Tennessee Higher Education Tabletop Exercise

Situation Manual

June 29, 2020



**Exercise Overview**

| **Exercise Name** | Tennessee Higher Education Tabletop Exercise |
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| **Exercise Dates** | June 15, 2020 |
| **Scope** | This exercise is a Tabletop planned for Two hours at INSERT UNIVERSITY NAME HERE. Exercise play is limited to administrative policy and decision makers. The overall goal of the exercise is to identify areas in our emergency response plan that need improvement to address the COVID-19 outbreak scenario. |
| **Mission Area(s)** | Mitigation, Response |
| **Core Capabilities** | Planning, Operational Coordination, Public Information and Warning, Operational Communications, and [Public Health, Healthcare, and Emergency Medical Services](javascript:%20if%20(%20typeof(NewContent)%20!=%20'undefined'%20)%20%7bNewContent('FAAB205241532031C005130100014744','1',%7b'top':0,'left':0,'width':800,'height':600,'resizable':true,'location':false,'menubar':false,'scrollbars':true,'status':false,'toolbar':false%7d);%7d) |
| **Objectives** | 1. Assess the validity of the current Emergency Response Plan in the context of an outbreak of COVID-19. 2. Assess how the existing emergency response structure at our campus will address the challenges pose by a pandemic COVID-19 event. 3. Assess how our campus will coordinate its response with our campus health service, area hospitals, and state / regional and local public health agencies. 4. Identify gaps and issues to be addressed in our campus response plan. 5. Identify the next steps in the planning process. 6. Review plans to clarify lines of accountability (roles & responsibilities) and communication to enable a timely, well-coordinated, and effective response. 7. Discuss disposition of presumptive positive individuals. 8. Review responder safety and health. |
| **Threat or Hazard** | COVID-19 Outbreak |
| **Sponsor** | Tennessee Higher Education Commission, Tennessee Department of Health, Tennessee Emergency Management Agency. |
| **Participating Organizations** |  |
| **Point of Contact** | Adam Stewart – [adam.stewart@tn.gov](mailto:adam.stewart@tn.gov)  Jeff Brown – [jeff.l.brown@tn.gov](mailto:jeff.l.brown@tn.gov) |

**General Information**

**Exercise Objectives and Core Capabilities**

The following exercise objectives in Table 1 describe the expected outcomes for the exercise. The objectives are linked to core capabilities, which are distinct critical elements necessary to achieve the specific mission area(s). The objectives and aligned core capabilities are guided by elected and appointed officials and selected by the Exercise Planning Team.

| **Exercise Objective** | **Core Capability** |
| --- | --- |
| Assess the validity of the current Emergency Response Plan in the context of an outbreak of COVID-19. *(Clinical response, Work-at-home, Tele-working, Distance learning, Social Distancing, Suspension of classes or closing the institution, Re-opening the institution, Academic Crediting, and Supply issues and operations issues including housing and common areas.)* | Planning  Public Information and Warning  Operational Coordination |
| Assess how the existing emergency response structure at our campus will address the challenges posed by a pandemic COVID-19 event. *(Travel enforcement and quarantine / isolation, how does the plan change once we have the first case of community-based transmission, Essential services and personnel, and crisis communications.)* | Planning  Public Information and Warning  Operational Coordination |
| Assess how our campus will coordinate its response with our campus health service, area hospitals, and state/regional and local public health agencies. *(Congregate care including support for ill students remaining on campus.)* | Operational Coordination  Operational Communications  [Public Health, Healthcare, and Emergency Medical Services](javascript:%20if%20(%20typeof(NewContent)%20!=%20'undefined'%20)%20%7bNewContent('FAAB205241532031C005130100014744','1',%7b'top':0,'left':0,'width':800,'height':600,'resizable':true,'location':false,'menubar':false,'scrollbars':true,'status':false,'toolbar':false%7d);%7d) |
| Identify gaps and issues to be addressed in our campus response plan. | Planning |
| Identify the next steps in the planning process. *(Business continuity)* | Planning |
| Review plans to clarify lines of accountability (roles & responsibilities) and communication to enable a timely, well-coordinated, and effective response. *(Continuation of research, Financial implications to University, and identifying training, communications, and resource needs.)* | Planning  Operational Communications  Operational Coordination |
| Test Samples *(Isolation of presumptive positive individuals)* | Planning  Operational Coordination  [Public Health, Healthcare, and Emergency Medical Services](javascript:%20if%20(%20typeof(NewContent)%20!=%20'undefined'%20)%20%7bNewContent('FAAB205241532031C005130100014744','1',%7b'top':0,'left':0,'width':800,'height':600,'resizable':true,'location':false,'menubar':false,'scrollbars':true,'status':false,'toolbar':false%7d);%7d) |
| Review responder safety and health | Planning |

**Exercise Structure**

This will be a facilitated Tabletop Exercise. The exercise scenario is divided into four distinct response situations, plus a debriefing. Participants will respond to the following scenario modules.

**Module 1:**

* Positive Test in Dormitory or Other Congregant Setting

**Module 2:**

* Introduction of COVID-19 from the Community (no known exposure)

**Module 3:**

* Cluster Outbreak of COVID-19 in the Community and on Campus*.*

**Module 4:**

* Mass Gatherings

**Module 5:**

* Athletics COVID-19 Situation

**Module 6:**

* Business Continuity and Looking Ahead

**Exercise Debriefing**

**Exercise Conduct**

Each module will be conducted as follows:

● The Group Facilitator will introduce each module.

● In each module, scenario information and events will be provided in the order in which they occur.

● All information will be provided to all participants.

● At the end of each module, the scenario will be suspended for questions and discussion.

**Exercise Guidelines**

* This exercise will be held in an open, low-stress, no-fault environment. Varying viewpoints, even disagreements, are expected.
* Respond to the scenario using your knowledge of current plans and capabilities (i.e., you may use only existing assets) and insights derived from your training.
* Decisions are not precedent setting and may not reflect your organization’s final position on a given issue. This exercise is an opportunity to discuss and present multiple options and possible solutions.
* Issue identification is not as valuable as suggestions and recommended actions that could improve prevention/protection/mitigation/response/recovery efforts. Problem-solving efforts should be the focus.

**Participant Roles and Responsibilities**

Participants respond to the situation presented based upon their knowledge, current plans, and procedures.

Group Facilitator(s) will moderate discussion.

**Exercise Assumptions and Instructions**

A tabletop exercise is intended to be a safe environment that encourages open and wide-ranging discussion. Differing viewpoints, even professional disagreements, are expected**.**

* The scenario is plausible, and events occur as they are presented.
* Respond based on your knowledge of current plans and capabilities. You may not use non-existent assets.
* There is no pre-determined solution to this exercise. Make your best decision based on the circumstances presented.
* Decisions are not precedent setting and do not necessarily reflect the universitiesposition on a given issue. This exercise is an opportunity to discuss and present multiple options and possible solutions.
* Assume cooperation and support from other responders and agencies. Assume that state/regional and federal responders are initiating their plans, procedures, and protocols while you are concentrating on the university’sresponse. Draw upon your own experience and knowledge of how local, state/region, and federal agencies work together in any emergency response situation.
* The presented events, information, written material, and resources serve as the basis for discussion.
* The response process and decision-making are more important than detail

**Post-exercise and Evaluation Activities**

**Debriefings**

Post-exercise debriefings aim to collect sufficient relevant data to support effective evaluation and improvement planning.

**Hot Wash**

At the conclusion of exercise play, controllers facilitate a Hot Wash to allow players to discuss strengths and areas for improvement, and evaluators to seek clarification regarding player actions and decision-making processes. All participants may attend. The Hot Wash should not exceed 30 minutes. A hot wash is “*the immediate "after-action" discussion and evaluation of an agency's (or multiple agencies') performance following an exercise, training session, or major event*.” Please set aside all rank structure, personal history with individuals and ego. This is an opportunity for all involved players to have a voice.

**Participant Feedback Forms**

Participant Feedback Forms provide players with the opportunity to comment candidly on exercise activities and exercise design. Participant Feedback Forms should be collected at the conclusion of the Hot Wash. Please actively encourage all participants to engage and complete all feedback forms.

**Exercise Evaluation**

Evaluation of the exercise is based on the exercise objectives and aligned capabilities, capability targets, and critical tasks, which are documented in Exercise Evaluation Guides (EEGs). Evaluators have EEGs for each of their assigned areas. Additionally, players will be asked to complete participant feedback forms. These documents, coupled with facilitator observations and notes, will be used to evaluate the exercise and compile the After-Action Report (AAR).

**Module 1: Introduction of COVID-19 with known exposure**

**Friday, August 21, 2020**

1. Symptomatic (cough, low-grade fever) 18-year-old freshman resident of a dormitory gets a test for COVID-19 at university clinic that afternoon. Student DOES agree to share information with the university through a consent form.
   * Student feels bad over the weekend and stays in the dorm, using the laundry room and goes to dining facility.
   * University clinic informs student of a positive test for COVID-19 on 24 August.
   * University notified the afternoon of the 24th.
   * University Health Department coordinates with County Health Departmentto begin initial contact tracing to notify people who have been in close contact to quarantine for 10 days. List includes 5 faculty and up to 100 students that have been in contact with the student in the last 5 days.
   * Student attended a fraternity recruitment event on the evening prior (20 August) and potentially exposed up to 50 people in a social atmosphere, most who were not known by the student.
2. Some faculty and students with casual (and/or close) contact to the student want to be tested for COVID-19.
3. Word has traveled fast over social media about a “student with coronavirus in the dorm.”
   * Social media tries to identify the student, leading him to want to withdraw from the university.
   * Students identified in contact tracing are not remaining in quarantine.

**Key Issues**

Dormitory housed student positive for COVID-19.

Contact tracing implemented and notifications given to individuals in contact and to the university.

Potential negative social media messaging targeting the school, students or faculty.

**Questions**

Based on the information provided, participate in the discussion concerning the issues raised in Module 1. Identify any critical issues, decisions, requirements, or questions that should be addressed at this time.

The following questions are provided as suggested subjects that you may wish to address as the discussion progresses. These questions are not meant to constitute a definitive list of concerns to be addressed, nor is there a requirement to address every question.

1. Do we have good information indicating who was exposed? How do we track testing of additional students (fraternity)? Classmates?
2. What is communicated to the campus community?

* What happens if students don’t want to come to class?
* What mechanisms are in place to encourage isolation/quarantine?

1. We now have the first confirmed case of COVID-19 in a campus dorm. Do we change any of our policies regarding our response in commuter student areas?
   * Do we make any changes to screening questions at our clinics?
   * How do we message and encourage students off-campus to get testing?
   * Are we academically prepared to deliver course material to quarantined or isolated students?
2. Assume one of the students at the fraternity has two roommates and they live off-campus. Do we have any recommendations for these students? (No one is displaying symptoms.)
   * Would our recommendations change if the case and roommates lived on campus?
3. What are the recommendations for the people who attended the fraternity recruitment event?
   * Can a student who did not quarantine be disciplined for not adhering to the isolation policy?
   * Would discipline/consequences be different if it was an employee instead?

**Module 2: Introduction of COVID-19 from community (no known exposure)**

**Prior to Monday, August 31**

1. A series of positive cases have been identified in a County; origins are all traceable to other cases thus far. Only the most severe cases are being tested, so the numbers are likely higher than reported.

**Monday, August 31**

1. A 58-year-old male who works in the Biology Departmentpresents to the Health Clinic without notification, experiencing fever, cough, and shortness of breath. He denies any out-of-state travel or recent social gatherings.
   * He tests positive for COVID-19. Isolation is advised.

**Wednesday, September 2**

1. 48 hours later his spouse, who works in the University Center, comes down with similar symptoms, she is tested by County Heath Department, and she is positive for COVID-19.
   * She informs clinic staff that she continued commuting to her office after her husband’s return home.
   * What should be done with this information?

**Key Issues**

Positive test in employee and spouse at two locations on campus.

What actions from a public health and campus safety standpoint should be considered?

Messaging from the university to students, parents, faculty, staff and the community about decisions being made.

**Questions**

Based on the information provided, participate in the discussion concerning the issues raised in Module 2. Identify any critical issues, decisions, requirements, or questions that should be addressed at this time.

The following questions are provided as suggested subjects that you may wish to address as the discussion progresses. These questions are not meant to constitute a definitive list of concerns to be addressed, nor is there a requirement to address every question.

1. Did you activate your Emergency Operations Center (EOC) or a Coordination Center?
2. What needs to be communicated to the students and employees and the general public?
   * Who will craft the appropriate press release?
3. What are the policy issues for faculty and staff who want to work at home, citing fears of being exposed to an infectious person during their incubation period?
   * A relatively large number of faculty and staff have reported software/system delays in response times while working online. Some are experiencing other computer issues as well, and there is a delay in IT getting back with them. What policies govern employees who work at home but do not have a functioning computer?
4. Are any changes warranted to recommendations or policies for the end of the semester before the holidays?
5. What are the decision points for suspending classes or closing the main university campus?
   * What are the triggers? Number of deaths and/or cases? Case-fatality rate?
   * Are the triggers for cancelling classes different from those to ask faculty to work from home?
6. Does the Incident Command Team in the EOC have the authority to acquire more resources (medical supplies, security, personnel, etc.)?
7. Are sanitation contracts or personnel in place to address building and equipment that have been exposed to a symptomatic person?

**Module 3: Cluster Outbreak of COVID-19 in the Community and on Campus**

**September 10 to September 30**

1. Sunday, September 12: 90 reported positive cases of COVID-19 in city area , 67 in County area, and 23 in surrounding County.
2. During the week of September 21-24, 110 additional cases are diagnosed representing 5 different geographic clusters of the disease in a County. A cluster outbreak in the city neighborhood is being tracked by County Health Department.
3. Tuesday, September 22, two deaths from COVID-19 occurs in a County*.*
4. During the week of September 28 to October 2, 142 additional cases are diagnosed representing 10 new clusters of disease and reside in seven different counties in the university region.
5. Wednesday, September 30, three additional people (known cases) have died from COVID-19 in Knox County.
   * One Junior at the university, who had tested positive on September 14th, passed away at a Hospital on September 19th. The fatality was confirmed to be a full-time student, and they did not live on campus.
   * Additionally, 8 students (6 commuter students, two in dormitory settings) test positive for COVID-19.

**Key Issues**

Analysis and data used to drive potential closure decisions.

What does this information trigger with campus messaging?

Are these cases linked in any way to the university staff or faculty?

**Questions**

Based on the information provided, participate in the discussion concerning the issues raised in Module 3. Identify any critical issues, decisions, requirements, or questions that should be addressed at this time.

The following questions are provided as suggested subjects that you may wish to address as the discussion progresses. These questions are not meant to constitute a definitive list of concerns to be addressed, nor is there a requirement to address every question.

1. If you **didn’t** cancel classes or close the universityin Module 2, do you do so now?
   * To what extent will you use capabilities for video-streaming lectures so that students don’t miss out on course work? What are the key factors in making decisions related to this area?
   * How will you address missed work for courses requiring in-class participation (*i.e.,* courses that aren’t amenable to watching video-streamed lectures?)
   * Is there a trigger for vacating student housing, such as the dorms at the university?
2. Will university-sponsored gatherings/events be canceled, such as student socials? Who makes this decision? What are the triggers? (See Table of events at end of exercise)
3. What business continuity planning clause might affect vendors who don't deliver?
4. Do we know how many cases of COVID-19 would exceed the hospital and campus clinic capacity and resources (such as available ventilators?) (Does the hospital typically run close to capacity?) What approaches to managing surge capacity will be used?
5. Are you concerned about the lack of food and medication supplies being delivered to the campus? If yes, what plans do you have to secure food and/or medical supplies?
6. What mechanisms are in place to address mental health issues for students, faculty, and staff? (Potential issues include death/hospitalization of loved-ones, stress related to postponing graduation, missed work, etc.)
   * Will students already seeking care be able to keep their regular appointments?
7. Is critical research allowed to continue?
   * Are there any threats to caring for the research animals?
   * Is it safe for our researchers to see participants who are coughing? Should they be screened first?

**Module 4: Mass Gatherings**

**Friday, August 28th 2020**

1. Social media reports from the Tennessee Homeland Security Fusion Center, TBI, and City Police Department indicate a large gathering (over 900 indicated as either ‘interested’ or ‘going’) to address social injustice is planned for 7pm on Saturday, August 29th, at a campus location. Most of the social media feeds indicate it would be peaceful, but posts and messages indicate that some disparate groups may demand a meeting with President Dufenschmertz. In addition, TBI stated that non-students from other cities may attend, and that two fraternities from out of state universities are very interested in supporting the effort.
2. Some faculty members have expressed interest in attending the rally as well. This is strictly based on rumor and assumption based on conversations and emails in faculty circles.

**Key Issues**

The Social Injustice rally, which is not university sanctioned, is being planned with large crowds exceeding CDC and the State guidance on large crowds (over 25).

Possibility of participants from both outside the campus and out of state universities may attend.

A small contingent of faculty may participate in the rally.

**Questions**

Based on the information provided, participate in the discussion concerning the issues raised in Module 3. Identify any critical issues, decisions, requirements, or questions that should be addressed at this time.

The following questions are provided as suggested subjects that you may wish to address as the discussion progresses. These questions are not meant to constitute a definitive list of concerns to be addressed, nor is there a requirement to address every question.

1. What are the steps the university can take having been provided this information? What are the actions the university could take 24 hours out from the start of the rally? 12 hours out?
2. In a Covid-19 environment, how will the institution address faculty that participate? What about PPE protection for Campus Security?
3. What strategies could you use in this environment to be able to contact trace?

**Module 5: Athletics Covid-19 Situation**

**October 1st, 2020**

1. University of Mars football team travels to a city to play Neptune University. After returning to Mars, all players and coaches were tested on Monday, 6 October. On 7 October, the AD at Neptune contacts Coach Piccard and said he had 19 players test positive for Covid-19 when he got the results that day. On 8 October, University of Mars got results from the 6 October test and the team had five Covid-19 positive results for the team. No players were symptomatic. Due to the Neptune report the previous day, Coach Piccard requested another test of the team on Monday, 12 October. On 14 October, results showed an additional 12 players were positive, along with two assistant coaches and a trainer. Only one player was displaying any symptoms. A game with the University of Saturn at home is scheduled for 16 October.

**Key Issues**

Two separate tests after returning to Mars from Neptune resulted in a total of (17) players and (3) coaching staff positive for Covid-19.

The University of Mars is scheduled to play the University of Saturn in two days.

**Questions**

Based on the information provided, participate in the discussion concerning the issues raised in Module 3. Identify any critical issues, decisions, requirements, or questions that should be addressed at this time.

The following questions are provided as suggested subjects that you may wish to address as the discussion progresses. These questions are not meant to constitute a definitive list of concerns to be addressed, nor is there a requirement to address every question.

1. What actions did the coaching staff need to take when the original (5) players tested positive? What messaging should be put out from the Athletic Department and the University?
2. What should the university athletic department do with the information that Neptune provided? Was testing the entire team a second time prudent?
3. What decision should be made concerning the upcoming game with University of Saturn? What messaging needs to accompany that decision?
4. What other actions need to happen at this point?

**Module 6: Business Continuity and Looking Ahead**

**October 12 to November 20**

1. Most statesin have experienced multiple cases of and deaths from COVID-19 during the “second wave” in this Fall.
2. In Tennessee, the epidemic curve has peaked and in early November there has been the first observed decrease in the number of weekly cases.

**Key Issues**

Second wave infections presented a rise in cases in September and October, with a decrease in November.

Public and State Health officials report the state and region is on a downward trend.

**Questions**

Based on the information provided, participate in the discussion concerning the issues raised in Module 3. Identify any critical issues, decisions, requirements, or questions that should be addressed at this time.

The following questions are provided as suggested subjects that you may wish to address as the discussion progresses. These questions are not meant to constitute a definitive list of concerns to be addressed, nor is there a requirement to address every question.

1. How many consecutive weeks (or incubation periods) should there be a decrease in cases before students and faculty return to campus?
   * What are the triggers to reopen classes?
2. Who is communicating information about closure length to the students and employees?
3. How does the University’sadministration identify those who have recovered from COVID-19? Medical clearance to return to campus? If so, who monitors?
4. What policy covers those students and employees who refuse to return to campus until they feel it is safe to return? What resources are there to make the return comfortable for students and employees?
5. What are the issues regarding tuition reimbursements, credits, etc.?
6. Will there be any changes with the Spring Semester?
7. How are international students or students receiving VA benefits affected?

**Debriefing Questions**

1. Identify the three most important activities accomplished during this tabletop exercise.

2. What are the three most important gaps identified during this exercise?

3. What are the three most important lessons learned from participating in this exercise?

4. Identify three things that could help improve this exercise.

. **Exercise Schedule**

**Note:** Because this information is updated throughout the exercise planning process, appendices may be developed as stand-alone documents rather than part of the SitMan

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| --- | --- |
| **TIME** | **ACTIVITY** |
| **0900** | **Welcome and Introductions** |
| **0905** | **Narrative** |
| **0910** | **Module 1: Introduction with Known Exposure** |
| **0930** | **Module 2: Introduction with Unknown Exposure** |
| **1000** | **Module 3: Suspension of Classes** |
| **1030** | **Module 4: Business Continuity and Looking Ahead** |
| **1100** | **Exercise Debriefing** |
| **1125** | **Review and Conclusion** |
| **1130** | **Adjourn** |
|  | **\*Please fill out all required Participant Feedback Forms**  **\*Please turn in all notes or materials generated from the exercise**  **\*All times are subject to adaptation as needed** |

**Exercise Participants**

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| **Participating Organizations** |
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| State |
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| Local Organizations |
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