

Stanford Vax Crew Collaborative: A Model for Agile, Community-Centered Vaccination Campaigns

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ABSTRACT

Background: Stanford Vax Crew is one of the largest student-led vaccination programs in the United States. Since its founding in 2001, Vax Crew has partnered with community organizations across the Bay Area, such as the United Farm Workers Foundation and the San Jose Children's Discovery Museum, to host hundreds of free influenza immunization clinics with the mission of increasing access to vaccines in medically underserved communities. Following authorization of the first COVID-19 vaccines, the team adapted and scaled its operations, which depended on strong community-university partnerships, to develop an equitable COVID-19 vaccine system to reach communities that were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

Methods: Interventions included the procurement of free vaccines from the federal government, adaptation of existing workflows to include additional registration and observation stations, and development of community engagement activities to increase vaccine literacy.

Outcomes: During the academic year of 2021 to 2022, Vax Crew organized 39 influenza and COVID-19 vaccine clinics with 18 community partners and 279 volunteer shifts.

Conclusions: Several factors contributed to the success of the interventions. First, prior decades spent developing vaccination infrastructure and fostering partnerships provided strong operational and relational foundations that could be rapidly scaled. Second, careful alignment of goals enabled stakeholders to overcome historically distinct incentive structures. Finally, facilitation of a mutually beneficial experience for both students and community-based organizations led to equal buy-in among partners.

Recommendations: Diverse stakeholders, such as government agencies, academic institutions, and community based organizations, should play distinct but complementary roles in building effective community-university partnerships.

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