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# Virtual panel shows “hidden” contributions of public universities in the pandemic

Some contributions of Brazilian federal universities to the fight against the pandemic are recognized, especially those related to the health issue. Development of covid tests, clinical studies of vaccines, epidemiological studies and research on long covid, for example, were prominently reported by the press and shared on social networks.

There are, however, numerous actions by universities that were hidden, but that made a difference in the lives of the population. Compiling and broadening access to this information is the purpose of the dashboard Performance of Public and Science Universities in the Defense of Life during the Covid-19 Pandemicreleased this Wednesday (29).

Among these initiatives are the management and planning of the fight against covid-19, preparation of emergency plans, production and distribution of personal protective equipment, legal advice and combating domestic violence.

“Since the beginning of the pandemic, universities have mobilized around strategies and techniques for managing the fight against covid-19. Now, we present the set of these initiatives so that they reach a wider audience”, said Marcus David, dean of the Federal University of Juiz de Fora (UFJF) and president of the National Association of Directors of Federal Institutions of Higher Education (Andifes).

The panel was created by the research group Sou Ciência, from the Federal University of São Paulo (Unifesp) and had the support of Andifes (National Association of Directors of Federal Institutions of Higher Education).

There are listed and cataloged the actions to combat the pandemic of 39 institutions, which represent 55% of federal universities. The information was collected through a form and underwent factual checks. The project will continue to receive information until the end of 2022.

The data were organized into 5 axes of action: organization to act in the pandemic context; health care, extension and solidarity; research, technology and innovation; and actions in communication), subdivided into subcategories. So far, there is a description of more than 1,000 actions developed by universities.

The launch of the panel takes place at a time of cuts in the budget of federal universities. “In 2020 and 2021, we had a budget reduction with the justification that there were no face-to-face activities. We expected the funds to return at least to the level of 2019, but what we had was more cut”, said David.

In 2019, the budget of federal universities was R$ 6.2 billion. In 2022, the initial budget was R$5.3 billion, and in June there was another cut, which reduced this amount to R$4.7 million.

In this context, those responsible for the project believe that the panel can be a showcase to show society the importance of science. “Investing in universities is a more than justifiable investment,” said David. “This work brings the hope that we will be able to sensitize society to this situation”.

Editing: Rodrigo Durao Coelho

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