

COVID-19 cases surge at US colleges and universities, administrations seek to hide the disaster

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Two months into the reopening of US colleges and universities for in-person learning, a disaster of mass infections is unfolding. US educational institutions have been transformed into incubators for the further spread of the coronavirus.

Outbreaks of COVID-19 have occurred on virtually every major college or university campus in the US. The universities are doing everything in their power to skew the data and obscure the severity of the campus outbreaks. The following is a small sampling of this criminal debacle.

The University of Texas San Antonio, which had 31,698 students enrolled in the spring semester, has only performed 2,210 tests on students, and a mere 35 on staff. The test positivity rate was recorded as 4.66 percent. Given these figures, the 123 officially reported COVID-19 cases since the start of classes on August 23 almost certainly represents a significant undercount of the actual number of cases.

The University of Texas at Dallas (UTD), which had almost 29,000 students enrolled in fall 2020, has seen more than 293 recorded cases. Suspiciously, information on test data such as positivity, number of tests, and other data is absent despite UTD having completed mandatory testing of all students as of September 10.

The University of Texas at Austin has recorded 341 cases since the start of classes on August 25, with a 3.17 percent positivity rate.

At Texas A&M University, which has almost 67,000 students, 2,970 cases have been reported since August 30 and a 7 percent positivity rate. One student has died, 20-year-old Kirstyn Katherine Ahuero. The callousness of the university administration—which continued in-person learning and did not bother to institute even token safety measures such as masking—led to protests by students who chanted, “Not another Aggie!” and “Mask mandates are a must, and A&M is unjust!”

Faculty have also denounced the administration, with physics professor Peter McIntyre stating last week at a

virtual faculty senate meeting, “How many Aggies must die before Texas A&M University mandates vaccinations and masks for its students and faculty?”

When Duke University opened for the fall semester, the administration boasted the highest vaccination rate among major North Carolina universities. Within the first two weeks of opening, 349 students and 15 employees tested positive for the virus. All but eight were fully vaccinated.

Harvard Business School has been forced to move all first-year and some second-year MBA students to remote learning this week amid a “steady rise” in breakthrough COVID-19 infections. Harvard University said on its website that 95 percent of students and 96 percent of employees are vaccinated.

The University of South Florida has recorded at least 2,070 cases since August 24. The university is deliberately failing to report positivity rates, the number of tests, and the numbers of students in quarantine or isolation. The university claims that it is providing “updates to the community” regarding new cases, but students have not reported seeing any such updates. The university administration is thereby working to conceal community spread in a state in which there are no masking or vaccine requirements.

The University of Colorado Boulder—which has 95 percent of its 35,897 students vaccinated in keeping with the University of Colorado System’s vaccine requirement—has carried out a mere 2,846 PCR tests since August 9. The school is reporting a positivity rate of around 2.3 percent. This translates to approximately 826 cases among students and 235 among staff and faculty, much higher than the official 66 officially reported cases.

Despite the growing number of cases, countless colleges have taken down their COVID-trackers and even implemented new policies that prevent faculty from informing students of outbreaks. Faculty at the University of Delaware, for example, are prohibited from telling their

students when a classmate has tested positive for COVID-19.

The COVID cover-up extends to every facet of school and work life. The latest data from the American Academy of Pediatrics shows that multiple states have quietly changed their parameters for tracking child infections, hospitalizations and deaths in order to obscure the data.

Florida has stopped reporting child hospitalizations altogether. Arkansas has stopped reporting child deaths and hospitalizations. Nebraska has completely removed their COVID-19 dashboard from public view—that is, the state is no longer reporting child cases, hospitalizations, or deaths. Despite their efforts, official data shows that child deaths continue to rise each week.

The widespread nature of the COVID-19 outbreaks at schools and its cover up, is an indictment of the entire American ruling class, Democrat and Republican alike. As for the ever-compliant bourgeois press, they have dutifully fulfilled their role in this sordid venture by maintaining a virtual news blackout on the extent of the outbreaks among students.

From the standpoint of the ruling class, there is nothing to report. The omnipresent danger of infection, sickness and death by a deadly contagion has been decreed to be the new normal in American society. The philosophy is that “the cure can’t be worse than the disease,” and therefore workers and their children must learn to live with COVID-19 for the sake of the stock market.

The fact of the matter is that this disaster was the entirely predictable and logical outcome of crowding students and educators into classrooms under conditions in which the United States is again the epicenter of the pandemic, averaging more than 121,000 new cases per day, and more than 2,000 daily deaths. In this context, the US ruling class and its appendages bear criminal responsibility for the untold suffering wrought by their reopening policy.

The students and educators sent back into classrooms under these conditions are the victims of a barbaric experiment in “herd immunity.” The university administrations, driven by ruthless economic interests, are determined to obtain tuition funds from in-person learning, regardless of the cost to the lives and health of their students, faculty, and the wider population. This is a part of the wider policy of the entire American ruling establishment, which has determined to reopen the economy regardless of the cost in human life and suffering.

The legitimacy of the strategy of ‘mitigation’ or “learning to live with the virus”—which has been used by the ruling class and its media mouthpieces to justify the reopening of schools and colleges—was based on two lies: firstly, that vaccines would serve as a sort of silver bullet that would end

the need for any other containment measures, and secondly that young people, even when infected, are not at any significant risk from COVID-19.

The reality is that while the vaccine is safe and effective at preventing severe illness, it is not a miracle cure. Experts have stressed that vaccines are most effective at preventing community spread only when combined with other containment measures such as lockdowns, masking and social distancing. The spread of the vaccine-resistant Delta variant dispels the myth, fueled by the fevered hopes of the bourgeois establishment, that the vaccine would bring an immediate end to the pandemic and allow a return to “normalcy.”

The claim that youths have nothing to fear from COVID-19 will go down in history as an infamous lie. It is now well known that young people are vulnerable to “long COVID,” the still poorly understood syndrome which afflicts as many as 30.3% of those who have suffered COVID-19 infection, according to a June study by the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI). Symptoms can last for many months following recovery, and the longer term health implications are as yet unknown. The health consequences, which include chronic pain and fatigue, and severe cognitive impairment, are debilitating. An entire generation of youths is thus having its long-term health sacrificed for the sake of private profit.

Students and workers must take up the demand for the eradication of COVID-19—necessitating the shutting down of non-essential production, the closure of schools, and the deployment of billions of dollars for social programs—as an expression of their vital interests, in this case their most basic social needs: the right to be able to live, work and study without endangering their lives and health as a result of exposure to an entirely preventable disease.

The taking up of this demand would bring students and workers into immediate conflict with the capitalist system, which has subordinated all of society to the profit motive and is incapable of implementing a rational response to the pandemic that prioritizes human life over private profit. A socialist response is required to bring an end to the pandemic.



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