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COVID19 Student Experiences Survey  
Future Plans Edition  
Spring 2020  
Research Brief #204

**College of the Canyons**

Santa Clarita Community College District  
26455 Rockwell Canyon Road  
Santa Clarita, CA 91355

Institutional Research, Planning, and  
Institutional Effectiveness

Vida M. Manzo, Ph.D.

Daylene M. Meuschke, Ed.D.



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## **Introduction & Background**

This is the second edition in a series of research briefs organized by topic (RB#203-RB#209) reporting the results from the Student Experiences survey administered by the Office of Institutional Research, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness. In response to the COVID19 Coronavirus pandemic, the college abided by the legislative stay-at-home order and transitioned to an entirely online/remote environment in week 6 of the spring 2020 term. All courses that were scheduled to meet face-to-face/on-ground were transitioned to a distance education format where instruction was changed to either synchronous or asynchronous mode, drastically changing how faculty and other student services departments interface with students. This report focuses on results regarding students' future plans for the remainder of the spring 2020 term as well as their plans for the fall of 2020 in light of the drastic changes to college operations and instruction that occurred in the spring of 2020. COVID19 has affected society and businesses at large in an unprecedented way. Particular industries are concerned about how their sector will fair in the "new normal". Colleges throughout California and the United States are wondering about the likelihood of students remaining enrolled and specifically returning in the fall of 2020 given the necessary transition away from face-to-face and towards the online/remote environment. Reports more broadly have suggested with student concerns over health and safety in combination with families losing expendable income for college and university tuition, that there may possibly be a downtrend in enrollments (Hartocollis, 2020). College of the Canyons Student Experiences survey provided a key opportunity to address some of these concerns by assessing students plans for the future extending from week 6 until the closing of the spring 2020 term as well as students plans for fall 2020.

## **Method**

Of the original 41 items within the survey, four items specifically assessed students' future plans:

- Q26.** If you had planned to transfer to a 4-year institution next semester (fall 2020), is this still your plan?
- Q27.** Which of the following applies to your plans for this semester? Select one
- Q28.** You indicated that you are either thinking about it, or have dropped/withdrawn from one or more courses. What are the primary reasons for this? Check all that apply.
- Q29.** If social distancing requirements remain and instruction is still remote/online in the fall 2020 semester, which describes your plan (select one).

Questions 26, 28, and 29 provided an open-ended opportunity for students to expand further by providing free response explanations instead of and sometimes in addition to, the forced choices provided. Analysts read each response and allowed for themes to emerge freely from these responses. Responses were coded into the themes that emerged for each response. In all cases more than one theme could have been coded for any one response, as sometimes students discussed multiple themes within a single response. Thus, counts of themes will not always equal the number of individual responses provided. Within each theme, a total sum was calculated to provide a quantitative illustration of the proportion and count that each theme contributed within a given question. Across these three questions, there were 912 free-responses provided. Across the questions, disaggregation by ethnicity, age, modality (face-to-face only, hybrid, online only), and first-generation status was conducted.

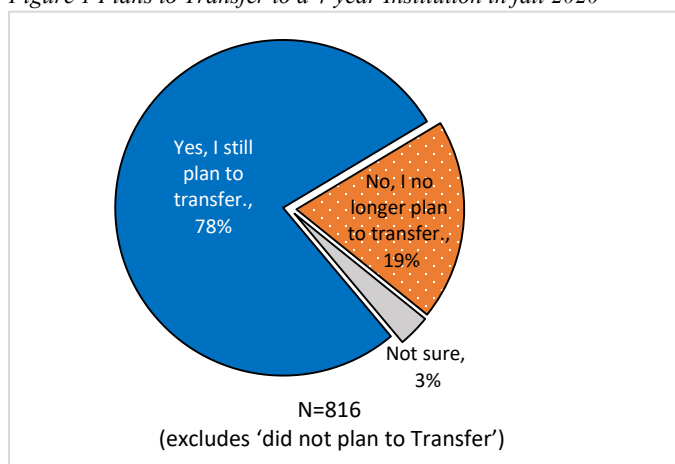
Emotional valence of open-ended responses was also coded. Valence refers to the affective quality or emotional tone of something (Lewin, 1951; Scherer, 1984; Leu, Mesquita, Ellsworth et.al., 2009). In this case we coded each open-ended response for overall negative, neutral, or positive emotional tone. Of the free responses provided (a code of 1 was assigned to an open-ended response that was perceived by the coder as negative, a code of 2 was assigned to neutral responses and a code of 3 was assigned to responses perceived as positive. An overall mean and descriptive summary of the valence for the open-ended themes will be provided where applicable.

## Results

Of the 3,697 valid respondents 2,569 (70%) provided a response to question number 26; “If you had planned to transfer to a 4-year institution next semester (fall 2020), is this still your plan?” Of these 2,569 responses 1,753 (68%) indicated within the free response that they did not plan to transfer but not because their plans had changed but because they had not intended to transfer (either at all) or in the fall of 2020 from the outset of their academic journey. These responses are thus, excluded from the results and data visualizations below as this question did not pertain to this subset of students. What remained was a total of 816 responses wherein students indicated either “Yes” “Unsure”, or “No”. For those respondents who selected “No”, they had the opportunity of explaining further within their open-ended responses, why their plans changed (see Figure 1).

A majority (78%) of respondents indicated they still planned to transfer while 19% indicated they no longer had plans to transfer and 3% were unsure. A rough comparison of the rate of students who self-report transfer plans during previous “normal” spring terms (2018 and 2019) can be found within the Completion Exit surveys conducted by the Institutional Research, Planning and Institutional Effectiveness office for students who petition to graduate. Out of those who petitioned to graduate for each term, 87% (spring 2019) and 86% (spring 2018) self-reported they were transferring to another institution.

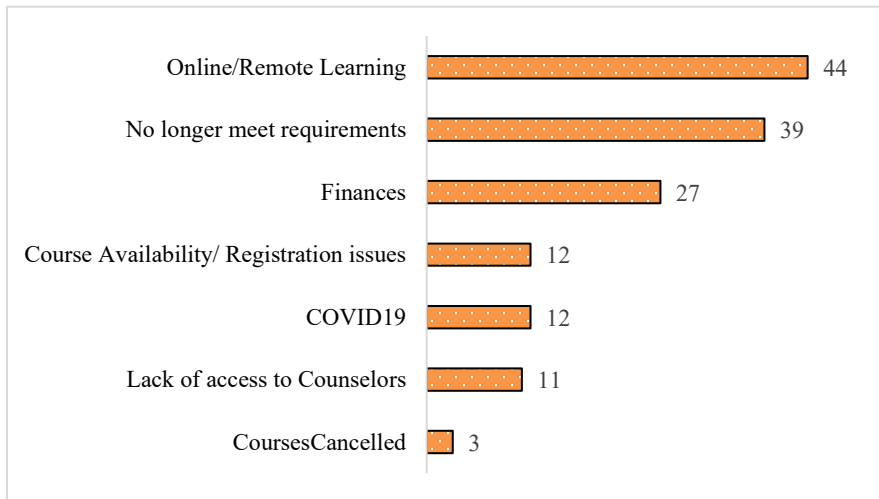
Figure 1 Plans to Transfer to a 4-year Institution in fall 2020



Among the 19% (158) from the COVID19 Student Experiences Survey who indicated that they no longer planned to transfer, open-ended responses were coded for themes. Seven core themes emerged for why students’ plans changed. The top three of these themes (sum/count) were: Online/remote learning concerns (n = 44), no longer meeting course requirements (n = 39), and finances (n = 27) (see Figure 2). An eighth theme (n = 26) was designated as N/A and non-actionable. These consisted of responses such as “just changed my mind”, “everything is confusing”, and “I don’t know if this is possible anymore”. These are excluded from Figure 2. The top-most popular theme was **online/remote learning**. Specifically, students suggested they were not planning to transfer if their transfer college was

providing only online format come Fall 2020. Students wrote: “I do not like online learning and if this continues, I will be taking a semester off to work until things return to normal.” Other students wrote: “I was planning to enroll but I think I will choose to enroll at the new university in Spring 2021 to avoid online classes” and “4-year institutions are planning for online courses only and that is the same quality that I will be receiving at COC so therefore there’s no point in transferring.”

Figure 2 Open-Ended Themes for Why Students' Transfer Plans Had Changed



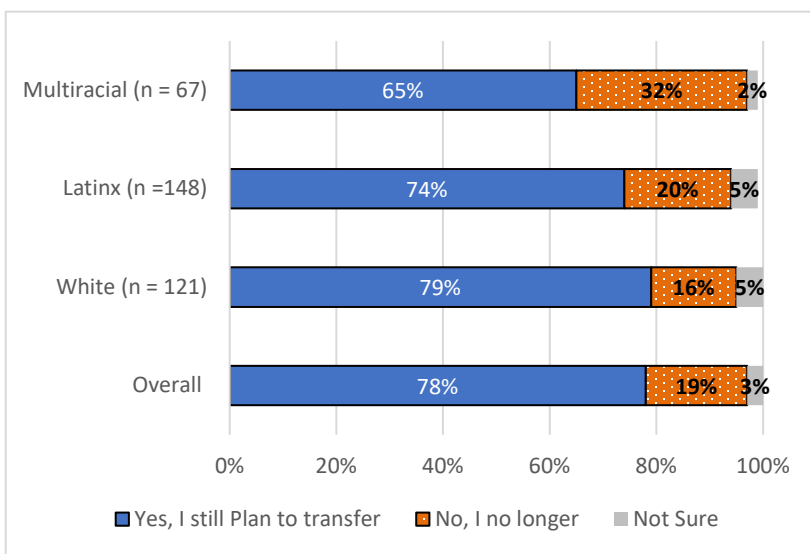
For the second theme pertaining to **no longer meeting requirements**, students were concerned that this spring term had presented such a disruption to their actual credits/grades that they would no longer be eligible to transfer. Students wrote: “Because of COVID I dropped one of my pre-requisites that I now have to postpone transfer” and “I was forced to drop a course required for the 4-year and I don’t know if I’ll be able to transfer now.” For the third theme, pertaining to **finances** students indicated that financial obligations/situations had changed due to COVID no longer making transfer a

possibility. “I was planning on transferring but I’m not financially prepared anymore due to CoViD-19 [sic]” and “Well, now I’m financially ruined so doesn’t seem likely for me to get to a 4-year.” Student quotes pertaining to **course availability and registration issues**: “I can’t get into all my classes cause [sic] yall don’t have enough classes available for Science”. In addition, “I need to take lab with micro my last class”, “I am trying to get the ECE 12 units” and “I don’t even know when I will be completing this semester or when I will be allowed to sit for my RN boards exam so I can proceed with my plans.” Student quotes pertaining to **COVID19**: “I don’t plan on going to school until there is a cure”, and “Because of COVID19 and Seattle being a hotspot”. **Lack of access to Counselors**: “It’s hard to get the help I need from counselors”, “Unable to meet with academic counselor face to face” and “Website wouldn’t let me schedule counselor visit”.

Overall, the emotional valence of these open-ended responses was 47% negative and 54% neutral ( $M=1.54, SD .50$ ).

Disaggregation of the overall responses by ethnicity, age, and modality were conducted to assess for disproportionality in those who responded that they no longer planned to transfer. Analysis revealed that as compared to the overall (78%)

Figure 3 fall 2020 Transfer Plans Disaggregated by Ethnicity



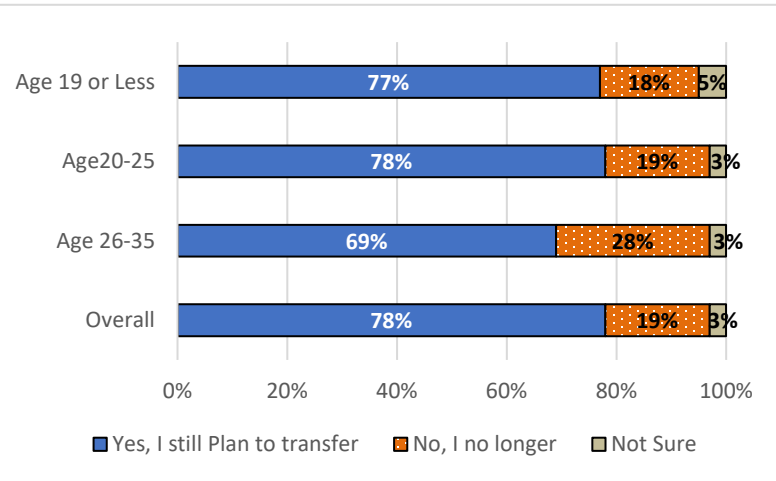
Latinx and Multiracial identifying respondents were less likely to select that they were still planning to transfer (74% and 65% respectively). Multiracial were more likely to select that they were no longer going to transfer at a rate 13 percentage points higher than the overall rate (See Figure 3).

Latinx selected that they were not sure about their plans at a slightly higher rate (5%) than the overall (3%) rate (See Figure 3). White identifying students conversely were slightly more likely to select that they were planning to still transfer (79%) as compared to the overall rate (78%) and less likely to select that they no longer planned to transfer (16%) as compared to the overall rate (19%). Counts for

Black/African American, Native American, Asian, Filipinx, Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and other were too small ( $Ns < 20$ ) and thus not presented here.

Figure 4 fall 2020 Transfer Plans Disaggregated by Age

In disaggregating by age, the only disproportionality that emerged was among the age group 26-35 (See Figure 4).

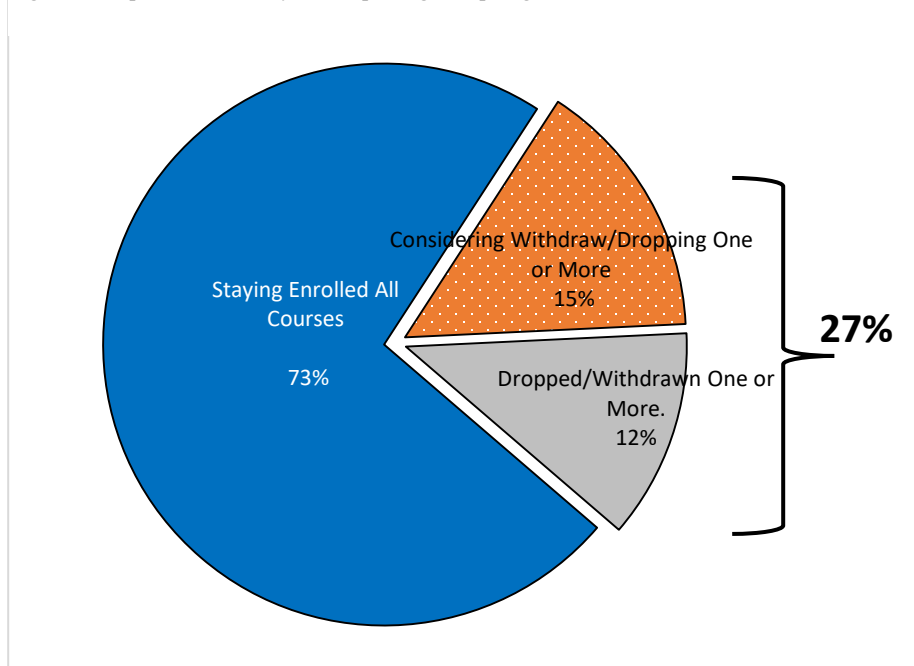


Specifically, among 26-35-year-old respondents, (28%) report no longer planning to transfer as compared to the overall rate (19%). This is even after accounting for those who had not planned to transfer from the outset of their academic journey. Counts for respondents 36 years of age and older were too small (Ns < 20) and thus not presented here. All other planned disaggregation analysis did not reveal disproportionality.

Of the 3,697 valid respondents, 2,595 (70%) provided a response to question number 27: “Which of the following applies to your plans for this semester?”

**Select one.** Of these 2,595 responses a majority 1,882 (73%) indicated they are completing the semester and staying enrolled in all of their courses (See Figure 5). Students who were considering dropping or withdrawing from one or more courses comprised 15% (401) of respondents and an additional 12% (312 respondents) indicated they already had dropped or withdrawn from one or more of their courses.

Figure 5 Respondents Plans for Completing the spring 2020 Semester

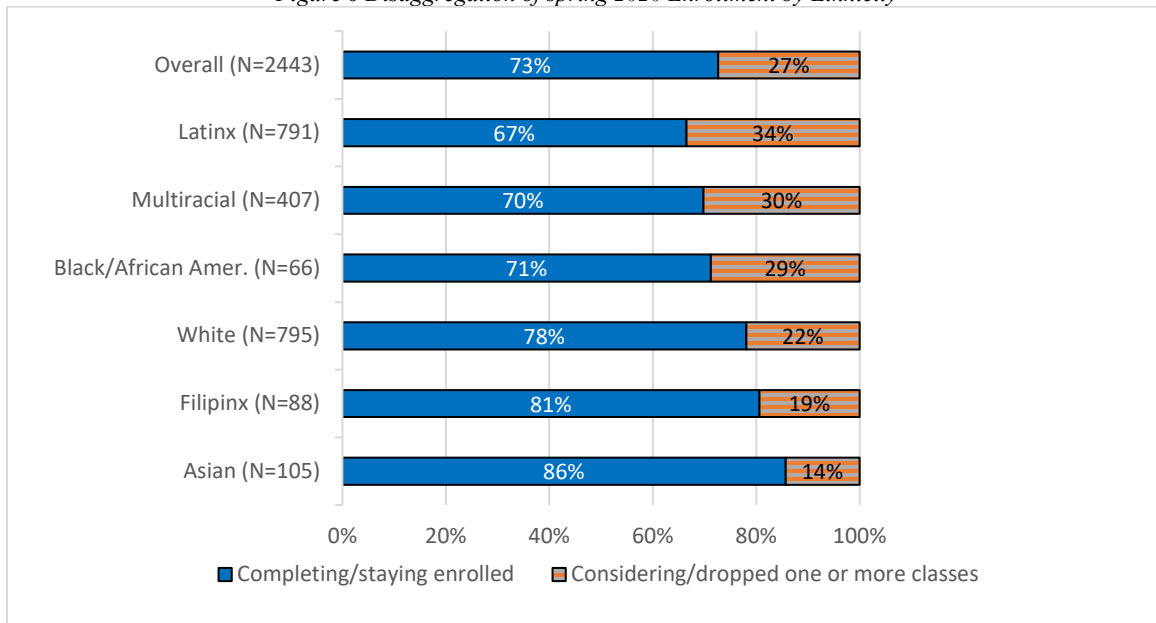


Thus, a total of 27% of students either had or were considering dropping or withdrawing. Retention rate analysis during a “normal” spring term (2019) yields 88% retention. Thus, 12% withdraws on a “normal” spring (2019) semester.

The methodology of the retention rate analysis captures only withdraws not drops and does not capture students who had “considered” dropping/withdrawing as the self-reported COVID19 Student Experiences survey does. Further, the 73% in the COVID19 Student Experiences survey captures students who were retained in all of their courses whereas retention rate analysis is the percent of students retained in courses out of total enrolled in courses.

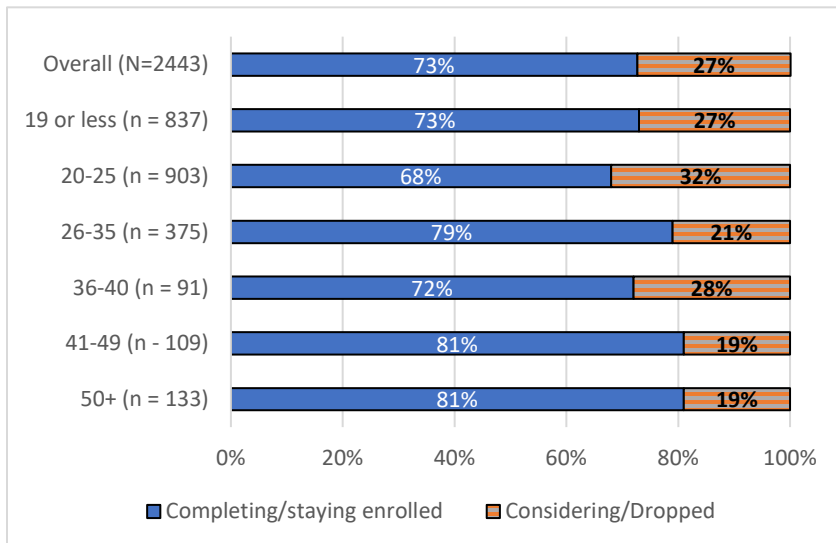
Disaggregation analysis revealed disproportionality on the basis of certain ethnic backgrounds, certain age groups, modality, and first-generation status. Specifically, among ethnicity, Latinx, Multiracial, and Black/African-American identifying respondents were slightly less likely to report that they were staying enrolled in all of their courses for this spring 2020 semester and more likely to report that they were considering and or had dropped one or more courses (see Figure 6).

Figure 6 Disaggregation of spring 2020 Enrollment by Ethnicity



Disaggregation by age revealed that respondents within the age group 20-25 were 5% more likely to say they were considering and or had already dropped one or more of their courses this semester (See Figure 7).

Figure 7 Plans for spring 2020 Enrollment Disaggregated by Age

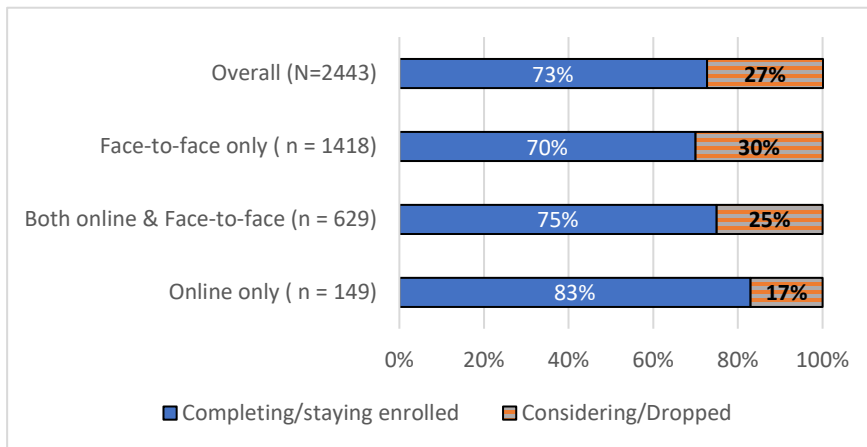


Furthermore, disaggregation by first-generation status also revealed that students who were the first in their families to go to college reported considering dropping or having dropped at a rate of 30% compared to the overall rate of 27%.

Disaggregation by modality revealed (See Figure 8) that respondents who were enrolled in face-to-face only courses were more likely (30%) to select that they were considering or had dropped/withdrawn as compared to the overall rate (27%). Conversely, respondents were less likely to select that they were considering or had dropped/withdrawn if they were already enrolled in only online courses prior to the transition

(17%). Understandably, the transition may have been more disruptive to students who had no familiarity with the online environment and less so for those students more well versed with the online format.

Figure 8 Spring 2020 Enrollment Plans Disaggregated by Modality

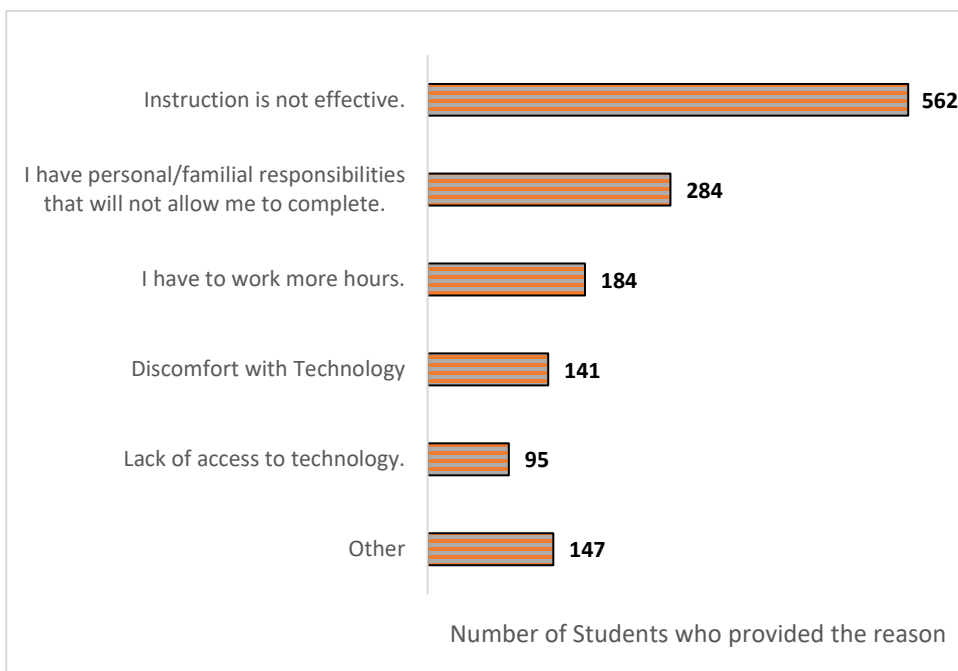


Among the overall 27% (n = 716) who indicated, they were considering dropping or who had dropped/withdrawn the survey asked Q.28 “You indicated that you are either thinking about it, or have dropped/withdrawn from one or more courses. What are the primary reasons for this? Check all that apply. Students selected from a set of six forced choice options. The six options were: Instruction is not as effective, I have personal/familial responsibilities that will not allow me to complete, I have to work more hours,

discomfort with technology, lack of access to technology, and other, please specify (with an open-ended response option). Cases where a respondent selected other and then wrote a response that matched one or several of the six forced-choice options was recoded and counted into the prescribed forced-choice option.

After this recoding the top most popular reason selected was “instruction is not as effective” reported by 78% (n = 562) of these respondents, followed by “I have personal/ familial responsibilities” reported by 40% (n = 284), and the third most popular; “I have to work more hours” comprising 26% (n=184) of respondents who had or were considering dropping (See Figure 9).

Figure 9 Reasons for Why Students Dropped or Considered Dropping Courses



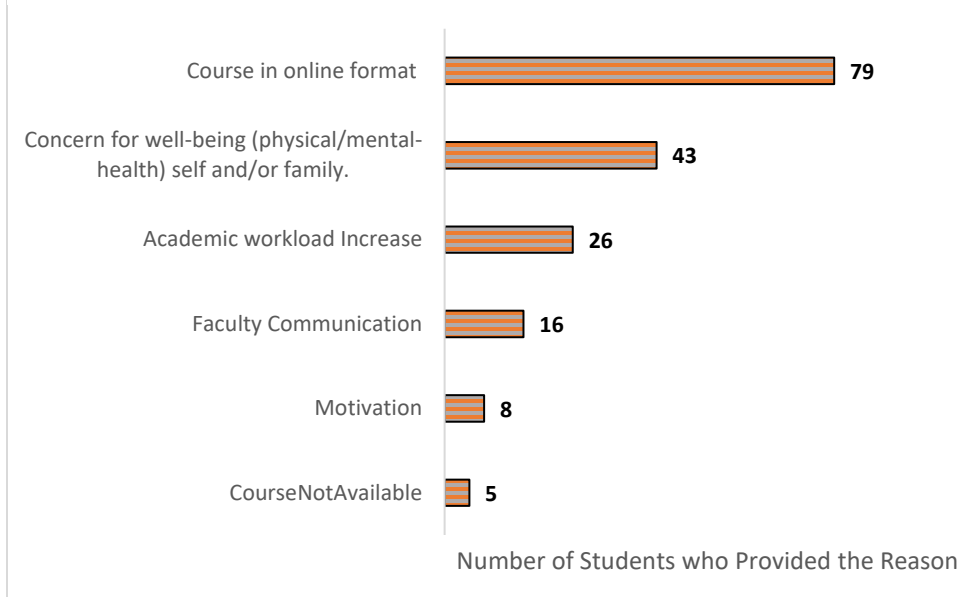
Essentially, the most popularly selected reasons for students reporting why they had or were considering dropping courses was because the instruction was not as effective, followed by personal/familial responsibilities, followed by needing to work more hours.

Examples of some open-ended responses that were recoded into the prescribed forced-choice options are as follows: **Instruction is not as effective:** “Some instructors were unable to translate classes to CANVAS others were amazing”. **I have to work more hours:** “The academic workload has increased and I was not able to carry it along with increased hours from work since I am employed with an essential business”.

Finally, **Lack of access to technology:** “I had no internet at home at the start of the lockdown, that made me miss a lot of work.”



Figure 10 Open-Ended Themes for Why Students Dropped or Considered Dropping Courses

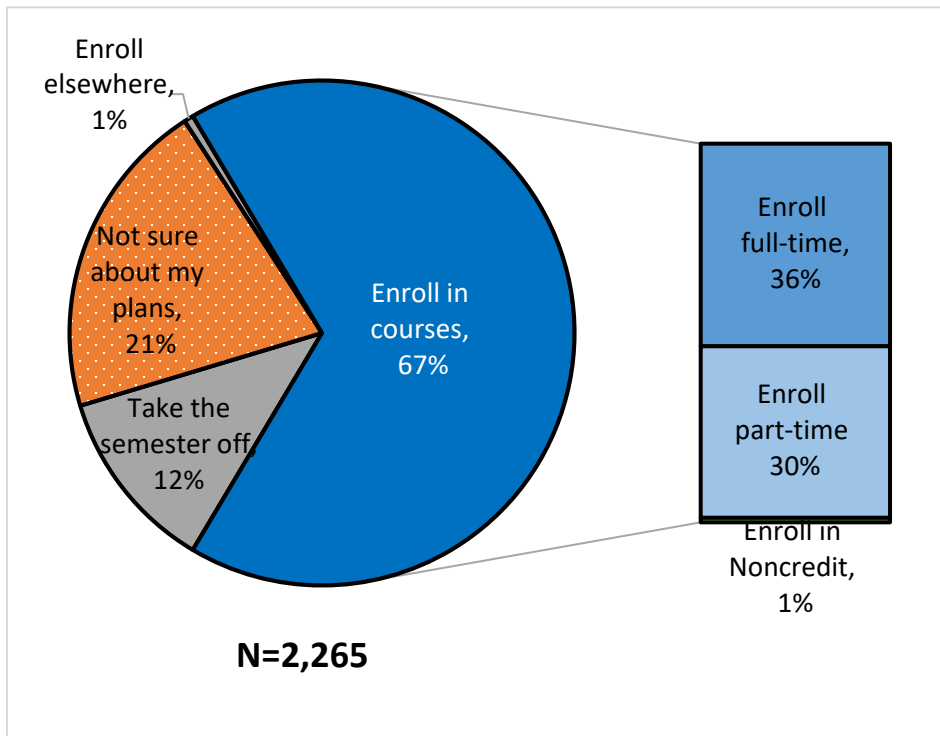


A total of 147 respondents selected “other” and provided open-ended responses that did not fit the six prescribed forced-choice reasons. The new themes that emerged among the 185 free-responses provided in the “other” option were: online format concerns (n = 79), concern for well-being (n = 43), academic workload increase (n= 26), faculty communication (n = 16), Motivation (n = 8) and Course not available (n = 5) (See Figure 10).

Examples of some open-ended responses are as follows. **Online format concerns:** “It was a lab class that I loved in person, but I wasn’t

really getting much out of it online” and “The class I dropped was Auto Technology and there was no way to learn that online.” **Concern for well-being:** “Loss [of] a friend and have several family members with coronavirus and my husband and I are both furloughed”, “One of my family members contracted coronavirus and it’s been difficult, stressful” and “Too much stress with family member dying and being sick with coronavirus”. **Academic workload increase:** “Professor has no compassion on parent[s] that are also homeschooling and leaves to much homework or assignment to be completed weekly”, “Professor is not patient with students. Can’t get help. It sucks when you’re stuck behind a screen and don’t understand the lectures”, “Due to this pandemic, Professors have been assigning more assignments not knowing that some of their students are essential workers” and “I have been given increased, harder work that does not equate to the class I was originally in.” **Faculty communication:** “Unresponsive professor, and when you’re limited to only online communication that is key and necessary”, “Professor had no communication with the student. Assigning loads of work without explanation as to what it is” and “Professor has never specified how we would be meeting and when”. Overall the emotional valence of these open-ended responses was 83% negative and 17% neutral ( $M=1.17, SD .38$ ).

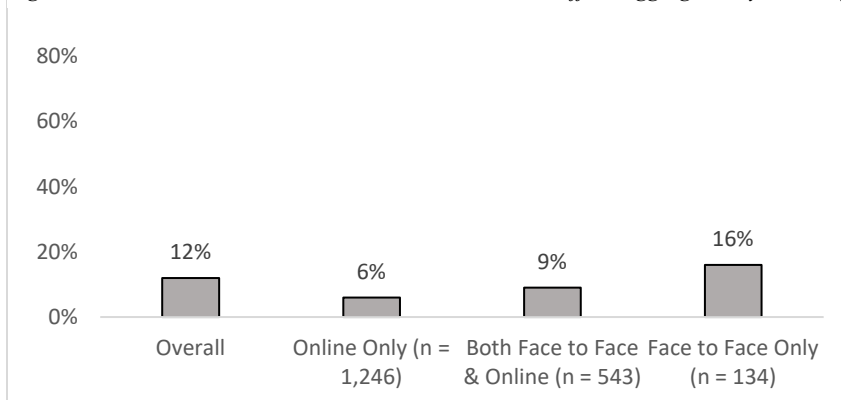
Figure 11 Plans for fall 2020 Enrollment



Finally, the survey asked students **Q.29 If social distancing requirements remain and instruction is still remote/online in the fall 2020 semester, which describes your plan (select one)**. After excluding those respondents who selected they would be graduating (n = 277), a majority of respondents (67%) reported that they would be enrolling in courses in the fall 2020 term (See Figure 11). Of those 67% who planned to enroll in courses, 36% reported they will enroll full-time and 30% they will enroll part-time in fall 2020. Of the total respondents to this question, 21% were not sure about their plans, 12% planned to take the semester off and 1% planned to enroll elsewhere.

Disaggregation analysis by ethnicity, age, modality and first-generation status was conducted. No disproportionality was found for age or first-generation status. For ethnicity, Filipinx were less likely to report that they were taking the semester off (6%) as compared to the overall rate (12%). Furthermore, modality yielded differences in the proportions of respondents who said they would most likely take the semester off next fall 2020 (See Figure 12).

Figure 12 Fall 2020 Semester Plans to Take the Semester Off Disaggregated by Modality

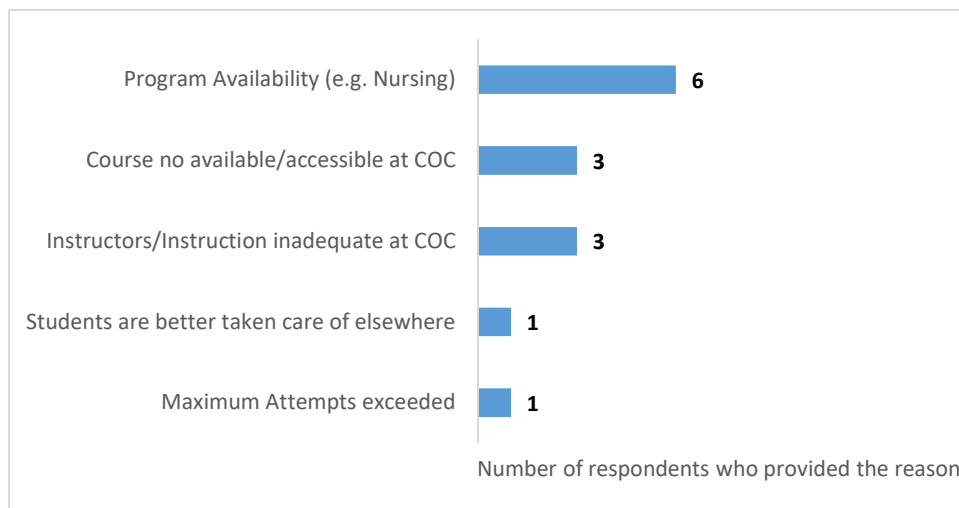


Specifically, while the overall rate of respondents who said they would take the semester off was 12%, it was half that rate (6%) among students who were enrolled in only online courses prior to the transition. Conversely, this rate was 4 percentage points higher (16%) among those students who were enrolled in only face-to-face classes prior to the transition.

Among 1% of respondents (n = 14) it was indicated that they planned to enroll elsewhere and this excluded at a 4-year institution/transfer

to 4-year institution. Among these students they had the opportunity to explain in an open-ended response why that was.

Figure 13 Open-Ended Responses for Enrolling Elsewhere in fall 2020



Among these 14 open-ended responses four themes emerged. These were program availability, course availability/accessibility, inadequate instruction, maximum attempts exceeded, and the perception that students are better taken care of elsewhere. Student provided quotes for each of these themes are provided as follows. **Program availability:** “Applying to nursing programs”, “I either get into nursing school at another college or I work for the semester while apply to other colleges”, and “try to

find a nursing school that is enrolling new students, if there are any”. **Course accessibility:** “The science classes I need are more accessible elsewhere” and “I have priority registration somewhere else, it’s too hard to get the classes I need here.”

**Inadequate instruction:** “I am having trouble reaching a POC to make my refund request. Quality of professors in an online setting is poor for the main classes I need”, “The teachers at COC aren’t very relatable for students. One math teacher will make you do calculus without a calculator while another will allow you to use calculators with notes. Awful teachers.”

**Maximum attempts exceeded:** “If I fail, I cannot take the next class in this college as it will be the 3[sic] try.”

**Students better taken care of elsewhere:** “I have heard of better-quality care for students elsewhere”.

## Recommendations

Upon review of the results of the COVID 19 survey data analyses, the following recommendations should be taken into consideration:

- Explore ways that increased marketing and outreach can be done for students who petitioned to graduate and/or requested a UC/CSU certification for transfer to a 4-year, especially due to financial issues, and **inform them of the opportunities to further their educational attainment through less expensive means via the University Center (UCEN) offerings.**
- Because Latinx, Multiracial, and Black/African-American were slightly more likely to report dropping/considering dropping this spring 2020 semester, **consider targeted outreach to these populations of students for financial aid opportunities and workshops to increase familiarity with technology (CANVAS/ZOOM etc.).**
- Across two outcomes (dropping/withdrawing in spring 2020 and taking the semester off in fall 2020) modality was a possible moderator. Those students who were more familiar with the online environment (online only enrollments) were less likely to drop throughout this challenging time and were less likely to say they would take fall 2020 off if it was held in a distance learning platform. **Thus, increasing all students comfort with technology (e.g., CANVAS/ZOOM) via workshops would benefit them.**
- Across several open-ended responses course/program availability was an issue specifically in reference to science/lab-based courses and nursing. **Explore accommodations that can be made for these courses in accordance with guidance and order from the State and Los Angeles County of Public Health.**

- Further, across all open-ended questions online/remote learning and faculty instruction were re-occurring themes as possible barriers towards student success. In some cases, it was a lack of faculty communication, others it was a lack of faculty familiarity with technology and online platforms. Thus, **consideration towards the training-up of all faculty in the online learning environment and establishing set expectations for virtual communication with students may assist in addressing these concerns.**

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For more detailed information on this research brief, stop by the Institutional Research, Planning, and Institutional Effectiveness office located in BONH-224, or contact [Vida M. Manzo](#), Ph.D., Senior Research Analyst (661)362-5871, or [Daylene Meuschke](#), Ed.D., Associate V.P. Institutional Research, Planning and Institutional Effectiveness at 661.362.5329.