

Tulane Public Health Alumnus Develops Symptom Monitoring Platform for COVID-19

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Benjamin Swig (PHTM *09, B *16) is a public health entrepreneur who has invented a software platform to help employers screen, track, and trace COVID-19 within their employee population and help them keep their business running.

“I came up with this concept in early March when COVID was starting to hit the headlines,” says Swig. His idea is Checkpoint, a screening, tracking and tracing software, and it is only the latest entrepreneurial public health venture for Swig.

The Checkpoint software is a web- and cloud-based platform that administers health surveys to employees. The software is meant to collect self-attestations and on-site screenings of COVID risks serving as an initial mitigation step for employers to keep their workplace clear of COVID-19 and get employees back to work with confidence. Swig developed the platform in March, with two colleagues, Karl Thomsen and Mike Cunningham, of San Francisco based software developer Infuse. Two Louisiana companies have already contracted with them to use the software.

Swig was the co-founder of Ready Responders, which in 2016 won the Big Idea competition during New Orleans Entrepreneur Week. Ready Responders equips part-time emergency medical professionals to provide mobile urgent care reducing unnecessary trips to the Emergency Department. Swig is now a Healthcare and Innovation Senior Advisor at Acadian Ambulance, the country’s largest private ambulance company, which is based in Lafayette, Louisiana.

His public health background prepared him for the current crisis. Before he attended Tulane, he was a pandemic planner in Colorado, drafting pandemic influenza and mass fatalities plans for several communities. He chose to attend Tulane because it

was the only public health school with a master's degree in disaster management. While at Tulane, he interned in emergency management for the city of New Orleans.

"It was post-Katrina; it was an amazing opportunity to work and learn at the same time," said Swig. His master's degree prepared him well for the next step in his career, working as a public health contractor for the U.S. Surgeon General. As such, he was responsible for training 6,500 members of the U.S. Public Health Service. "The multidisciplinary approach of Tulane's program provided me with a background where I could work and support the multidisciplinary teams of the United States Public Health Service from every aspect."

A few years later, he pursued his Executive MBA at the A. B. Freeman School of Business. "I wanted to leverage my knowledge in public health to create a sustainable business."

Swig, who is a member of the Dean's Advisory Council for the School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine, is constantly on a quest for creative ideas to improve public health. "I'm always looking for opportunities for healthcare innovation."