Johns Hopkins University

COVID-19 Vaccine Volunteer Project


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UNIVERSITY

The Vaccine Volunteer Project

The Vaccine Volunteer Project at Johns Hopkins University was created through the Office of the President to ensure the university's students could provide valuable capacity to vaccination efforts within Baltimore city. In collaboration with the Maryland Health Department, the Maryland Medical Reserve Corps (MRC), and local Baltimore agencies, the university created a system through which students serve as nonclinical volunteers to further advance Maryland's vaccination efforts.

The most important elements for the success of this project have included adequate staffing, resource allocation, and communication. With an eager student body to support the vaccination efforts, the framework of the project was crucial to the implementation. This report will provide context for the Vaccine Volunteer Project regarding collaboration, staffing, technology, student leadership development, volunteer recruitment, and evaluation of efforts. The project itself is anticipated to provide over 4,000 hours of direct service on-site at various locations throughout Baltimore city. The primary service site has been the mass vaccination clinic at M&T Bank Stadium, with additional volunteers serving at the Morgan State University clinic as well as community clinics offered throughout the city.

The Vaccine Volunteer Project was a collaborative effort to ensure student success at the vaccination clinics. The state employees, on-site coordinators, university staff, and student leaders each played an important role in the planning and implementation of the project. Regular planning meetings took place to outline the framework of the project among all parties. Following implementation, the staff lead, student employees, and student shift leaders met regularly to ensure volunteers were being recruited and retained to meet the demand of the site needs.

4,000 hours
of direct service on-site at various locations throughout Baltimore city.
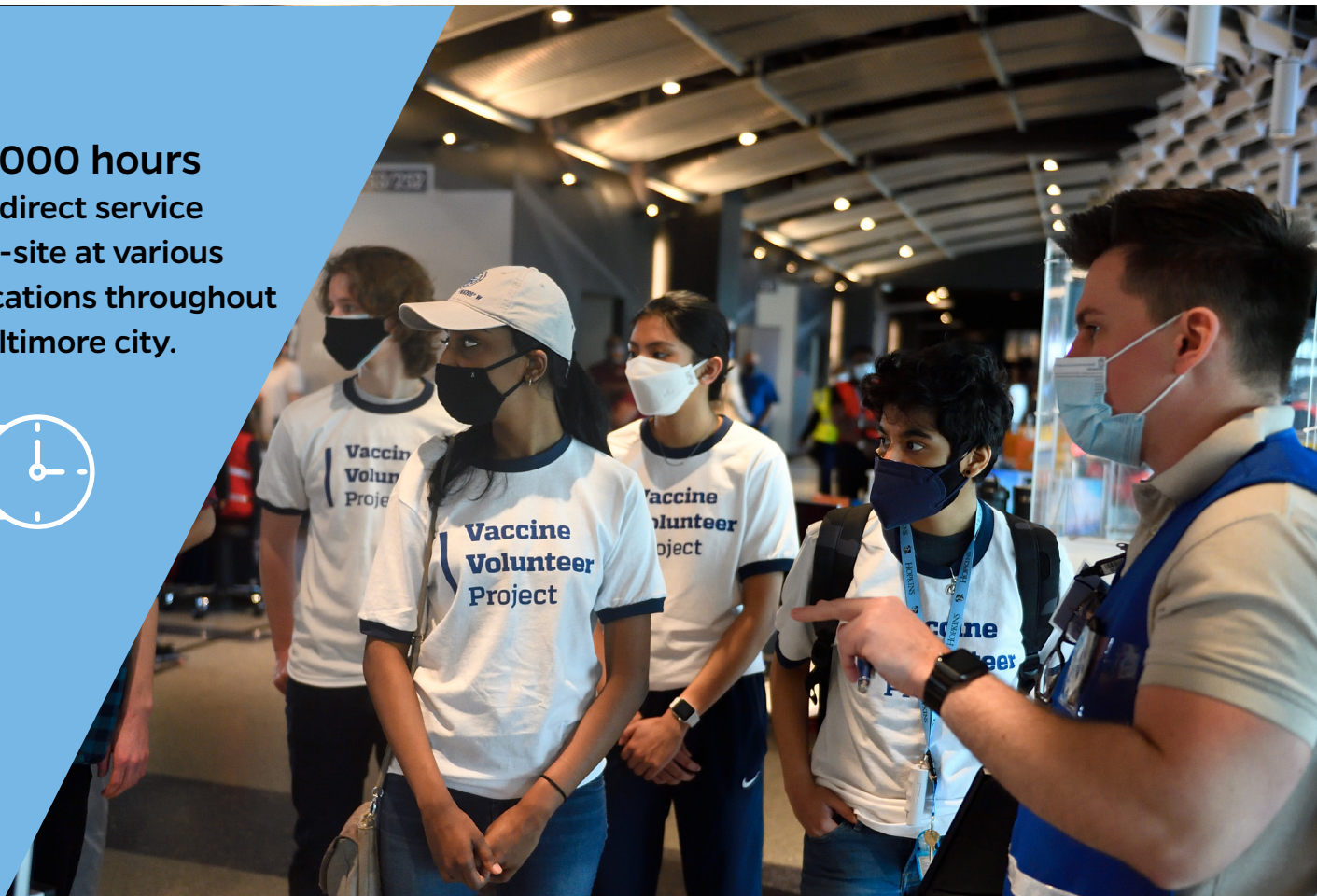
University Staffing

The university provided a commitment to ensuring student volunteers could be recruited and made available as nonclinical volunteers to support the state's vaccination effort. Leveraging the Center for Social Concern, the undergraduate office within Student Affairs that supports civic engagement and community service, a staff member was assigned to provide roughly 20 hours per week of coordination support, student leadership development, and volunteer management. This capacity provided direct points of contact for the MRC, Health Department, site coordinators, and student leaders. The university leveraged an existing community engagement platform, Hopkins Engage, to manage volunteer registration, required training, liability forms, and volunteer tracking.

In addition to the staff capacity, a student volunteer coordinator was identified to assist in the logistics and communication efforts of the project. Federal work-study-eligible undergraduate students were hired to serve as shift leaders and manage volunteer communication, troubleshoot project details, and provide on-site support for volunteers and the site coordinators.

Technology Resources

This project relied heavily on logistics coordination of students, staff, and site contacts. The two platforms that were leveraged were the Hopkins Engage platform (powered by GivePulse) and Microsoft Teams. Each managed a portion of the project and enhanced communication and evaluation. Additionally, Qualtrics was utilized to obtain volunteer feedback and project planning..

- **Hopkins Engage** – The platform is accessible to all university affiliates with a Johns Hopkins credential. This web-based service centralized the information for volunteer training, application for participation, gathering of all data required by the MRC, and the location for volunteers to register for shifts and acknowledge all liability waivers. The site itself permitted us to schedule the exact numbers of volunteers needed and identify a waitlist of volunteers to manage cancellations and attrition on the day of the shift.

- **Microsoft Teams** – All parties involved in the planning and implementation of the Vaccine Volunteer Project were added to a Microsoft Teams "team" to centralize planning documents, weekly briefings, and volunteer rosters. Channels allowed for student leaders to obtain easy access to training materials, provide feedback on the process, and access their weekly volunteer rosters. Weekly briefings were compiled to include the most recent volunteer numbers and project updates and shared through the channel.

- **Qualtrics** – The survey platform allowed for easy survey creation and distribution to student volunteers to gather feedback regarding their experience with registration and volunteering. Surveys were distributed following the first week of the project to get initial thoughts on ways to streamline the project and communication. A follow-up survey was conducted at the end of spring semester regarding plans for summer volunteering.

Staffing Resources

Student Affairs staff, Center for Social Concern

Oversee project administration and implementation including review by risk management, create weekly reports, guide student leaders, serve as point of contact for on-site coordinators and volunteers.

Student Volunteer Coordinator

Provide administrative support, produce reports for MRC approval, create volunteer rosters, and support student leaders.

Student Leaders (12 students hired)

Community federal work-study students hired to serve as leads for each shift, guiding students and being responsible for the following: contacting shift volunteers to confirm attendance, preparing students for service, serving as on-site point of contact for the state and JHU, ensuring transportation is confirmed, and providing feedback.

Volunteers (undergraduate and graduate students at JHU)

Register, confirm, and attend volunteer shifts, serving in assigned roles and providing feedback regarding their experience and the project processes.

On-site coordinator, point of contact for JHU

Greets student leader and volunteers, provides on-site training, and connects with the Student Affairs lead for planning of shift numbers and events.

State MRC contact

Assist in the initial planning and coordination of the project, receives and processes the MRC volunteer list weekly.

University Transportation

Coordinate shuttles per the project needs.

Lyft Business Pass Program

The existing Lyft Business Pass program offered through the Center for Social Concern was expanded for student volunteer transportation provided beyond the undergraduate campus.
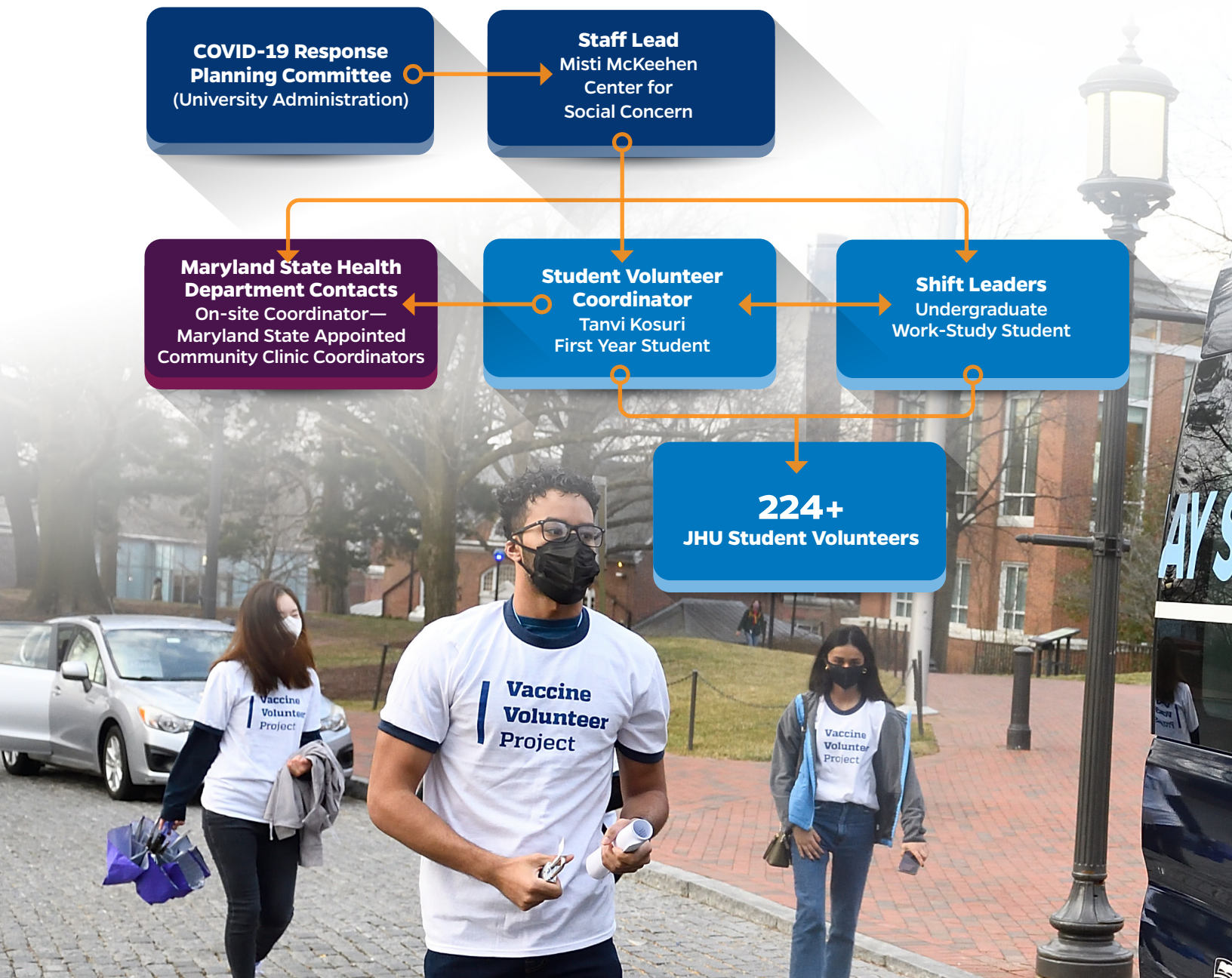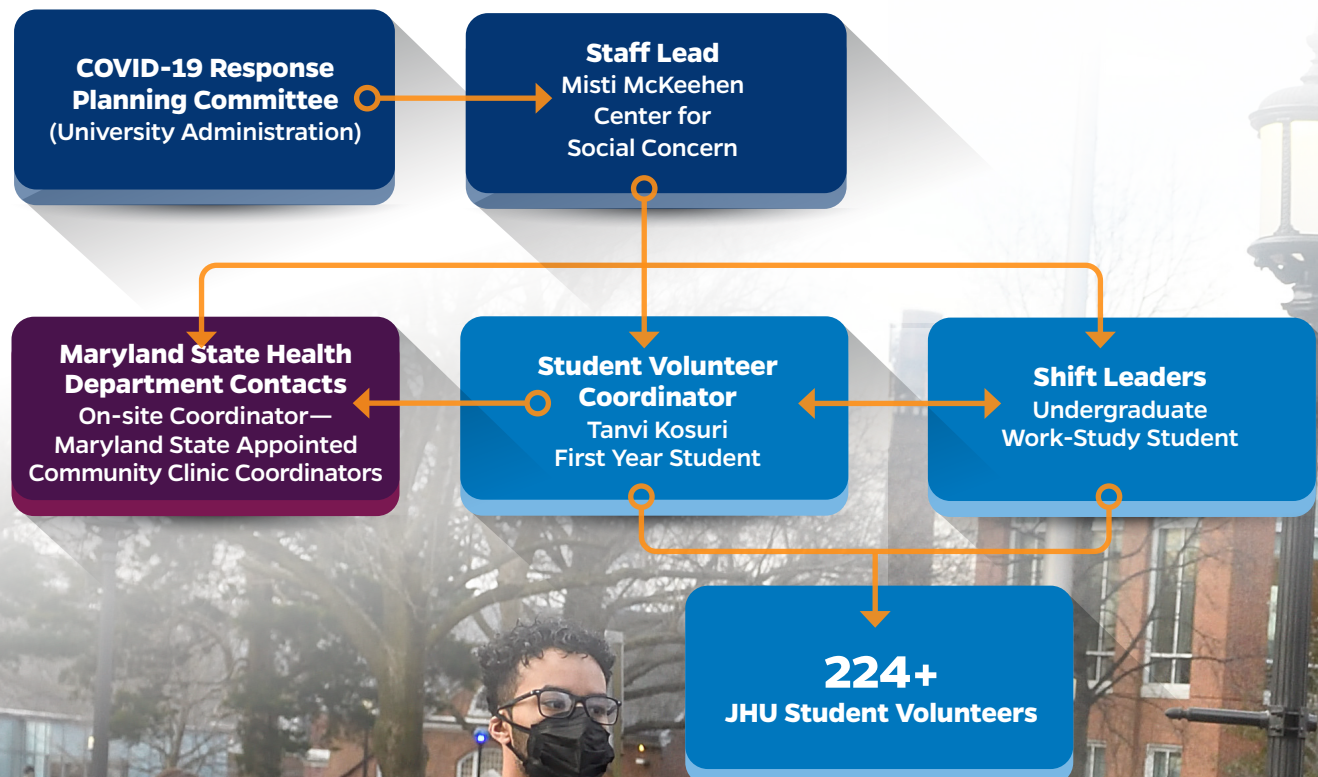
University Communications

The creation of the centralized website, featured with the JHU COVID-19 response information, provided high-level information as well as a direct link for students to register to volunteer. University communications also authored a HUB article to promote the efforts and encourage additional volunteer registrations.
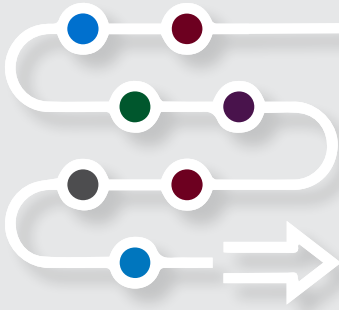
Volunteer Recruitment

The project was announced in two phases to begin volunteer recruitment. First, to begin with a soft-launch period, the Center for Social Concern (the undergraduate office dedicated to community service and civic engagement) leveraged regular student volunteers to invite registration and participation in the first few weeks of the project. These students were reliable volunteers and provided feedback on the process and implementation of the project. Emails were distributed to existing program participants and student service organizations for the first round of volunteer recruitment.

The second phase of the project recruitment included university promotion, the creation of the centralized website, and the HUB article. During an early volunteer date, the university provided a photographer to document the departure of volunteers from campus and their day of service on-site.

Vaccine Volunteer Organizational Chart

COVID-19 Response Planning Committee (University Administration)

Staff Lead
Misti McKeehen
Center for
Social Concern

Maryland State Health Department Contacts
On-site Coordinator—Maryland State Appointed Community Clinic Coordinators

Student Volunteer Coordinator
Tanvi Kosuri
First Year Student

Shift Leaders
Undergraduate Work-Study Student

224+
JHU Student Volunteers

Stages of Volunteer Engagement

1 Recruitment / awareness

Students received communication from the university to gather a list of interested students. Student leaders, program participants, and readers of the daily university emails were notified of the opportunity to volunteer.

2 Registration

Interested students completed the registration form via Hopkins Engage, completing all required MRC data entry and liability waivers, and reviewing video trainings that were required by the state prior to service.

3 MRC approval

Weekly submissions of student data were provided to the Maryland state MRC. Upon submission to the state, volunteers' registration records would be updated and "approved" in the system. The records would be provided a specific tag, which allowed students to view and register for shifts within Hopkins Engage.

4 Shift sign-up

Weekly announcements would be emailed to the volunteer database notifying students of new available shifts. Students had the opportunity to register for shifts based on their own availability. As shifts filled, volunteers were added to the waitlist within the system. After selecting shifts of interest, students were required to reaffirm their understanding of the liability waivers and training, and to note their T-shirt size, any medical information that should be shared, and their mode of transportation for the shifts.

5 Confirmation of volunteering

Shift leaders were provided rosters of volunteers up to a week before the shift was to take place. Each shift leader would contact their volunteers via email or text in advance to provide instructions for volunteering and confirm their planned attendance. Upon receipt of cancellation from volunteers, shift leaders would notify administrators of need for a waitlist volunteer.

6 Volunteering

Students arrive on-site to serve as nonclinical volunteers for the stated shift. The mass vaccination clinic at M&T Bank Stadium offered morning and afternoon shifts, with Morgan State University and community clinics offering one-day shifts.

7 Evaluation/reporting

Upon arrival, volunteers were checked in via Hopkins Engage to track accurate reporting. Students were sent a follow-up email from the system to confirm their attendance and offer space for feedback to be provided based on their experience. At times throughout the project, student satisfaction ratings, feedback, and plans for volunteering were requested via email to gather information for how the coordinators and shift leaders could enhance the program.

COVID-19 Vaccine Volunteer Program

	Pre-Program				Program																
Weeks	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Hire student volunteer coordinator	■																				
Identify transportation plan	■	■																			
Create graphic identifier		■																			
Develop website		■																			
Confirm volunteer training required		■	■																		
Build volunteer training & registration portal			■	■																	
Recruit and hire work-study shift leaders			■																		
Train shift leaders + visit site				■																	
Soft launch announcement to student volunteers				■																	

Program Responsibilities

	Pre-Program				Program																
Weeks	1	2	3	4	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
Confirm volunteer needs				■	■				■				■				■				■
Post volunteer shifts					■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Publish program announcement/request volunteers				■	■																
Submit student list to State Health Department					■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Compile volunteer rosters					■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Update shuttle needs					■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Spring Break Day of Service											■										
Request volunteer feedback						■			■												
Hire summer shift leaders													■								
Community Clinic planning calls															■			■			
Confirm scale-down plan																		■			
Finalize project – compile report																			■	■	■

Program Development Stages

Institutional commitment

As COVID-19 vaccines became available to the public, the senior leadership of Johns Hopkins University sought out opportunities to support the vaccine rollout. When the State of Maryland announced plans to set up mass vaccination sites, JHU leadership realized the potential for undergraduate volunteers to help staff these sites. JHU's institutional commitment was made clear from the earliest days of the vaccine rollout.

Forming the partnership

Drawing on established connections with the State of Maryland, Johns Hopkins reached out to the state to express an interest in providing undergraduate volunteers to support mass vaccination sites. After multiple conversations with partners from the state, it was determined that Johns Hopkins undergraduate volunteers could help to provide support in nonclinical roles (e.g., greeting and registering individuals on-site) at the state's M&T mass vaccination site. The state assigned a dedicated staff member to serve as a liaison with Johns Hopkins as the partnership developed.

Identifying staff leads

Within the university, the Center for Social Concern was identified as the natural home for this effort, given its focus on volunteerism and community engagement. University leadership approached the center's director about the emerging partnership, and she agreed to serve as the staff lead, with responsibility for implementation of the student vaccine volunteer corps.

Assessing resources and tools

The dedication of the university's staff time provided the initial investment to assess the needs of the project. The funding proposal created included the funding required for transportation, identifiable T-shirts for volunteers, funding for student employees, and project supplies. Existing resources within the university included shuttle services provided by Parking and Transportation, and the Hopkins Engage software, powered by GivePulse. University communications provided the graphic design and website presence for the project, hosting information and link to the Hopkins Engage sign-up within the COVID-19 Information portion of the jhu.edu website.

Recruiting and training student leaders

To build the infrastructure required to manage the interest and participation of up to 100 weekly volunteers, student leaders were hired to serve as shift leads. The recruitment of work-study-eligible students was announced on the university's internal hiring platform, SMILE JHU. Social media content was posted and email announcements sent to students to obtain applications for students interested in the position. Students were required to submit work history and schedule availability to coordinate plans for the days. Students were hired under the Center for Social Concern as university employees, making $12 per hour.

Student leaders participated in a welcome training via Zoom (2 hours) and attended a training shift on-site at M&T Bank Stadium prior to the start of student volunteers. Staff and the volunteer coordinator attended to receive a tour of the stadium, serve in roles that student volunteers will need to fill, and gain an understanding of the workflow.

Volunteer announcement

To recruit student volunteers, a soft launch project announcement was made to students who have previously participated in civic engagement activities through the Center for Social Concern. The first two weeks of shifts were promoted to volunteers with the understanding that their feedback would assist us in the planning and implementation of the program. Following the soft launch period, a campuswide announcement was made via a HUB article and promotion of the website.

Weekly planning and coordination

Weekly coordination included the mandatory shift leader debrief meeting (45 minutes) with the volunteer coordinator and staff point of contact. The staff lead connected weekly, via phone or email, with site coordinators to assess the progress, volunteer need, and effectiveness of JHU student volunteers. Adjustments to schedule and volunteer numbers would be reflected in the weekly planning.

Volunteer Registration and management

Through the Hopkins Engage platform, volunteer shifts were first posted for the month of March. We found that students who registered for shifts two to three weeks prior to the shift, were the most likely to cancel or not respond to the shift leaders, requiring more time and attention of staff and shift leaders to fill spaces from the waitlist. After March, shifts were posted once with only one-week advance and the database was contacted to alert students of the availability of volunteer shifts for the coming week. Each shift posted allowed for the specific number of students to confirm a registration on a first-come, first-served basis. The software then allowed students to place themselves on a waitlist for participation. The staff lead and volunteer coordinator would provide the rosters to shift leaders with information including name, phone, email, T-shirt size, transportation needs, and notation of whether this was their first shift. Shift leaders were responsible for contacting each volunteer via email or text to get confirmation of intent to attend the shift and provide key instructions for the day, including transportation details. Should a cancellation occur, the shift leader would contact the staff lead and a waitlist volunteer would be confirmed.

Successful Shift Leaders would typically follow this communications routine:

- Email 3 days prior to shift for introduction and request of confirmation of participation.
- Text reminders the day prior to all volunteers, individual text to nonresponders.
- Text the morning of to ensure all volunteers were awake and ready for the shift.
- Phone call if volunteer had not arrived 10 minutes prior to the shuttle departure.

On-site coordination

Each service site has an identified coordinator to connect with the shift leaders. At the M&T Bank Stadium site, the state's point of contact identified key leadership projects for shift leaders and returning volunteers to assist in the overall operations of the site. The on-site coordinator communicated with the staff lead for any changes to schedules or processes.

Transportation

To ensure students did not face barriers in their participation, transportation was provided for each volunteer as needed. Working with University Transportation Services, a shuttle bus was offered from the undergraduate campus and was the primary mode of transportation to the stadium. Some volunteers supplied their own transportation using the free parking available at the stadium or at the volunteer sites. For student volunteers who did not live within close proximity to the main undergraduate campus, a Lyft Pass program was implemented to provide codes to cover the cost of the ride-share service directly to or from the stadium. Passes were only activated on the days of service between the hours of 7 a.m. and 6 p.m. and had to include the clinical site as a destination or pick-up location.

As additional sites were created, the Lyft Pass program was expanded to support volunteer's transportation. As the volume of volunteers needed for each shift decreased to three per site, the program exclusively utilized Lyft Pass for volunteer transportation.

Recording participation

Shift leaders were responsible for notifying the staff lead on each shift of their student attendance. In the case of a no-show, staff would contact any waitlist volunteers who noted a willingness to be a day-of contact and coordinate their arrival on-site. This practice allowed for the site to receive the accurate number of volunteers that were planned. Shifts saw very low attrition (if any), thanks to the diligence of the shift leaders in ensuring their students were prepared and committed.

Weekly reports

Leveraging the Microsoft Teams site, a weekly report was compiled by the staff point of contact to provide number of unique volunteers, shifts served, hours on-site, and economic impact each week, as well as a YTD number for each category. The report includes additional points of interest, updates to schedule or partnership needs, and any upcoming needs. This is emailed weekly to the leadership team (contacts within the Office of the President, Dean of Student Development, and Vice Provost of Student Affairs) and is available for viewing for all student leaders and university points of contact within the Teams site.

Fostering additional interest / partnership

In coordination with University Communications and the Center for Social Concern's social media team, the announcement of the project garnered more than 200 registrations in a week's time. The initial story in JHU's HUB shared information about the project and promoted it to the university community. Weekly social media posts featured student volunteers to provide ongoing attention to the project.

Receiving feedback

In the soft launch of the program, the feedback of shift leaders and volunteers assisted in shaping the project. Weekly meetings of staff, volunteer coordinator, and shift leaders provided space for debriefing of weekly successes and opportunities for improvement. The learning space of the shift leaders allowed for students to share best practices and relay information to staff to enhance the administration of the project.

Key Lessons for Project Implementation

Ensure a dedicated point of contact is available during each shift to troubleshoot concerns.

Establish regular contact with state, site, and university contacts to clarify the volunteer need, roles, and eligibility requirements with site contacts prior to project announcement.

Enable a waitlist feature and communicate the necessity of attendance to each volunteer.

Evaluate processes for equitable participation of students of all income levels.

Empower student leaders to take leadership on-site.

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