

PULSE SURVEY HIGHLIGHTS: CAMPUS PLANS FOR COVID-19 MANAGEMENT IN FALL 2023

ACHA's Campus COVID-19 Vaccination & Mitigation (CoVAC) Initiative conducted a pulse survey between June 26, 2023, and July 12, 2023, to gather information about campus plans for COVID-19 management for the fall 2023 semester. Information was collected to provide benchmarking and help guide ACHA and other national and state leadership groups as they continue to manage COVID-19 on campus.

Key findings:

- Most campuses report *recommending* students receive a COVID-19 vaccine (61%); however, 18% will *require* some or all students to receive a COVID-19 vaccine in fall 2023. Health sciences students are the subgroup of students most likely to be required to be vaccinated against COVID-19. (Page 3)
- Fifty-three percent of responding institutions will offer COVID-19 vaccinations on campus next fall, either through their own health service or a third party such as a retail pharmacy or department of public health. Fifty-four percent of respondents will refer students to off-campus community-based resources for COVID-19 vaccines. (Page 4)
- Institutions continue to take a wide variety of approaches to isolation housing for COVID-19 positive residential students, but 38% plan to have the positive student isolate in place and permit their roommate to remain or secure alternative housing on their own. (Page 5)
- Masking policies and practices differ widely between health services and counseling services; 54% of health services reported they will require students with symptoms of upper respiratory symptoms to wear a mask and 53% of counseling services report not having a masking policy for students. (Page 6)
- Most respondents (74%) said they will collect COVID-19 lab specimens on site (33% will also process the lab tests on campus while 41% will send the samples off site for processing). Just over one third will refer students seeking a lab or PCR test off campus. Approximately two thirds of the respondents who indicated they would provide rapid tests to students said they would not charge for them while 33% said they would do so. (Page 7)
- Most respondents (59%) believe their budget for fall 2023 will be adequate to meet their COVID-19 needs, but 37% either don't feel it will suffice or don't know what their budget will be or what it encompasses. (Page 8)

- Most respondents (78%) either agreed or strongly agreed that their campus health center leadership is included in institutional COVID-19 policy decision making processes. Just over 11% disagreed (8.7%) or strongly disagreed (2.6%) with that statement. (Page 9)

As campuses are reopening for fall 2023, they are doing so with far fewer federal and state resources to support their efforts. Campuses need to maintain the systems, processes, and practices that we know are effective in preventing and mitigating the worst impacts of COVID-19 and other illnesses on our communities.

About the Survey Respondents

Responses were solicited from 900 unique institutions. These individuals were either representatives from ACHA member institutions or individual members from non-member institutions. Responses from emeritus and sustaining ACHA members were not solicited. Of the 900 individuals contacted to participate in the survey, 311 responded, representing a response rate of 34.56%. Several questions allowed respondents to check more than one category so the total number of responses may be greater than the number of survey respondents.

Demographics

The demographics of the participants and their institutions were as follows:

Institutional Attributes	N	Valid Percent
Public	143	46%
Private	168	54%
2-year	20	6.4%
4-year	291	93.6%

Geographic Region	N	Valid Percent
Northeast	104	33.4%
Midwest	66	21.2%
South	98	31.5%
West	43	13.8%

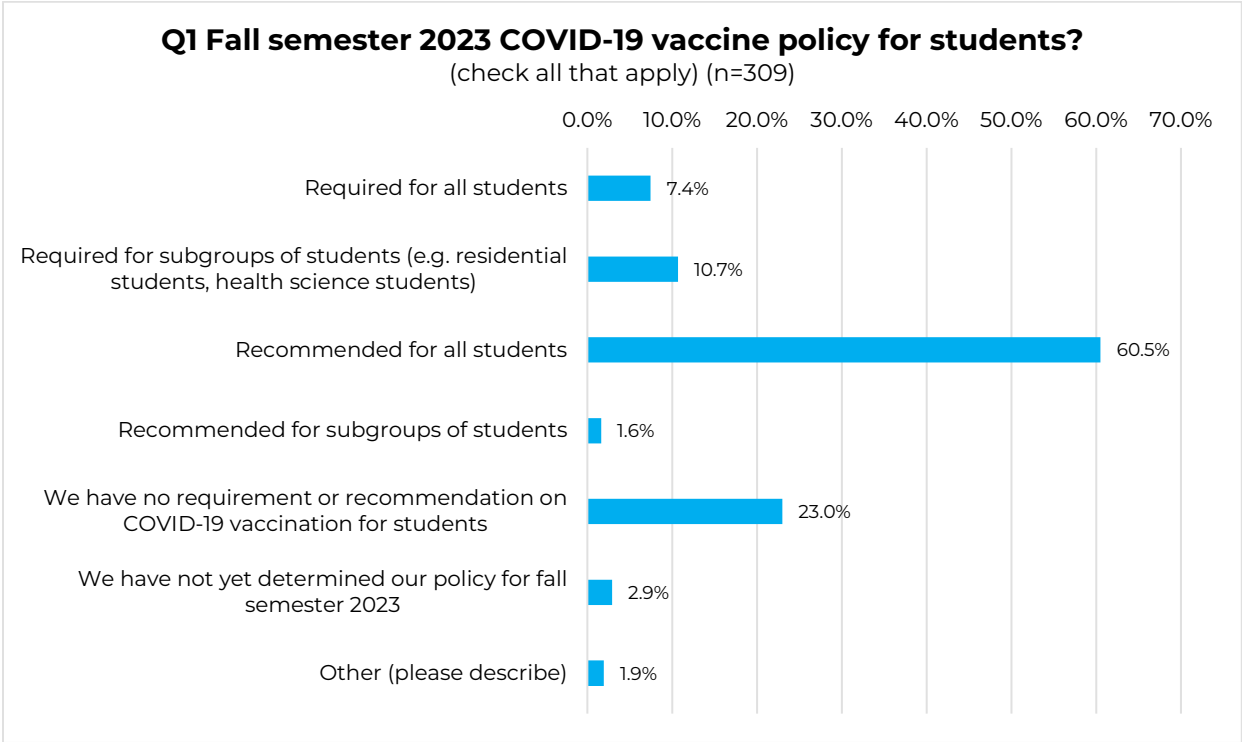
Locale	N	Valid Percent
Urban	162	52.1%
Suburban	78	25.1%
Town	57	18.3%
Rural	14	4.5%

Enrollment	N	Valid Percent
Less than 2,500	71	22.8%
2,500 – 4,999	55	17.7%
5,000 – 9,999	63	20.3%
10,000 – 19,999	51	16.4%
20,000 or more	71	22.8%

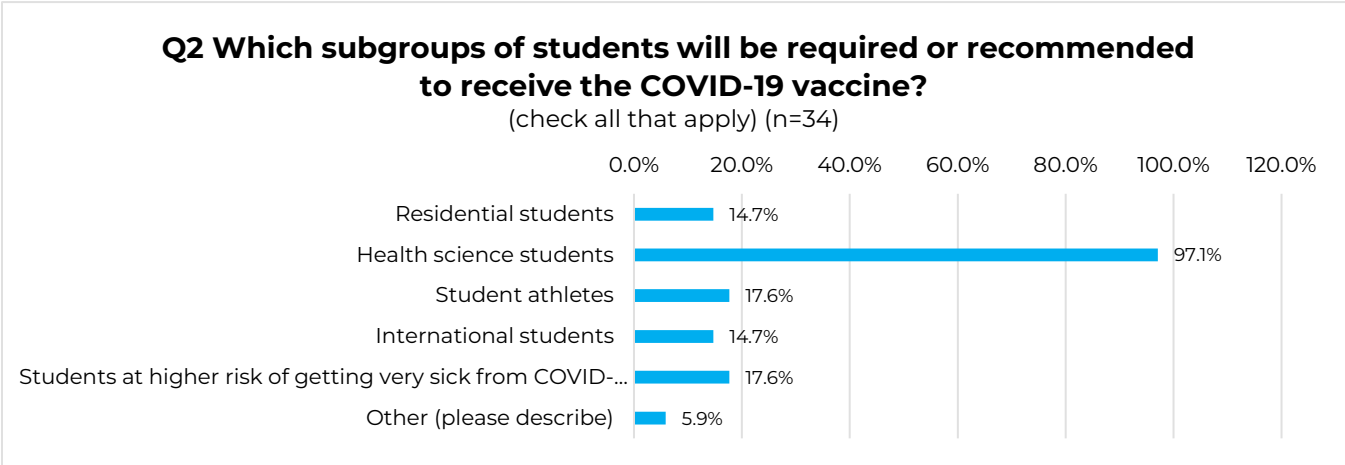
The majority of respondents were from urban institutions of higher education (52.1%), with only 4.5% from rural campuses (as defined by IPEDS). There was broad representation from the four geographic regions, with less representation from western campuses. All campus sizes were represented, with 40.5% of respondents hailing from institutions of higher education with fewer than 5,000 students, about 37% of respondents coming from mid-sized institutions, and almost 23% of respondents coming from large institutions with 20,000 or more students.

COVID-19 Vaccine Policies for Students

Approximately 61% of respondents indicated they will recommend COVID-19 vaccines for all students in fall 2023. Eighteen percent indicated they have a COVID-19 vaccine requirement for all (7%) or some (11%) students. Twenty-three percent of respondents reported having no requirement or recommendation on COVID-19 vaccination for students.

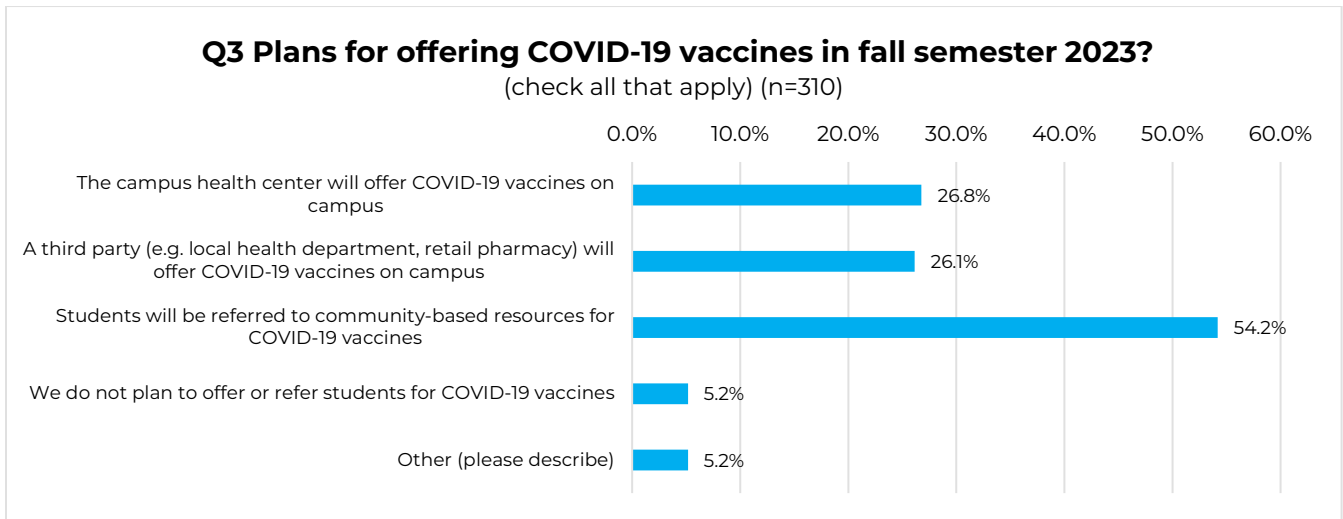


Ninety-seven percent, or all but one of the campuses recommending or requiring certain subgroups of students to be vaccinated against COVID-19 indicated the subgroup of students in health sciences. Student athletes and students at higher risk of getting very sick from COVID-19 each comprised 18%, and residential and international students each comprised 15% of the subgroups of students required to be vaccinated against COVID-19.

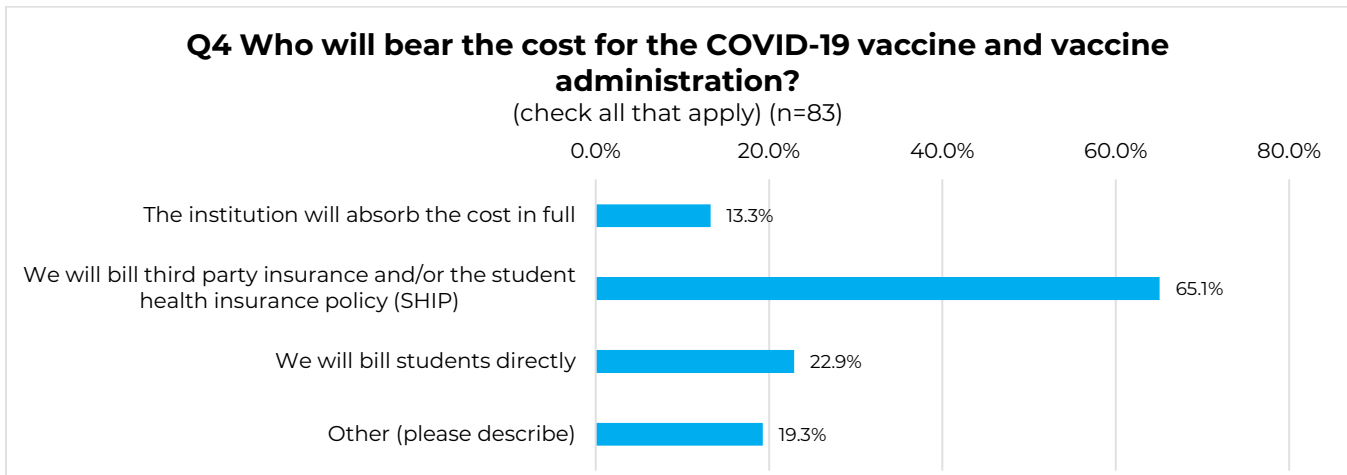


COVID-19 Vaccine Services and Access

Fifty-four percent of respondents reported intending to refer students to community-based resources for COVID-19 vaccines in fall 2023, while 53% said they will provide the vaccines on campus either directly through their health center (27%) or a third party such as a retail pharmacy or local health department (26%). Five percent of respondents said they do not plan to offer or refer students for COVID-19 vaccines. Some respondents indicated they would utilize several approaches or were still working on their plans for fall 2023.

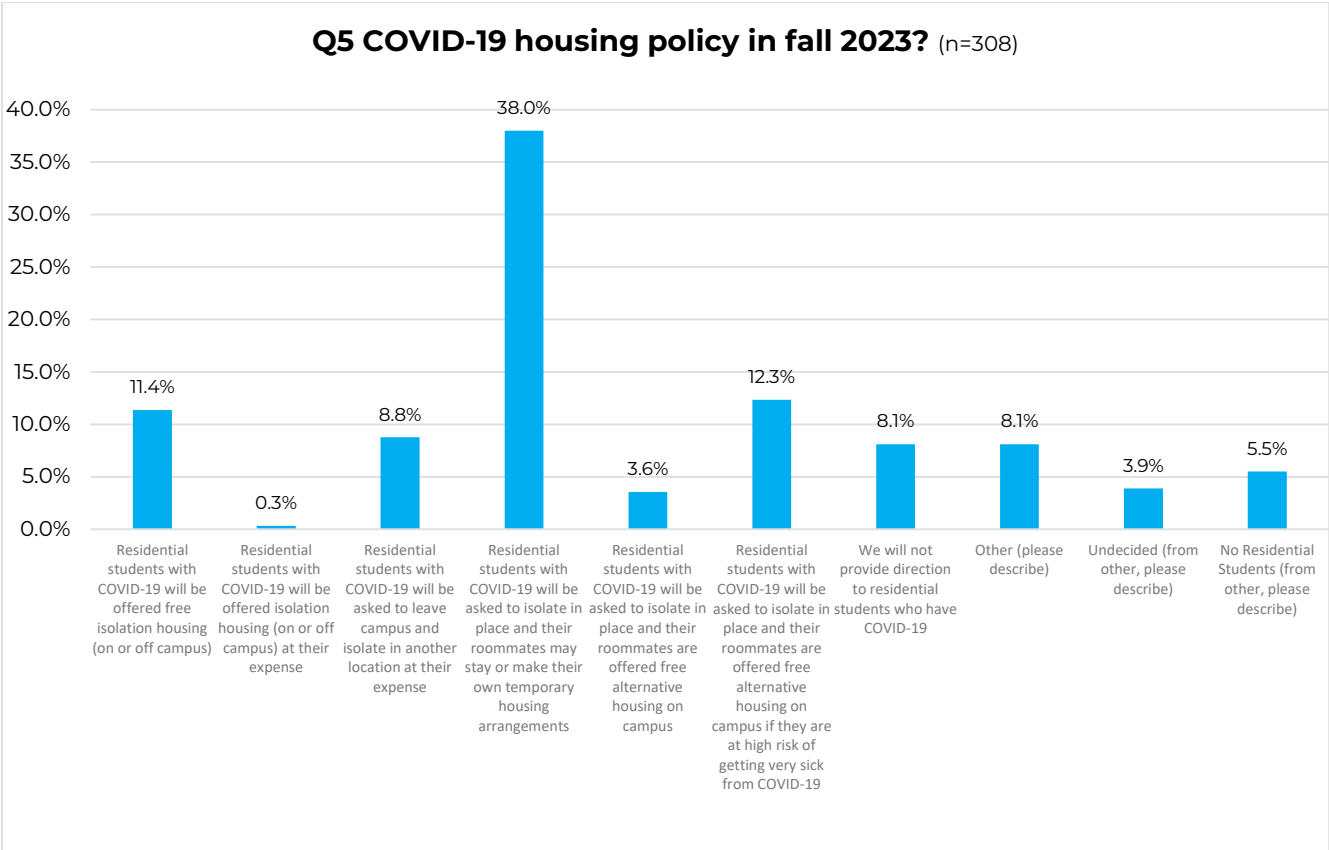


Among those institutions that will offer the COVID-19 vaccine on campus, 65% said they would bill third party insurance and/or the student health insurance policy, while 23% said they would bill students directly. Thirteen percent said they would absorb the cost of COVID-19 vaccination in full. Many respondents who indicated “other” reported they would use existing stock that they received at no cost or rely on free vaccine from their health department partners at the state or local level.



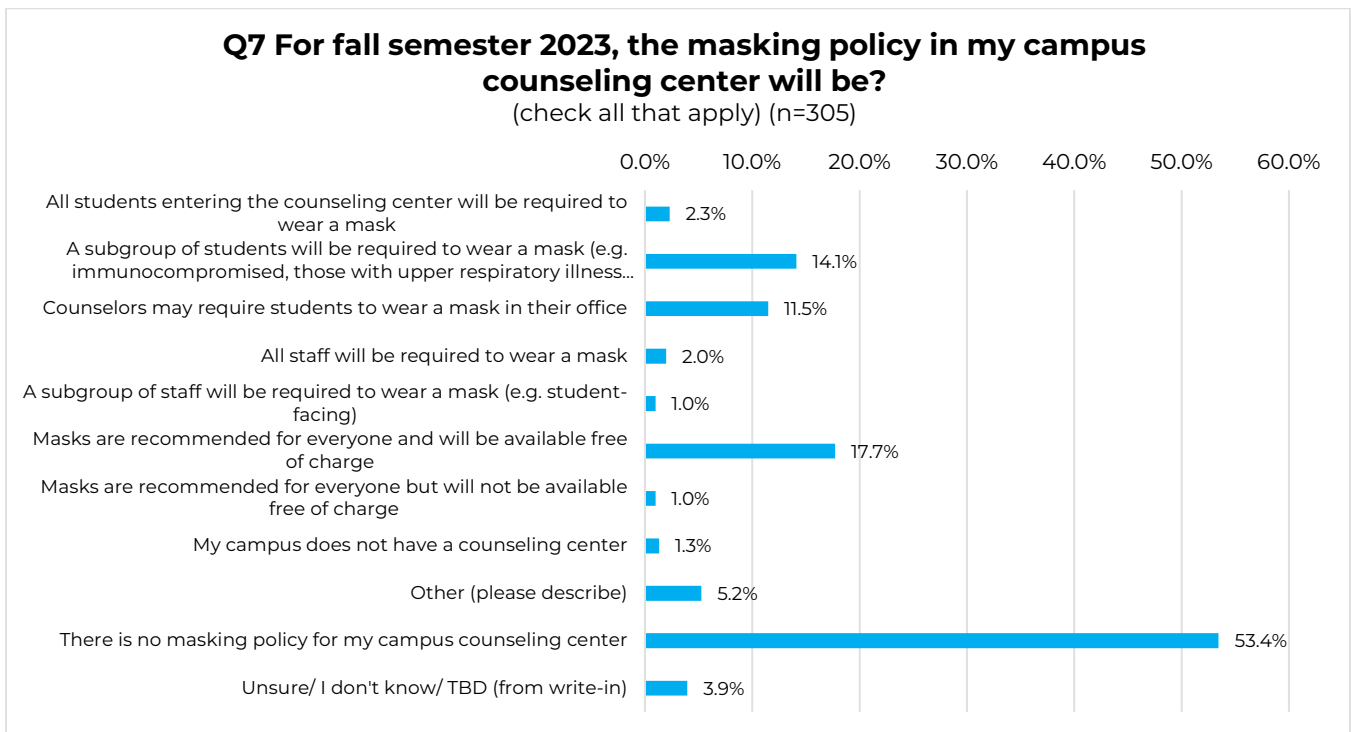
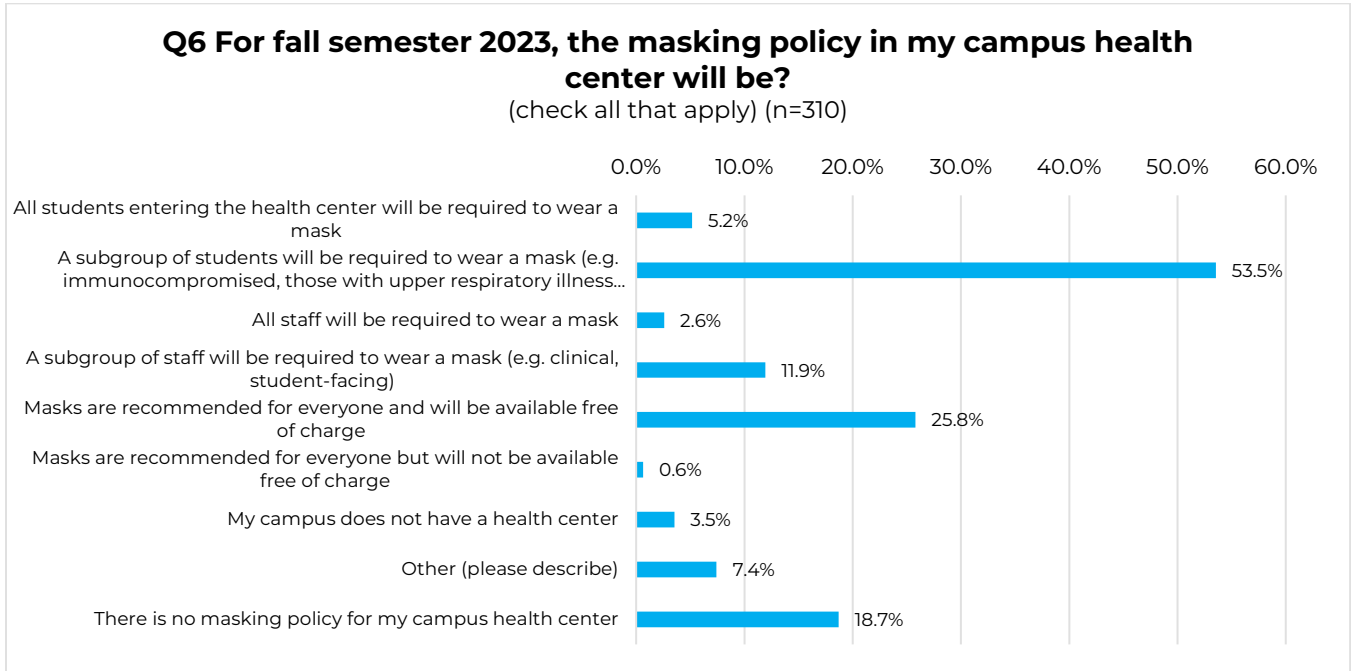
Approaches to Isolation for COVID-19 Positive Residential Students

Respondents reported taking a wide variety of approaches to the isolation needs of COVID-19 positive students living in residence. While 38% of respondents said they plan to ask COVID-19 positive students to isolate in place while their roommates may stay or make their own temporary housing arrangements, 11% said they would offer free isolation housing, on or off campus, to students with COVID-19. Several respondents who indicated “other” in response to the question described a flexible approach that would accommodate students without financial resources to leave campus and multi-tiered strategies based on capacity (e.g., when isolation housing is at capacity, transition to isolate-in-place or ask student to return home if within a certain distance from campus and if not possible to return home, isolate in place.)



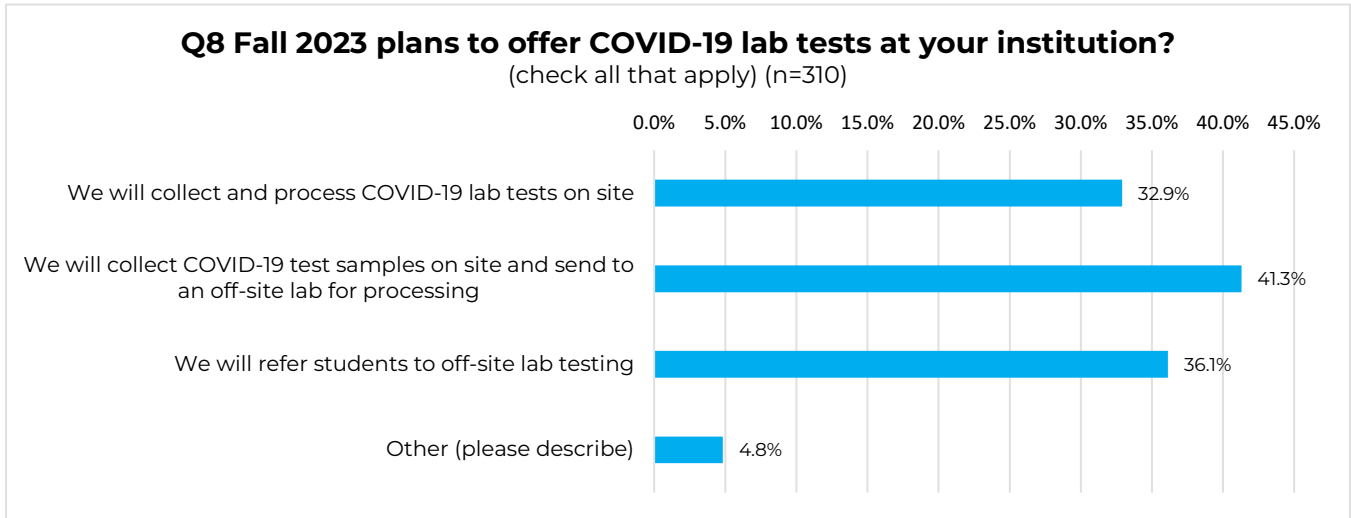
Masking In Health and Counseling Centers

Campuses continue to take a wide variety of approaches to masking in clinical spaces. Relatively few respondents (5%) indicated that all students would be required to wear a mask in the campus health center. Far more (54%) indicated that students with symptoms of an upper respiratory infection will be required to wear a mask. Just over half of responding counseling centers (53%) reportedly will not have a masking policy in fall 2023.

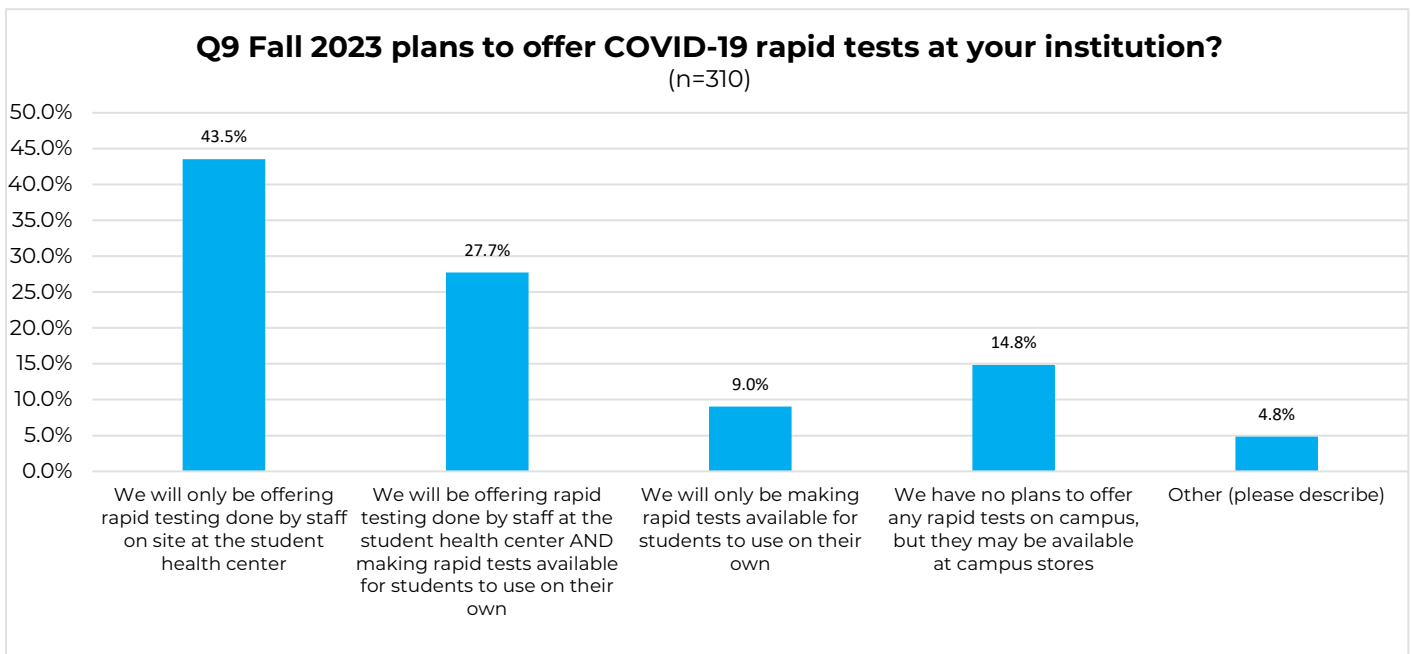


COVID-19 Testing

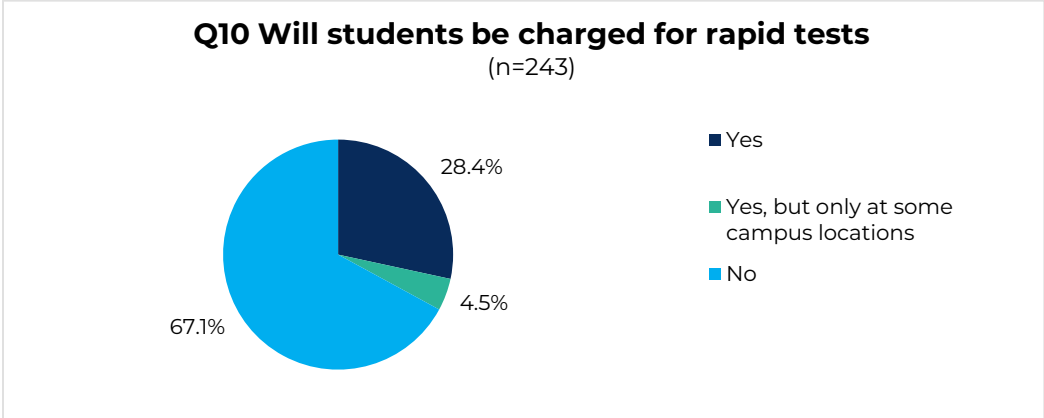
Seventy four percent of respondents said they will collect COVID-19 lab specimens on site (33% will also process the lab tests on campus while 41% will send the samples offsite for processing). Thirty-six percent will refer students seeking a lab or PCR test off campus.



The situation looks different for rapid or antigen testing on campus. Forty-four percent of respondents plan to offer rapid testing through the student health center. Another 28% will administer rapid testing through their health center *and* make rapid tests available for students to use on their own. Nine percent will only provide tests for students to use on their own. Some respondents noted that they will provide rapid tests until their current supplies expire or run out.

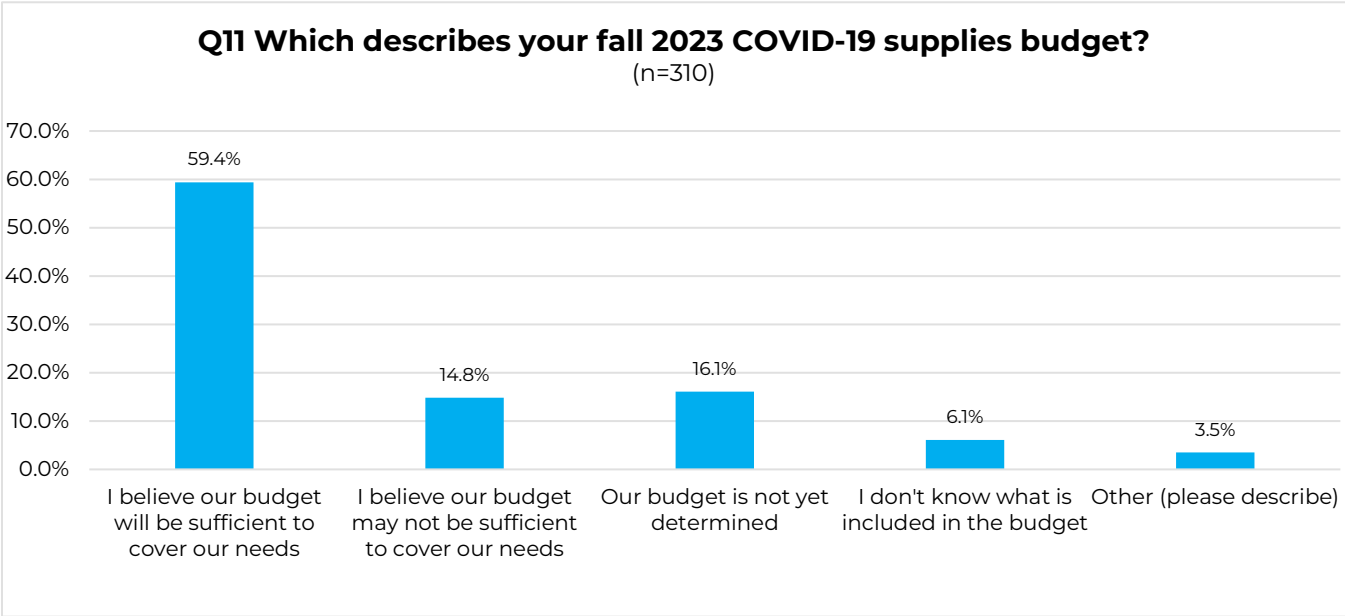


With the expiration of the public health emergency and associated requirement for insurance companies to provide free COVID-19 antigen tests, many college students may need to pay out of pocket for such tests. This may prove to be a significant barrier to students and has implications for tracking transmission of COVID-19 on campus. Sixty-seven percent of the respondents who indicated they would provide rapid tests to students said they do not plan to charge students; while 28% said they do plan to charge.

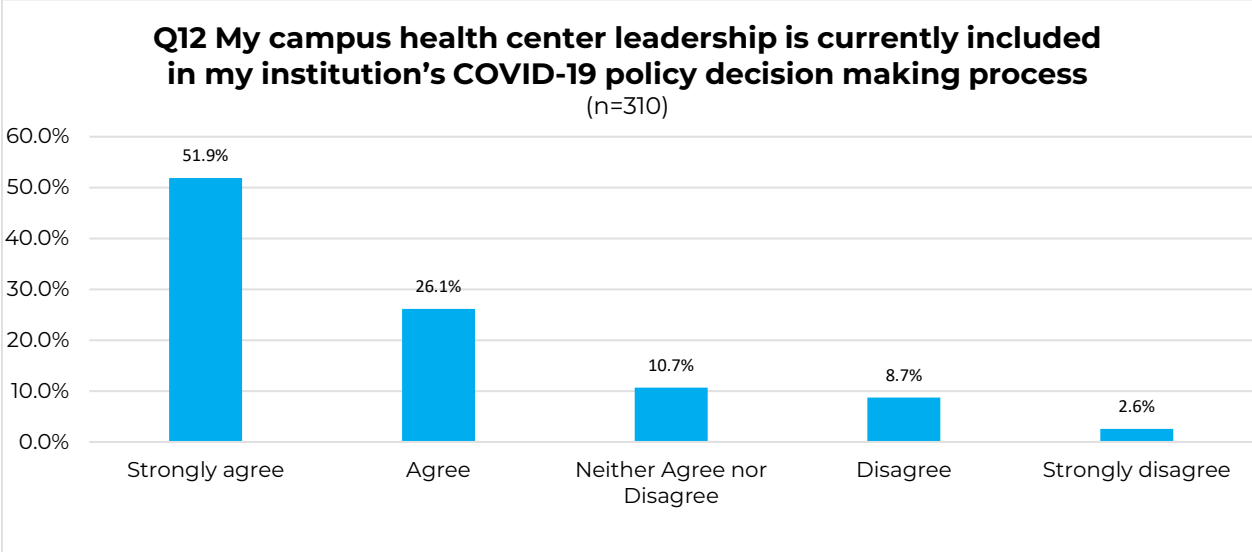


Budget Implications and Involvement in COVID-19 Decision-making

Nearly 60% of respondents reported believing their budget will be sufficient to cover their COVID-19 needs in fall 2023, while 15% feel that it won't be sufficient. Just over 22% either don't have a budget or report not knowing what is covered in the budget at the time.



Encouragingly, 78% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that their campus health center leadership is included in institutional COVID-19 policy decision making processes. This is about the same percentage (79.5%) who reported being involved in COVID-19 decision making in the winter of 2020-2021. Twelve percent disagreed (9%) or strongly disagreed (3%) with that statement.



Limitations

The findings of this survey reflect policies and planning at the time of the participants' responses. COVID-19 has continued to behave unpredictably, and campus plans are subject to change based on many factors.

Conclusion

The goal of this survey was to gather information about campus fall 2023 COVID-19 management. Information collected provides benchmarking and helps guide ACHA and other national and state leadership groups as they continue to manage COVID-19 on campus. Despite pandemic indifference, hostile vaccination legislation, and continued mis- and disinformation surrounding COVID-19 and mitigation efforts, campuses continue to provide thoughtful and impactful decision making (with student health leadership included) aimed at keeping their campuses healthy and safe. While it's expected that COVID-19 vaccination recommendations will change once again this fall, these changes are unlikely to cause significant disruption to student health operations based on this survey's findings.

As noted in the ACHA guidelines, [COVID-19 Considerations for Institutions of Higher Education, Fall 2023](#), "[t]o move forward, IHEs must keep one eye on the future and one on the past to retain lessons learned, improve access to care and services, optimize public health messaging, increase trust with stakeholders, and address the burnout of faculty, staff, and students. IHEs should continue to promote policies that are as inclusive as possible and should continue to take every opportunity to increase vaccine uptake and vaccine confidence in the campus community."