

Survey Results Preview: How Have the University System of Maryland Covid-19 Mandates Impacted You?

March 2022

Executive Summary

Since University System of Maryland Chancellor Perman's announcement of the system-wide USM Covid-19 Vaccine Mandate on April 23, 2021, the Institution has consistently stated their focus is on the safety of students and staff and reducing transmission of the Covid-19 virus. The mandate requires all USM students and employees to receive the original two mRNA vaccinations or one Johnson and Johnson vaccine as well as follow several additional requirements that include: wearing KN95/equivalent masks, adhering to quarantines, weekly testing for the exempted (up to twice per week), receiving booster vaccinations, and punitive consequences for being out of compliance.

In the year since implementation of the Mandates and related policies, there has been no known assessment of the broad effects of the USM Covid-19 mandated policies on USM students, parents, and employees. Therefore, a survey to gather information on the collateral impacts of these mandates and related policies was distributed to USM students, parents, and staff in several of the 12 USM institutions.

The preliminary results of this survey, which is on-going, show that there are significant adverse impacts. These impacts clearly necessitate further attention from USM and individual institutional COVID-19 response leadership to consider all end points and make necessary changes to eliminate adverse physical, psychological, financial and academic impacts of the mandated policies.

Results show that the majority of respondents (80%) suffered physical and psychological harm due to USM Covid-19 mandates.

In addition, a majority of respondents (80%) believe:

- USM should not have the authority to make risk/benefit decisions regarding medical procedures/treatments
- Covid-19 no longer remains a serious health threat on campus
- Covid-19 mandate/policies are not necessary for safety

Of the students, faculty, employees and staff that responded:

- 50% received the Covid-19 vaccine to comply with the mandate and avoid restrictions such as masking and testing and 50 % responded they received the vaccine to protect themselves and others
- 71% reported a negative impact from mandates / policies on mental health
- 50% reported adverse impact from mandates / policies on physical health

There were 142 student, faculty, employee and staff respondents that opted to comment about the physical and/or psychological harm they have experienced. The comments included 95 specific mentions of depression / anxiety/ stress / isolation / ostracized and 7 mentions of vaccine injury.

The top mandated requirements identified as causing harm were vaccination, regular testing of the exempted, masking, quarantines resulting in missed classes / work, dining hall restrictions and social distancing. Of the exempted students, faculty, staff and employees who responded, 51% reported receiving at least one punitive consequence for being out of compliance for any reason. These consequences included being denied entry to dining halls for meals (lasting for days), access to housing / dormitories and access to classes. Other consequences reported include being asked to leave class, loss of job for having an exemption denied and being threatened with receiving a failing grade and more.

Additional survey results reveal a majority of respondents do not agree overall with the Covid-19 mandates and policies. Specifically, 50-60% reported disagreeing with one or more of the policies for masking, the original Covid-19 vaccine requirement, the booster requirement, and non-compliance consequences. Testing requirements for the exempted was another requirement with which respondents disagreed (45%). Quarantine for those testing Covid-19 positive was split nearly 50/50% in agreement and disagreement. Other than the policy requiring quarantine for Covid 19 positive, a smaller percentage of respondents (15%-24%) indicated agreement with the policies listed in this section.

The survey results also indicated that student retention may be significantly impacted by the mandates as a notable number of respondents shared that they had already left USM or have considered leaving / transferring to a school without similar Covid-19 restrictions.

Additional insight into adverse impacts was revealed in the survey respondents' comments. Read in their own words what it is like to be injured from the vaccine, to choose between a vaccine and providing for your family, to be a student locked out of campus and denied access to classes for weeks despite remaining healthy due to repeated exposures to vaccinated Covid positive students, a student going for days without access to food for missing testing, and all of the other examples respondents provided of physical, psychological, academic and financial harm due to USM Covid-19 mandates and policies.

The survey was administered for informational purposes only and is not intended to be scientific; however, the results reveal significant adverse impacts. USM leadership must give thoughtful consideration to enact comprehensive policies to offset and ultimately eliminate the unintentional undue harms being caused by the USM Covid-19 vaccine mandates and policies now and in the future.