



**INDIANA UNIVERSITY**  
SOUTH BEND

# **Leveraging the Distinctive Strengths of Regional Publics in the Time of COVID**

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# About Indiana University South Bend

- One of five regional campuses of Indiana University
- Serves eight counties in North Central Indiana and counties in the Southwestern corner of Michigan (region affectionately known as *Michiana*)
- Comprehensive university mission that is learner-centered and community-engaged
  - ANCHOR in our community
- ~5,000 students
  - 72% traditional age; 65% female
  - 28% minority; 37% first-gen; 40% Pell eligible
  - Growing Master's degree enrollment (over 500 grad students)
- Only ~5% drop in enrollment during COVID
- Recently joined CUMU!



[Learn More in Our Annual Report.](#)



INDIANA UNIVERSITY SOUTH BEND

# Distinctive Strengths in COVID

1. Regional Mission
2. Collaboration Across Campus
3. Affiliation with Larger Campus
4. Communication



## Regional Mission – “Safe Harbor in the Storm”

- Faculty focus on teaching and learning; strong student-faculty relationships.
- History of varied teaching modalities, including online.
- Teaching/professional development support (UCET).
- After quick pivot to all online instruction in Spring 2020, IU issued Restart Guidelines that provided principles to use for safely offering in-person classes in Fall 2021.
- Faculty were given local autonomy to implement, with encouragement to offer as many in-person classes safely.
- **Example Outcome:** 30% of classes were offered in-person, contributing to student retention and success.



# Feedback from Students

## Things Done Well

- Handling of pandemic communication
- Mitigation protocols and commitment to safety
- Mobile hotspots
- Overall faculty empathy and support

## Student Challenges

- Academic Experience
- Lack of Connectivity to Faculty, Peers, & Campus
- Online Course Fees and Parking Fees

IUSB added three “Wellness Days” in Spring 2021 to respond to student fatigue and make up for lack of Spring Break.



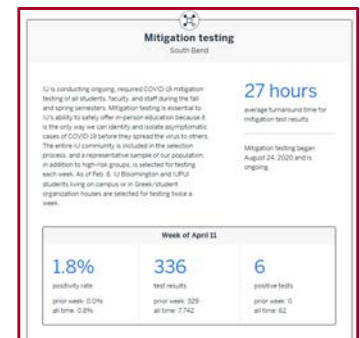
# Collaboration – “We are in this Together”

- Chancellor established a [collaborative decision-making structure](#) to implement Restart Guidelines.
- Seven Working Groups and a Steering Committee with 82 people total:
  - 11 students
  - 37 staff
  - 23 faculty
  - 11 administrators
- No across the board mandates, but a shared, deliberative process that integrated operational expectations and faculty/staff expertise, student perspectives.
- Intensive “[Keep Teaching](#)” and “[Keep Learning](#)” resources and workshops.
- **Example Outcomes:** Facilities delivered more trash cans across campus to collect waste from increased sanitization of surfaces. Communications designed additional safety signage to address needs, such as clustering in the University Grill. IT created “Zoom Room” spaces for students operating with hybrid schedules.



# Affiliation with Larger Campus – “Ask Aaron”

- IU Medical School lent its faculty expertise in a [Medical Response Team](#) (MRT) that used evidence and data to inform campus guidance.
- Experts made themselves available ([Ask Aaron](#) webinars).
- Helped us stand up a mitigation & symptomatic testing center, developed an [online testing dashboard](#) to make data transparent.
  - Mitigation testing center became the new “water cooler” on campus.
- Resulted in significantly lower campus community positivity rates; no confirmed learning spread. We reduced illness and saved lives because of our approach.
- **Example Outcome:** [IU-wide study](#) showed students taking more in-person classes had decreased risk of becoming COVID-19 positive.



# Communication – “The More, the Better”

- Administration held monthly “[Coffee with the Chancellor](#)” virtual events (a carry over from previous in-person Coffee events) – with regularly over 100 attendees.
- [Website](#) with information and FAQ page.
- Virtual Q&A sessions with students and their families.
- Regular email communications; Daily Titan newsletter for additional news/announcements; weekly [COVID-superstar awards](#) recognized outstanding employees; [Restart Report](#) posted online.
- [Restart Working Groups](#) and Steering Committee met weekly, which provided additional layer of communication.
- Campus-wide “grab-n-go” events, including the very popular “we are in this together build-a-bear” kits.
- Monthly meetings with other area higher education leaders to share information and resources.
- **Example Outcome:** Had to pause athletics in January 2021 because of rising COVID cases in community; widely communicated this decision and reasoning. Not a popular decision, but people were OK with it because they knew what and why. BIG WIN – Men’s Basketball won the conference championship despite the pause!



# In Summary

- New chancellor & campus were able to fast-track “getting to know” each other and new collaborations were born!
- Restart Steering Committee is re-focused as a Return Steering Committee to prepare for a “mostly normal” Fall 2021 semester.
- Despite the pandemic we thrived:
  - Hired two new vice chancellors, entirely virtually
  - Developed a new strategic plan, entirely virtually
  - Received Bronze sustainability STARS rating (via AASHE)
  - Awarded *Military Friendly School* designation
  - Renewed our Tree Campus USA status
  - Launched new faculty & staff leadership development program
  - Received over \$1 million in grants for new program & facilities development
  - And the list goes on ...

