

Longwood's Policy changes with COVID-19 on campus

Jessica Roop

Longwood University

SOCL -345-02: Research Methods

Dr. Pederson

November, 23 2020

Abstract:

When the Coronavirus entered the United States in March of 2020, Longwood was pressured to send the students home for safety reasons as well as health issues with some students. Since coming back to school in the fall of 2020, Longwood has fully prepared and exceeded in reassuring the students safety on campus and allowing the students to still receive a full education at school in person and not just online. This leads into the purpose of my research study, which is to survey students at Longwood University and see how they respond to different policy changes made with COVID-19. The participants in the study are current students at Longwood university. The exploration of this study focuses on the students attitudes towards policy changes at Longwood and whether or not they feel that they are beneficial to their safety and education. The research will take place at Longwood university through a published survey. The research conducted was a mixed methods study. The qualitative and quantitative findings for my research are found in the dependent variable and the independent variables. The dependent variable that I used to operationalize my research is "On a scale from 0-10, how beneficial do you think the policies Longwood enacted are at preventing the spread of COVID-19?" Then the independent variable I used to operationalize my research is "Longwood requires all students, faculty, and guests to wear face masks on campus with few (stated) exceptions. Do you support the face mask policy at Longwood University?" The statistics of this research concluded that about 85% of students who took the survey feel positive attitudes towards the policies enacted. There were a total of 433 students who responded to the survey. The implications of this study show that students feel safe and benefitted from Longwood's policies in preventing the spread of COVID-19.

Introduction:

This research will go through the data from the quantitative and qualitative measures as well as use other academic findings to achieve the answer to the research problem of “Students who feel a distrust with administration, will feel negative attitudes towards the university's policies.” This paper provides eight academic sources that have also addressed the problem of students having negative attitudes towards policy changes with administration on college campuses and universities. Funding by institutions as well as technology and cognitive ability affect the ways that the students will feel benefited with their education. Some deficiencies in the study arose from different scenarios with getting an education with COVID-19 happening around the country. Deficiencies are problems or roadblocks that cause a lack of something, in this case it would be learning in the time of COVID-19. Many students chose to not come back to campus and attend classes online as a safety precaution to themselves or their family members. Another deficiency is that students who commute to campus and do not live in a dorm, Longwood owned housing or walk2campus will feel differently about the policies. The walk2campus housing are apartments that students can rent for the semesters through Longwood University. Students who are taking classes strictly online will create a deficiency in the data because they will not be affected by the policies or benefitted. This research is significant for Longwood students and Longwood administration. If the university is receiving negative feedback from the students, then they will work around to find what is beneficial. The students want to feel safe, the safer they feel on campus the more likely they will use Longwood provided accommodations and be more eager to learn. The purpose of this study is to get feedback from the students to further evaluate the effects of the policy changes at Longwood with COVID-19, and how the students are reacting.

Literature Review:

Policies constructed by administrators of Universities are created and planned to ensure that the students feel safe and well taken care of while obtaining their education. In this research I will use academic sources to promote a review and compare and contrast the publishers with each of their works on different topics. The sources used will allow me to review other research on how students are affected with policy changes that are sporadic. Longwood's administration decided to entitle new policies when students came back to campus in the fall. They had to produce manageable rules and regulations to ensure student safety in an educational setting. The importance of this topic goes beyond the policies itself and begins to concentrate on how the students will respond. There can be many negative outputs to the positive inputs of each policy placed. I will be using eight different scholarly journals to obtain and synthesize the data chosen.

Funding and Transition

Funding policies are created by the institutions to promote each individual with a more sufficient education by supplying needs for the students. Rutherford and Rabovsky (2014) explain that it is known that the average rate of students to complete college in most recent years is only 60%. Tuition for primarily public institutions has in most cases skyrocketed causing students to either drop out due to financial incapacity or receive a low-performance in their educational needs. The findings have been criticised (Sutton, Muller, & Langekamp. 2013) would argue that it's not the fundings, but it is the transition from high school to college that would cause students to drop out or receive a low-performance education. Rutherford and Rabovsky (2014) and Sutton, Muller, & Langekamp (2013) have conceded that graduation rates are affected by the policy of funding and by the transition from highschool to college. Both of these are reliable reasons why policy can be negative or positive.

Policy Changes and Safety

The impact of negative attitudes that lead to enforced policies around campuses are greatly influenced by the students. Fisher (2002) explains the decrease in acceptance of smoking not only in residence halls but as well as no smoking on campus grounds, making it prohibited at most universities. Fire accidents are caused by smoking in campus buildings and on campus property says Fisher (2013). In comparison Sindhi (2013) agrees that it is essentially important for students' safety to create learning environments and living environments that are provoked from fires and other events that could lead to serious injury or death. In a 2017 study Cohdosh, Bibbens, Gray & Graves argue the importance of sexual assault and student academics on a educational campus. Within a University there are policies in place to set responsibility and adjudicating claims that will proceed to protect the student body from harm. The findings have been criticized by universities having to go under federal law and become investigated for the risk of audit (see Cohdosh, Bibbens, Gray, & Graves 2017).

Technology and Cognitive Ability

After the event at Virginia Tech, that held students victims to gun violence, many believe that cell phones are necessary to maintain on personale at all time for their own safety (Tindell & Bohlander 2012). Tindell & Bohlander (2012) further explain their research to conclude cellphones are important in a classroom to receive text message updates to make the population aware of dangerous activity. Gray & Swinton (2017) argue Tindell & Bohlander (2012) and criticize these researchers for the influence that cell phones have. To increase the success of students there needs to be a greater importance on the effort made (Gray & Swinton 2017). Gray & Swinton (2017), students need to have a preparedness for class at all times, no distractions.

The research discussed were different applications on how the policy of a school can really deteriorate or build the student readiness, and safety. The efforts made criticize each research mentioned, they all base their research off one another. This topic goes beyond the policies itself and concentrates on how the students will respond. There can be many negative outputs to the positive inputs of each policy placed. The study I will be conducting will use the evidence from the policy changes and safety as well as the funding attribution. The research will use a survey from the student body to promote answers as to how the students feel regarding the recent changes with administration.

Data and Methods

Sample Section:

The sample is students attending Longwood University. A nonprobability convenience sample was used to gather information on what students think of this semester with COVID-19. The survey has been delegated by email, to the student population at Longwood University through faculty members to take part in the survey. Organizations such as Greek Life, Sports, and Club Sports have been prompted to participate in our survey as well to get different demographics and variable outcomes. The questionnaire is a selection of questions based on mental state, policies, online learning, student events online, and the overall college experience this year.

Quantitative:

There are 433 operations. I will use the scale from my dependent variable to produce a value, and find the overall quantitative reasoning for how benefited the students feel on campus. The dependent variable for the data set states: "On a scale from 0-10, how beneficial do you think the policies Longwood enacted are at preventing the spread of COVID-19?" For my

independent variable I will find the quantitative reasoning by finding the numerical total for the answer options yes, no, maybe and does not apply. The independent variable for the data set states: "Longwood requires all students, faculty, and guests to wear face masks on campus with few (stated) exceptions. Do you support the face mask policy at Longwood University?" I will be using these variables in my research because they focus on the attitudes toward policy. I will be analyzing the close-ended survey questions using descriptive statistics and figures.

Quantitative Findings

The quantitative findings with this research will use statistics on the dependent and independent variables within my conducted research. The dependent variable that I used to operationalize my research is "On a scale from 0-10, how beneficial do you think the policies Longwood enacted are at preventing the spread of COVID-19?" Then the independent variable I used to operationalize my research is "Longwood requires all students, faculty, and guests to wear face masks on campus with few (stated) exceptions. Do you support the face mask policy at Longwood University?" The conducted quantitative findings produced in this paper will correlate to the thesis; Students who feel a distrust with administration, will feel negative attitudes towards the university's policies.

The dependent variable for this study is students' self assessment on how beneficial they think the policies with Longwood are preventing the spread of COVID-19 around campus. The answers ranged from 0-not at all, to 10 an extreme amount. The mean for this variable was 6.44 with a standard deviation of 2.41. This means that about 68% of students answered between 4.03 and 8.84. The dependent variable conducted is an interval ratio.

The independent variable for this study is students' self assessment on the face mask policy at Longwood, and if students support that policy. The answers ranged from yes, no, maybe, does not apply, and others. The descriptive statistics for the independent variable, students support the face mask policy, are located in table 1.

Table 1.

Percent of students that support the mask policy.

Support of the Face Mask policy	Count	Percentage
Yes	366	84.53
No	31	7.16
Maybe	26	6.01
Does not apply	10	2.31
other	0	

Note. N=433

The question of “Longwood requires all students, faculty, and guests to wear face masks on campus with few (stated) exceptions. Do you support the face mask policy at Longwood University?” 84.52% of students reported the answer “yes” to supporting the face mask policy at Longwood.

The dependent and independent variable are correlated through a bivariate analysis. Students who support the face mask policy at Longwood, also felt that the policies at Longwood University are beneficial at preventing the spread of COVID-19. The mean of students who agreed with the policies being beneficial and supported the face mask policy was 6.75. The descriptive statistics for the bivariate analysis are located in Table 2.

Table 2.

Mean score of students that support the face mask policy by perceived prevention of COVID-19

Support of the mask policy	Mean
Does not apply	6.44
Maybe	5.50
No	3.54
Yes	6.75

Note. N=433

In the statistics out of a total number of 433 respondents, a mean of 6.44 responded that supporting the face mask policy and preventing the spread of COVID-19 at Longwood University do not apply to them or affect them, While a mean of 6.75, respondents voted that they support the face mask policy in preventing COVID-19. The mean score of 6.44 respondents in the “does not apply,” those are students who may have chosen to be completely online this semester or students who do not attend the University in person at all. Those students would not be affected by the in-person changes on campus. The small mean of 3.45 respondents who voted no to supporting the face mask policy may have health issues going on that make it difficult to wear a mask at all times or other issues regarding it, or they simply do not like or support it. The independent and dependent variable conclude that Longwood Students feel positive attitudes towards Longwoods Policies and towards Longwoods approach to preventing the spread of COVID-19.

Qualitative Findings

The data suggests that students shared three major concerns about their learning experience during COVID-19 at Longwood University. These concerns were- the fear of contracting COVID-19 with the mask policy in place; professors' attitudes towards new learning innovations with policy changes; and attitudes towards Longwood's new policies during COVID-19. The policy changes put in place at Longwood University during this time are to ensure student safety on campus while allowing these students to still get a prioritized education. The changes were constructed to create a safe learning environment physically and mentally. Previous research shows that professors' attitudes towards the learning environment can persuade students to follow policies and excel in their classes. In previous research it also showed that the policy of a school can really deteriorate or build the student readiness, and safety to learn. Within a condensed learning environment, policy changes were enabled to prohibit no students on Longwood property without a mask, and professor initiation. Many students feel negative towards the school's approaches to contain student safety.

Fear of contracting COVID-19 with mask policy

The qualitative data indicated that students showed fear in receiving COVID-19 with the mask policy. Longwood's face mask policy requires every student, faculty member or guest to wear a mask at all times while on Longwood campus including Upchurch, Dorril Hall, Greenwood Library, and all classrooms. The only exception is for students who are eating in which they can periodically remove their masks while they eat. If a student or faculty member does not abide by these policies and regulations they can serve serious consequences with the student handbook and the administration. Respondents in our survey showed both negative and positive responses to Longwoods face mask policy. Respondent 062 says "People on campus are

adhering to the mask policy.” This promotes safety as well as positivity around because it influences other students to participate as well. Another respondent said “I think Longwood is doing what they can to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Obviously not everyone is following those guidelines and I wish the Farmville community would use similar guidelines now that students are back in classes” Respondent (066). These are both positive outcomes to Longwoods enforced policies around the campus community. A negative response was from Respondent 414 who said “Keeping COVID levels down is about it. Nothing has been done well and people are too scared of messing things up for a result of quarantine rather than actual public safety.” All of these responses to the survey were answers to the question “What seems to be working well this semester.” From the respondents' answers it shows that the mask policy is working well, but other tasks have been taken lightly by Longwoods administration.

Professors attitudes

Next on the qualitative data suggested, were the attitudes of the professors throughout the policy changes. Many respondents felt that the policy changes not only affected their fears of obtaining COVID-19 through the school, but also affected the professors attitudes towards following the required guidelines. Many respondents were pleased with the professors willingness to cooperate with the new policies. Respondent 157 stated “The leniency of professors since we're all getting used to the online format.” The professors attitudes towards learning affects how the students will react to the new policies. If professors decide to focus on student safety in the classroom over the learning speed, students will feel more compassion and help from the professors. For example:

I think the small size of our campus and the fact that many students and faculty are following the COVID-19 guidelines are helping stop the spread as best as possible. There are also many professors who are being very understanding this semester that we must be

flexible and do what we can, even if it means not getting to everything on the syllabus.
(Respondent 338)

This is a response that shows the emotion from students towards their professors. From the respondents answers to this concern, it shows that overall they are in alliance with the professors attitudes, as long as they are not playing the victim.

Attitudes towards Longwood Policy

The last concern for the qualitative data suggests the attitudes towards the University's policy changes during COVID-19. Students came into the 2020-2021 school year with worriedness and doubt within the schools ability to create policies that students will follow and be safe with. Different types of policy changes due to COVID-19 are the guest policy, face mask policy, social distance policy, and activities on campus. The attitudes towards the policies from the respondents were rather positive. Respondent 215 says "The policies in place for stopping the spread of COVID-19." This was referring to the question of "What seems to be working well this semester." Another respondent said "People are following the policies on campus with a little pressure" (Respondent 289). A negative response was from Respondent (184). They said "Nothing actually, I don't like the way the school approached COVID-19" (Respondent 184).

Overall the respondents to the survey suggested that in the qualitative data there were three major concerns with- fear of receiving COVID with the mask policy, the professors attitudes, and attitudes towards Longwoods policy changes. Each different respondent's answers helped conclude qualitative data from our survey using open-ended questions. These questions will help the University to better evaluate themselves for the spring semester with the pandemic around. Longwood is still evolving their policies, and the students feel some safety while learning on campus.

Conclusion:

In conclusion the students attending Longwood University have positive views towards the administrative staff and the policies in place to prevent the spread of COVID-19. In my quantitative and qualitative findings I found that my dependent variable had a mean of 6.44 referring that about 68% of students answered between 4.03 and 8.84 out of a scale from 0-10, 10 being that the policies in place are extremely beneficial. For my independent variable my results concluded that 84.53% of students supported the face mask policy put into place at Longwood University. This concluded that the other 15.47% of students either are not affected by the policies in place at Longwood, or feel negative attitudes towards the policies. The attitudes of the students' emotions towards the policies put into place to prevent the spread of COVID-19 are essential to a productive school year. The students who feel positive about the face mask policy and support it and feel that it benefits their safety, they will be more willing to apply the policy to themselves. The students feel that the policies in place are beneficial and provide safety.

Resources:

Chodosh, H., Bibbens, M., Gray, N., & Graves, D. (2017). Safety and Freedom: Let's Get It Together. *Journal of Legal Education*, 66(4), 702-716. doi:10.2307/26453517

College and University Governance: Union County College (New Jersey). (2016). *Bulletin of the American Association of University Professors* (2010-), 102, 44-51. Retrieved September 24, 2020, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/44648662>

Fisher, L. (2002). Back to School: Smoking Policies in US College Residence Halls (Fall 2002). *Cancer Causes & Control*, 13(8), 787-789. Retrieved September 24, 2020, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3553562>

John Gray, & Omari H. Swinton. (2017). Non-cognitive Ability, College Learning, and Student Retention. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 86(1), 65-76.
doi:10.7709/jnegroeducation.86.1.0065

RUTHERFORD, A., & RABOVSKY, T. (2014). Evaluating Impacts of Performance Funding Policies on Student Outcomes in Higher Education. *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 655, 185-208. Retrieved September 24, 2020, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/24541756>

Sindhi, S. (2013). Creating Safe School Environment: Role of School Principals. *The Tibet Journal*, 38(1-2), 77-89. Retrieved September 24, 2020, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/tibetjournal.38.1-2.77>

Sutton, A., Muller, C., & Langenkamp, A. (2013). High School Transfer Students and the Transition to College: Timing and the Structure of the School Year. *Sociology of Education*, 86(1), 63-82. Retrieved September 24, 2020, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43744618>

Tindell, D., & Bohlander, R. (2012). The Use and Abuse of Cell Phones and Text Messaging in the Classroom: A Survey of College Students. *College Teaching*, 60(1), 1-9. Retrieved September 24, 2020, from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23247608>