ENDING PANDEMICS ACADEMY

Global Health Institute · Mel and Enid Zuckerman College of Public Health

PROGRESS REPORT
May · 2026

A new chapter in pandemic preparedness. Established as a dedicated hub for preparedness and innovation, the Ending Pandemics Academy pairs frontier thinking in disease detection with hands-on, experiential learning for students, private-sector leaders, non-profits, and health professionals. In its inaugural year, the Academy has successfully integrated in to the academic and public health landscape of Arizona, emphasizing a “One Health” approach that bridges human, animal and environmental health.

Embedding in Arizona's health landscape

In its first months, the Academy has woven itself into the life of the College — and into the state's public health system. Leadership has joined state and county conversations, engaged in thought leadership, taken part in One Health tabletop exercises, conducted stakeholder workshops and contributed guest lectures across several ongoing courses.

Dr. Mark Smolinski delivered the keynote at the State of Arizona's One Health Symposium, while **Nomita Divi** introduced novel disease detection and verification systems to the same audience. Together they facilitated a One Health workshop with leaders spanning human, animal, and environmental health to design new ways of engaging the public directly in early disease detection.

Mark Smolinski and Nomita Divi address participants of EpiHack Arizona.

A flagship moment: EpiHack Arizona

In May 2026, the Academy hosted its first EpiHack in the USA — EpiHack, its signature program has been staged twelve times across the globe in prior years. This edition focused on strengthening early outbreak detection across Arizona through a One Health participatory surveillance approach. Over five intensive days it convened experts spanning human, animal, and environmental health; Faculty across campuses; Students from five colleges across the university; and representatives of the Tohono O'odham Nation.

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STUDENTS ACROSS COLLEGES	DAYS OF COLLABORATION	EPIHACK STAGED WORLDWIDE	REPRESENTATIVES FROM TOHONO O’ODHAM NATION

Left: Representatives from Tohono O'odham Nation provided their insights. Right: Faculty shows — a community cooling-center map.

A partnership built in from the start: Representatives of the Tohono O'odham Nation helped inform the work from the outset, ensuring that community voices and Indigenous perspectives were considered during design of the surveillance models. The collaboration was as productive as it was inspiring.

Immersive experience for students

Students and professionals prototyping side by side

Participants produced working prototypes resulting One Health participatory surveillance system for earlier detection of potential outbreaks in Arizona.

The Academy is now advancing the prototype into a **minimum viable product (MVP)** — a tangible tool born directly from this gathering of disciplines and communities.

Working with mentors allowed me to learn so much in a short amount of time. The most satisfying part was that this was not just a class project that would become irrelevant after grading. Instead, it gave me a sense of personal satisfaction because I was working on solving real-world problems.

Student testimonial

Looking ahead

Next 12 months

- Fully develop and demonstrate the surveillance tool to state health representatives.
- Launch pilots with communities across the Arizona region.
- Mobilize nursing, medical, and veterinary professionals to lead community outreach.

On the horizon

- Host the Fifth International Digital Disease Detection Conference in October 2027.
- Ongoing student projects on pandemics preparedness.
- Shape the future of digital innovation across the One Health disciplines.

The Ending Pandemics Academy is building not only the tools, but the people and partnerships that will help the world detect outbreaks earlier - and stop the next pandemic before it begins.

Dr. Mark Smolinski & Nomita Divi -- Ending Pandemics Academy leadership