



# Statewide COVID-19 Impact Surveys of Students and Employees

Spring 2020 Results

In partnership with



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Lastly, we would like to thank the CCC students and employees themselves for sharing their experiences so openly with us.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In May 2020, two surveys were administered to California Community College (CCC) students and employees about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. Nearly 50,000 students and 16,000 employees provided information about their experiences transitioning to a remote educational environment, their well-being, and for students, their educational plans. These findings reflect experiences during the early stages of the pandemic, yet the results remain relevant to college, district, and system planning beyond 2020. As the pandemic persists and communities continue to grapple with remote educational environments, these data provide an opportunity to reflect on lessons learned with remote education and work in college.

**TRANSITION TO A VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENT.** Overall, most students and employees felt supported by their college during the transition to a virtual environment. Many still expressed a desire for more communication and guidance as a significant portion of each group had no prior experience in an online/virtual environment.

### Students

- Over a third of students had no remote education experience prior to March 2020.
- The most frequently cited challenge was difficulty learning in a home environment and accessing support services.
- Students' top technology challenges were instructor discomfort with technology, difficulty collaborating with others virtually, and lack of access to library resources.
- African American/Black, Hispanic/Latina/o/x, and American Indian/Alaska Native students disproportionately lacked access to computers and the internet.

### Employees

- Over half of employees had no remote working/teaching experience prior to March 2020.
- Employees' top challenges pertain to maintaining work/life balance and an increase in job pressures and demands.
- More than 60% of faculty cited students' internet reliability, discomfort with technology, and downward shift in engagement as a challenge.
- One quarter of faculty cited their own discomfort with technology.

**BASIC NEEDS AND WELL-BEING.** Both students and employees are grappling with anxieties and basic needs (being food insecure, housing insecure, and/or homeless) challenges.

### Students

- Over 40% of students reported moderate to severe anxiety.
- Nearly 60% of students reported at least one basic needs insecurity with rates highest for minority student populations.
- More than half of students reported decreased income and limited knowledge of available financial support.

### Employees

- More than 25% of employees reported moderate to severe anxiety.
- More than 25% of employees reported at least one basic needs insecurity; with higher percentages reported by adjunct faculty and classified staff relative to full-time faculty and administrators.

**BEYOND SPRING 2020.** While access to and comfort using the resources and tools are important to a positive remote experience, flexibility, and adjustments to expectations, as well as opportunities to connect and engage with others, were key to feeling supported in this environment.

### **Students**

- Students who were more comfortable using Canvas, more likely to feel supported by their college and instructors; and felt they had received good communication from their college were more likely to plan to continue their enrollment.
- If colleges remain online, over half of students indicated a preference for hybrid models that allow for a flexible learning approach, while also noting the value of opportunities to connect live and in real-time online with instructors, peers, and support services personnel/staff.

### **Employees**

- As employees look to the future, they are seeking tangible and intangible support from their colleges and districts:
  - Over half of administrators and classified professionals indicated the need for computers, software applications for their work and communication, or access to electronic files and databases. Faculty reported these same needs, though to a lesser degree.
  - Nearly half of employees indicated the need for adjustments to workload and expectations, regular updates on COVID-19 response, and a flexible work schedule.

**CONCLUSIONS AND OPPORTUNITIES.** The California Community Colleges have always been committed to ensuring students have access to a quality educational experience, regardless of whether face-to-face, hybrid, or 100% remote. The COVID-19 pandemic has provided an opportunity to enhance and expand the remote environment for students and employees. The results of this survey can inform the system's larger Guided Pathways work, addressing the unmet needs of students, faculty, and staff to create a seamless and integrated college experience. Colleges and districts may want to review their support efforts through the lens of a hierarchy of needs focusing on ensuring there is an equitable remote experience for students and employees.

- 1. Students and employees learn best when their basic needs are met.** Colleges and districts should institutionalize ways to periodically assess students' and employees' basic needs; their awareness and access of the myriad services and supports available to them (e.g., categorical programs and food pantry); and how to eliminate gaps in uptake.
- 2. Students and employees need access to and proficiency in technology and software necessary to participate in a remote or hybrid setting.** The investment in Canvas has been worthwhile (as evidenced by the relationship between comfort with Canvas and a positive remote experience). Training in its use should continue to be prioritized. Further, the resources and services that have been curated by the California Virtual Campus-Online Educational Initiative to enhance the online teaching and learning environment, can be especially valuable at this time. Moreover, lessons learned from this experience to integrate resources and supports to create a seamless virtual experience can be applied far beyond the pandemic.

- 3. There must be human connection and goodwill.** The pandemic has forced us to strategize innovative ways to stay connected even when we cannot be physically close and when there are even more competing demands at home for many. Approaches that prioritize the value of connection, regular communication, and compassion should be incorporated into all remote experiences to ensure students and those supporting them are at the center of these approaches.

## INTRODUCTION

In spring 2020, the Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges (The RP Group) developed and administered two surveys<sup>1</sup> on behalf of the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office asking students and employees across the CCC system about how they had been impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Questions were developed with input from a group of project liaisons; representing Chief Executive, Instructional and Student Service officers, as well as the statewide Academic, Classified, and Student Senates.

The RP Group sent the survey to Chief Executive and Institutional Research Officers at all California community colleges (CCC) who then administered the survey to their students and employees. A statewide announcement was also made by the project liaisons.

These findings reflect experiences during the early stages of the pandemic, yet the results remain relevant to college, district, and system planning beyond 2020. As the pandemic persists and communities continue to grapple with remote educational environments, these data provide an opportunity to reflect on lessons learned with the transition to primary distance education and remote working at the colleges.

In total, 49,463<sup>2</sup> students from across 97 colleges<sup>3</sup> as well as 15,513 employees<sup>4</sup> across 96 colleges and 19 district offices completed the survey (see list of participating colleges and district offices in Appendix A). For students at these 97 colleges, which enroll approximately 1.057 million students 18 or older, these responses represent a 5% response rate. For employees, there were a total of 15,513 valid responses from 96 out of 116 California Community Colleges (83%) and 19 out of 23 district offices (83%). The participating colleges and districts employ approximately 75,000 faculty, administrators, and classified professionals, yielding a response rate of 21%.

A follow-up survey administered to key staff at participating colleges after the statewide COVID-19 surveys revealed that colleges primarily invited students to take the survey via e-mail messages, but many also used social media, text, college portal/app, and standard communications such as newsletters. Employees were invited to take the survey primarily via e-mail messages.

Student survey questions focused on three key areas: the transition to distance learning, general well-being, and plans beyond spring 2020. Descriptive responses for the full sample were analyzed for overarching themes. Responses to each survey question were also disaggregated<sup>5</sup> by the following variables to determine where different student experiences emerged:

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<sup>1</sup> Copies of the survey can be found here:

<https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1ydWMVvR7krKhJCAzxnrmmh0D1Jl5Mot5?usp=sharing>

<sup>2</sup> Colleges where fewer than 10 students completed the survey were removed from the sample and are not included in this count.

<sup>3</sup> While students identified the primary CCC they attended, 14% of students indicated that they were also enrolled in at least one other community college, and 3% were also enrolled at a four-year university.

<sup>4</sup> Colleges where fewer than 10 employees completed the survey were removed from the sample and are not included in this count.

<sup>5</sup> The report flags differences of *practical* significance. Given the large sample sizes of both surveys, even group differences as small as two percentage points are *statistically* significant, and therefore, not all differences that are statistically significant are highlighted.

- gender
- race/ethnicity
- age group
- parent/guardian status
- plans for fall 2020
- experience with distance education

Employee survey questions focused on two key areas: the transition to remote working/teaching and general well-being. Descriptive responses for the full sample were analyzed for overarching themes. Responses to each individual survey question were also disaggregated by the following variables to determine where different student experiences emerged:

- gender
- race/ethnicity
- age group
- parent/guardian status
- job classification

For both the student and employee surveys, questions regarding general well-being were drawn from the Hope Center’s #RealCollege survey that is administered nationally. The RP Group partnered with the Hope Center to ensure consistency in the way these questions were asked and analyzed to ensure comparability to the national sample. These questions focused on anxiety, food insecurity, housing insecurity, and homelessness.<sup>6</sup>

This report first presents key results from the student survey followed by results from the employee survey. Results from both surveys are then combined such that references to one another may be drawn and commonalities/differences between student and employee experiences can be highlighted.<sup>7</sup>

## STUDENT SURVEY RESULTS

### STUDENT PROFILE

Table 1 provides the demographic breakdown of survey respondents. For each demographic, approximately 30% of students chose not to provide their information, thus percentages are listed two ways, both including and excluding those who opted not to provide the demographic information.

Survey respondents were generally reflective of the population of community college students in the state, with the exceptions that statewide, females comprise 55% of community college students, but they make up 72% of survey respondents (who provided their demographic information) and responses to this survey skewed slightly older than the general CCC population. While not shown in Table 1 below with respect to demographic intersectionality:

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<sup>6</sup> See Appendix C. Three Survey Measures of Basic Needs Security [https://hope4college.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/COVIDStdSurvNationalAppendices\\_07142020\\_FINAL.pdf](https://hope4college.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/COVIDStdSurvNationalAppendices_07142020_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>7</sup> Detailed tables summarizing each of the surveys can be found in the supplementary data report here: <https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1ydWMVvR7krKhJCAznrrmh0D1Jl5Mot5?usp=sharing>

- There were no substantive differences in the racial/ethnic breakdown across males and females.
- Male students skewed slightly younger (54% of males ages 18-24 vs. 48% of females).
- Hispanic or Latina/o/x students skewed younger (57% ages 18-24) followed by Asian students (50%), White students (40%), and African-American/Black students (33%).
- Females were more likely (23%) than males (12%) to indicate living with children.
- African-American/Black students were more likely to have children at home (31%) compared to Hispanic or Latina/o/x (21%), White (20%), or Asian students (16%).

Table 1. Demographics of Student Survey Respondents

	<b>Total Students</b>	<b>% w/ Unknown</b>	<b>% w/o Unknown</b>	<b>% Statewide<sup>a</sup></b>
<b>Gender</b>				
Female	25,246	51	72	55
Male	9,351	19	28	44
Non-binary/third gender	397	1	1	<1
Unknown/other	14,469	29	n/a	2
<b>Transgender</b>				
Yes	406	1	1	1 <sup>b</sup>
No	34,499	70	99	n/r <sup>c</sup>
Unknown/prefer not to answer	14,558	29	n/a	n/r
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>				
African American/Black	1,679	3	5	6
American Indian/Alaska Native	178	<1	1	<1
Asian	3,808	8	12	11
Hispanic or Latina/o/x	13,387	27	40	46
Pacific Islander or Native Hawaiian	275	1	1	<1
Two or More Races	4,651	9	14	4
White	9,098	18	28	24
Unknown/other	16,387	33	n/a	9
<b>Age Range</b>				
18 to 24	17,838	36	50	59 <sup>d</sup>
25 to 34	8,627	17	24	21
35 to 54	6,666	13	19	20 <sup>e</sup>
55 or older	2,880	6	8	n/a
Unknown	13,452	27	n/a	<1
<b>Parent/Guardian with dependents</b>				
Yes	7,274	15	20	n/r
No	28,669	58	80	n/r
Unknown	13,520	27	n/a	n/r

Notes. <sup>a</sup> [https://datamart.cccco.edu/Students/Student\\_Term\\_Annual\\_Count.aspx](https://datamart.cccco.edu/Students/Student_Term_Annual_Count.aspx) for 2019-2020,

<sup>b</sup> California-wide statistics, not specific to CCC students, so skewing older than the CCC population

<https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/publications/trans-adults-united-states>, <sup>c</sup> n/r=not reported,

<sup>d</sup> Includes students <18 years old, <sup>e</sup> Statewide the % of students age 35-49 = 12% and age 50+ = 8%

## TRANSITION TO DISTANCE LEARNING

Students were asked several questions about their experience as their classes were transitioned to remote instruction in spring 2020. Analyses explored the degree to which students' experiences were impacted by their prior history of distance/online education.

Across the sample, 35% of students reported having no distance/online education experience prior to March 2020.<sup>8</sup> Female students and students under age 55 were more likely to have had online learning experience.

**35%**  
**OF STUDENTS**

Had no distance education experience prior to March 2020

Despite over a third of students never having taken an online course, overall comfort with the online learning platform, Canvas, was relatively high. Over half of students (56%) indicated being very comfortable with Canvas, while an additional 36% said they were somewhat comfortable. **The more prior experience students had with online learning, the more likely they were to indicate being very comfortable using Canvas.**

Only 5% of students indicated being not at all comfortable with Canvas, while another 3% indicated never having used it. Students aged 55 and older were more likely than their younger peers to indicate being either not at all comfortable using Canvas (10%) or having never had used it (19%).

More generally, among those who regularly enrolled in online classes, only 20% indicated that difficulty learning online was a challenge, compared to 55% of those who had no experience with online classes.

Even students themselves highlighted the benefit of prior online experience when asked in an open-ended question, "What has worked best in helping you transition to an online college experience?" For these students, the transition to remote instruction was smoother since they were accustomed to self-paced learning and were already familiar with Canvas, making it easier to navigate the course assignments and resources. In the words of three students:

*"Being enrolled in online classes prior to COVID has helped me a lot. I was already comfortable with Canvas and this made it much easier."*

*"The prior experience I have with classes online and my own preference for independent learning."*

*"I was well versed in online classes prior to the pandemic and was thankfully well acquainted with Canvas."*

## TECHNOLOGY CHALLENGES

As students made the transition to online learning this spring, they indicated facing various technology-related challenges. Among these challenges, most frequently cited were:

1. Instructor discomfort/unfamiliarity with technology (33%)
2. Inadequate digital alternatives for face-to-face collaboration tools (e.g., whiteboards, breakout rooms; 27%)

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<sup>8</sup> See Student Survey Data Tables: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1\\_E\\_ADLb4uxSyzn3U0oUQ97G3-bmdgzwc/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1_E_ADLb4uxSyzn3U0oUQ97G3-bmdgzwc/view?usp=sharing)

### 3. Lack of access to library resources (24%)

Analyses of differential experiences by student demographic groups revealed that, while overall access to devices and the internet was not a top challenge for students, **African American/Black and American Indian/Alaska Native students were more than twice as likely to indicate the challenge of not having a functional laptop than White students** (22% and 22% vs 9%, respectively). Further, 19% of African American/Black students, 20% of Hispanic or Latina/o/x students, and 26% of American Indian/Alaska Native students indicated the challenge of not having internet access, compared to only 11% of White students.

Additionally, students with no prior online learning listed their *own* discomfort or unfamiliarity with required technology or software, such as Canvas as a top challenge (28% indicated this was a challenge, compared to 14% of students who had taken at least one online class, and 6% of students who had regularly taken online classes).

The issue of instructor discomfort with technology was reinforced in students' open-ended responses to the question "If the COVID-19 pandemic continues through fall 2020, what can the college reasonably do to support you in your studies and training?" whereby training for faculty and staff was one of the most commonly cited responses.

Students felt that not all their professors were comfortable using technology and many struggled with Canvas. **Students would like their professors to complete training on how to teach effectively in an online environment, as well as specific training on how to use Canvas**, such that there is consistency across courses and students can get the most out of the online format. As three students noted:

*"Ensure that instructors, counselors, and other staff directly working with students are provided with proper technology, training, and support to provide the same, if not higher, quality of educational environment for students."*

*"Get the instructors fully trained and comfortable in the technology used so they can seamlessly present their lessons and be familiar with basic technology problems a student may encounter and how to guide them to fix their problem-- simple things such as audio not working, not seeing video, etc."*

*"The college can support me in studies/training by providing professors better training on Canvas, so that they can be more organized and efficient in grading and providing feedback to students. There are many professors that have online teaching down so beautifully that there is no confusion as to what is due or expected, while others are so disorganized that it becomes very frustrating for the student to keep up with the expectations of the class."*

***"The college can support me in studies/training by providing professors better training on Canvas, so that they can be more organized and efficient in grading and providing feedback to students. There are many professors that have online teaching down so beautifully that there is no confusion as to what is due or expected, while others are so disorganized that it becomes very frustrating for the student to keep up with the expectations of the class."***

## LEARNING/EDUCATIONAL CHALLENGES

Students indicated several learning/educational challenges in transitioning to online learning. At least two in every five students cited the challenges of:<sup>9</sup>

1. Home environment harder to learn in (55%)
2. Difficulty focusing/paying attention (52%)
3. Preference for face-to-face learning (52%)
4. Difficulty learning online (43%)
5. Lack of interaction/connection with other students (41%)
6. Feeling isolated in an online learning environment (40%)

Across all six areas, students with little to no experience with online courses reported these challenges at rates that were 18 to 31 percentage points higher than students who regularly enrolled in online courses.<sup>10</sup> Additionally, as the age of students increased, students were *less* likely to cite these challenges (though older students were less likely to cite any types of learning/educational challenges generally).

Supporting the top two challenges noted above, **a quiet study space** was also one of the most frequently cited answers to the open-ended question “what is the one thing you personally need right now?” Prior to the transition to remote instruction, students utilized study spaces such as the library on campus. Now, with more members of the household at home including small children, many students reported difficulty concentrating on schoolwork due to the distractions and noise. In their own words, three students noted their specific need for a quiet study space:

*“A place to work on schoolwork outside of my home. Particularly, my school library with quiet study zones, reliable internet, computers, and other devices like printers. I would love if they could open with social distancing guidelines/requiring mask or anything else they need to do for the students’ safety. I am literally willing to comply with any precautions they want to take, I just need a place to study.”*

*“A quiet place to study and do my work. It's a full house at home with no room to concentrate or even a desk to do my work in.”*

*“A quiet space to study...There's six of us living in one small house. There's commotion going on every time of day and I can't focus on my assignments.”*

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<sup>9</sup> See Table S6 for the full list of options and percentages:

[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1\\_E\\_ADLb4uxSyzn3U0oUQ97G3-bmdgzwc/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1_E_ADLb4uxSyzn3U0oUQ97G3-bmdgzwc/view?usp=sharing)

<sup>10</sup> See Table S6h: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1\\_E\\_ADLb4uxSyzn3U0oUQ97G3-bmdgzwc/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1_E_ADLb4uxSyzn3U0oUQ97G3-bmdgzwc/view?usp=sharing)

## ACCESS TO SUPPORT SERVICES

While many often think of the impact of classes moving online, it is important to realize that all colleges *support services* also moved online in the spring due to the pandemic.

The following services were most often cited as being challenging to access online across all student groups:

1. Academic counseling (38%)
2. Library (27%)
3. Financial aid (26%)
4. Tutoring/Writing center (25%)

The top challenges in accessing these online support services included:

1. Preference for face-to-face interaction (45%)
2. Home environment makes it harder to communicate online (e.g., distractions or competition over technology, digital access) (42%)
3. Difficulty focusing/paying attention (41%)

While these challenges were the top three among all student demographic groups, students who regularly enrolled in online classes were less likely to cite these as challenges.

## STUDENT WELL-BEING

### INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

Students were asked several questions regarding their personal well-being in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as how supported they feel by their college. Approximately 41,200 students responded to this set of questions. Overall, **students feel incredibly supported by their colleges**, with more than four out of five agreeing or strongly agreeing that:

- Their college has shown it cares about them when making decisions in implementing changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic (85%)
- Their instructors have shown care and concern for them as they transition their courses to an online platform (84%)
- Their college has supported them in the transition to taking classes online (82%)
- Their college has communicated information effectively to them regarding changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic (86%)

**> 80%**  
**OF STUDENTS**  
felt supported by their college as they transitioned to a remote environment

Perhaps most notably, there were no major differences in the level of agreement with these statements by demographic group.

## PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCES AND EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

Nearly half of all students (49%) reported difficulty concentrating on school, while 41% of students faced the challenge of needing to care for family members.<sup>11</sup> The challenge of caretaking was highest among females (46%), American Indian/Alaska Native students (51%), Pacific Islander/Native Hawaiian students (53%), Hispanic or Latina/o/x students (50%), students aged 25-54 (51%), and students who were parents/guardians to children at home.

Students were asked a set of seven questions from the Generalized Anxiety Disorder [GAD-7] scale<sup>12</sup> (Spitzer, Kroenke, Williams, & Lowe, 2006). The assessment asked students about the number of times in the last week they were bothered by any of the following:

- feeling nervous, anxious, or on edge;
- not being able to stop or control worrying;
- worrying too much about different things;
- trouble relaxing;
- being so restless that it is hard to sit still;
- becoming easily annoyed or irritable; and/or
- feeling afraid as if something awful might happen.

Among the nearly 37,000 respondents to this set of questions, results revealed that **45% of students reported moderate to severe anxiety**<sup>13</sup>, similar to what the Hope Center found in their national *#RealCollege During the Pandemic* survey of two-year college students this spring (49%; Goldrick-Rab, Coca, Kienzl, Welton, Dahl, & Magnelia, 2020). In our current survey, the degree of anxiety decreased with age, with 51% of students aged 18-24 reporting moderate to severe anxiety, compared to only 19% of students aged 55+. While representing only a small proportion of the population, it is important to note that anxiety levels were substantially higher among students who identify as non-binary/third gender, with 75% reporting moderate to severe anxiety, compared to 46% of students who identify as female, and 39% of students who identify as male.

## BASIC NEEDS AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES

As noted previously, students were asked a set of questions drawn from the Hope Center's *#RealCollege During the Pandemic* survey on basic needs.<sup>14</sup> Of the approximately 39,000 students who answered these basic needs questions, **nearly three out of every five students (57%) reported at least one basic needs insecurity, including 40% reporting food insecurity, 37% reporting housing insecurity, and 18% reporting homelessness.**<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> See Table S4a [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1\\_E\\_ADLb4uxSyzn3U0oUQ97G3-bmdgzwc/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1_E_ADLb4uxSyzn3U0oUQ97G3-bmdgzwc/view?usp=sharing)

<sup>12</sup> <https://jamanetwork.com/journals/jamainternalmedicine/fullarticle/410326>

<sup>13</sup> Eighteen percent of students reported moderate anxiety while 26% reported severe anxiety (Total equals 45% due to rounding of the two individual numbers).

<sup>14</sup> See Appendix C. Three Survey Measures of Basic Needs Security [https://hope4college.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/COVIDStdSurv-NationalAppendices\\_07142020\\_FINAL.pdf](https://hope4college.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/COVIDStdSurv-NationalAppendices_07142020_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> For context, these statistics mostly parallel those found by the Hope Center among two-year college students in their recent nationwide survey, whereby 58% reported at least one basic insecurity, including 44% food insecurity, 36% housing insecurity, and 11% homelessness. Where it differed slightly was in the percentage of reported homelessness, the sample was 7% point higher than the national sample.

When these data are disaggregated by student group, notable differences include:

- Students of color were 16 percentage points more likely to report at least one basic needs insecurity than White students (62% and 46%, respectively).
- Younger students were more likely to report at least one basic needs insecurity (61% for ages 18-24 and 63% for ages 25-34) than older students (55% for ages 35-54 and 35% for ages 55+).



**Nearly 3 out of 5 students** reported at least one basic needs insecurity, including food, housing, and/or homelessness

Survey questions also asked students to report on the economic impact of the pandemic on their lives. Results revealed that **over half of students (53%) saw a decrease in their income because of the COVID-19 pandemic**. Consequently, nearly a quarter of students (22%) reported being laid off or furloughed, while another 19% had their hours reduced.

Students were subsequently asked about whether they had accessed several financial support services.<sup>16</sup> Nearly one in four students applied for unemployment compensation/insurance (24%) and/or emergency aid at their college (25%).<sup>17</sup> However, a knowledge gap exists, notably with respect to financial resources available both from and outside of the college. Approximately **one in five students either did not know about or did not know how to apply for unemployment compensation/ insurance or SNAP (food stamps). Knowledge of emergency aid funds available is even lower** (with 40% not knowing about aid at their college and 51% not knowing about aid outside their college).

When asked “What is the one thing you personally need right now?” one of the most frequently cited answers was **financial assistance**. Many students reported that they are unable to work or did not have a source of income at that time. For these students, the one thing they indicated needing right now is a job. Next, students reported that financial support from the college would be helpful to assist with basic needs such as housing, food, and childcare, as well as school expenses including computers/laptops, textbooks, and internet services. In the words of three students:

*“Financial assistance. Everyone in my house has lost their job because of COVID. I am the only one working from home, but I have lost so many hours. I can't even afford to pay my landlord.”*

*“Additional funds to pay for school supplies and a computer and food. Peace of mind financially so I can concentrate on tackling the classes I need to graduate and move on to a four-year university.”*

*“I need a part-time safe job or some money so I can support my family. My brother has lost his job due to COVID-19 and my parents don't work at all*

***“Additional funds to pay for school supplies and a computer and food. Peace of mind financially so I can concentrate on tackling the classes I need to graduate and move on to a four-year university.”***

<sup>16</sup> See Tables S14-21 [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1\\_E\\_ADLb4uxSyzn3U0oUQ97G3-bmdgzwc/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1_E_ADLb4uxSyzn3U0oUQ97G3-bmdgzwc/view?usp=sharing)

<sup>17</sup> Approximately 37,000 students responded to this set of questions.

*because they don't speak English at all. If I can have a part-time job, I can at least support my family.”*

Along these same lines, in response to this same question, students highlighted **the need to mitigate college expenses**. Many students reported that they are struggling financially to meet their basic needs. Some have experienced temporary or permanent job loss, which has induced additional stress and anxiety. Students would like to see the college help alleviate some of their financial burden by reducing the cost of tuition, providing free textbooks, or offering additional financial aid and emergency funds. In their own words, two students shared:

*“Lower tuition cost due to not being able to give students the full college experience as well as the face to face assistance (tutoring) to learn the material to get through courses.”*

*“Lower the prices - as international students we're already paying a premium and many of us can't go back to our countries right now - it really hurts paying almost \$4000 in tuition when we're taking online classes and can't get the experience we came here for + we can't work to support ourselves.”*

## FUTURE PLANS

### RE-ENROLLMENT DECISIONS

At the time of surveying, approximately one in five students (19%) were still on the fence regarding whether they planned to re-enroll at their CCC in fall 2020. **The large majority (71%) were planning to re-enroll at their community college in the fall, while 5% had never planned to enroll, and only 4% decided not to enroll.** When probing further among those who originally planned to re-enroll but decided not to (n=1,595) and those who were still deciding whether to re-enroll (n=7,030),<sup>18</sup> the top factors causing them to consider not enrolling in more classes included:

1. I do not want to have to enroll in online classes (48%)
2. Too many distractions at home (34%)
3. I am worried about risking exposure for myself and others to COVID-19 (30%)

### Factors Not Related to Re-enrollment Plans

No clear relationships emerged between students' likelihood of re-enrollment and their campus' plans for reopening: 29% indicated being most likely to re-enroll if their campus is fully re-opened, 37% if it is partially reopened, and 34% if courses are all online and the campus is closed.

Further, there does not appear to be a relationship between students' re-enrollment plans and any challenges they faced accessing student support services since the transition to online learning.

Additionally, there did not seem to be a connection between students' re-enrollment plans and issues encountered related to finances (e.g., filing for unemployment or SNAP benefits). However, **students considering not re-enrolling were more likely to indicate housing insecurity** (though not homelessness or food insecurity). Parents/guardians were no more or less likely to indicate plans to re-enroll than non-parents.

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<sup>18</sup> The proportion of students listing these top three challenges were similar across these two groups

## Factors Related to Re-enrollment Plans

Students who decided not to re-enroll and students who were still deciding whether to re-enroll faced more challenges as they transitioned to online learning relative to those who indicated that they were planning to re-enroll. Overall, across all students, the top challenges students faced included:

- Personal preference for face-to-face interactions for services (52%)
- Home environment makes it harder to communicate online (55%)
- Difficulty focusing or paying attention to online instruction or activities (52%)
- Feeling isolated in an online environment (40%)
- Course activities that have not translated online well (33%)

Across these challenges though, there was a 9 to 16 percentage point difference between students planning to re-enroll and those who either decided not to re-enroll or were still deciding, with the latter being more likely to indicate having these challenges. Additionally, **students who were more comfortable using Canvas were more likely to indicate plans to re-enroll** in the fall: 59% of those planning to re-enroll in the fall indicated being very comfortable with Canvas, compared to 43% who were still deciding, and 42% who were originally planning to but decided not to enroll.

**Students who indicated plans to re-enroll were more likely to indicate feeling supported by their college**

Lastly, students who indicated plans to re-enroll were more likely to indicate feeling supported by their college, most notably for the statement: “My college has supported me in the transition to taking my classes online” -- 85% of those planning to re-enroll in the fall indicated agreeing or strongly agreeing with this statement, compared to 73% who were still deciding, and 67% who were originally planning to enroll but decided not to.

Additionally, with respect to the statement, “My college has communicated information effectively to me regarding changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic,” -- 88% of those planning to re-enroll in the fall agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, compared to 81% who were still deciding, and 78% who were originally planning to enroll but decided not to. The importance of strong communication from colleges was reinforced in students’ responses to the question “What is the one thing that you personally need right now?” Among the top three responses was **direction and clear guidance**. Students were concerned about their education and wanted to know what to expect for fall 2020 and beyond. Many students shared that they would like to know their college’s plan for the future. They would like the college to be transparent, provide answers, and offer some form of assurance. Students reported that communication and information has been lacking and that they would like better guidance so they can plan accordingly. Three students described what they need:

*“An understanding of what direction schools plan to head towards in the future as a means to planning my courses.”*

*“Communication from the school and student leaders, through something that is easy to access, like Canvas.”*

*“A firm plan and the knowledge of how the fall semester will go. Specifically, with regards to the classes I have with labs in them, if I can't take them in the fall, I won't be able to transfer in 2021 fall and stay on my planned transfer track.”*

While for many students, direction and clear guidance was a strong need, responses to the open-ended question, “What has been the most positive aspect of transitioning to learning online?” support the finding that many colleges are already succeeding in this area, as **clear and ongoing communication** rose to the top of the list. Students indicated that they especially appreciated such communication from their professors. For many students, professors are their primary point-of-contact with the college, so getting clear instructions and guidance on next steps and course expectations was imperative to their successful completion. Many students shared that their professors sent regular emails or used class time to provide updates and information. In three students’ own words:

*“Being able to have good communication with your professor! I can tell you I was so stressed out! I thought ‘how I'm I going to make sure she gets my work online?’ My professor would email us weekly updates on how to and if we had any question to email her. That helped a lot!!!”*

*“My professors are immaculate. Their communication is great, I receive notifications from them daily.”*

*“The professors giving us motivational speeches about them wanting us to succeed and how open their communication was.”*

The benefit of good communication and support was highlighted at both the college level as well as the educator level as, in response to the question of “What has been the most positive aspect of transitioning to learning online?” students also highlighted the value of **support and motivation from professors**. In addition to relaxed or extended due dates and offering greater flexibility in class attendance, professors maintained a positive attitude and served as a source of motivation to students. Students reported that their professors were understanding and caring and made accommodations when possible to ensure success and reduce stress. As three students noted:

*“My professors become a bigger support personally. They responded quicker to emails and offered additional support and motivation constantly saying “We are all getting through the semester together, etc.” Prior to the pandemic and face to face classes, professors seemed busy ... and now they seem to be more accessible.”*

*“The most positive aspect of transitioning to learning online for me has been the motivation and reassurance of the professors and understanding how difficult transitioning over to online classes was for us and for themselves.”*

*“All my professors were very understanding and flexible. I felt [they] genuinely cared about my well-being and they were effective and very supportive.”*

***“All my professors were very understanding and flexible. I felt [they] genuinely cared about my well-being and they were effective and very supportive. Only two were not ready to digest emotional turmoil themselves but this is understandable. I appreciate all the professors' attempts to reach out to the students and to be brave and share their own personal struggles.”***

*Only two were not ready to digest emotional turmoil themselves but this is understandable. I appreciate all the professors' attempts to reach out to the students and to be brave and share their own personal struggles.”*

## LEARNING PREFERENCES

While students’ circumstances and the associated plans change on a seemingly daily basis, at the time of surveying (May/June 2020) colleges’ fall plans were far less concrete than at the writing of this report (October 2020).

At the end of the spring 2020 term, students were quite divided with respect to their preferences for how courses are offered in the fall. While a third of students (34%) preferred that courses be taught fully online (do not reopen campus), 29% preferred that courses be taught as before, mostly face-to-face with some online (fully reopen campus), and 37% preferred a combination of those two options.

However, when asked the open-ended question “If the COVID-19 pandemic continues through fall 2020, what can the college reasonably do to support you in your studies and training?” one of the most frequently cited responses was the **continuation of online classes**.

Students reported that online classes allow them to maintain their health and safety during the pandemic while minimizing risk to exposure. Other students reported that they may be caring for school-aged children in the fall or dealing with unpredictable work schedules that make face-to-face instruction challenging. Examples shared by three student responses include:

*“Continue online classes and add more online sections as courses are filling up fast.”*

*“I would rather continue online courses then go to campus. I want to keep my family safe.”*

*“Continue online classes and training support for students to become accustomed to distance learning.”*

More relevant to the scenario today whereby most California Community Colleges began their fall terms online, when asked their preference for how courses are offered if they remained online in fall 2020, the majority of students (51%) preferred a hybrid model where students have the option to attend synchronously, but also have the flexibility to watch a recorded version on their own schedule.

Nearly a third of students (30%) preferred the option of asynchronous (recorded) class meetings, while 15% preferred the option of synchronous (live) class meetings. This division of preference was readily apparent in response to the open-ended question of “What has worked best in helping you transition to an online college experience?” A large subset of students voiced **support for asynchronous classes and self-paced learning**.

Many students reported that they found it challenging to attend their regular class sessions with children at home, as well as having to work around the schedules of other household members. Having the flexibility of self-paced learning and the option to watch recorded lectures was very helpful. Three students described:

*“I think asynchronous classes online work best. With the live lectures that are then recorded so I can go back and rewatch. I like to study that way and it is very helpful for me to attain and understand the information.”*

*“Saving asynchronous prerecorded lectures that allowed me to watch whenever I felt was best, with the option of joining the live lecture to ask questions.”*

*“Asynchronous classes - Attending a scheduled meeting is an unrealistic expectation during these times.”*

However, nearly as often referenced in response to the question of “What has worked best in helping you transition to an online college experience?” was live Zoom meetings. Students reported that the live meetings held in Zoom were helpful for staying connected and informed. These synchronous sessions provided an opportunity for students to ask questions and confer with other classmates. Students reported that the **live meetings made the transition to distance learning smoother and helped alleviate feelings of isolation**. Students also used Zoom to engage with college personnel for academic counseling and support services. Four students shared:

*“Being able to have zoom meetings with my professor and still have some type of interaction.”*

*“I prefer synchronous teaching because I did originally prefer face-to-face classes, so having synchronous classes is awesome.”*

*“A structured class with weekly zoom meetings to express any of our concerns.”*

*“Be as flexible and understanding as possible with due dates for assignments. Also understanding that live zoom classes are not realistic for me with children. I can watch a recording at any time that is convenient but can’t always be available during normal class times with being at home.”*

***“Be as flexible and understanding as possible with due dates for assignments. Also understanding that live zoom classes are not realistic for me with children. I can watch a recording at any time that is convenient but can’t always be available during normal class times with being at home.”***

The desire for flexibility was further highlighted in response to the open-ended question “If the COVID-19 pandemic continues through fall 2020, what can the college reasonably do to support you in your studies and training?” whereby students stressed the need for **patience, understanding, and flexibility** from their professors and their college so they can manage the competing responsibilities from school, work, and family. Many students hope that professors will continue to be lenient with due dates and class attendance, so they can continue making progress toward their education goal and do not feel the need to drop out or take a break from school. In two students’ own words:

*“Continue to have instructors with compassion and patience that allow me the flexibility I need for assignments and exams.”*

*“Continue to be understanding of the situation and allot flexibility for those that need it but still want to continue their education even though it's tough.”*

## OPPORTUNITIES TO SUPPORT STUDENTS

This section synthesizes results from the student surveys and presents colleges and districts with actionable opportunities to support students in response to the findings. Opportunities are presented as they relate to supporting students' transition to distance education and well-being, as well as increasing their likelihood of re-enrollment in future terms.

### SUPPORTING STUDENTS' TRANSITION TO DISTANCE EDUCATION

Colleges and districts should continue investing in technology and tools such as Canvas that make for positive remote learning experiences. Before colleges can address making the student experience better in an online learning environment, they **must ensure universal access to the tools needed to access an online experience** in the first place.

While not a top challenge universally, more than one in 10 students lacked either a functioning laptop and/or reliable internet (14% and 16%, respectively) to access online instruction in the first place, with rates higher for African-American/Black (22% and 19%, respectively) and American Indian/Alaska Native students (22% and 26%, respectively).

Once these functional needs are addressed, **students need to feel comfortable using such tools and need to know how to access college services**. The California Virtual Campus - Online Educational Initiative (CVC-OEI)'s [online readiness modules](#) can be a valuable resource for students. Preparation for online courses may help ameliorate students' anxieties about learning online. Encouraging is the finding that **students who had prior experience with online classes were less likely to note challenges learning online**. Thus, this challenge may decrease as students gain more experience with online instruction. However, it is important to note that students who regularly enrolled in online classes made the intentional choice to do so, which may speak more to their interest in and comfort with online learning.

Providing students with the knowledge and confidence to navigate an online learning environment is critical to setting them up for success and easing the relative stress of the experience. However, even among the most tech savvy, seasoned online course takers, the reality is that with the shelter-in-place and pandemic active, **students are grappling with increasing demands in their personal lives and homes that further pull their attention and focus away from being able to be present and engaged in their learning**.

Not only do students report the challenges related to a **lack of interaction/connection with other students** and **feeling isolated in an online learning environment**; their home environments also make it **harder to communicate online**. Where possible, colleges may want to consider whether they may be able to provide a socially-distance study space, and/or consider providing technology accessories such as headphones to assist students with creating environments that are more conducive to learning, while still maintaining their safety.

**Colleges may want to explore additional and alternative strategies for facilitating engagement among students**. For example, increasing use of group-based activities and assignments that encourage students to connect with one another outside of the "normal class time" to complete work using portable technology such as cell phones, may ease some of the challenges of completing work assignments in front of a computer, while increasing peer-to-peer interaction and engagement. Faculty may also want to consider polling students for ideal office hours at the start of the course to

increase the likelihood that students will have the ability to leverage that virtual face-to-face connection.

## **SUPPORTING STUDENTS' WELL-BEING**

Like many around the country, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in a loss of income for several students. The impact of this income loss is apparent in the high rates of basic needs insecurities students reported, with nearly **three out of every five students reporting being food insecure, housing insecure, and/or homeless.**

The need to financially care for themselves and their families may need to be prioritized over education. Improving students' **knowledge of available financial supports during this time is critical.** Approximately one in five students either did not know about or did not know how to apply for unemployment compensation/insurance or SNAP (food stamps).

Knowledge of emergency aid funds available (either at or outside their college) is even lower. As additional federal and state funding is made available to help students during this time, colleges need to consider using a variety of media and repeated attempts to connect students with external resources as well as internal resources provided by the college (e.g., food pantries, spaces for internet access). Now, more than ever, **strong partnerships and collaborations with community-based organizations and efforts to support students, both inside and outside of the college, are needed.**

## **SUPPORTING STUDENTS' FUTURE PLANS**

A potential quick win for keeping more students enrolled lies in the finding that **students who were less comfortable with using Canvas were also less likely to indicate a definitive plan to re-enroll.** Colleges should consider making it a practice among all incoming students to **familiarize them with Canvas** regardless of what types of courses they are currently taking. Doing so may help mitigate some of the challenges students face when transitioning to online coursework (either by choice or in forced situations such as the COVID-19 pandemic).

Perhaps the **most compelling findings of this report are the positive relationships between a greater likelihood of re-enrollment and (1) students feeling supported by their college and (2) students feeling their college effectively communicated information to them regarding changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic.** While perhaps less tangible/seemingly actionable than previous findings regarding students' comfort with Canvas, colleges should keep this finding in mind when strategizing ways to improve the student experience.

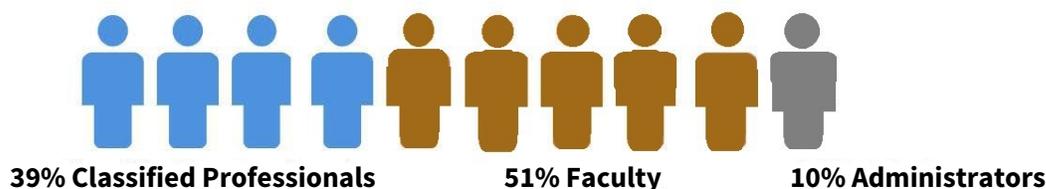
**Colleges must recognize the fundamental difference between students who actively opt to take online classes and those who are driven into it by circumstances outside of their control, such as the current pandemic.** These students face hurdles far less common among those who have previously opted to take online courses likely because the latter have both the physical surrounds as well as a learning style conducive to this type of education (e.g., those not challenged by feelings of isolation learning online or chaotic home environments).

# EMPLOYEE SURVEY RESULTS

## EMPLOYEE PROFILE

Table 2 provides the demographic breakdown of employee survey respondents. For each demographic, approximately 20% of employees chose not to provide their demographic information, thus percentages are listed two ways, both including and excluding those who opted not to provide a given piece of demographic information.

Survey respondents were generally reflective of the population of California community college employees (though skewed slightly younger), with 39% (n=6,106) of responses from classified professionals, 51% (n=7,848) from faculty (fairly evenly split between full time and adjunct), and 10% (n=1,555) administrators/managers.



Statewide data from the Chancellor’s Office Staffing Report for 2019 show faculty to be the largest employee group (approximately  $\frac{2}{3}$  adjunct and  $\frac{1}{3}$  full time) followed by classified professionals, with administrators being the smallest employee group.<sup>19</sup>

The majority (86%) of employees work at one site, but 8% work at more than one community college, 4% also work at a four-year institution, and 3% also work in a K12 school or district. This result is like what students reported, with 83% indicating being enrolled at only one community college, with the rest enrolled at additional community colleges or universities. For employees, adjunct faculty were far more likely to also be working at another community college (24%) or a four-year college or university (11%). While not shown in Table 2 below<sup>20</sup> with respect to demographic intersectionality, we found the following:

- There were no substantive differences in the racial/ethnic breakdown between males and females.
- Female employees tended to be younger (40% of females are under 45 vs. 32% of males).
- Significantly more Asian American (42%) and Hispanic or Latina/o/x (56%) employees are younger than 45 (across all employee respondents, 32% were under 45).
- Employees between the ages of 30 and 59 were more likely to have children living at home (86% vs. younger than 30 at 2%, and 60 or older at 11%).

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<sup>19</sup> The statewide staffing report does not include part-time or temporary employees; therefore, exact comparisons are not possible.

<sup>20</sup> See supplemental Tables E60-E64 here: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hG3IELUVRluO-opBLtxTHO3qEmFa6Ao\\_/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hG3IELUVRluO-opBLtxTHO3qEmFa6Ao_/view?usp=sharing)

Table 2. Demographics of Employee Survey Respondents

	<b>Total Employees</b>	<b>% w/Unknown</b>	<b>% w/o Unknown</b>	<b>% CCC Statewide<sup>a</sup></b>
<b>Gender</b>				
Female	8,365	54	68	56
Male	3,868	25	31	44
Non-binary/third gender	55	<1	<1	<1%
Unknown/other	3,225	21	n/a	0
<b>Transgender</b>				
Yes	39	<1%	1	n/r <sup>b</sup>
No	12,365	80	99	n/r
Unknown/prefer not to answer	3,109	20	n/a	n/r
<b>Race/Ethnicity</b>				
African American/Black	546	4	5	7
American Indian/Alaska Native	55	<1%	<1%	1
Asian	992	6	9	11
Hispanic or Latina/o/x	2,323	15	20	21
Pacific Islander or Native Hawaiian	100	1	1	<1
Two or More Races	1,065	4	9	2
White	6,404	41	56	52
Unknown/other	4,028	26	n/a	7
<b>Age Range</b>				
18 to 24 <sup>c</sup>	672	4	5	15
25 to 34	4,281	28	33	n/r
35 to 54	5,232	34	40	50
55 or older	2,916	19	22	35
Unknown	2,412	16	n/a	0
<b>Parent/Guardian with dependents</b>				
Yes	5,218	34	40	n/r
No	7,931	51	60	n/r
Unknown	2,364	15	n/a	n/r

Notes. <sup>a</sup>[https://datamart.cccco.edu/Faculty-Staff/Staff\\_Demo.aspx](https://datamart.cccco.edu/Faculty-Staff/Staff_Demo.aspx) for Fall 2019, <sup>b</sup>n/r=not reported, <sup>c</sup>Statewide figures combine 18-24 and 25-34 into one group.

## EMPLOYEE TRANSITION TO REMOTE ENVIRONMENT

Employees were asked various questions about their experience transitioning to working remotely. Faculty were further asked specific questions about their experience with the transition to teaching online.

### TRANSITION TO WORKING REMOTELY

In March 2020, due to the COVID-19 pandemic, California Community Colleges employees had to shift to working remotely. Among employees, 56% had no experience working remotely prior to March 2020. The lack of prior experience was more pronounced for adjunct faculty (62%) and classified professionals (59%) than full-time faculty (50%) and administrators (40%).<sup>21</sup>

**56%**  
**OF EMPLOYEES**

Had no experience working/teaching remotely prior to March 2020

Among all employees (n=15,504), 81% indicated working entirely remotely after March 2020, with 6% not working remotely, and 12% working both remotely and on site.<sup>22</sup> Faculty reported higher rates of working entirely remotely (93% of full time and 90% of adjunct) versus administrators (66%) and classified professionals (72%). Overall, 81% of employees agreed with the statement: “I can effectively work remotely from where I am living.”<sup>23</sup> Responses were similar across employee groups. **Therefore, while most employees are working either fully or partially remotely, most feel they can work effectively from their home environment, but many still cannot.**

Employees were asked to identify the factors negatively influencing their ability to be successful working in the current environment. The top challenges<sup>24</sup> among the approximately 13,700 respondents to this question set were:

1. Difficulty managing work/life balance (37%)
  - This challenge was more likely to be cited by employees with children at home (44%) relative to those without (33%).
2. Increased job pressures and demands (37%)
  - The increase in job demands was more frequently noted by full-time faculty (50%) relative to 41% of administrators, 35% of adjunct faculty, and 27% of classified professionals.
3. Family responsibilities (32%)
  - This challenge was more likely to be noted by those with children at home (45%) versus those with no children at home (27%).
4. Lack of proper workspace (30%)
  - There were no notable group differences with respect to this challenge.

The issue of **maintaining work-life balance**, especially as it relates to childcare, was echoed in the open-ended responses to the question “What has been the biggest challenge in adapting your work in response to COVID-19?” Many employees reported their workload has increased, either from the

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<sup>21</sup> See Tables E11f and E13f [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hG3IELUVRluO-opBLtxTHO3qEmFa6Ao\\_/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hG3IELUVRluO-opBLtxTHO3qEmFa6Ao_/view?usp=sharing)

<sup>22</sup> See Table E12: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hG3IELUVRluO-opBLtxTHO3qEmFa6Ao\\_/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hG3IELUVRluO-opBLtxTHO3qEmFa6Ao_/view?usp=sharing)

<sup>23</sup> See Table E45: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hG3IELUVRluO-opBLtxTHO3qEmFa6Ao\\_/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hG3IELUVRluO-opBLtxTHO3qEmFa6Ao_/view?usp=sharing)

<sup>24</sup> The full list can be found in Table E59 here: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hG3IELUVRluO-opBLtxTHO3qEmFa6Ao\\_/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hG3IELUVRluO-opBLtxTHO3qEmFa6Ao_/view?usp=sharing).

implementation of additional protocols requiring more time and energy to complete their work, or from the influx in virtual meetings and additional time needed to transition their work online, further disrupting their work-life balance. For those with the added responsibility of childcare and home instruction, maintaining productivity has been especially challenging. As three employees described:

*“The biggest personal challenge has been balancing work demands at [a] time when my school aged children are home without anyone to provide care and instruction.”*

*“The school closure and transition to remote learning has been a challenge as I now have to homeschool my children.”*

*“I started off working from home, along with my husband and kids, a college student, and a high school sophomore. My office was set up in the lounge, and I had distractions and questions all day long. I found it very difficult to stay focused.”*

**“I started off working from home, along with my husband and kids, a college student, and a high school sophomore. My office was set up in the lounge, and I had distractions and questions all day long. I found it very difficult to stay focused.”**

Looking ahead, in response to the open-ended question “If the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact the workplace through fall 2020, what is the most critical thing the college could reasonably do to support you?” many employees were eager to receive **professional development and training**. The specific use of the term “professional development” was cited over 1,400 times in open-ended responses, while “training” was mentioned over 1,900 times.

Employees are seeking assistance in their adjustment to remote work and how to manage their schedule effectively. Instructors requested professional development on how to teach online, and many employees would like support on how to navigate different software programs and applications. As four employees noted:

*“Professional development training (help us sort through the overwhelming maze of DE (distance education) information and options).”*

*“Professional development training on how to work from home effectively.”*

*“Continued Professional Development training for Distance Education and Student Equity.”*

*“Additional professional development training for faculty AND training for students to 1) use Canvas and 2) manage their time effectively.”*

## **INNOVATIONS AND STRATEGIES TO WORKING REMOTELY**

An open-ended question on the employee survey invited employees to share any innovations and/or strategies that have helped/improved their experience working remotely during this time. Among the top strategies listed were: Setting-up a home office, establishing a regular work schedule, increasing communication and collaboration with co-workers, and maintaining a positive outlook.

**Setting-up a Home Office.** Employees reported the importance of having the necessary workspace and equipment to perform their jobs. Many were not equipped to work from home and had to purchase office furniture including a desk and chair, computer equipment such as a desktop or laptop, hardware including monitors and printers, and office supplies.

Employees reported benefits from having the infrastructure and resources needed to work from home; however, they were largely purchased out-of-pocket (i.e., not reimbursed). Many reported making ergonomic adjustments to their workspace at home to get through their eight-hour shifts. These purchases included standing desks and ergonomic chairs and keyboards. In the words of three employees:

*“Creating a better home workspace in all aspects: purchased a large surface work table, rearranged desktop and printer equipment, added a borrowed office chair to better manage the challenge of excessive hours at the computer, continuing making efforts to adjust lighting, added filing rack to manage the new excess of administrative and instructor information.”*

*“Having a second monitor eases the frustrations of multitasking on just a laptop screen. I have also purchased a wireless mouse and keyboard & office chair which has improved my comfort level.”*

*“I bought a desk and a chair for my home office and re-organize a space for that purpose only. It helps to have a separate workspace with good light and a good chair designated for work only.”*

**Establishing a Regular Work Schedule.** Many employees reported that having a schedule helped establish a routine and made it feel like they were working in their regular office. Employees structured their schedule around childcare and other responsibilities. Having this consistency helped maintain boundaries between their work and home life. Employees reported building in breaks and a lunch hour to mirror their regular work schedule. As three employees noted:

*“I tried to maintain the same work schedule for myself as I would have on campus. This became very blurry after a while and I found myself working 10-12-hour days, even during the weekend. I changed my office hours to coincide with the first hour of my classes so that students could meet with me via Zoom when we would have met face to face. Students found that beneficial. I also made individual appointments with students.”*

*“I try and set a schedule with frequent breaks. No more than 3 hours in front of the computer without a half-hour break, one-hour lunch, and I turn everything off at 8:00 PM. I also do my best to stay away from the computer and my cell phone on the weekends. Students were made aware of my work schedule.”*

*“Understand that working remotely does not mean you are expected to be available for work 24/7. Develop a work schedule early on to minimize mixing work and personal life. Understand what hours you are more productive and adjust your work schedule to fit that.”*

***“Understand that working remotely does not mean you are expected to be available for work 24/7. Develop a work schedule early on to minimize mixing work and personal life. Understand what hours you are more productive and adjust your work schedule to fit that.”***

**Increasing Communication and Collaboration with Co-workers.** Employees reported that scheduling regular check-ins and meetings with their colleagues and managers helped them deal with many uncertainties and provided an opportunity to ask questions and get clarification on guidance. Increasing communication and collaboration helped alleviate feelings of disconnect and isolation.

Some of the meetings were for work purposes, but others built-in time to meet informally to stay connected and offer moral support. Three employees shared their examples:

*“I provide the faculty in my area a weekly check-in by department and scattered office hours where they know they can just pop in to talk about anything. I also meet weekly with the division staff to get updates; see how they are doing and connect. We often play kahoot or other games during the meeting just to relax and enjoy each other for an hour a week.”*

*“Emailing with colleagues to stay in touch and check-in. The ability to screenshare when helping students has helped me feel like I am more connected to students (but I wish video chatting were something we could do, too.)”*

*“I do weekly check-ins with my team via phone, not about work but how they are doing personally. Have put together fun text groups with teams and students to stay connected as a team.”*

**Maintaining a Positive Outlook.** Employees reported that having a positive attitude and maintaining an optimistic outlook has helped them as well as their students. By shifting their mindset to one that is more patient and supportive, they have handled the stress and uncertainty. Employees also appreciate their co-workers and managers creating a positive work environment, and the recognition that everyone is dealing with unexpected hardships. In the words of three employees:

*“Always talking positively. Stating facts but not dwelling on the negative. Encouraging students to stay positive, continue moving forward and we will get through this.”*

*“Being positive and optimistic; not having a mentality that because it hasn't been done, it can't be done; be open to change; be conscious that things are beyond one's control. Have the mentality that “If it's difficult for one, imagine how difficult it is for students and their families.”*

*“Connecting with students as human beings and talking about their daily worries help create a community. Showing students, the positive side of things helps them feel better and more ready to work in class.”*

## **FACULTY TRANSITION TO TEACHING ONLINE**

When asked about the transition to online teaching, faculty respondents (n=7,017) indicated the following as the top three technology challenges:<sup>25</sup>

1. Students' lack of access to reliable internet/devices (70%)
2. Students' discomfort/unfamiliarity with technology/software (63%)
3. My own discomfort/unfamiliarity with technology/software (29%)

Faculty also experienced challenges in adapting coursework to distance education.<sup>26</sup> Faculty were provided a list of challenges and asked to “Check all that apply.” The top adaptation challenges indicated by the 7,017 faculty who responded to this question set were:

1. Personal preference for face-to-face learning (55%)

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<sup>25</sup> See Table E14: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hG3IELUVRLuO-opBLtxTHO3qEmFa6Ao\\_/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hG3IELUVRLuO-opBLtxTHO3qEmFa6Ao_/view?usp=sharing)

<sup>26</sup> See Table E16: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hG3IELUVRLuO-opBLtxTHO3qEmFa6Ao\\_/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hG3IELUVRLuO-opBLtxTHO3qEmFa6Ao_/view?usp=sharing)

2. Students have not maintained previous levels of engagement (54%)
3. Difficulty maintaining/creating a sense of community with students (45%)

Faculty expressed concerns with the transition to distance education.<sup>27</sup> The top concerns indicated by the 7,017 faculty respondents were:

1. Not being able to communicate with my students at the same level (64%)
2. Diminished student learning (58%)
3. My discipline does not lend itself well to distance education (31%)
4. Security/privacy in proctoring online exams (30%)

## TRANSITION TO PROVIDING STUDENT SERVICES ONLINE

In addition to faculty transitioning to online teaching in March 2020, student support services needed to transition to online service provision. Employees who provide direct services to students were asked to indicate the challenges they had encountered from a provided list.<sup>28</sup> Among the top challenges in delivering student services were remotely:

1. Personal preference for face-to-face services (27%)
2. Students have not maintained previous levels of engagement (23%)
3. Resources and services have not translated well into an online environment (19%)

Classified professionals and administrators also reported some additional technological challenges to working remotely.<sup>29</sup> Their top technological challenges were:

1. Access to electronic work files (34%)
2. Reliable/sufficient internet (29%)
3. Downloading/running normal work-related software/apps (19%)
4. Access to a reliable device (laptop, mobile device) (18%)

## INNOVATIONS AND STRATEGIES TO SUPPORT STUDENTS REMOTELY

A final open-ended question on the employee survey invited all employees to share any innovations and/or strategies they have implemented to support students remotely during this time. The top four areas highlighted included flexibility in deadlines and requirements, regular check-ins with students, increased availability, and accessibility to students, and leveraging technology.

**Flexibility in Deadlines and Requirements.** Several instructors reported offering more flexible or extended deadlines for assignments and other requirements in their

### Employees' top strategies to support students include:

- Flexibility in deadlines and requirements
- Regular student check-ins
- Increased availability and accessibility
- Leveraging technology

<sup>27</sup> See Table E18 [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hG3IELUVRLuO-opBLtxTHO3qEmFa6Ao\\_/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hG3IELUVRLuO-opBLtxTHO3qEmFa6Ao_/view?usp=sharing)

<sup>28</sup> See Table E17 [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hG3IELUVRLuO-opBLtxTHO3qEmFa6Ao\\_/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hG3IELUVRLuO-opBLtxTHO3qEmFa6Ao_/view?usp=sharing)

<sup>29</sup> These questions were asked specifically of administrators and classified professionals, as faculty were asked the challenges with technology questions in Table E18: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hG3IELUVRLuO-opBLtxTHO3qEmFa6Ao\\_/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hG3IELUVRLuO-opBLtxTHO3qEmFa6Ao_/view?usp=sharing)

course; and increased communication and coordination with students who needed more time to complete their work. Instructors reported that they relaxed their class attendance policies knowing student schedules may be unpredictable. They reported allowing more attempts for papers and exams to be re-taken for a higher grade. Many instructors recorded their lectures and made them available to students who were unable to participate in class during the regularly scheduled time. As one faculty member noted:

*“I have held synchronous Zoom sessions, but I made them optional and provided notes of what was covered so that students who were not able to attend could view them. I have been extremely flexible with deadlines and assignments because many of them are anxious, stressed, and have poor access to technology. I send a brief weekly overview of what we're doing that week with a little cheerful message included.”*

**Regular Check-ins with Students.** Employees reported that they checked-in with students on a consistent basis, most frequently via Zoom and Canvas, which helped maintain communication and provided time to offer guidance and support when needed. Many instructors noted that they increased their communication with students via Canvas announcements and messages as well as direct phone calls. In the words of three employees:

*“Communication - this is big, what I find with online teaching is students report that online teachers are not communicating with them on a regular (basis). I respond very quickly to students to address concerns. I would just suggest that teachers would be sure to be in constant communication with students. They get lost if you don't and many of them struggle with the online portal when there is a lack of communication it only worsens.”*

*“Regular check-ins, consistent communication. I've really focused on maintaining a sense of socialization. The college needs to look into developing activities and events that maintain social distancing, like hosting a drive-in night on campus.”*

*“Communicate several times a week with students; help students navigate the administrative max: drop, not drop, EW, or P/NP? Try to provide a sense of security that we are there for them. Talk to colleagues to hear they are doing. Share ideas for better student support.”*

***“Communicate several times a week with students; help students navigate the administrative max: drop, not drop, EW, or P/NP? Try to provide a sense of security that we are there for them. Talk to colleagues to hear they are doing. Share ideas for better student support.”***

**Increased Availability and Accessibility to Students.** Employees reported that they increased their availability to students by providing additional office hours, allowing students to contact them any time of day, and meeting before and after class in Zoom to connect.

They also provided additional means of contact to ensure students could access them in multiple ways including home phone, cell phone, and text message. **Google Voice** was utilized by 144 employees who created a phone number for contacting students, while 81 employees said they were using **Cranium Café** to reach out to students.

As three employees noted:

*“Open zoom office hours for students to drop in and get academic support and create a sense of community for those feeling out of touch, phone calls to students who disappear for a while (assuming they have a number accessible to us via Banner's class download function).”*

*“Using google voice so I can provide services over my personal phone without giving out my personal phone number.”*

*“Weekly phone calls to those who do not/cannot zoom. Biweekly texts to students who joined my Remind app- a quick encouragement; information of food distribution points, scholarships, campus/COVID-19 updates...whatever may be helpful for them right now as well as encourage student engagement. Google page where I upload whatever docs are shared in email...trying to keep things accessible for everyone. Zoom conversation/ hangout time for students to just come on and see each other and chat.”*

**Leveraging Technology.** Employees reported using various applications and programs to provide instruction and communicate with students. While there was a learning curve for some, many found their transition to remote work improved once they became more familiar with the available technology and could integrate it into their work. **Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and Google Hangouts** were used for instructional purposes to deliver course content in a virtual environment, making use of features such as recording, screen sharing, and breakout rooms. Canvas was used as an education tool for students to submit assignments, complete quizzes, and exams, and stay current with course announcements and posted resources. **Cranium Café** was used for counseling and outreach purposes including the instant messaging feature, and many made use of fillable forms with electronic signature fields for document completion. These applications allowed for greater communication and support in a virtual environment and provided opportunities for students to stay connected with the college and their peers. As three employees noted:

*“I have learned how to run meetings using Zoom and obtaining electronic signatures through Adobe.”*

*“I learned how to use Zoom. Recorded videos using zoom related to general transfer information that students can access on our website. Participated in a live Instagram forum where students could ask questions about transfer. Learning about lots of video tools such as, Flipgrid, Screencast-o-matic, Adobe Spark, etc.”*

*“I am using Microsoft OneNote to draw/write on my screen. I'm writing directly over a .pdf of note pages that I've given my students so they can see where I am in our course content. I record this writing along with my voice in shorter segments and post online for students to watch when it's convenient for them. This keeps it as close to our class-time as possible.”*

## EMPLOYEE WELL-BEING

### INSTITUTIONAL SUPPORT

**Employees indicating feeling very supported by their college/district.** Nearly three quarters of the over 14,000 employee respondents agreed or strongly agreed<sup>30</sup> that their college/district has:

- Supported them in the transition to working remotely (74%)
- Shown they care about employees like them when making decisions in implementing changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic (72%)
- Communicated information effectively to them regarding changes due to the COVID-19 pandemic (74%)

However, despite overall satisfaction with communication, when asked about the biggest challenge in adapting their work in response to COVID-19, **many employees cited unclear or absent communication and guidance.** Employees reported feelings of frustration over the lack of communication, guidance, and decisive action from college leadership and administration. Employees described instances of inconsistent information and miscommunication.

Many employees indicated the transition to working from home and remote instruction could have been handled better with proper guidance, clear expectations, and responsiveness from the college. In the words of three employees:

*“Administration will not make decisions, and stick with them, and the lack of communication. We are the only people left on campus 100% of the time and are having to deal with the backlash of the lack of decision making and communication.”*

*“In the beginning, it was difficult/stressful because there was no plan or idea of a plan in place for those of us that were “essential personnel.” The biggest adaptation now is when people who haven't been on campus for months show up, it's difficult to know how to interact with them.”*

*“Inconsistency! From proper PPE - to the Board/District saying we're going to follow the directives as laid-out by CDC, CA Gov. & Local Health Agency -- then a few weeks later doing the opposite and bringing everyone in Facilities back to work on their regular schedule!”*

The desire for **improved communication, guidance, and direction** was also apparent in response to the open-ended question “If the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact the workplace through fall 2020, what is the most critical thing the college could reasonably do to support you?” Employees reported that clear communication would be helpful, especially as it relates to work expectations and schedules, the status of their positions, and how colleges plan to safely reopen campuses. Employees **cited some variation of improved “communication” at least 355 times**, including adjectives such as “better,” “clear,” “more,” and “regular.” Employees explained that clear, concise, and transparent communication is needed to adequately prepare and plan for the future.

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<sup>30</sup> For all statements, agreement was highest among administrators and lowest among full-time faculty, see Table 23f-25f: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hG3IELUVRluO-opBLtxTHO3qEmFa6Ao\\_/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hG3IELUVRluO-opBLtxTHO3qEmFa6Ao_/view?usp=sharing)

As three employees noted:

*“Clear and concise communication coming from one source. When we initially went online, I was confused as to what the process was going to be because multiple people said multiple things and the emails were not thoroughly written. It was a confusing time made more confusing by poor communication.”*

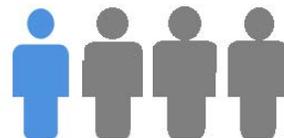
*“Clear and effective communication and sensible actionable plans instead of vague emails congratulating our resilience.”*

*“Better communication from the leadership to the staff. Oftentimes there is miscommunication between the staff and communication from the deans and chairpersons to the faculty is very low.”*

## BASIC NEEDS AND ECONOMIC CIRCUMSTANCES

While the Hope Center typically only reports on basic needs of college students, we opted to administer these questions to employees as well to get a sense of how prevalent basic needs insecurities were among those attempting to provide high quality education and support to our students. Key findings include:

- Statewide, 3,552 employees (26%) reported facing at least one basic needs insecurity, including 19% facing housing insecurity, 3% facing homelessness, and 10% facing food insecurity.<sup>31</sup>
- Employees of color were 10 percentage points more likely to report at least one basic needs insecurity than their White colleagues (30% vs. 20%, respectively).
- Employees under 30 were more likely to report at least one basic needs insecurity (36%) than older employees (24-28% of those 30 or older).



**1 in every 4 employees**  
reported at least one basic needs  
insecurity, including food, housing,  
and/or homelessness

Employees were subsequently asked whether they had accessed different financial support services during this pandemic.<sup>32</sup> Approximately 86% out of 15,513 employees responded to this set of questions:

- 6% of employees had applied for **unemployment compensation/insurance** (of whom 42% had received it at the time of surveying), while an additional 9% either did not know about it or did not know how to apply for it.
- 1% of employees had applied for **SNAP** (food stamps; of whom 48% had received it at the time of surveying), while 8% either did not know about it or did not know how to apply for it.
- Less than 1% of employees had applied for **emergency aid funding at their college** (of whom only 15% had received it at the time of surveying), though 18% either did not know about it, or did not know how to apply for it.

<sup>31</sup> See Tables E41, E46, E48, and E49: [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hG3IELUVRluO-opBLtxTHO3qEmFa6Ao\\_/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hG3IELUVRluO-opBLtxTHO3qEmFa6Ao_/view?usp=sharing)

<sup>32</sup> See Tables E26-E33 [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hG3IELUVRluO-opBLtxTHO3qEmFa6Ao\\_/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hG3IELUVRluO-opBLtxTHO3qEmFa6Ao_/view?usp=sharing)

- 1% of employees had applied for **emergency aid from outside their college** (of whom 52% had received it at the time of surveying), while 17% either did not know about it or did not know how to apply for it.

## EMPLOYEE NEEDS FROM THE INSTITUTION

Employees were asked to identify what they need from the college/district leadership to carry out their work.<sup>33</sup> Across all employees:

- 49% indicated the need for necessary adjustments to workload and expectations
  - The need for adjustments to workload and expectations was most frequently cited by full-time (60%) and adjunct (50%) faculty relative to classified professionals (44%) and administrators (40%).
- 48% indicated the need for regular updates on status of and plans for COVID-19 responses
- 46% indicated the need for a **flexible work schedule**
  - The need for a flexible work schedule was most frequently cited by employees with children at home (51%) relative to those without (43%), and for full-time faculty (51%) compared to classified professionals (47%), administrators (45%), and adjunct faculty (39%).

### Nearly half of employee expressed the need for:

- **Necessary adjustments to workload and expectations**
- **Regular updates on status and plans for COVID-19 responses**
- **A flexible work schedule**

The need for flexibility was echoed in response to the question “If the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact the workplace through fall 2020, what is the most critical thing the college could reasonably do to support you?” **The overwhelming response from employees was to continue to allow them to work remotely and provide flexibility in their work schedule.** This response was by and large the most requested support across all employee groups. “Flexible work schedule” was cited over 2,000 times in response to this open-ended question.

Employees shared various reasons working from home and offering a flexible work schedule would be helpful. The most frequently reported reason was childcare demands. Employees also shared that the flexibility would allow them time to deal with distractions at home, coordinate internet and computer usage with other members of the household, and limit their exposure to COVID-19, putting those who are uncomfortable returning to campus at ease. In the words of three employees:

*“Flexible work schedules are vital! Many times, during the week I have a distraction-free environment and renewed productivity during hours that are not always between 8-5.”*

*“Flexible work schedules due to caring for children and homeschooling children; Ability to choose to work remotely to stay healthy and keep vulnerable family members healthy.”*

*“Flexible work schedule: I have school aged kids that need my attention as well and I can get most of work done at all hours, not just the standard ones - ability to continue working remotely,*

<sup>33</sup> See Table E22 [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hG3IELUVRLuO-opBLtxTHO3qEmFa6Ao\\_/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hG3IELUVRLuO-opBLtxTHO3qEmFa6Ao_/view?usp=sharing)

*even when some of the restrictions are lifted. It makes no sense to go back if we are still concerned about spread. We can work just as effectively remotely.”*

Employees also chose from a list of specific supplies and/or services they needed from their college to carry out their work remotely.<sup>34</sup> Out of the 13,400 respondents, 48% indicated they needed a laptop/desktop, while 42% reported they needed access to software necessary to do their job, and 42% indicated a need for access to a meeting/communication application (e.g., Zoom, Skype). In general, classified professionals and administrators were more likely to indicate a need for these supplies/services than faculty.

Employees also highlighted the need for colleges to provide the **necessary office equipment, software, and supplies to work from home** in open-ended responses. Many employees reported that they purchased office equipment, supplies, and software to work from home, in addition to using their personal phone and internet services, as well as utilities to conduct their work.

Many employees explained that they are not equipped with the same resources and technology as their regular workspace, making it more difficult to complete their daily responsibilities from home. Desktop computers, laptops, and hardware such as dual monitors and printers were requested most often. Ergonomic desks and office chairs, headsets, speakers, cameras, microphones, and office supplies such as printer ink/toner and copy paper were also at the top of the list. Technology needs such as internet and phone services, as well as access to software were mentioned frequently as well. As four employees noted:

*“A proper desk and office chair would help. I do not have office furniture that provides an ergonomic workspace for long periods of sitting and working on the laptop.”*

*“A printer/scanner/fax would be nice as I am using my personal device and it is very old and slow.”*

*“A monitor would be nice. It is difficult looking at a laptop screen for 8+ hours a day. A desk would be nice; even a simple one.”*

*“A laptop configured to access all necessary college applications, all necessary software programs, and all supplies to do my job.”*

***“A laptop configured to access all necessary college applications, all necessary software programs, and all supplies to do my job.”***

Lastly, related to workload, an important theme emerged in response to the open-ended question “If the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact the workplace through fall 2020, what is the most critical thing the college could reasonably do to support you?” Among the top responses from employees was for colleges to **provide compensation for increased workload**. Employees reported needing additional time for their increased workload and would like to be compensated for the additional hours spent transitioning their work to a remote environment, the increase in virtual meetings, and staying up-to-date on changing guidance and processes. Instructors reported additional hours

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<sup>34</sup> See Table E20 [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hG3IELUVRluO-opBLtxTHO3qEmFa6Ao\\_/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hG3IELUVRluO-opBLtxTHO3qEmFa6Ao_/view?usp=sharing)

required to transition their courses online, finding time to address questions from students, and increasing their accessibility to support students. In the words of two instructors:

*“More financial compensation. The reality is that teaching online is 3x the workload of teaching live in the classroom. I have taught for 25 years. Converting all my knowledge to online, Canvas modules and implementing them, plus instructional time, responding to discussions, students, grading, etc. is consuming a tremendous amount of time. Adjuncts are not being compensated proportionate to the number of hours we are working.”*

*"There is a dramatic increase in workload, and I have fewer staff to deliver the services. I am very worried about losing staff. We have already been told we will lose all temporary staff. This, and the fact that I have staff who cannot work on campus has a huge effect on the delivery of our services and my ability to manage the workload as effectively as needed.*

## EMOTIONAL WELL-BEING

### Anxiety

Employees were asked the same questions from the Generalized Anxiety Disorder [GAD-7] Scale as students.<sup>35</sup> Out of nearly 13,000 respondents, 29% of all employees reported at least moderate to severe anxiety. Prior studies show that 6% of the general population falls into the category of moderate to severe anxiety (Löwe, Decker, Müller, Brähler, Schellberg, Herzog et al, 2008), but those studies were not conducted during the time of a pandemic.

Anxiety decreased with employee age, with 45% of employees under 30 categorized as having moderate to severe anxiety compared to 37% of employees age 30-44, 27% of employees age 45 to 59, and 19% of employees age 60 and over.

### Worries

Employees were asked what they worry about more now than before COVID-19.<sup>36</sup> More than half of the approximately 13,700 respondents to this question set were worried about:

- Health and well-being of friends and family (76%)
- What the future holds for the college (70%)
- Own health and well-being (66%)
- The health and well-being of students (66%)
- Doing your job effectively despite the changes in your work environment (60%): This worry was most pronounced for faculty
- The health and well-being of colleagues (57%)
- Risking exposure to yourself and others to COVID-19 by coming on campus (54%): This worry was most pronounced for classified professionals

#### More than half of employees are worried about:

- The health and well-being of friends, families, colleagues, students, and themselves
- What the future holds for their college
- Doing their job effectively despite the changes in their work environment
- Risking exposure to themselves and others to COVID-19 by coming on campus

<sup>35</sup> See Table E57 [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hG3IELUVRLuO-opBLtxTHO3qEmFa6Ao\\_/view?usp=sharing](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1hG3IELUVRLuO-opBLtxTHO3qEmFa6Ao_/view?usp=sharing)

<sup>36</sup> This question about what employees worry about was adapted, with permission, from recent HEDS COVID-19 Institutional Response Staff and Faculty Surveys: <https://www.hedsconsortium.org/covid-19-institutional-response-surveys/>

Employees' responses to the open ended question "What has been the biggest challenge in adapting work in response to COVID-19?" reinforced the finding that employees are worried about **maintaining the health and safety** of themselves and those around them. Employees reported concerns over their ability to maintain their health and safety in the current work environment, particular amongst staff who were designated as essential workers.

They also reported fear of COVID-19 exposure and shared various health risks related to the type of work they do, where they do it, and their own health status. Those who were deemed essential workers and continued working or returned to work, reported concerns over how their institution has handled the risk of exposure for different populations of workers and indicated disparities across the workforce.

Others feared what may occur when they are no longer permitted to work from home and must return to campus. Employees expressed concerns as to whether colleges can ensure all employees adhere to safety measures such as social distancing, cleaning protocols, and use of personal protective equipment. As two employees noted:

*"Being sent home because I have two of the outlined conditions that put me at risk for COVID-19, then being told weeks later I have to return to work because I am an "essential employee." Am I no longer at risk because I'm "essential"? Everyday has been difficult dealing with the possibilities of getting more exposure at work versus being at home and controlling my exposure. I consider myself an "At-Risk Essential Employee."*

*"My office does not allow for social distancing, but I must access it every day. We are too close to one another and use the same equipment. The office is too small, and we only have two computers to share between the four of us. We share vehicles which means we touch the same surfaces there too. Public Safety/Security is required to be here, "It's what we signed up for" is something I keep hearing. However, shouldn't we, like the rest of District employees working from home, be afforded the ability to stay safe and not bring COVID-19 back home to our families?"*

Further, many employees cited *wanting* to work, but facing the challenges that their jobs cannot be performed remotely and a fear of job loss as a result. Employees conveyed their frustration from not being permitted to work due to the nature of their position. These positions involve duties that either cannot be performed virtually or provide services that are only needed when students and staff are present on campus.

Even employees who were deemed essential, fear their positions are at risk if campuses remain closed. Others who can perform their duties from home shared concerns about their future job status and job security if the pandemic continues to impact their workplace. As four employees shared:

*"My biggest challenge is that I cannot work! All of the activities that the transportation department supports have been cancelled."*

*"I am unable to get enough work due to budget cuts for sign language interpreter services."*

*"I cannot teach at all due to working in a preschool."*

*"I cannot work because I am not allowed into the theater because of the campus closure."*

## OPPORTUNITIES TO SUPPORT EMPLOYEES

This section synthesizes results from the employee surveys and presents colleges and districts with actionable opportunities to support employees in response to the findings. Opportunities are presented as they relate to supporting employees' transition to distance education and their general well-being.

### SUPPORTING EMPLOYEES' TRANSITION TO WORKING REMOTELY

Similar to the challenges students reported experiencing, with increased demands on all facets of their lives due to the pandemic coupled with the newness of remote teaching and working for a majority of the employees, **it is critical for colleges to re-examine their operational practices to meet all their stakeholders where they are in this moment.**

With over half of faculty in this survey reporting no prior experience with online education, it is important that resources and professional development activities have an **extra focus on supporting faculty with quality online teaching.** The California Virtual Campus-Online Education Initiative's (CVC-OEI) Course Design Rubric<sup>37</sup> can be a valuable resource in this area. The rubric was developed by the OEI's Professional Development Work Group - CCC practitioners across the state with expertise and experience in online teaching. The rubric is aligned to accreditation standards pertaining to distance education and includes information to ensure online courses are designed to support online student success.

In addition to the course design rubric, the CVC-OEI has a host of online academic and student support resources that can be leveraged to support online teaching and working for faculty, classified professionals, and administrators at the colleges. According to figures reported by CVC-OEI on their website,<sup>38</sup> several colleges are still not taking advantage of the subsidized resources and tools that the CVC-OEI has curated to improve online teaching and learning. For example, while 96 colleges are actively leveraging the online tutoring platform (Pisces - NetTutor), fewer than half of colleges are taking advantage of the online counseling platform (Cranium Cafe) and online proctoring platform (Proctorio).

In both closed- and open-ended responses, **employees highlighted the need for enhanced communication from their college/district**, most notably as it relates to workload expectations and how they structure their time. Colleges/districts may consider drafting and circulating more formal documents outlining new policies or procedures for working in a remote environment (and revisit these regularly as the situation evolves). Doing so can help ensure both clarity and equity in how employees are able to conduct their work in these unprecedented times.

With respect to employees' desire for increased compensation due to an increased workload, as reduced resources may limit this possibility, colleges/districts should consider alternative methods for reducing the strain currently faced by their employees to avoid the potential for burnout, and other possible means of compensation.

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<sup>37</sup> <https://cvc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/CVC-OEI-Course-Design-Rubric-rev.10.2018.pdf>

<sup>38</sup> <https://cvc.edu/expanded-student-support-ecosystem-services/>

## SUPPORTING EMPLOYEES' WELL-BEING

Nearly one in four employees reported that they are facing either food insecurity, housing insecurity and/or homelessness, and *more* than one in four reported experiencing moderate to severe anxiety. Colleges should make a concerted effort to support their employees during this time by reinforcing the importance to their employees that their well-being is also important and there are resources/services to support them. Now may be a good time to refresh and remind employees what mental health services are available to them, details of their benefits coverage, etc. Further, colleges may want to clarify which support services are not just available to students but employees as well (e.g., food pantries).

Lastly, colleges have a history of addressing students' basic needs; however, where possible, colleges should consider continuously collecting and tracking this information among their *employees*. While COVID-19 surely exacerbated these issues, they were likely present even before the pandemic hit.

## CONCLUSIONS

This report provides insights from nearly 65,000 voices across the California Community College system, painting a comprehensive picture of how different groups have been experiencing the pandemic. The California Community Colleges have always been committed to ensuring students have access to a quality educational experience, regardless of whether face-to-face, hybrid, or 100% remote. The COVID-19 pandemic has provided an opportunity to enhance and expand the remote environment for students and employees. The results of this survey can inform the system's distance education offerings and larger Guided Pathways work to create a seamless and integrated college experience.

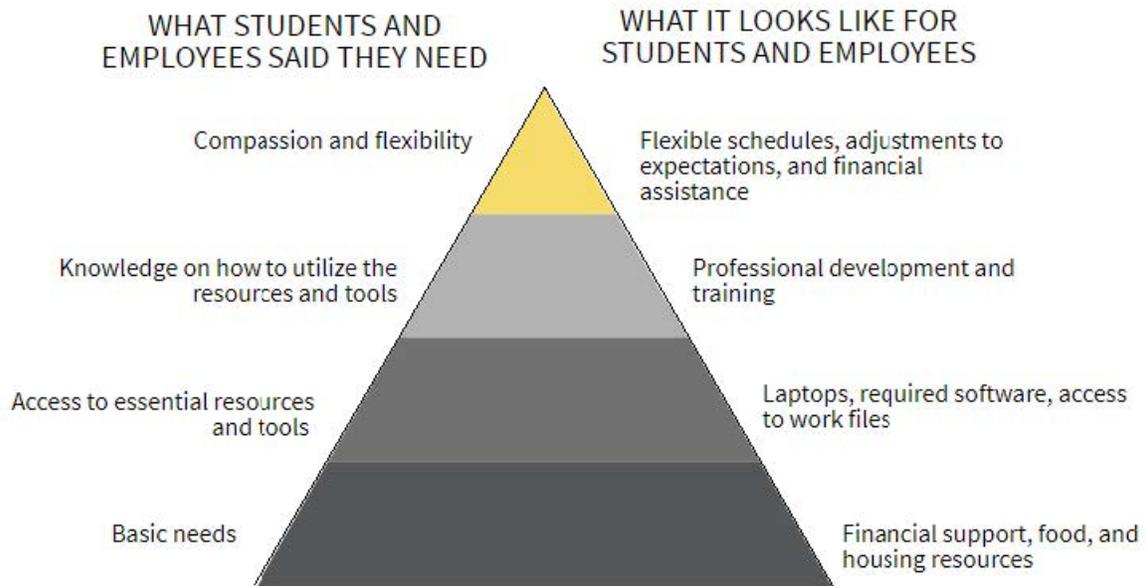
While both surveys focused heavily on the *challenges* being faced in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, such that resources could be targeted to improve the student and employee experience, colleges and districts should take pride in the fact that students and employees overall reported feeling supported as they navigate this uncharted territory. The results presented throughout the report provide valuable information colleges and districts can use in enhancing processes, practices, and systems for remote learning and working (be it within or outside of a pandemic).

While each group indicated facing unique challenges, many common themes emerged. Both students and employees spoke to the need for **connection with their peers** and the **value of engagement with one another**. Colleges and districts may want to view support as a **hierarchy of needs** as outlined in Figure 1.

First and foremost, **individuals' basic needs must be met**. A concerted effort must be made to ensure both students and employees know of the financial supports available (e.g., SNAP), as well as other supports such as food pantries. As additional federal and state funding is made available during this time (or in future times of emergency), colleges need to consider using a variety of media and repeated attempts to connect students and employees with those resources. **Without basic needs being met, learning is not likely to happen**.

Colleges and districts should institutionalize ways to periodically assess students' and employees' basic needs; their awareness of and access to the myriad services and supports available to them (e.g., categorical programs and food pantry), and how to eliminate gaps in uptake.

Figure 1. Hierarchy of Student and Employee Needs



Once this foundation is laid, **colleges must ensure their students and employees have the tangible tools necessary to participate in online instruction.** For students, these tools include access to computers and the internet. For employees, it also means access to the types of software available on campus. However, once the tools are *available*, one must **know how to access and use them.** Survey results made the case that the investment in Canvas has been worthwhile. Comfort with the platform was linked to students having a positive remote experience. Thus, while comfort with Canvas is already quite high, it must become universal before we can expect students and employees to succeed in a virtual learning environment. Providing students with the knowledge and confidence to navigate an online learning environment is critical to setting them up for success. Professional development for faculty, classified professionals, and administrators offering support services should be universal and focus on how to maximize use of digital technologies to serve students. The resources and services that have been curated by the California Virtual Campus-Online Educational Initiative to enhance the online teaching and learning environment can be especially valuable at this time. Moreover, lessons learned from this experience on how to integrate resources and supports to create a seamless virtual experience can be applied far beyond the pandemic.

All of the above is necessary groundwork for a positive remote experience. However, the reality is that even among the most tech-savvy, seasoned remote learners and educators, individuals are grappling with increasing demands in their personal lives that pull their attention and focus away from being able to be present and engaged. Across the board, **flexibility is key, as are adjustments to expectations.** For students, flexibility takes the form of asynchronous or hybrid learning opportunities (while still building in time for live interactions to maintain a sense of connection). For employees, flexibility means accommodating an atypical work schedule and grace in understanding the competing demands being faced at home.

While it is the hope universally that the COVID-19 pandemic will soon be behind us, and the more peripheral impacts will likely linger indefinitely. Thus, there is still time to **leverage these findings,**

**both to make the present experience a more positive one for all stakeholders, but also to help ensure systems are in place for the future that will allow for less disruption should a pivot to remote education and/or work (either on the individual-, college-, or system-wide level) ever be necessary.**

The pandemic has opened additional opportunities to strategize innovative ways to stay connected even when we cannot be physically close and when there are even more competing demands at home for many. **Approaches that prioritize the value of preparation, connection, regular communication, and compassion should be incorporated into all remote experiences to ensure students and those supporting them are at the center of these approaches.**

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## Appendix A: List of Participating Colleges and Districts

<i>Colleges</i>					<i>Districts</i>
	Copper Mountain	LA Harbor❖	Mt. San Jacinto*	San José City	
Alameda		LA Mission		San Mateo	Contra Costa
American River❖	Crafton Hills	LA Pierce	Napa	Santa Ana	Foothill-De Anza
	Cuesta	LA Trade	Norco	Santa Barbara*	
Antelope Valley	Cuyamaca	LA Southwest❖	Ohlone	Santa Monica	Grossmont-Cuyamaca
Bakersfield	Cypress	LA Valley	Orange Coast	Santa Rosa❖	Kern
Barstow	De Anza	Lake Tahoe❖	Oxnard	Santiago Canyon	Los Angeles
Berkeley City	Diablo Valley	Laney	Palo Verde*		Peralta
Butte*	East LA	Lassen	Palomar	Sequoias	
Cabrillo❖	El Camino❖	Long Beach	Pasadena*	Shasta	Rancho Santiago
Canada	Evergreen Valley	Los Medanos	Porterville	Sierra*	Riverside
Canyons	Feather River	Madera	Reedley	Skyline	San Diego
Cerritos	Foothill	Marin	Riverside	Southwestern	San Francisco
Cerro Coso	Fresno City	Merced	Saddleback	Taft	San José-Evergreen
Chabot*	Fullerton❖	Merritt	San Bernardino	Ventura	
Chaffey	Gavilan	MiraCosta	San Diego City	Victor Valley	San Mateo
Citrus	Glendale	Mission	San Diego Continuing Ed	West Hills Coalinga	South Orange County
Clovis	Golden West	Modesto	San Diego Mesa	West Hills Lemoore	State Center
Coastline	Grossmont	Monterey	San Diego Miramar	West LA	Ventura
Columbia	Imperial	Moorpark			West Hills
Compton	Irvine	Moreno Valley	San Francisco	West Valley	Yosemite
Contra Costa	LA City	Mt. San Antonio	San Joaquin Delta	Woodland	Yuba
				Yuba	

*Note.* All colleges participated in both the student and employee surveys except for those with a \* only participated in employee survey or ❖ only participated in student survey.

## **The Research and Planning Group for California Community Colleges (The RP Group)**

As the representative organization for Institutional Research, Planning, and Effectiveness (IRPE) professionals in the California Community Colleges (CCC) system, the RP Group strengthens the ability of CCC to discover and undertake high-quality research, planning, and assessments that improve evidence-based decision-making, institutional effectiveness, and success for all students.

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