Health Nursing Student Activities (3 of 3)

Mass Vaccination Planning



Library Health Ambassadors



Image Descriptions: (left) An aerial view of the Lumen Field COVID-19 mass vaccination site in Seattle, showing tables of vaccinators, clients, and support personnel. (right) A view of the front façade of the Seattle U Library, on a sunny day with students sitting on benches, the library steps, and the grassy areas adjacent to the library. There are small trees and parked bicycles in the foreground and midground of the photo.



The Approach: Case Study in an Evolving Context

- Case studies investigate “a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context.”¹
- Instrumental case study: uses the particular “to gain a broader appreciation of an issue” and functions as both “the process of learning about the case and the product of our learning.”²



Lessons Learned

1. Challenges of situational assessment and job delineation
2. Interventions suited to nursing student engagement
3. Difficulties arising from yearlong intern management
4. Gains resulting from student involvement
5. Ideas for future student engagement

Lessons Learned

1. Challenges of situational assessment and job delineation

“Ready for Fall” planning addressed the myriad health, safety, [and] operational issues we would face when we reopened...The library’s Ready for Fall team...developed several library-specific plans addressing space, operations, core functions, and services. Plans needed to align with the Governor’s Phase 2 and Phase 3 Library Services COVID-19 requirements and Seattle University’s health and safety measures.”

“[We were] trying to wait for NCAA and WAC guidelines of how to run athletics during COVID. Ivy League school guidelines paved the way.”

“We were trying to figure out, what will be our new normal? At the very beginning, campus was not completely shut down. Initially we thought the need for the [Safe Start Welcome Center] would be bigger.”

“We were tasked early on with the case investigation and contact tracing responsibilities. I also took on [the creation of] a daily health certification program.”

“[We] reverse engineered the process [for COVID testing of athletes] – no guidelines initially or guidelines all came sort of late for planning purposes.”

- Guidelines and requirements coming from a variety of bodies/sources
- Unprecedented level of collaboration and flexibility required

Lessons Learned

2. Interventions suited to nursing student engagement

“Honestly, I was not familiar with the PHI program in the early months of the pandemic, and case management was originally tasked to Student Development. I recall having some vague concept of nursing students being uniquely positioned to involve themselves in the university’s response, but I did not have a clear vision of how until much more recently.”

“As FQ20 approached, we were grateful for the offer to involve public health nursing student interns in the contact tracing and case investigation process to help manage the caseload. As the quarter progressed and the case numbers continued to increase, these students provided an important point of contact for students who were exposed [to] or infected with the virus.”

“Ensuring compliance with SU’s face covering requirement proved to be difficult for front-line service providers from the start. Ensuring compliance...is not usually within the wheelhouse of academic library faculty and staff.”

“We were scrambling for people within SU to help out. This was not a part of athletics usual job description. [We] had no strong vision of how we would use PHI students – we created it together.”

“[Our] first need was operational: scheduling, logistics. Second need was health service information ability. Without the PHI students, the SSWC would be staffed by Dept of Public Safety students with a customer service and logistics orientation. Having PHI students allowed us to be able to provide more health information around COVID.”

- Need for health expertise was great, but nursing faculty needed to explain student capabilities and appropriate scope of work, supervision
- Collaborative creation of tasks, supervision plans; flexibility in meeting evolving needs; helping students cope with ambiguity

Lessons Learned

3. Difficulties arising from yearlong intern management

“As case[s] climbed and peaked around late November, one immediate challenge was scheduling. Each student worked a single shift each week, which meant that the distribution of cases was uneven and case turnaround times were not conducive to...tracing efforts. As a result, Public Safety continued to manage the primary tasks related to contact tracing and case investigation to ensure that these actions could occur in a timely manner. This resulted in the core responsibilities for the nursing students shift[ing] from contact tracing and case investigation to providing follow up, support, and resource education.”

“The only challenge has been the last 2 weeks of each quarter with decreased availability due to demand on students’ time to study and take finals.”

“Primary challenges came from working with new people, getting schedules straight, [and] the PHI students’ other quarterly obligations.”

“A positive was that PHI students already had a background in customer service.”

“The nature of the work, especially when numbers are low, is largely “as-needed” and there was not always work to be done. The PHI students’ schedules needed to be...planned in advance, so their availability did not always overlap hours when workload would surge.”

“Amount of hours is very low for us. The kinesiology students are in for 15 hours a week. This affects rapport building, etc.... PHI student did a great job with HIPAA...They needed less coaching on this...”

- Inflexible nursing course/clinical obligations made scheduling and responsiveness difficult
- Faculty and mentors need to provide student guidance for appropriate tasks during less busy times

Lessons Learned

4. Gains resulting from student involvement

“Having the additional help of the PHI students, I believe, will be critical in making sure that case management work (regular check-ins with people already in isolation and quarantine) does not fall by the wayside as new cases continue to come in...Additionally, the PHI students having insight into the I/Q process and student experience informed their intervention project which may have a demonstrable impact on student mental health wellbeing.”

“The screening program has evolved both with the processes of the lab and changes in community activity of the virus. Nursing students have helped with every aspect of the program including helping run the mass testing clinic, process specimens for pick-up, complete requisitions, and [ensure] compliance.”

“Here, [the library] served as the client, providing the students with an opportunity to lead and an opportunity to push the boundaries of student/library collaboration. Gains...include learnings for staff about what ‘for students, by students’ means...[and] lessons for [library] leaders and practitioners about innovation in academic libraries during times of crisis.”

“While follow-up, support, and resource education was not the original intent for these [nursing] students, the students they followed up with often appreciated hearing from a peer while experiencing an isolating and anxiety-provoking situation.”

“They helped to fill gaps within our community and provide redundancies in care.”

- Students provided additional flexibility and possibility to on-campus units during an unpredictable and stressful time
- Nursing students in student-facing roles made unanticipated gains resulting from ability to relate peer-to-peer

Lessons Learned

5. Ideas for future student engagement

Various ideas from multiple respondents:

- Vaccine clinic planning and operations
- Maintaining website on vaccine info
- Campaigns to encourage vaccination
- Partnering with Wellness and Health Promotion
- Creating a virtual reference shelf for students who want to learn more about COVID-19
- Developing internet subject specific websites that advance knowledge and information about the pandemic
- Brainstorm...ideas [about] how [the library] can help nursing students and students doing research in nursing and related areas

“Emergency preparedness is a function of our department, but a pandemic was not historically very high on the list of things that we expected to be our biggest threat. I think COVID-19 has redefined the threat landscape for every emergency manager in the country. Moving forward, this...will have to remain a high priority for continued preparedness and there may well be significant room for overlap there between Public Safety and the [population health nursing] program.”

“With the incidence of mental health diagnoses among college students continuing to rise, I think there are opportunities for more peer support. While we have trained peer health educators on campus, the need for peer support is likely to continue to increase.”

“Another need which they began to identify towards the end of this [year] was mental health. We are open to educational events with a mental health focus, linking to resources, creating a toolkit.”

- All respondents could see future collaboration possibilities
- Student mental health appeared as top non-COVID need



Implications

Population Health Nursing Students Serving Campus Communities: Lessons from Case Study

- Need for clear guidelines
- Student roles exist in preparedness and response
- Student flexibility, with support, is critical
- Collaborative supervision is critical
- Peer-to-peer engagement, including responding to mental health issues, was unexpected gain and area for future development

Health Professions Students in COVID-19 Campus Responses: Growing Body of Literature

- Consensus that students able to fill unmet needs in emergencies
- Emerging key elements of success:
 - strong central leadership
 - clear protocols and practice guidelines, including orientation
 - ongoing communication
 - evaluating projects for both educational and community impacts
 - experience in community-based experiential or service-learning educational models

Sources: Chawłowska et al., 2021; DeGroot et al., 2021; Drenkard et al., 2021; Fox et al., 2021; Gresh et al., 2021; Hamer et al., 2021; Rupley et al., 2020; Zerwic et al., 2021

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THANK YOU!

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