

COVID-19: College Parents Speak Out

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February 2021

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This survey was sponsored by the University of Minnesota, Department of Family Social Science, and by the national association of parent/family professionals, AHEPPP: Family Engagement in Higher Education.

As nearly all colleges and universities transitioned to remote learning during March 2020 and subsequently spent the summer planning for an uncertain fall semester, we wanted to understand how parents of college students were experiencing the 2020-21 academic year. We designed a study to understand the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the family's role in their students' college experiences. Specifically, we examined the effect of COVID-19 on students' ability to continue their education; parents' recommendations to their students related to continuing school; changes in family influence on practical issues such as housing, commuting, online or alternative learning methods, transferring, and changing majors or career goals; parents' opinion of the decisions schools are making; families' satisfaction with and understanding of communications received from institutions. This report reflects findings from a second wave of data collected between October and November 2020. A report from the first wave of data collected June-August 2020 and additional study background is available: <https://innovation.umn.edu/college-parent/>

Our Approach

The Department of Family Social Science and Minnesota Extension at the University of Minnesota partnered with the professional organization *AHEPPP: Family Engagement in Higher Education* (AHEPPP; <https://www.aheppp.org/>) to recruit and survey parents from across the country to understand the impact that the pandemic has made on the family's role in their students' college experience.

AHEPPP is the premier national association for professionals who work with the parents and families of college students. AHEPPP provides valuable resources, networking opportunities, and education to support professionals in higher education who promote student success through informed parent and family engagement. AHEPPP has more than 200 partner colleges and universities in the United States and Canada.

AHEPPP shared a recruitment message that schools could customize; individual parent programs shared a custom message with parents of their students, both parents of returning students and parents of incoming freshmen, admitted for the 2020-21 academic year. AHEPPP members also shared the recruitment message with some non-AHEPPP institutions who shared the survey opportunity with their families. Parents who chose to participate could click on a link to complete a 15-minute online survey (via Qualtrics). Parents who completed the first survey were also invited to complete the second survey. All participants had the opportunity to choose to be entered into a drawing for a chance to win one of 15 \$75 electronic gift cards.

What is important for understanding the results from both surveys is that they each capture one moment in time - parents responded to the first survey between mid-June and early August 2020, and they responded to the second survey during October and November 2020. COVID-19 has created a time when higher education is constantly in flux, as new science emerges and institutions pivot, as CDC guidance changes, and as we see COVID-19 outbreaks on campuses. This story will continue to unfold as spring semesters begin.

Who Participated

Three thousand three hundred and ninety-two parents representing more than 75 institutions across the country participated in this study; 73.7% of students were at a public institution, and 25.7% were at a private institution (the remaining parents were unsure). Parents represented all 50 states and Puerto Rico; 22 were living outside the US. In addition, 16.8% of parents had less than a 4-year degree, 43.1% had earned a Bachelor's degree, and 40% had a higher degree.

At the time of the survey, 79% of parents reported their student's institution was partially in-person and partially remote for spring; 11.7% reported their student's institutions would be fully online; 65% of parents reported there was no change in plans once the institution opened. Nearly half of parents (45.1%) reported their student was living in campus housing, 32.6% in an apartment or house near campus, and at the time of the survey, 17.9% of parents reported their student would be living at home with family.

Key Findings

- Families reported experiencing a lot of stress: 76% reported someone in their household had been asked to work from home, 29% reported reduced income, 21% reported someone in their household became ill with COVID-19, and 40% reported feeling nervous or stressed fairly or very often.
- Indications are that 2020-21 currently is and will continue to be challenging for families. Families generally expected colleges to return to normal in the fall, and that did not happen. Parents are worried about their students.
- Parents are increasingly frustrated. Only 60% of parents felt schools made the right steps for course delivery (down from 84% when parents were surveyed in summer). Institutions need to think about what that means for retention and affinity.
- Communication is good! Ninety-one percent of parents reported received information about COVID-19 separate from the information their student received; 78% were confident they have the information they need (74% were confident when they were surveyed in the summer).

- Distance learning is still hard! It was “new,” unfamiliar, and the transition happened fast in spring 2020. This transition required students, but also faculty, and all family members to adjust. Although it’s no longer new for students and families, it’s not much better; some of the challenges are difficult (or impossible) to fix. Certain classes, such as labs and studio-based instruction, are hard to take online, and nearly one in 10 parents reported their student struggled with Internet access. For some students, distractions interfere with learning, and two-thirds of parents reported their students simply prefer in-person learning. On the plus side, parents noted an improvement in class structure since the first wave survey.
- Colleges and universities may be changing their relationship with parents/families. Schools have done well communicating with parents/families about COVID-19. This raised parents’ expectations about the frequency and content of communications from their students’ schools; how do schools maintain that expectation?
- Parent/Family Programs were innovative in providing programs and services this year, creating new programming and providing online presentations for traditional in-person events such as family orientation and family weekend; what does that mean for future programming? Do in-person programs need an online option? Are multiple formats worth the time and effort? When using social media and posting other online content, know your audience (Facebook is more popular among parents than Twitter).
- Results suggest schools should consider providing information in virtual formats for parents on...
 - Career planning, career fairs for students
 - Off-campus housing options for fall 2021
 - Mental health tips and resources
 - Tutoring resources
 - Campus involvement opportunities
 - Internships, study abroad
 - Finance
 - Updates on COVID-19

Data Summary

What year is your student?

	Frequency	Percent
First year	1384	40.8%
Second year	942	27.8%
Third year	627	18.5%
Fourth year	385	11.4%
Fifth year or higher	29	0.9%
My student graduated	4	.1%
Graduate student	18	.5%
Unsure	3	.1%
Total	3392	100.0%

In other words...

	Frequency	Percent
First Year	1384	40.8%
Non-First Year	2008	59.2%
Total	3392	100.0%

As a parent/family member, are you receiving information from your student's college/university about campus response to COVID-19, separate from notifications that your student received?

	First Year	Non-First Year	Total
No	158 (11.4%)	175 (8.7%)	333 (9.8%)
Yes	1225 (88.6%)	1829 (91.3%)	3054 (90.2%)
Total	1383 (100.0%)	2004 (100.0%)	3387 (100.0%)

Do you currently feel confident that you have the information you need from your student's college/university?

	First Year	Non-First Year	Total
No	218 (15.8%)	254 (12.7%)	472 (13.9%)
Yes	1033 (74.7%)	1582 (79.0%)	2615 (77.2%)
Comment	132 (9.5%)	167 (8.3%)	299 (8.8%)
Total	1383 (100.0%)	2003 (100.0%)	3386 (100.0%)

As of the first day of classes, what was the school's decision about opening for classes?

	First Year	Non-First Year	Total
The school decided to hold fully in-person classes for fall semester.	42 (3.0%)	72 (3.6%)	114 (3.4%)
The school decided to be entirely online for fall semester.	153 (11.1%)	244 (12.2%)	397 (11.7%)

The school developed a hybrid plan, combining online and in-person classes.	1110 (80.3%)	1564 (78.1%)	2674 (79.0%)
I am unsure.	10 (0.7%)	13 (0.6%)	23 (0.7%)
Other	68 (4.9%)	110 (5.5%)	178 (5.3%)
Total	1383 (100.0%)	2003 (100.0%)	3386 (100.0%)

Approximately when did you first learn of the school's re-opening plan?

	First Year	Non-First Year	Total
Before June 1	92 (6.7%)	107 (5.4%)	199 (5.9%)
During June	243 (17.6%)	314 (15.7%)	557 (16.5%)
During July	572 (41.4%)	903 (45.2%)	1475 (43.6%)
During August	416 (30.1%)	572 (28.6%)	988 (29.2%)
Other	60 (4.3%)	103 (5.2%)	163 (4.8%)
Total	1383 (100.0%)	1999 (100.0%)	3382 (100.0%)

Did the school modify its re-opening plan before school started?

	First Year	Non-First Year	Total
No change	656 (47.5%)	1068 (53.6%)	1724 (51.1%)
Changed from a plan for fully in-person classes to a hybrid plan, combining online and in-person classes	374 (27.1%)	439 (22.0%)	813 (24.1%)
Changed from a plan for fully in-person to entirely online	80 (5.8%)	86 (4.3%)	166 (4.9%)
Changed from hybrid to entirely online	105 (7.6%)	167 (8.4%)	272 (8.1%)
Changed from hybrid to entirely in-person	1 (0.1%)	1 (0.1%)	2 (0.1%)
Changed from entirely online to hybrid	16 (1.2%)	49 (2.5%)	65 (1.9%)
Changed from entirely online to entirely in-person	1 (0.1%)	6 (0.3%)	7 (0.2%)
Other	149 (10.8%)	176 (8.8%)	325 (9.6%)
Total	1382 (100.0%)	1992 (100.0%)	3374 (100.0%)

Did the school change its plans after school opened?

	First Year	Non-First Year	Total
No change	854 (61.8%)	1341 (67.3%)	2195 (65.0%)
Changed from a plan for fully in person classes to a hybrid plan, combining online and in-person classes	47 (3.4%)	54 (2.7%)	101 (3.0%)
Changed from hybrid to entirely online	37 (2.7%)	51 (2.6%)	88 (2.6%)
Changed from hybrid to entirely in-person	208 (15.1%)	281 (14.1%)	489 (14.5%)
Changed from a plan for fully in-person to entirely online	1 (0.1%)	2 (0.1%)	3 (0.1%)
Changed from entirely online to hybrid	20 (1.4%)	22 (1.1%)	42 (1.2%)
Changed from entirely online to entirely in-person	2 (0.1%)	3 (0.2%)	5 (0.1%)
Other	213 (15.4%)	240 (12.0%)	453 (13.4%)

Total	1382 (100.0%)	1994 (100.0%)	3376 (100.0%)
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Do you believe the school has made the right decisions about course delivery for Fall 2020?

	First Year	Non-First Year	Total
No	412 (29.8%)	485 (24.2%)	897 (26.5%)
Yes	777 (56.1%)	1261 (63.0%)	2038 (60.2%)
Other	195 (14.1%)	256 (12.8%)	451 (13.3%)
Total	1384 (100.0%)	2002 (100.0%)	3386 (100.0%)

If you have questions or concerns related to the school's decisions related to COVID-19, who are you most likely to contact?

	First Year	Non-First Year	Total
Parent/Family office	377 (27.2%)	526 (26.3%)	903 (26.7%)
Residence Life office	48 (3.5%)	40 (2.0%)	88 (2.6%)
College/university main office	269 (19.4%)	435 (21.7%)	704 (20.8%)
The school's COVID-19 email or hotline	300 (21.7%)	479 (23.9%)	779 (23.0%)
I don't know who to contact	328 (23.7%)	409 (20.4%)	737 (21.8%)
Other	62 (4.5%)	114 (5.7%)	176 (5.2%)
Total	1384 (100.0%)	2003 (100.0%)	3387 (100.0%)

On what topic has your student most requested your advice or assistance as the fall semester started?

	First Year	Non-First Year	Total
None	194 (14.0%)	310 (15.5%)	504 (14.9%)
Finances	188 (13.6%)	321 (16.0%)	509 (15.0%)
Career planning	46 (3.3%)	197 (9.8%)	243 (7.2%)
Academics	325 (23.5%)	412 (20.6%)	737 (21.8%)
Personal relationships	156 (11.3%)	148 (7.4%)	304 (9.0%)
Health/safety	122 (8.8%)	252 (12.6%)	374 (11.0%)
Time management	82 (5.9%)	94 (4.7%)	176 (5.2%)
Involvement opportunities	152 (11.0%)	100 (5.0%)	252 (7.4%)
Other	118 (8.5%)	168 (8.4%)	286 (8.4%)
Total	1383 (100.0%)	2002 (100.0%)	3385 (100.0%)

As this year begins, what is your greatest concern for your student?

	First Year	Non-First Year	Total
None	53 (3.8%)	92 (4.6%)	145 (4.3%)
Finances	43 (3.1%)	98 (4.9%)	141 (4.2%)
Career planning	13 (0.9%)	146 (7.3%)	159 (4.7%)
Academics	250 (18.1%)	404 (20.2%)	654 (19.3%)
Personal relationships	226 (16.4%)	187 (9.3%)	413 (12.2%)
Health/safety	229 (16.6%)	539 (26.9%)	768 (22.7%)
Time management	50 (3.6%)	53 (2.6%)	103 (3.0%)

Opportunities for involvement with campus life	430 (31.1%)	315 (15.7%)	745 (22.0%)
Other	88 (6.4%)	167 (8.3%)	255 (7.5%)
Total	1382 (100.0%)	2001 (100.0%)	3383 (100.0%)

Did your student change academic plans because of COVID-19?

	First Year	Non-First Year	Total
No change	1138 (82.3%)	1638 (82.0%)	2776 (82.2%)
My student decided to attend a different school	33 (2.4%)	7 (0.4%)	40 (1.2%)
My student changed from a four-year to a two-year school	2 (0.1%)	1 (0.1%)	3 (0.1%)
My student is postponing college	5 (0.4%)	18 (0.9%)	23 (0.7%)
My student changed housing plans	97 (7.0%)	141 (7.1%)	238 (7.0%)
Other	107 (7.7%)	192 (9.6%)	299 (8.8%)
Total	1382 (100.0%)	1997 (100.0%)	3379 (100.0%)

Please check all the reasons why your student changed their plans. (Check all that apply.)

	First Year	Non-First Year	Total
My student wants to be closer to home	45 (3.3%)	25 (1.2%)	70 (2.1%)
I want my student closer to home	28 (2.0%)	26 (1.3%)	54 (1.6%)
Financial factors affected our ability to pay for college	21 (1.5%)	32 (1.6%)	53 (1.6%)
A family member's health issues prevented my student from returning	4 (0.3%)	12 (0.6%)	16 (0.5%)
My student's health prevented them from returning to school	7 (0.5%)	23 (1.1%)	30 (0.9%)
My student is attending a different school in order to take more classes online	3 (0.2%)	2 (0.1%)	5 (0.1%)
My student is attending a different school in order to take more classes in-person	13 (0.9%)	7 (0.3%)	20 (0.6%)
My student was concerned that the school's plan for course delivery would change	53 (3.8%)	78 (3.9%)	131 (3.9%)
Other	127 (9.2%)	225 (11.2%)	352 (10.4%)

Where is your student currently living?

	First Year	Non-First Year	Total
Campus housing	1028 (74.7%)	492 (24.7%)	1520 (45.1%)
Apartment/house near campus	72 (5.2%)	1026 (51.5%)	1098 (32.6%)

Fraternity or sorority house	2 (0.1%)	63 (3.2%)	65 (1.9%)
At home with family	251 (18.2%)	351 (17.6%)	602 (17.9%)
Other	23 (1.7%)	60 (3.0%)	83 (2.5%)
Total	1376 (100.0%)	1992 (100.0%)	3368 (100.0%)

If the school should decide to close campus before the end of this academic year, where do expect your student will live?

	First Year	Non-First Year	Total
Campus housing	99 (7.2%)	58 (2.9%)	157 (4.7%)
Apartment/house near campus	107 (7.8%)	878 (44.2%)	985 (29.3%)
Fraternity or sorority house	4 (0.3%)	27 (1.4%)	31 (0.9%)
At home with family	1104 (80.3%)	943 (47.5%)	2047 (60.9%)
Other	61 (4.4%)	81 (4.1%)	142 (4.2%)
Total	1375 (100.0%)	1987 (100.0%)	3362 (100.0%)

How many of your student's classes include at least some in-person teaching?

	First Year	Non-First Year	Total
None	449 (32.6%)	765 (38.4%)	1214 (36.1%)
One or two	690 (50.1%)	876 (44.0%)	1566 (46.5%)
Three or four	207 (15.0%)	277 (13.9%)	484 (14.4%)
Five or more	15 (1.1%)	38 (1.9%)	53 (1.6%)
Don't know	15 (1.1%)	34 (1.7%)	49 (1.5%)
Total	1376 (100.0%)	1990 (100.0%)	3366 (100.0%)

Is your student experiencing any challenges with online learning? (Check all that apply.)

	First Year	Non-First Year	Total
My student doesn't have any online learning	7 (0.5%)	14 (0.7%)	21 (0.6%)
No challenges--it's working fine	225 (16.3%)	348 (17.3%)	573 (16.9%)
It's too soon to tell	232 (16.8%)	179 (8.9%)	411 (12.1%)
My student prefers in-person learning methods	897 (64.8%)	1386 (69.0%)	2283 (67.3%)
Internet connection is spotty where they live	101 (7.3%)	202 (10.1%)	303 (8.9%)
Classes lack structure	321 (23.2%)	416 (20.7%)	737 (21.7%)
Instructors are unorganized	266 (19.2%)	424 (21.1%)	690 (20.3%)
My student has difficulty meeting deadlines	115 (8.3%)	161 (8.0%)	276 (8.1%)
My student is unable to participate in labs/studio time	179 (12.9%)	326 (16.2%)	505 (14.9%)
There are too many distractions when studying outside of class	232 (16.8%)	329 (16.4%)	561 (16.5%)
Other	268 (19.4%)	419 (20.9%)	687 (20.3%)

How do you think this year's COVID-19 experience will affect your student's time to graduation?

	First Year	Non-First Year	Total
It will take longer than expected	151 (11.0%)	280 (14.0%)	431 (12.8%)
They will graduate sooner than expected	4 (0.3%)	19 (1.0%)	23 (0.7%)
My student is still on track to graduate as planned	487 (35.4%)	1251 (62.8%)	1738 (51.6%)
Too soon to tell	701 (51.0%)	397 (19.9%)	1098 (32.6%)
Unknown	32 (2.3%)	46 (2.3%)	78 (2.3%)
Total	1375 (100.0%)	1993 (100.0%)	3368 (100.0%)

Did this year's COVID-19 experience cause your student to rethink career goals or academic major?

	First Year	Non-First Year	Total
No	1117 (81.4%)	1607 (80.7%)	2724 (81.0%)
Yes	256 (18.6%)	385 (19.3%)	641 (19.0%)
Total	1373 (100.0%)	1992 (100.0%)	3365 (100.0%)

Did your student's school provide the following types of online information sessions or webinars for parents/family members during the summer?

Events	Selection	First Year	Non-First Year	Total
Presentations on college students' mental health	Yes, and I participated	342 (26.3%)	145 (7.9%)	487 (15.5%)
	Yes, but I did not participate	443 (34.1%)	731 (39.8%)	1174 (37.4%)
	No online programs were offered	516 (39.7%)	961 (52.3%)	1477 (47.1%)
	Total	1301 (100.0%)	1837 (100.0%)	3138 (100.0%)
Presentations on students' physical health	Yes, and I participated	345 (27.0%)	170 (9.4%)	515 (16.6%)
	Yes, but I did not participate	373 (29.2%)	663 (36.5%)	1036 (33.5%)
	No online programs were offered	561 (43.9%)	984 (54.2%)	1545 (49.9%)
	Total	1279 (100.0%)	1817 (100.0%)	3096 (100.0%)
Presentations on COVID-19 policies	Yes, and I participated	770 (59.0%)	698 (37.5%)	1468 (46.3%)
	Yes, but I did not participate	296 (22.7%)	712 (38.2%)	1008 (31.8%)
	No online programs were offered	240 (18.4%)	453 (24.3%)	693 (21.9%)
	Total	1306 (100.0%)	1863 (100.0%)	3169 (100.0%)
Welcome from the college president, chancellor, vice	Yes, and I participated	951 (72.0%)	723 (39.1%)	1674 (52.8%)
	Yes, but I did not participate	247 (18.7%)	729 (39.4%)	976 (30.8%)

president, or provost	No online programs were offered	122 (9.2%)	397 (21.5%)	519 (16.4%)
	Total	1320 (100.0%)	1849 (100.0%)	3169 (100.0%)
Presentations on student finances	Yes, and I participated	454 (35.1%)	83 (4.6%)	537 (17.4%)
	Yes, but I did not participate	465 (36.0%)	682 (38.1%)	1147 (37.2%)
	No online programs were offered	374 (28.9%)	1027 (57.3%)	1401 (45.4%)
	Total	1293 (100.0%)	1792 (100.0%)	3085 (100.0%)
Parent/family orientation	Yes, and I participated	987 (74.8%)	230 (12.7%)	1217 (38.8%)
	Yes, but I did not participate	229 (17.3%)	1168 (64.3%)	1397 (44.5%)
	No online programs were offered	104 (7.9%)	418 (23.0%)	522 (16.6%)
	Total	1320 (100.0%)	1816 (100.0%)	3136 (100.0%)

Is your student's school planning an online Family Weekend during Fall semester?

	First Year	Non-First Year	Total
Yes, and I plan to participate.	231 (17.1%)	145 (7.4%)	376 (11.4%)
Yes, but I don't plan to participate.	513 (38.0%)	900 (46.0%)	1413 (42.7%)
No, a virtual Family Weekend is not planned.	278 (20.6%)	345 (17.6%)	623 (18.8%)
Unknown	329 (24.4%)	567 (29.0%)	896 (27.1%)
Total	1351 (100.0%)	1957 (100.0%)	3308 (100.0%)

Is your student's school planning an in-person Family Weekend during Fall semester?

	First Year	Non-First Year	Total
Yes, and I plan to participate.	44 (3.3%)	42 (2.1%)	86 (2.6%)
Yes, but I don't plan to participate.	68 (5.0%)	154 (7.8%)	222 (6.7%)
No, an in-person Family Weekend is not planned.	1008 (74.5%)	1319 (67.2%)	2327 (70.2%)
Unknown	233 (17.2%)	447 (22.8%)	680 (20.5%)
Total	1353 (100.0%)	1962 (100.0%)	3315 (100.0%)

Did anyone in your household become ill with COVID-19? (Check all that apply.)

	First Year	Non-First Year	Total
Myself	48 (3.5%)	60 (3.0%)	108 (3.2%)
My partner/spouse	46 (3.3%)	54 (2.7%)	100 (2.9%)
My student	148 (10.7%)	184 (9.2%)	332 (9.8%)
Another family member living at home	37 (2.7%)	39 (1.9%)	76 (2.2%)
No one in my family was became ill with COVID-19	1075 (77.7%)	1611 (80.2%)	2686 (79.2%)
Other	50 (3.6%)	82 (4.1%)	132 (3.9%)

Has anyone in your household been asked to work from home as a result of COVID-19? (Check all that apply.)

	First Year	Non-First Year	Total
Myself	621 (44.9%)	952 (47.4%)	1573 (46.4%)
My partner/spouse	591 (42.7%)	848 (42.2%)	1439 (42.4%)
My student	241 (17.4%)	428 (21.3%)	669 (19.7%)
Another member of the household	171 (12.4%)	297 (14.8%)	468 (13.8%)
No one in my family was working from home as a result of COVID-19	344 (24.9%)	462 (23.0%)	806 (23.8%)

In the last six months, which of these issues have you experienced? (Check all that apply.)

	First Year	Non-First Year	Total
Death of a close friend or family member	171 (12.4%)	313 (15.6%)	484 (14.3%)
Death of a parent	66 (4.8%)	102 (5.1%)	168 (5.0%)
Mental health crisis	127 (9.2%)	192 (9.6%)	319 (9.4%)
Physical health crisis	62 (4.5%)	126 (6.3%)	188 (5.5%)
Loss of job	103 (7.4%)	202 (10.1%)	305 (9.0%)
Reduced income	388 (28.0%)	610 (30.4%)	998 (29.4%)
None	482 (34.8%)	613 (30.5%)	1095 (32.3%)

In the past month, please describe how often you have ...

	Rating	First Year	Non-First Year	Total
felt nervous and "stressed"?	Never	40 (3.1%)	54 (2.9%)	94 (2.9%)
	Almost Never	188 (14.5%)	257 (13.6%)	445 (13.9%)
	Sometimes	552 (42.4%)	842 (44.5%)	1394 (43.6%)
	Fairly Often	340 (26.1%)	515 (27.2%)	855 (26.8%)
	Very Often	181 (13.9%)	225 (11.9%)	406 (12.7%)
	Total		1301 (100.0%)	1893 (100.0%)

How would you rate your ... in the past 7 days?

	Rating	First Year	Non-First Year	Total
Overall physical health	Poor	24 (1.8%)	20 (1.1%)	44 (1.4%)
	Fair	146 (11.2%)	221 (11.6%)	367 (11.4%)
	Good	401 (30.7%)	581 (30.5%)	982 (30.6%)
	Very Good	477 (36.5%)	695 (36.5%)	1172 (36.5%)
	Excellent	258 (19.8%)	385 (20.2%)	643 (20.0%)
	Total		1306 (100.0%)	1902 (100.0%)
Overall sense of well-being	Poor	24 (1.8%)	24 (1.3%)	48 (1.5%)
	Fair	210 (16.1%)	285 (15.0%)	495 (15.4%)
	Good	448 (34.3%)	657 (34.5%)	1105 (34.4%)
	Very Good	427 (32.7%)	658 (34.6%)	1085 (33.8%)

	Excellent	197 (15.1%)	278 (14.6%)	475 (14.8%)
	Total	1306 (100.0%)	1902 (100.0%)	3208 (100.0%)
Personal relationships with your close friends	Poor	32 (2.5%)	35 (1.8%)	67 (2.1%)
	Fair	123 (9.4%)	197 (10.4%)	320 (10.0%)
	Good	378 (28.9%)	547 (28.8%)	925 (28.8%)
	Very Good	473 (36.2%)	648 (34.1%)	1121 (35.0%)
	Excellent	300 (23.0%)	474 (24.9%)	774 (24.1%)
	Total	1306 (100.0%)	1901 (100.0%)	3207 (100.0%)

How would you rate your student's ... in the past 7 days?

	Rating	First Year	Non-First Year	Total
Over all physical health	Poor	23 (1.8%)	29 (1.5%)	52 (1.6%)
	Fair	104 (8.0%)	183 (9.6%)	287 (8.9%)
	Good	330 (25.2%)	554 (29.1%)	884 (27.5%)
	Very Good	535 (40.9%)	651 (34.2%)	1186 (36.9%)
	Excellent	316 (24.2%)	487 (25.6%)	803 (25.0%)
	Total	1308 (100.0%)	1904 (100.0%)	3212 (100.0%)
Overall sense of well-being	Poor	57 (4.4%)	87 (4.6%)	144 (4.5%)
	Fair	222 (17.0%)	352 (18.5%)	574 (17.9%)
	Good	435 (33.3%)	625 (32.9%)	1060 (33.0%)
	Very Good	433 (33.1%)	590 (31.0%)	1023 (31.9%)
	Excellent	161 (12.3%)	248 (13.0%)	409 (12.7%)
	Total	1308 (100.0%)	1902 (100.0%)	3210 (100.0%)
Personal relationships with their close friends	Poor	78 (6.0%)	90 (4.7%)	168 (5.2%)
	Fair	239 (18.3%)	299 (15.7%)	538 (16.8%)
	Good	375 (28.7%)	541 (28.4%)	916 (28.5%)
	Very Good	412 (31.5%)	637 (33.5%)	1049 (32.7%)
	Excellent	204 (15.6%)	336 (17.7%)	540 (16.8%)
	Total	1308 (100.0%)	1903 (100.0%)	3211 (100.0%)

To what extent do you think that COVID-19 has negatively affected ...

	Rating	First Year	Non-First Year	Total
Your student's academic experience	Not at all	28 (2.1%)	69 (3.6%)	97 (3.0%)
	A little bit	178 (13.6%)	281 (14.7%)	459 (14.3%)
	Moderate	306 (23.4%)	464 (24.3%)	770 (23.9%)
	A lot	328 (25.1%)	541 (28.3%)	869 (27.0%)
	A great deal	469 (35.8%)	554 (29.0%)	1023 (31.8%)
	Total	1309 (100.0%)	1909 (100.0%)	3218 (100.0%)
Your family's financial status	Not at all	386 (29.5%)	614 (32.2%)	1000 (31.1%)
	A little bit	414 (31.7%)	504 (26.4%)	918 (28.5%)
	Moderate	276 (21.1%)	436 (22.9%)	712 (22.1%)
	A lot	119 (9.1%)	189 (9.9%)	308 (9.6%)
	A great deal	113 (8.6%)	165 (8.6%)	278 (8.6%)
	Total	1308 (100.0%)	1908 (100.0%)	3216 (100.0%)
	Not at all	307 (23.5%)	495 (25.9%)	802 (24.9%)

The way you manage money now	A little bit	412 (31.5%)	556 (29.1%)	968 (30.1%)
	Moderate	335 (25.6%)	469 (24.6%)	804 (25.0%)
	A lot	158 (12.1%)	257 (13.5%)	415 (12.9%)
	A great deal	95 (7.3%)	132 (6.9%)	227 (7.1%)
	Total	1307 (100.0%)	1909 (100.0%)	3216 (100.0%)
Communication with your college student	Not at all	646 (49.4%)	993 (52.0%)	1639 (50.9%)
	A little bit	275 (21.0%)	403 (21.1%)	678 (21.1%)
	Moderate	212 (16.2%)	289 (15.1%)	501 (15.6%)
	A lot	112 (8.6%)	140 (7.3%)	252 (7.8%)
	A great deal	63 (4.8%)	84 (4.4%)	147 (4.6%)
Total	1308 (100.0%)	1909 (100.0%)	3217 (100.0%)	
Your overall relationship with your college student	Not at all	719 (55.0%)	1116 (58.5%)	1835 (57.1%)
	A little bit	304 (23.2%)	400 (21.0%)	704 (21.9%)
	Moderate	158 (12.1%)	208 (10.9%)	366 (11.4%)
	A lot	76 (5.8%)	111 (5.8%)	187 (5.8%)
	A great deal	51 (3.9%)	72 (3.8%)	123 (3.8%)
Total	1308 (100.0%)	1907 (100.0%)	3215 (100.0%)	

Parents also responded to a series of open-ended questions to share more about their experiences and their students' experiences.

Summary of Parents' Responses to Open-ended Questions

<i>Theme</i>	<i>Summary</i>	<i>Example Quotes</i>
Confident you have the information you need	Most parents were confident they had the information they need (79%). They also wanted more specific information and more routine/timely notices. If they received regular communications during summer, they expected that to continue. Parents wanted to know outcomes, not just numbers; to be able to compare information with other schools and with what they were told earlier. Parents felt the information for Spring 2021 was less clear. Parents also recognized that it's problematic when student information is not consistent with parent information.	"As it relates to COVID protocol, yes. As it relates to how those protocols effect his courses, no."
Timing of decision on re-opening	<p>A common response from parents was that "it kept changing." Many did not recall when they heard the school's decision on re-opening. They expressed frustration with the timing of decisions and with decisions themselves. Some felt they heard updated information after it was decided; others complained that decisions were made with very little notice.</p> <p>Parents expressed their preference for in-person or hybrid classes for students. Comments indicated that for 1st year students, the online model meant their students' transition to college-level classes was more difficult (students are essentially "self-taught"). Some believe students should have been able to choose whether to be on campus or learn online; they were frustrated that a choice was not available. Many parents were asking for in-person labs, and in-person classes for freshmen. Other parents admitted they just didn't know what the right call should be.</p>	<p>"No thought was given to the choice of the student or parent."</p> <p>"I realize a lot is on (my student) but it is on us all to show up through this."</p> <p>A lot of comments suggested, "the school did this to (my student/family)." And "The University instituted such tight restrictions on what she could do if on campus, that I was seriously concerned for her mental health."</p>
Who would parents contact with questions about COVID-19	This question elicited quite a bit of frustration about failed communication or lack of trust in communication. While some indicated that the school had been clear about where to direct calls, there were also complaints that "no one cares." Parents sometimes contacted multiple offices with no resolution or response. A few comments indicated that questions were referred from department to department with no answers. Some said they would ask their student to find the answer; several	"The school has a family connections team that has been absolutely amazing during this pandemic time."

	<p>indicated they didn't feel they had a voice. Other parents would post their questions on a parent/family Facebook or social media page. The range in experiences is a good reminder that every communication should include a notation on who to contact with questions, and that having a single contact for parents is helpful.</p>	<p>"I email the contact I have on file from the parent org. and she directs me to specific contacts depending on the info I am asking for."</p>
<p>Topics on which students have requested parent advice; and</p> <p>Parents' greatest concerns for their student this year</p>	<p>Students requested parent advice on a range of topics: academics, finding friends, roommate issues, laundry, time management, money management (all common challenges for first-year students); managing cooking, car maintenance, and the new responsibilities of apartment living (for continuing students). Restricted dining options, long lines, unappealing meals and small portions were mentioned. These are issues that schools have made great progress on, and parents' comments indicate that this year seems like regression.</p> <p>Challenges with technology, including having to learn multiple platforms, mental health concerns, isolation, and "anxiety of every aspect of campus life" were also noted. Parents said their students were bored (not something that parents usually complain about!). Some students are overwhelmed by the whole concept of a pandemic; some are frustrated with how other students respond to COVID restrictions.</p> <p>Comments were similar to the responses above: health, career preparation, internships, study abroad, lab classes, involvement opportunities, making friends, and "weak" academics. Parents expressed that this is not a normal college experience; some felt students are not getting the education they will need. There were also concerns that students will quit school because the year has been miserable, and students are not getting their money's worth.</p> <p>However, overall parents' greatest concern was mental health, repeated over and over, with examples of how students are being affected by COVID-19.</p>	<p>"He's a prisoner in his dorm room."</p> <p>"A lot of students feel (like) they are learning on their own."</p> <p>"It seems since Covid there is no down time. Posts from professors come at all hours and days of the week."</p> <p>"These students are being adversely impacted academically and socially. It is not healthy for their mental health."</p> <p>"I'm concerned for how this will impact not just my student but a generation."</p>
<p>Changes in academic plans because of COVID-19</p>	<p>Some students added a major or minor or took an extra course. Others dropped classes, opted to take longer to graduate, or applied for a leave of absence. Some students changed their schedule in order to "save" certain classes to take in person when classes resume on campus. Several were thinking of transferring,</p>	<p>Students dropped classes or dropped out because "he cannot teach himself everything."</p>

<p>withdrawing, or making new plans depending on the school’s decisions about spring semester.</p> <p>Dissatisfaction with online classes was most frequently cited as the reason students changed their academic plans. Many students opted to move home or live off-campus because all their classes were switched to online or because they were concerned that classes soon would be changed to online. In several cases, students dropped out or moved home because of concerns that they would be exposed to COVID. Mental health, anxiety, and isolation triggered dropping out of school, dropping out of on-campus housing, or moving home. The decisions that roommates made also factored in; if students lost their roommates, they rethought their own living arrangements. Family factors also weighed in, especially when a family member’s health could be compromised.</p> <p>Students were choosing community colleges or in-state schools as alternatives. In some cases, students considered taking a lighter course load or dropping out for a semester, but they were committed by scholarships, student loan payback requirements, an off-campus apartment lease, or athletics. Study abroad was cancelled for most students, and for some that means they will not be able to fit a study abroad program into their curriculum. No study abroad could mean some will have to change their major or career plans. For international students, plans changed due to concerns about borders closing, and students who were studying abroad were called home.</p> <p>Decisions were sometimes made based on financial value. Many are questioning the value of higher education, making judgments based on the experience they’ve had this past year. Some students were making decisions in October and November not to enroll in spring semester classes due to the likelihood of continued online learning.</p> <p>Some are choosing new careers that are very different from their original plan--from pre-law to physical therapy; agriculture to philosophy; science to business; optometry to education; business IT to kinesiology/pre physical therapy; theater to anthropology; child life specialist to cosmetology (then maybe back to college); neuroscience to economics; biomedical to accounting; business to engineering;</p>	<p>“He is considering postponing until he can have in person classes again.”</p> <p>“My student took a semester off rather than pay such a high tuition for all online classes.”</p> <p>“...family became very close during shelter in place and he wanted to stay close rather than leave the state.”</p> <p>“Already giving up on dream job to pursue more practical/essential work.”</p> <p>“Can’t complete capstone, so no idea.”</p> <p>“...she has had increased financial and mental health concerns but now has a clarified focus of the need for financial stability and relevant and meaningful educational and employment experience. She has developed a renewed and impassioned mindset in protecting others and fighting for the rights of those who cannot help themselves.”</p> <p>“Due to the inequality of the health system, she is considering...medical school.”</p>
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	<p>music performance to rhetoric; medical to engineer; medical to communications/media; journalism to math; business to art.</p> <p>Some are tweaking their plans--from surgeon to nursing; politics to diplomacy and world affairs; music performance to music composition; ER doctor to eye doctor.</p> <p>Others are selecting majors that are “easier” because of challenges with online learning, or lab classes not going well. Some are looking at jobs more likely to have openings after the pandemic; some want a different school or type of school (technical college, a school that stayed open during pandemic; a college closer to home; or a less expensive school). Several plan to drop out, and some have decided to join the military. Some students were choosing classes based on the course delivery platform they’re likely to have--”making choices (of classes) based on what [coursework] is in person.”</p>	<p>“More focused on a career that will not be affected if [there] were to be another shutdown.”</p> <p>“She is also considering a switch from a research career to a teaching career since she is convinced that she could do a better job of teaching than most of her current instructors....”</p> <p>“Since Div I athletics cancelled, he has had more time to explore jobs and is becoming interested in other things.”</p>
<p>Challenges with alternative learning</p>	<p>Parents reported that students were experiencing many challenges with online learning; explicitly and implicitly, parents talked about students having to teach themselves. There was a concern over lack of contact with and feedback from instructors. For many students, parents felt there is no down time; instructors send messages day and night, and students are studying nearly all the time. When students’ computers break, they can’t do their work. When instructors don’t teach synchronously, but simply post slides, videos, etc., students do not even see their instructor in real time. Many parents believe that online classes have more homework/more work than in-person classes. Specific types of classes raise additional concerns, notably lab classes, clinicals, math, languages, and classes in the arts. Time differences were also problematic, and group work and study groups were noted as “challenging.” Technology was also problematic when different classes use different technologies and excessive screen time was causing headaches and vision problems.</p> <p>Students with roommates struggled to find privacy for signing on to Zoom classes; students living at home had problems finding quiet spaces away from siblings;</p>	<p>“My child is teaching himself and we’re paying thousands of dollars for the privilege.”</p> <p>“Academically my son is doing very well, but virtual wind ensemble is very difficult and disappointing.”</p> <p>“Dance classes done online- not the proper flooring or space!”</p> <p>“Drawing and Painting classes are extremely challenging in her tiny bedroom.... She works and sleeps in a tiny</p>

	<p>students with learning disabilities find online learning difficult. When students have some online and some in-person classes, they have to find a study area on campus to do their online courses--and many of those options are closed due to COVID or full due to high demand from others with the same needs.</p> <p>Several parents said that online classes result in cheating. Roommates or fraternity members were charged with sharing answers. Although faculty may be making special efforts to prevent cheating, using eye monitoring technology means students can't take eyes off the screen; if they do, they fail. And there was a belief that instructors are making classes more challenging to counteract cheating by assigning more work than they would normally.</p> <p>Synchronous classes are difficult for students in other time zones; asynchronous classes mean students are even more isolated from instructors and classmates. A number of parents believe online classes should not cost as much as in-person classes, and that this year's coursework did not have much value.</p>	<p>room full of oil paint fumes [in apartment near campus"]</p> <p>"9 hour time difference very difficult and no social engagement is unhealthy"</p> <p>"Classes vary in the way they convey information so he's sometimes confused about what is due."</p> <p>"Both she and I are surprised she is finding it quite workable. Despite her ADHD."</p> <p>"My student has said that the online classes are better than he expected. He also stated the professors have gone out of their way to work with him in all of his classes."</p>
<p>Student opportunities and development</p>	<p>Some parents noted that they don't feel their student is maturing as would be expected. Students living at home are rooted in their high school patterns. The restrictions that on-campus students face--with rules about masks, social distancing, who they can socialize with--means they are not allowed the independence they would normally have.</p> <p>Similar to family attitudes related to college drinking, parents (and students) are coming from very different perspectives in their outlook on COVID-19. Some say the virus is not a problem for young adults, so let them be on campus. Others believe schools should close down, insist on social distancing, and keep students apart at all costs. And still others think students should be able to choose how they want to take their classes.</p>	<p>"My son, who is on the (autism) spectrum and overly cautious, is missing out on opportunities to grow socially and gain independence during this time."</p> <p>"I am concerned that many...lessons and life skills are being delayed, and will have to be learned during sophomore year, when course</p>

	<p>Parents are worried that their student will not have opportunities in the next few years that they need to reach their goals.</p>	<p>work is harder, stakes are higher and second-year students are not as fully supported as first-years.”</p> <p>“Open it all up. These are 20 year olds. They are very low risk.... They are doing more damage to the social/mental state than the small health risk the ‘Rona’ poses.”</p> <p>“...student is graduating this May and wanting to go to Grad school. The biggest concern with her is how the virus is going to impact that interview process and the number of slots available....”</p> <p>“Division 1 athletes have spent their entire youth and young adulthood preparing to play at the D1 Level. Schools are withholding or stalling decisions as to season play....”</p>
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