

To: HEDS listserv

From: Charlie Blaich and Kathy Wise

Re: From HEDS Central: Initial Trends from the HEDS COVID-19 Institutional Response Student Survey

Date: April 8, 2020

The HEDS COVID-19 Institutional Response Student Survey has been open for roughly a week. So far 1,400 students from 6 institutions have completed the survey. Whether or not your institution uses this survey, we thought that you might be interested in some preliminary trends.<sup>1</sup>

### Stress

We asked students, “Overall, how much stress are you feeling about the potential consequences of the spread of COVID-19?”

Roughly 60% of the students report feeling a great deal of stress, and another 35% report feeling some stress. The farther along students are in their academic careers, the more stress they report. Seniors and graduate students report the highest levels of stress. Women and non-binary students report higher levels of stress than men.

### Worries

Below we show the % of students who report worrying “often” or “very often” about each of the following concerns:

- 62% – Doing well in college now that many or all of your classes are online
- 49% – Losing friendships and social connections now that classes are online
- 42% – Paying your bills
- 32% – Accessing and successfully using the technology needed for your online classes
- 22% – Having access to healthcare
- 17% – Having a safe and secure place to sleep every night
- 15% – Having enough to eat day-to-day

#### *Worries overall:*

1. Women and nonbinary students are more likely than men to worry about doing well in college given the shift to online classes, losing friendships, and paying their bills.
2. U.S. students of color and international students are more likely than U.S. white students to worry about using technology for their classes, paying their bills, access to healthcare, having a safe place to sleep, and having enough to eat.

### Satisfaction with institutional responses to COVID-19

Below we show the % of students who are satisfied and dissatisfied with each of the following components of their institution’s response to COVID-19:

- The communication you are getting from this institution about its ongoing responses to COVID-19 – 71% satisfied; 12% dissatisfied
- The support you are getting from this institution to help you transition to taking your classes online – 53% satisfied; 21% dissatisfied
- The information you are getting about how changes at this institution in response to COVID-19 will impact your ability to pay for college – 38% satisfied; 33% dissatisfied

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<sup>1</sup> Please note, we’ve set up this survey so that institutions that are using it can see their data in real time in Qualtrics.

### Plans to return to the institution next fall

90% of the 1st year, 2nd year, and 3rd year students report “definitely yes” (71%) or “probably yes” (19%) when asked whether they planned to return to their institution next fall.

Students who report “definitely yes” are more likely to agree with or be satisfied with their institution’s response to the COVID-19 crisis, indicated by higher scores on the Institutional Support Scale from this survey.<sup>2</sup> Students who report “probably yes,” “unsure,” “probably no,” or “definitely no,” are generally less pleased with their institution’s COVID-19 response.

This is just a first pass on the data, but most of these trends held up across the 6 institutions that have participated in the survey so far.

### A few observations

It’s not surprising to us that the level of stress is so high. The good news is that there is a negative relationship between students’ level of stress and the overall sense of support that students report getting from institutions. That is, the more likely that students report satisfaction with the communication from their institution, say that their institution is doing a good job helping them adapt to changes propelled by COVID-19, or that people at the institution are showing care and concern for them, the lower their level of stress tends to be. And that’s true even after controlling for gender and class year.

We know it’s early days, but our sense so far is that it will be important to address students’ worries about how the changes from COVID-19 will impact their finances and their progress through college. We realize that colleges are working hard to figure these things out, but based on what we’ve seen so far, it will probably be important to reach out to students soon before these concerns take deeper root.

Finally, and this will be no surprise, there are a significant number of students worried about “having a safe and secure place to sleep every night” and “having enough to eat day-to-day.” If you can identify these students (and those institutions that are participating in our survey can), it may be worthwhile to identify local resources for them via United Way (e.g., 211) or other agencies.

We hope this is helpful. We’ll continue to send out updates as the data come in. Please let us know if you have any questions, thoughts, comments, or suggestions.

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<sup>2</sup> Our “Institutional Support Scale” is based on the first eight questions in the survey (alpha=0.88) that measure students’ overall agreement or satisfaction with their institution’s response to the COVID-19 crisis.