



HIGHER EDUCATION

HIGHER EDUCATION SCENARIO PLANNING TOOLKIT 2020-2021

INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic forced colleges and universities to shift their operations abruptly in spring 2020. Higher education institutions sent students home, put measures in place to ensure the safety and well-being of those still on campus, shifted to a remote education model for the remainder of the semester, and began planning for various scenarios for the new academic term.

Administrators across the country formed taskforce groups and committees to plan for the 2020-2021 academic year throughout the spring and summer. The rapidly shifting public health guidance related to COVID-19 required campus leaders to prepare for a variety of reopening scenarios. As students return in person or remotely, institutions continue to monitor and, in some cases, alter their original plans as the pandemic continues.

To support campus leaders in assessing their operations and adjusting as the semester unfolds, Hanover Research has developed a scenario planning toolkit for U.S. higher education institutions. The following guidance and tools will help users evaluate their current contingency plan, identify potential risks, prioritize those risks, and be prepared to respond to the challenges that arise.

THIS TOOLKIT:

- Outlines a **five-step process** that administrators can implement to support effective planning and execution as classes resume.
- Highlights the importance of **working with key stakeholders** as leaders monitor and adjust operations.
- Provides tools to help college and university leaders **identify and prioritize risks** related to on-campus or online instruction as the semester begins.
- Reviews the process for **mapping specific actions to mitigate risks** and **create comprehensive contingency plans**.
- Identifies **additional third-party resources** that supplement the content and guidance in this toolkit.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

2 / INTRODUCTION

4 / SCENARIO PLANNING PROCESS: AT A GLANCE

5 / IDENTIFY KEY STAKEHOLDERS AND INFLUENCERS

6 / DETERMINE RISKS TO KEY STAKEHOLDERS

9 / PRIORITIZE IDENTIFIED RISKS

14 / MAP ACTIONS TO MITIGATE PRIORITIZED RISKS

16 / BUILD CONTINGENCY PLANS

18 / ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

19 / ABOUT HANOVER RESEARCH

SCENARIO PLANNING PROCESS: AT A GLANCE

While individual institutions' reopening strategies vary, the process for identifying, monitoring, and responding to risks encompasses five major components:

1. IDENTIFY KEY STAKEHOLDERS AND INFLUENCERS

Determine the individuals (e.g., students, faculty, staff, alumni), external audiences (e.g., employers, K12 schools), and oversight entities (e.g., trustees, state or regional boards, accrediting bodies) that will be interested in or impacted by opening or operating amid the pandemic. Working closely with them, soliciting their input, providing them with necessary updates, and balancing their priorities will improve the likelihood that they will support plans put in place.

2. DETERMINE RISKS TO KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Students, parents, staff, and faculty will likely have concerns about health and sanitation procedures on campus or the quality of online learning, whereas local business partners and outside contractors may be concerned with how operations will impact existing agreements and financial arrangements they have with the institution.

3. PRIORITIZE IDENTIFIED RISKS

Carefully examine each risk that has been identified to weigh its potential impacts on a specific stakeholder group and within the larger community. Also, evaluate the perceived likelihood of a given risk actually coming to fruition and negatively impacting stakeholders.

4. MAP ACTIONS TO MITIGATE PRIORITIZED RISKS

Research and select specific action items to implement that combat individual risk factors and reduce the likelihood that those risk factors negatively impact the institution's community. Ideally, colleges and universities will map multiple actions to each risk in the event that one action does not achieve the desired effect.

5. BUILD CONTINGENCY PLANS

Determine who will be responsible for implementing specific actions, the timeline along which they will implement these actions, the resources they need, and how they intend to monitor and communicate progress to stakeholders. Such plans should account for both the expected and unexpected and should be flexible enough to facilitate rapid responses to unforeseen events (e.g., a dramatic spike in local transmission of COVID, emergency mandates from federal, state, or local authorities).

Source: Hanover Research






STEP 1.

IDENTIFY KEY STAKEHOLDERS AND INFLUENCERS

Administrators need to be methodical and attentive to various individuals' interests and needs as they develop reopening and contingency plans. Some groups are obvious—such as students, faculty, staff, and government agencies, while other stakeholders and influencers include the local media, alumni, donors, and entities with which institutions have service or materials contracts.

Hanover Research identified potential stakeholders and influencers in the chart below; however, individual institutions may have fewer or additional groups to consider.

POTENTIAL STAKEHOLDERS AND INFLUENCERS ON HIGHER EDUCATION SCENARIO PLANNING

 INSTITUTIONAL STAKEHOLDERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Students• Parents• Faculty• Instructional staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Non-instructional staff• Administrators• Trustees, chancellor, governors• Alumni
 OUTSIDE ENTITIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Federal government• Governor's office• State legislature	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• State or regional governing/ coordinating boards• County or local government• Accrediting bodies
 HEALTH AND SAFETY AGENCIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Centers for Disease Control and Prevention• State and local health departments	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Local hospitals• Campus health center
 FINANCIAL AND SERVICE PARTNERS	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Donors and supporters• Employers• Industry partners	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• K-12 schools and other higher education partners• Internship sponsors and clinical placement sites
 PRESS & MEDIA	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Local newspapers• Local television	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Radio outlets• Social media platforms

Use [Hanover's Donor Segmentation Analysis](#) to gauge these stakeholders' concerns, understand how they want to engage with your institution, and identify messages that resonate with them right now.

DETERMINE RISKS TO KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Once administrators identify stakeholders and influencers, they should explore the specific risks – both definitive and potential – that each stakeholder might face, which will inform more comprehensive planning for various scenarios.

Stakeholders will encounter different risks based on their particular involvement in or oversight of a given institution. The completed template below provides an example of risk factors as they apply to two stakeholder groups. A **blank version of this template** is available on the following page, and a detailed list of potential risk categories is included on [page 8](#).



RISK IDENTIFICATION FOR KEY STAKEHOLDERS TEMPLATE *(completed sample)*

STAKEHOLDER GROUP	RISK CATEGORY	SAMPLE RISK FACTORS
STUDENTS	Health and Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • COVID-19 spread • Vaccinations • PPE and/or sanitary resources • Safety precautions on campus
	Student Services and Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to tutors and other academic supports • Access to academic advising • Access to career advising • Access to mental health support
	Engagement and Retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to faculty and staff • Participation in campus life (e.g., extracurriculars, athletics) • Student engagement levels • Student attrition • International student access and policies
	Remote Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Internet and/or devices access • LMS or other technology platforms • Online/hybrid course outcomes • Course evaluation or testing practices • Accreditation uncertainty related to pivot to online instruction
FACULTY	New Instructional Environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adoption of new pedagogies • Campus building physical distancing strategies • Support and professional development for online teaching • Instructional quality
	Morale and Retention	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sense of personal safety • Access to employee assistance programs • Job security • Faculty attrition
	Career Progression	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Research and publishing output • Tenure-related timelines • Balancing work, family, and childcare responsibilities

Use [Hanover's Early Warning Dashboard](#) to identify factors that contribute to attrition risk and to plan targeted interventions.

Directions: Use the following template to list important stakeholders impacting and/or impacted by your institution’s reopening process. Then, record specific risk categories that different groups may encounter (e.g., health and safety) and risk factors within these areas.



RISK IDENTIFICATION FOR KEY STAKEHOLDERS TEMPLATE

STAKEHOLDER GROUP	RISK CATEGORY	RISKS

To assist colleges and universities in identifying risks and measuring the effectiveness of their response, Hanover Research has developed two survey instruments. The [Climate Pulse Survey](#) helps college leaders gather critical feedback on a recurring basis from stakeholders to quickly evaluate their institutions’ reopening strategy. Equipped with this perception data on an ongoing basis, leaders are empowered to respond quickly as stakeholder needs evolve over the semester.

STEP 2.

SAMPLE RISK CATEGORIES TO MONITOR DURING REOPENING

The table below assists colleges and universities identify potential risks and measure the effectiveness of their responses.

ASSESSMENT THEMES		
<p>Health and Safety</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring safety precautions are in place Monitoring adherence to safety precautions Ensuring safety in physical spaces (residences, dining, offices, library, etc.) Managing actual/perceived safety concerns 	<p>Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Evaluating frequency Ensuring updates are informative Delivering key messages through most effective channels 	<p>Community Needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Removing barriers to mental health services Ensuring quality of mental health services Ensuring access to healthcare Building engagement with the college/university community regardless of instructional setting
<p>Student Services and Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helping students stay on track with coursework Helping students to complete requirements (e.g., labs, studios, practicum) Ensuring access to/quality of academic and other student resources (e.g., writing center, tutoring, career services) 	<p>Remote Learning</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring student access to necessary tools and technology Facilitating faculty access during/outside of classes 	<p>Faculty and Staff Morale and Retention</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing support and training for online teaching Addressing concerns about physical well-being on campus
<p>Student Engagement and Retention</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engaging students with coursework Facilitating student engagement with classmates Facilitating student engagement with faculty Identifying and managing academic and personal factors that may impact engagement and retention Mitigating desire to transfer/have a different 	<p>New Instructional Environment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensuring faculty/staff access to necessary tools and technology Providing sufficient technology support for faculty/staff Maintaining quality of instruction Providing a quality learning experience 	<p>Faculty Career Progression</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Addressing concerns about access to labs, ability to conduct to conduct research Providing clarity about how to meet promotion goals

STEP 3.

PRIORITIZE IDENTIFIED RISKS

Identifying risks is just one part of scenario planning. Given limited time and resources, most institutions will be unable to address every potential risk, so campus leaders should determine which risks are the highest priority. Decision-makers should prioritize items that are likely to have the highest impact on the college or university community and are most likely to result in adversity for stakeholders. Below are two ways to assess and compare the likelihood and impact of different risks to help campus leaders decide what to prioritize.

OPTION A: RISK ASSESSMENT MAP

- FACTORS TO CONSIDER WHEN ASSESSING IMPACT:**
- Impact on people
 - Impact on reputation
 - Potential cost
 - Severity of impact
 - Speed of impact
 - Duration of impact



OPTION B: RISK ASSESSMENT MATRIX

		LIKELIHOOD				
		VERY UNLIKELY	UNLIKELY	POSSIBLE	LIKELY	VERY LIKELY
IMPACT	CATASTROPHIC	Moderate	Moderate	High	Critical Risk C	Critical
	CRITICAL	Low	Moderate	Moderate	High	Critical
	MODERATE	Low	Moderate Risk B	Moderate	Moderate	High Risk D
	MINOR	Very Low Risk A	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
	INSIGNIFICANT	Very Low	Very Low	Low	Low	Moderate

The completed template below presents a sample of risk prioritization as it applies to the challenges for students who are beginning the academic term remotely, listed on [page 5](#). A **blank version of this template** is available on the following page.



RISK PRIORITIZATION TEMPLATE *(completed sample)*

IDENTIFIED RISK : REMOTE LEARNING STUDENTS

RANK	RISK FACTOR	SAMPLE RISK FACTORS
3	Ineffective course evaluation or testing practices	Many faculty and staff have a system in place to evaluate learning outcomes following professional development sessions held over the summer.
1	Lack of access to reliable internet and/or devices	This is the highest priority. Without reliable internet access and access to a laptop or PC, students will not be able to stay up-to-date with their coursework, resulting in suboptimal academic performance and potential attrition.
2	Suboptimal hybrid/online course outcomes	This is a priority. Even though it is something we have been investing in throughout the spring and summer, we need to continue to provide training and support to faculty and instructors so they are able to leverage best practices in their online courses to keep students engaged and on track.
4	Unfamiliarity with LMS or other technology platforms	This is a lower priority because most returning students, faculty, and instructional staff engaged with our LMS and various technology platforms when we went online in the spring. We continue to offer weekly group training sessions and one-on-one support as needed. Earlier feedback from faculty and students indicate that our LMS platform is meeting our needs at the moment, and training has helped to reduce the more common frustrations.
5	Accreditation uncertainty related to pivoting to online learning	We addressed immediate concerns through conversations with accreditors over the spring/summer and are addressing this issue separately from other risks associated with remote learning.

RISK ASSESSMENT MAP



OR

RISK ASSESSMENT MATRIX

		LIKELIHOOD				
		VERY UNLIKELY	UNLIKELY	POSSIBLE	LIKELY	VERY LIKELY
IMPACT	CATASTROPHIC					Risk 1
	CRITICAL			Risk 3	Risk 2	
	MODERATE	Risk 5				
	MINOR					Risk 4
	INSIGNIFICANT					

Directions: Use the following template to rank identified risks with consideration to their likelihood and impact. List as many risks as you identify, rank them numerically, and provide a rationale for your ranking. Use the Risk Assessment Map or Matrix to assist with prioritization.



RISK PRIORITIZATION TEMPLATE

(completed sample)

IDENTIFIED RISK : REMOTE LEARNING STUDENTS

RANK	RISK	RATIONALE FOR RANKING

RISK ASSESSMENT MAP



OR

RISK ASSESSMENT MATRIX

		LIKELIHOOD				
		VERY UNLIKELY	UNLIKELY	POSSIBLE	LIKELY	VERY LIKELY
IMPACT	CATASTROPHIC					
	CRITICAL					
	MODERATE					
	MINOR					
	INSIGNIFICANT					

STEP 4.

MAP ACTIONS TO MITIGATE PRIORITIZED RISKS

Without planned actions to counter risks, efforts taken to identify and prioritize risks are purposeless. Rather than be reactive, colleges and universities should proactively plan, implement action steps and make resource decisions to combat important risk factors.

The completed template below maps actions to prioritize remote learning-related risks from [pages 9 and 10](#). **A blank version of this template** is available on the following page.



ACTIONS TO MITIGATE RISKS BRAINSTORMING TEMPLATE

(completed sample)

RISK FACTOR	ACTION
Access to Reliable Internet and Devices	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Create a central location where students can go for technology needs, such as UC Berkeley's Student Technology Equity Program website• Evaluate available technology and budget to supply hardware and internet access through a loaner program, similar to Community College of Philadelphia's program• Provide a list of free and low-cost, off-campus internet
Hybrid/Online Course Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Ensure faculty are aware of and successfully applying strategies to engage students in online learning• Track student and faculty perceptions of how online learning is going to identify and respond to risks early• Help students set goals and establish plans to stay on track in the absence of structured, in-person classes, such as using practices identified in the ideas42 report• Create guidelines about number of office hours faculty must hold and designate a go-to contact for students with concerns about faculty availability/access
Access to Technology Training and Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Continue weekly training for students offered by instructional support staff• Outline processes for faculty and staff to help identify students who need additional technology support• Monitor student comfort levels with technology through a survey

Directions: Use the following template to match identified high-priority risks with specific responsive actions or resource investments. One risk may be countered with more than one action or resource, and conversely, more than one risk may be addressed by a single action or resource.



ACTIONS TO MITIGATE RISKS BRAINSTORMING TEMPLATE

RISK FACTOR	ACTION

BUILD CONTINGENCY PLANS

As a last step when scenario planning, higher education institutions should create alternate plans in case a situation evolves more rapidly than predicted or a new risk arises that initially was not considered very likely or concerning. Contingency planning will help college and university leaders adapt more quickly to an ever-evolving situation and will foster flexibility in responses.

The completed plan below serves as an example for actions related to the challenges for students who are beginning the academic term learning remotely, as outlined on [page 14](#). **A blank version of this template** is available on [page 17](#).



COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY CONTINGENCY PLANNING TEMPLATE

(completed sample)

- **Risk:** Access to technology training and support
- **Impact:** Critical – our students must be comfortable with the technology used to deliver online classes to succeed in their coursework
- **Likelihood:** Moderate – we have a large population of adult learners

	STEP	OWNER	OTHERS INVOLVED	NEEDED RESOURCES	TIMELINE
Action Plan	Continue weekly training for students offered by instructional support staff and IT. Post recordings of trainings, how-to guides, etc. on student-focused websites.	Estrella Q.	Martin A. Mary Ellen W.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zoom accounts • Communication support 	Ongoing
	Outline process to faculty and staff to help identify students who need additional technology support	Jim H.	Tyrone W.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication support • Central resource repository • Department chair distribution 	Before Sept. 15
	Monitor student comfort levels with technology using ongoing pulse surveys	Heidi O.	Yao C. Latoya R.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey platform 	Every 4-6 Weeks
Stakeholder Engagement Plan	The owners and others involved will discuss these items at staff meetings. They will also work with new student orientation leaders, IT, Marketing, department chairs, and advisors to develop and widely share resource. Faculty and staff will have a central point of contact (Tyrone W.) throughout the fall term where they should direct students in need of additional technology training or support. Resources will also be stored in a central repository				
Communication Plan	The president will reiterate our commitment to supporting students in their online courses in communication with new and returning students. The provost will communicate in her update emails to faculty and staff about resources and the process for identifying students who may need additional support. Admissions and orientation staff will also prominently feature training opportunities on the new student webpage for students and parents. The IT department will post about available training and support and provide a link to the website and an email address for students seeking additional technology training and support. Throughout the fall term, Heidi and her team will monitor progress via surveys and qualitative feedback from faculty, instructional staff, and students.				

Directions: Use the planning template below to outline a specific goal that your institution has relative to a given risk. Then, record actions to mitigate that risk and achieve the objective, as well as the timeline for completing actions, the resources needed to do so, and the owners and process of implementing, monitoring, and communicating the actions.



COLLEGE/UNIVERSITY CONTINGENCY PLANNING TEMPLATE

- Risk: _____
- Impact _____
- Likelihood: _____
- Goal: _____

Action Plan					
Stakeholder Engagement Plan					
Communication Plan					

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

To supplement the recommendations and content of this toolkit, readers may refer to the following resources for guidance. Note that a specific resource’s inclusion in this listing does not constitute an endorsement by Hanover Research. Included items are meant to offer greater breadth and diversity of perspectives on reopening procedures and contingency planning.

SUPPLEMENTAL MATERIAL RELATED TO HIGHER EDUCATION SCENARIO PLANNING

RESOURCE	PUBLISHER	DATE	LINKS*
“Considerations for Institutes of Higher Education”	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention	May 2020	https://qr.go.page.link/4i2LU
“Considerations for Reopening Institutions of Higher Education in the COVID-19 Era”	American College Health Association	May 2020	https://qr.go.page.link/uzyuc
“Guidance for Reopening Campuses”	American Association of University Professors	–	https://qr.go.page.link/Mrqrc
State Guidelines for Higher Education Institutions	Individual States	Varies	Examples: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New York • Ohio • Tennessee
“COVID-19 Planning Guide and Self-Assessment for Higher Education”	Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security, the Council for Higher Education Accreditation (CHEA), and Tuscany Strategy Consulting (TSC)	June 2020	https://qr.go.page.link/y54co
“Coronavirus: How should US higher education plan for an uncertain future?”	McKinsey and Company	April 2020	https://qr.go.page.link/wM1ai
Hanover COVID-19 Resource Center	Hanover Research	Spring/ Summer 2020	https://qr.go.page.link/cbBmN

* Links shortened using QR Code Generator

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Contributions to this publication were made by the following Hanoverians:

Chief Content Officer: Anil Prahlad

Project Leads: Amir Rasool, Paul Gibson

Contributor: Katherine Stackhouse

Editorial Team: Amanda Lockhart, Sarah Jacques, Sarah Title, Jordan Wells

Designed By: Johanna Mora, Louisa Smith

ABOUT HANOVER RESEARCH

Hanover Research provides high-quality, custom research and analytics through a cost effective model that helps clients make informed decisions, identify and seize opportunities, and heighten their effectiveness.

HANOVER'S HIGHER EDUCATION SOLUTIONS

Hanover enables higher education institutions to offer a world-class educational experience and operate an efficient and sustainable institution. Hanover's Higher Education Solutions tackle the academic and administrative challenges facing every department at your institution—amplifying your individual efforts with our tried and tested suite of solutions. Our partners include higher education institutions of all varieties: from large to small, public and private, two-year, four-year, professional, graduate, and for-profit schools.

ACADEMIC SOLUTIONS

- **Enrollment Management:**
Target the optimal pool of students and maximize application and acceptance rates.
- **Academic Program Development:**
Strengthen your academic portfolio through market analysis of existing and potential new programs.
- **Student Success:**
Spot at-risk students early, identify the drivers of attrition, and pinpoint factors driving poor post-graduate outcomes.

ADMINISTRATIVE SOLUTIONS

- **Operations and Finance:**
Increase revenue and dynamically evaluate costs to run an efficient, financially viable, and growth-oriented institution.
- **Advancement:**
Highlight your institutional impact with donors and alumni.
- **Marketing:**
Reach the right audience at the right time with the right message.

GRANTS SOLUTIONS

- **Grantseeking Capacity:**
Develop your organizational capacity to pursue grant funding.
- **Funding Research:**
Spot grant opportunities aligned to your funding needs.
- **Pre-Proposal Support:**
Facilitate the development of competitive project concepts prior to submission.
- **Proposal Review & Support:**
Provide review and revision to ensure robust proposal submissions.
- **Proposal Development:**
Engage full proposal development support.



EXPERT

200+ analysts with multiple methodology research expertise



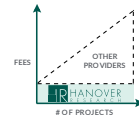
FLEXIBLE

Ongoing custom research agenda adapts with organizations' needs



DEDICATED

Exclusive account and research teams ensure strategic partnership



EFFICIENT

Annual, fixed-fee model shares costs and benefits



CONTACT

www.hanoverresearch.com

P 202.559.0050

E info@hanoverresearch.com



Headquarters

4401 Wilson
Boulevard
9th Floor
Arlington, VA 22203

Charlottesville

609 E Market Street,
Suite 302
Charlottesville, VA 22902

New York City

42 Greene Street
4th Floor
New York, NY 10013