

**INSIDE**  
HIGHER ED



# Responding to the Covid-19 Crisis: A Survey of College and University Presidents

A study by *Inside Higher Ed* and Hanover Research

March 2020

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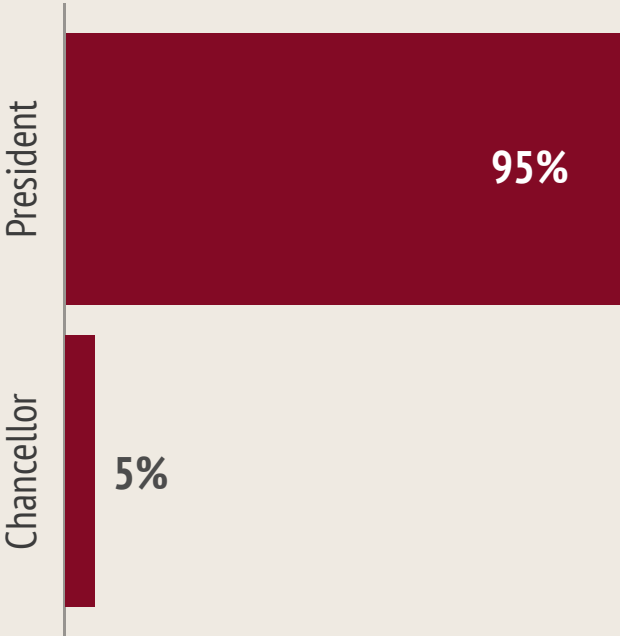
# INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

Inside Higher Ed partnered with Hanover Research to develop and disseminate a COVID-19 Perceptions and Response Survey to college and university presidents.

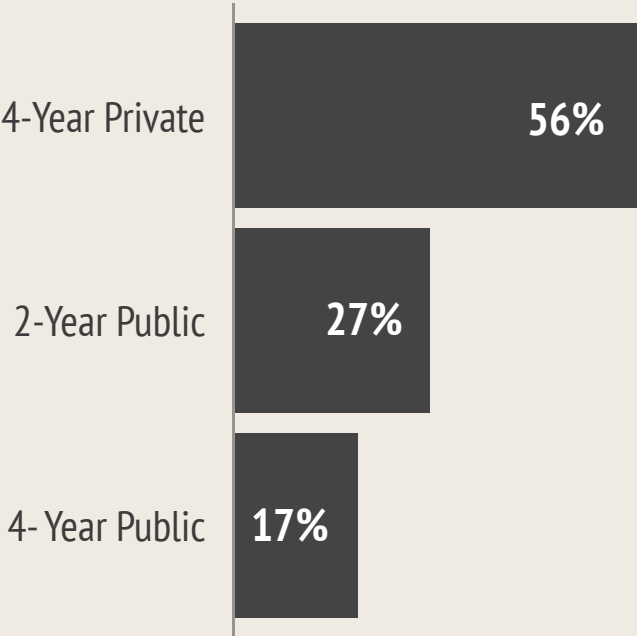
The survey was administered online in March 2020. The analysis includes a total of 172 respondents. Respondents were President or Chancellor, currently employed at a 4-year Private, 4-year Public, or 2-year Public institution. Statistically significant differences (95% confidence level) between groups are noted with an asterisk (\*).

## RESPONDENT PROFILE

Which of the following best describes your primary role at your institution? (n=172)



Which of the following best describes your institution? (n=172)

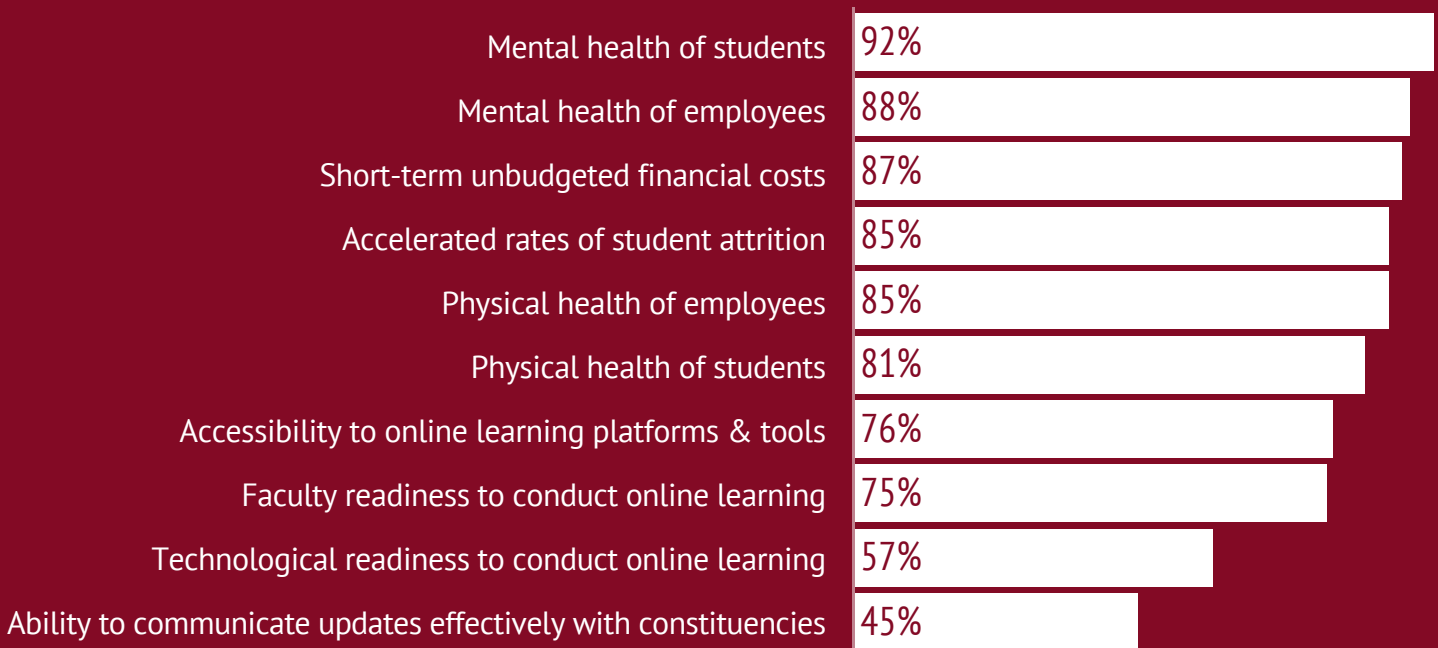


# IMMEDIATE-TERM ISSUES

Respondents worry most about the mental and physical health of students and employees in the immediate term. As shown in the figure below, at least 80% of respondents are somewhat or very concerned about the mental and physical health of students and employees alike.

## How would you rate your current level of concern related to the following immediate-term issues in regard to COVID-19? (n=164)

% Very Concerned + % Somewhat Concerned



# CHALLENGES IN ADDRESSING CONCERNS



**18%**

Respondents whose institutions have already invested in additional physical or mental health resources.



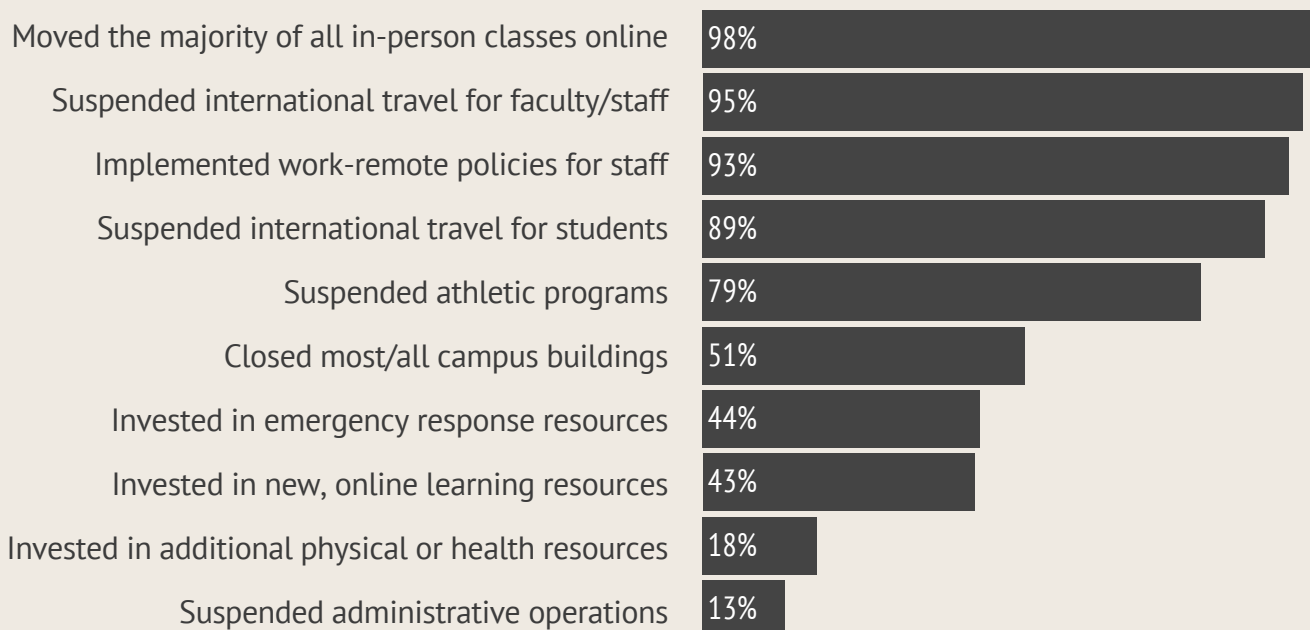
**44%**

Of the institutions that have yet to invest in physical or mental health resources, just under half report that they are somewhat or very likely to do so in the future.

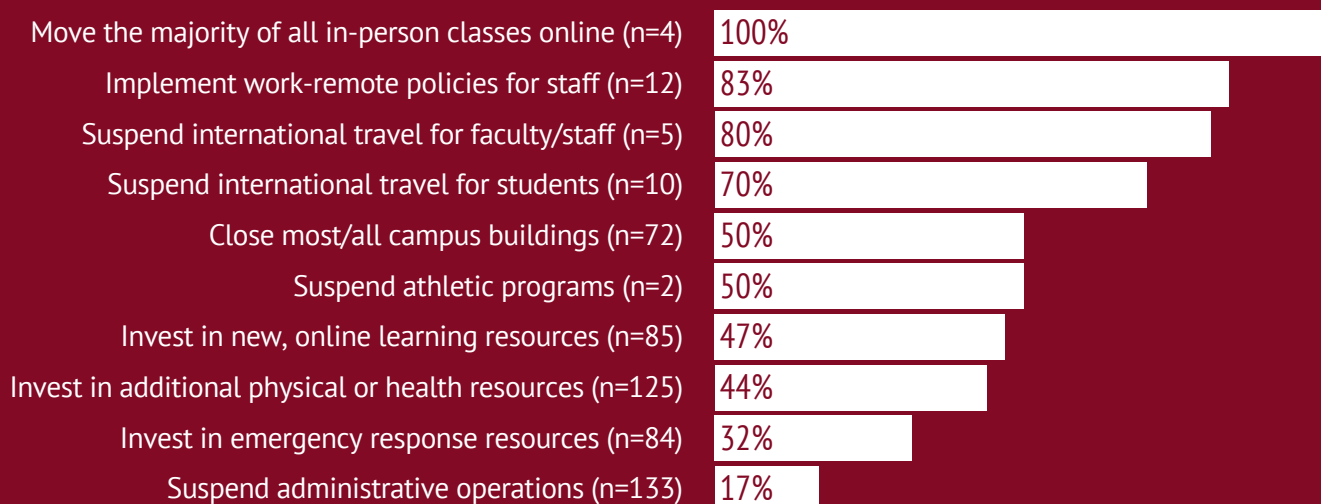
# INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSE

Though respondents report an immediate concern for the mental and physical health of their institutional community, only a few institutions have invested in additional physical or mental health resources, and a limited number of presidents or chancellors report they are likely to do so in the future.

## Which of the following actions have you already taken at your institution in response to COVID-19? (n=164)



## How likely is your institution to take the following actions in the future? % Very Likely + % Somewhat Likely

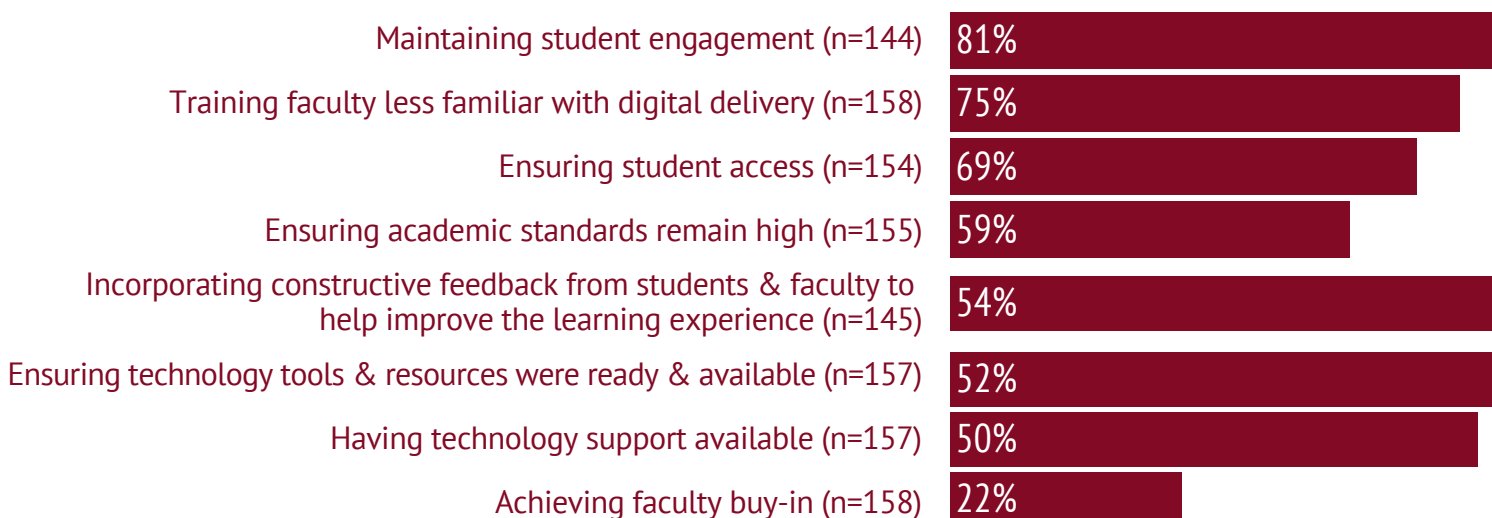


# REMOTE LEARNING CHALLENGES

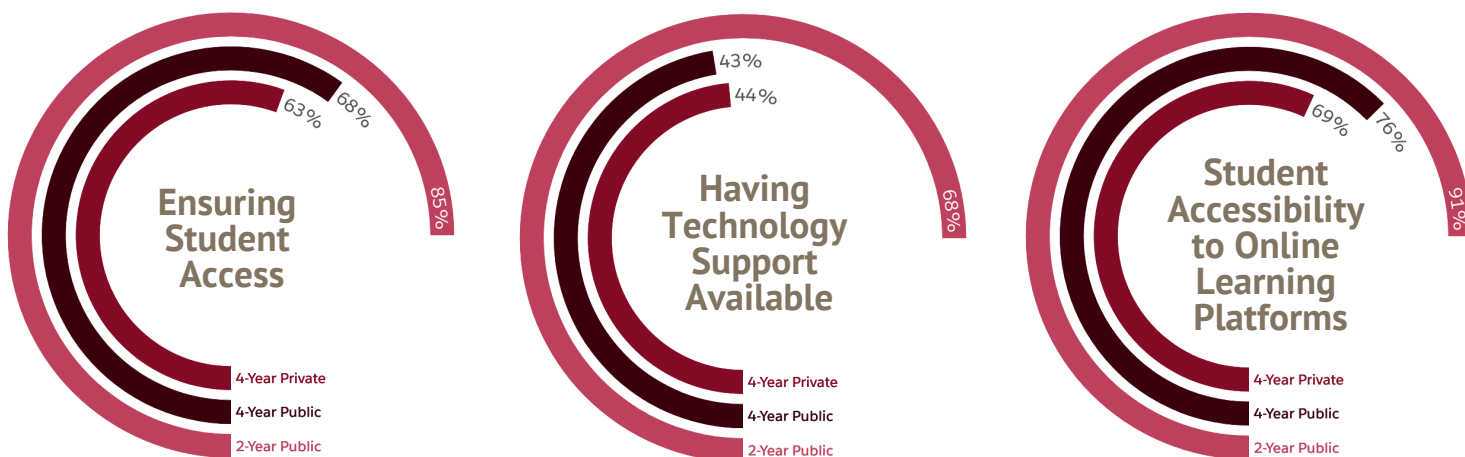
Student access and engagement are among the largest obstacles to continuing to serve and teach students. As shown in the chart below, a large majority of respondents rate maintaining student engagement (81%) and ensuring student access (69%) as somewhat or very challenging issues for their institution.

## How would you rate the level of challenge at your institution associated with moving in-person classes to a remote or online setting for the following activities?

% Very Challenging + % Somewhat Challenging



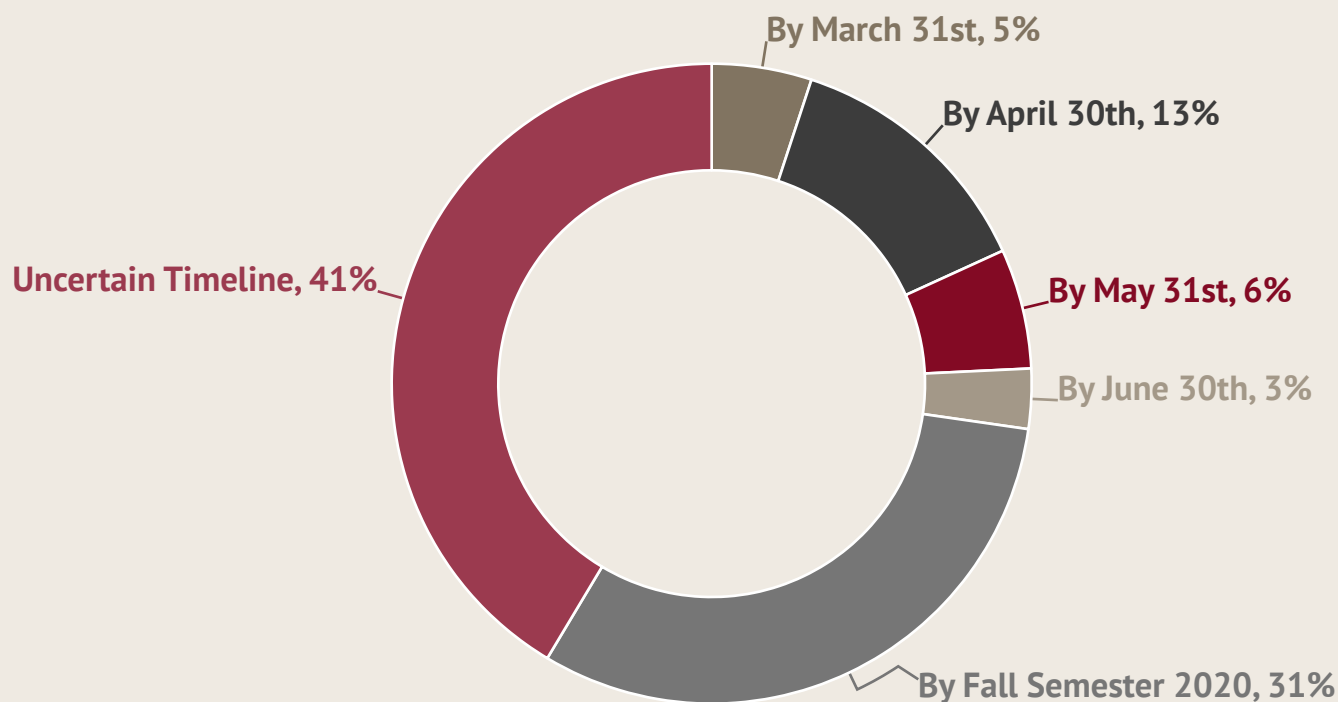
Challenges associated with moving in-person classes to a remote or online setting vary by institution type. Here is how each type rated a given challenge (% Very Challenging + % Somewhat Challenging).



# RESUMPTION OF IN-PERSON CLASSES

About half of the institutions surveyed operate on an uncertain timeline for resuming in-person classes. In particular, presidents and chancellors at two-year institutions face an uncertain future.

**When do you expect to resume holding in-person classes? (n=157)**



| Timeline               | 4-year Private (n=88) | 4-year Public (n=28) | 2-year Public (n=41) |
|------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|----------------------|
| By March 31st          | 2%                    | 7%                   | 10%                  |
| By April 30th          | 14%                   | 4%                   | 20%                  |
| By May 31st            | 6%                    | 7%                   | 7%                   |
| By June 30th           | 3%                    | 4%                   | 0%                   |
| By Fall Semester 2020* | 40%                   | 32%                  | 12%                  |
| Uncertain timeline     | 35%                   | 46%                  | 51%                  |

Note: An asterisk\* indicates a statistically significant difference between respondent groups.

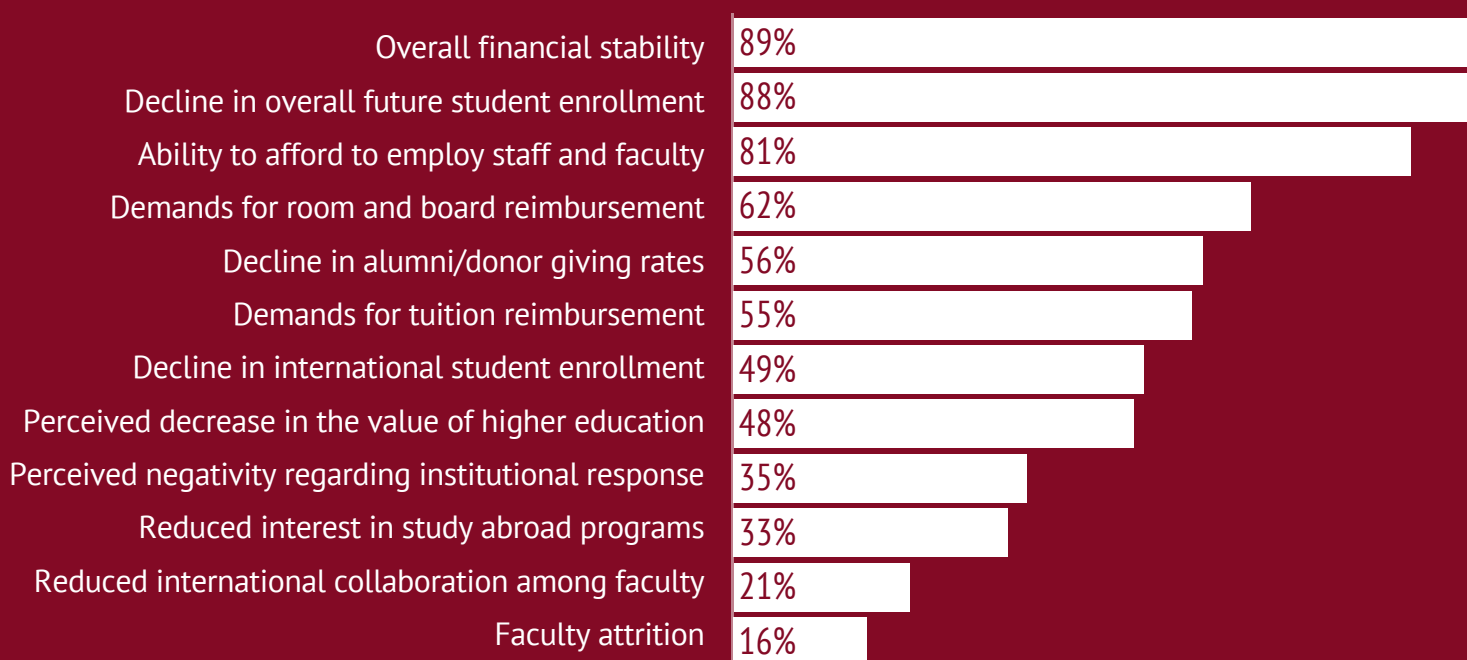


# LONG-TERM ISSUES

Short-term student attrition and long-term enrollment drops present obstacles to maintaining stability. Eighty-eight percent of respondents are somewhat or very concerned about the long-term decline in future student enrollment.

## How would you rate your level of concern with the following potential long-term issues at your institution in regard to COVID-19?

% Very Concerned + % Somewhat Concerned



## How would you rate your level of concern with the following potential [immediate-term/long-term issues] at your institution in regard to COVID-19?

Top 5 Options: % Very Concerned + % Somewhat Concerned

| Immediate-Term (n=164) |   | Long-Term (n=160) |   |
|------------------------|---|-------------------|---|
| 1                      | Mental health of students (92%)                     |                   | Overall financial stability (89%)                         |
| 2                      | Mental health of employees (88%)                    |                   | <b>Decline in overall future student enrollment (88%)</b> |
| 3                      | Short-term unbudgeted financial costs (87%)         |                   | Ability to afford to employ staff and faculty (81%)       |
| 4                      | <b>Accelerated rates of student attrition (85%)</b> |                   | Demands for room and board reimbursement (62%)            |
| 5                      | Physical health of employees (85%)                  |                   | Decline in alumni/donor giving rates (56%)                |

# OPERATIONAL SUPPORT

Respondents report needing the most support in navigating financial issues during the COVID-19 crisis. As noted earlier, among long-term issues, respondents are most likely to be concerned about their overall financial stability (89% somewhat or very concerned).

**Of the following areas, where do you feel your institution needs the most additional operational support to successfully navigate beyond the COVID-19 crisis?  
Select up to your top 3 options. (n=159)**



# STATE AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

Respondents primarily cite financial health and planning as their most needed operational support and a financial stimulus package to compensate for losses as their most needed government support, as shown in the graph below.

**Of the following areas, where do you feel your institution needs the most additional support from state and federal governments to successfully navigate beyond the COVID-19 crisis? Select up to your top 3 options. (n=159)**



**89%**

Financial stimulus package to compensate for losses



**71%**

Flexibility on regulatory limitations in providing remote learning (regular and substantive interaction, etc.)



**37%**

Easing of borrowing provisions to help colleges bridge short-term financial difficulties



**33%**

Mental health resource allocation for students



**25%**

Ability to leverage endowment funds without negatively impacting financial responsibility score



**14%**

Assistance with processing international student visas more efficiently

# STATE AND FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SUPPORT (cont.)

As a result of the uncertainties, nearly all respondents affiliated with two-year programs want flexibility from state/federal governments on regulatory limitations for remote learning (93%).

**Of the following areas, where do you feel your institution needs the most additional [operational support/support from state and federal governments] to successfully navigate beyond the COVID-19 crisis? Select up to your top 3 options.**

Top 3 Options

|   | Operational Support (n=159)                     | Support from State and Federal Governments (n=160)   |
|---|---|--|
| 1 | Financial health and operational planning (60%) | Financial stimulus package to compensate for losses (81%)  |
| 2 | Faculty training and development (53%)          | Flexibility on regulatory limitations in providing remote learning (regular and substantive interaction, etc.) (71%) |
| 3 | Instructional technology development (48%)      | Easing of borrowing provisions to help colleges bridge short-term financial difficulties (37%)                       |

**Of the following areas, where do you feel your institution needs the most additional support from state and federal governments to successfully navigate beyond the COVID-19 crisis? Select up to your top 3 options.**

By Institution Type

|   | 4-year Private (n=89)  | 4-year Public (n=27)   | 2-year Public (n=43)   |
|---|--|--|--|
| 1 | Financial stimulus package to compensate for losses (93%)  | Financial stimulus package to compensate for losses (93%)  | Flexibility on regulatory limitations in providing remote learning (regular and substantive interaction, etc.) (93%) |
| 2 | Flexibility on regulatory limitations in providing remote learning (regular and substantive interaction, etc.) (57%) | Flexibility on regulatory limitations in providing remote learning (regular and substantive interaction, etc.) (79%) | Financial stimulus package to compensate for losses (79%)  |
| 3 | Easing of borrowing provisions to help colleges bridge short-term financial difficulties (52%)                       | Mental health resource allocation for students (37%)   | Mental health resource allocation for students (63%)   |

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