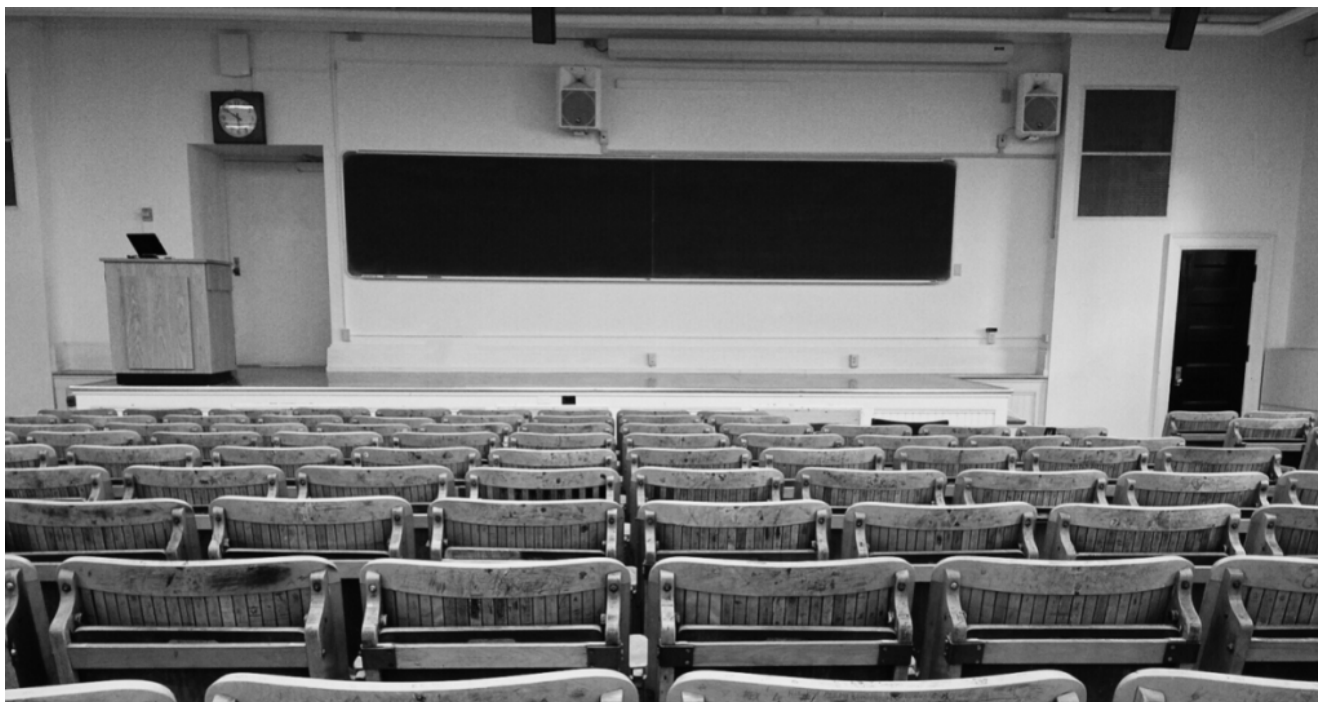


How Colleges Handled COVID and Mandates, Which Schools to Avoid



The last two years have been a crushing time to be a college student. They have had to [navigate university life](#) altered by failed promises and unjustified virus protection measures. The best years of their young adult lives have been riddled with never-ending restrictions on social gatherings, closed dining halls, cancellations of school traditions and the inability to attend sporting or entertainment events.

As a parent of a first-year college student and co-founder of a national movement to end college Covid-19 vaccine mandates, I have had to manage this landscape, and it has prompted me to investigate how colleges differ in their mitigation efforts and which take a more sane approach.

At a large majority of colleges, students were promised a “return to normalcy” if they complied with Covid-19 protocols. They were forced to wear masks to protect the elderly and vulnerable in their community but that didn’t work because the

virus was transmitted in spite of masks.

They were forced to take vaccines and boosters to protect themselves and others from infection but that didn't work either because a large number of college students caught the virus after being fully vaccinated. At most universities, administrative puppeteers continue to manipulate their every move targeting them through fear tactics and unscientific narratives instead of well-reasoned analysis which I remind you is fully expected of college students each day in their classrooms.

A review of college mitigation policies suggests that the more elite the college the more draconian the mitigation measures.

In March of 2020, [Harvard](#) gave its students five days to evacuate their dorms so it could shut its doors and transition to online learning. Today, students are back on campus, but little has changed in the way of extreme measures.

One Harvard student recently wrote that the decision to cancel a lively tradition called Housing Day [“is the latest in a long list of COVID-related excesses.”](#) She lamented that Harvard's strict mitigation measures have not stopped the spread of the virus, but they have taken experiences from her college years that can never be returned.

[Cornell University](#) has vaccine and booster mandates, strict indoor mask mandates for students and faculty and also recommends that masks be worn outdoors, where transmission is highly unlikely. [Yale](#) students were asked to refrain from dining at local restaurants, even outdoors, and they were required to quarantine in their rooms upon their delayed arrival for Spring term until they tested negative for the virus.

[Georgetown University](#) also started their Spring term remotely despite mandating booster vaccinations and having a 98% vaccination rate among students and faculty. This prompted one

student to start a petition demanding a tuition refund.

A student at [Williams College](#) wrote that faculty and students have been turned into police and that [COVID eradication policies](#) “led us to turn against one another.”

Many colleges mandating vaccines allow for exemptions, but whether one will be granted is very college dependent. Ironically, religious exemptions can be difficult to get at some religiously affiliated schools.

[Boston College](#), which has granted religious exemptions for other vaccines, has refused to follow its own precedent for the Covid-19 vaccine. In addition, medical exemptions are universally difficult to get.

One example is a [Johns Hopkins](#) student who was denied a medical exemption after submitting a letter from his treating physician outlining that he had prior hospitalizations and that his previous Covid-19 infections had given him natural immunity. (In spite of several studies showing that natural immunity from previous infections is robust and durable, most colleges will not recognize it in the place of vaccines or boosters.)

JHU notified the student that he must ignore his doctor’s advice and get the booster or face expulsion. If a college student is unable to secure an exemption, their only choice is to leave their school.

Securing an exemption does not mean your student will get a normal college experience as they may be subject to additional testing, mandated masks, stricter quarantine guidelines and even forced to live off-campus. Colleges also have a caveat; exemptions against Covid-19 vaccines may not be honored indefinitely. It can be an arduous and contentious process leaving many students and families feeling disillusioned and demoralized.

The good news is there are colleges that don't have crushing mitigation policies. There is a small number of religiously-affiliated colleges that do not accept grants from the federal government and do not participate in federal aid or loan programs in order to maintain autonomy.

[Christendom College](#) in Virginia has no mask or vaccine mandates and encourages individual responsibility by practicing social distancing and hand-washing.

[Grove City College](#) in Pennsylvania has also never mandated vaccines. In August 2021, at the start of the school year, Grove City had both testing and masking requirements, but by the end of September, indoor mask mandates were dropped for the most part and social distancing was recommended.

While public and private colleges in Oregon are still mandating masks and vaccines, [Gutenberg College](#) has zero guidance on its website as if the virus no longer exists, and Hillsdale College in Michigan may have had strict testing and masking protocols early in the pandemic, but one student recently described the college as "[the alternate universe where COVID-19 doesn't exist](#)".

While private colleges in the Northeast are among the worst offenders for science-based mitigation efforts, there are some exceptions to the rule.

The [University of Virginia](#) must abide by the newly passed executive order which prohibits public colleges from imposing vaccine and mask mandates.

Small private colleges in Virginia such as Regent College, [Liberty University](#), and [Patrick Henry College](#) are not bound by the executive order, but they have chosen not to mandate masks or vaccines.

Other small private colleges such as [Sterling College](#) in Vermont and [Roberts Wesleyan University](#) in New York do not

have vaccine mandates, but they do have different masking and testing rules depending on vaccine status.

Pennsylvania state colleges such as [Penn State](#) have no vaccine mandate, but they have testing and masking requirements, and [Millersville University](#) has no vaccine or mask mandate and encourages that the community be mindful of virus mitigation measures.

Public colleges in states like Texas and Florida have far more reasonable pandemic response measures because those colleges are prohibited by executive order from imposing Covid-19 vaccine and mask mandates.

Many of the private colleges such as [Abilene Christian University](#) and [Baylor University](#) in Texas do not require vaccines, do not have mandatory testing, and masks are optional.

[University of Tampa](#) and [Ava Maria University](#) in Florida do not require vaccines and do not have mandatory testing yet they do have masking requirements.

Another notable school located in a state that has no Covid-19 vaccine mandate is [High Point University](#) in North Carolina. High Point allows individual choice for vaccines and masks, only tests symptomatic and close contact students and provides “comfortable quarantine accommodations with meal delivery” if a student tests positive.

Contrary to what some would have you believe, public colleges in states that have never had vaccine mandates have fared no worse than the private colleges in those same states that mandate vaccines and strict indoor masking.

For example, in New Hampshire, where there has never been a vaccine mandate and no mask mandate as per a new state order, the [University of New Hampshire](#) has had fewer Covid-19 cases with almost triple the undergraduate enrollment than [Dartmouth](#)

[College](#) which has vaccine, booster, and mask mandates.

There are hidden gems in some states where you would least expect to find them.

[San Diego Christian College](#) respects choice and does not require vaccines but follows local guidance on mask requirements.

[Westmont College](#) in Santa Barbara does not have vaccine mandates, but they have masking, testing and different safety protocols for those that are unvaccinated.

[Vanguard University](#) in Costa Mesa, CA has mask and testing requirements but no vaccine mandates, and most refreshingly Northwood University in Michigan requires no vaccines and no masks and posts signs on campus that read "Personal Choices: Respected."

For those families just beginning the search for the best colleges for their high school students, there is hope. Covid-19 restrictions are in constant flux, and there are lists that outline which colleges [mandate vaccine boosters](#) and which colleges have minimal versus extreme [Covid-19 restrictions](#).

With some additional digging, you can uncover a wide range of excellent private and public colleges. Most important to keep in mind; any school that makes complying with mandates a non-negotiable condition to making dreams come true should promptly be removed from the list. The place that best aligns with their values is where your student will define their dream, believe in their dream and stop at nothing to achieve it.