

TEACHING & LEARNING IN THE TIME OF COVID-19

RESEARCH BRIEF:

CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS FROM ALAMO COLLEGES DISTRICT
FACULTY AND STUDENTS



December 2020

ABOUT THE URBAN EDUCATION INSTITUTE

OUR MISSION

The Urban Education Institute at UTSA produces scientific research to raise educational attainment, advance economic mobility, and help people achieve their potential in the greater San Antonio region.

We pursue our mission by (1) producing rigorous and actionable analysis that supports education policymaking, program implementation, and philanthropic giving; (2) convening community leaders to address entrenched challenges that harm education and human development; and (3) training the next generation of social scientists and educators to address education challenges through inquiry, analysis, and discovery.

INTRODUCTION

When COVID-19 hit in the spring of 2020, the research team at the Urban Education Institute at UTSA asked: “What can we do to help our community during this public health crisis?” Our answer was to document how COVID-19 affected teaching and learning in San Antonio, with the hope of learning from the experience. This report represents an early look at the Alamo Colleges District’s response to the sudden shift to emergency distance learning in the spring and summer of 2020.

A comprehensive survey effort was used to take the pulse of the five colleges and find out from faculty and students what worked and what didn’t during this unique and unrivaled time. Survey data were collected from full-time and adjunct faculty members, and from full- and part-time students at each of the five colleges. In total, 168 Alamo Colleges instructors and 604 students participated.

The findings in this brief are intended to help college leaders, administrators, and educators plan for intentional distance learning and resource allocations throughout the coming school year – and perhaps beyond. The authors are deeply grateful for the opportunity to play a part in the district’s continued work empowering diverse local communities for educational and career success.

KEY FINDINGS

Alamo College faculty and students faced a number of challenges with the transition to emergency pandemic distance learning, but they appreciated the support they received from the district and each individual campus.



Faculty and students felt supported by Alamo Colleges' early response to the pandemic, which included clear communication and training.

- 55% of faculty felt the “Boot Camp” technology trainings and ongoing IT support were most helpful
- 32% of students felt the college’s consistent, transparent communication (emails, texts, social media) that shared information about COVID-19 and available resources were most helpful



Most faculty felt challenged by the transition to distance learning.

- 45% of faculty said they missed pre-pandemic, in-person student interactions and engagement
- 23% of faculty had issues with internet access, technology, or software



Faculty and students identified synchronous class sessions, purposeful class discussions, and variation in technology tools as among the most engaging approaches to distance teaching & learning.



Alamo College students faced new and difficult socioeconomic realities while trying to keep up with school demands and academics during the pandemic.

- On average 27% of students across all college campuses were food insecure, meaning food ran out and they didn't have money to buy more
- 43% of students experienced job loss or decreased work hours
- Almost half of the students' postsecondary plans were not affected by the pandemic



Recommendations going forward from those surveyed included a need for increased faculty training for using technology platforms and for converting in-person course content to online delivery.

RECOMMENDATIONS



Increase training, resources, and support to develop faculty skills in online instruction



Support faculty's autonomous learning by allowing a degree of flexibility and experimentation with class structure and sizes



Increase resources and support for students, with a focus on meeting basic needs



Improve communication between faculty and those making decisions or among departments to share best practices



Facilitate the development of networked improvement communities to solve issues



Be proactive in assessing faculty and student needs

ALAMO COLLEGES' RESPONSE

When the coronavirus outbreak hit global pandemic scale in March of 2020, the Alamo Colleges District (ACD) quickly prioritized the health and wellness of students and staff. Spring Break was extended a week so faculty and staff could transition to working and teaching remotely. Immediately it was announced that each of the five colleges would provide free Internet access in their parking lots if students needed connectivity. Advisors began reaching out to students about their needs and welfare. Information technology specialists pushed out updates and trainings about accessing work and courses remotely.

This rapid response served to calm the college system community amid an unprecedented time. Communication came in emails, texts, social media, and phone calls and helped bridge what could have been a very chaotic transition into fully remote learning. Instead, those most affected told survey researchers they felt cared for and informed. This foundation of trust, flexibility, and transparency has gone on to serve ACD well during a protracted pandemic.

WHAT DID FACULTY AND STUDENTS FIND MOST HELPFUL?



55%

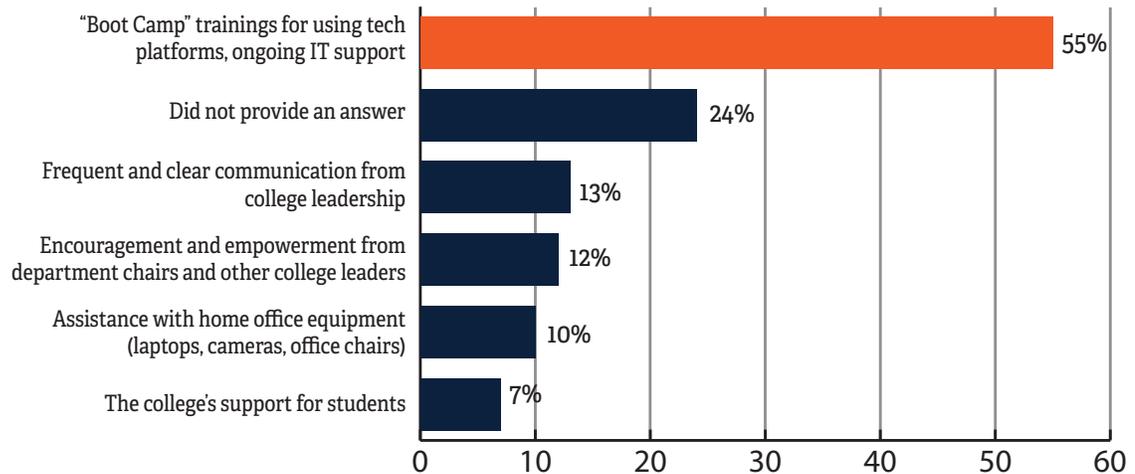
OF FACULTY FELT THE
**BOOTCAMP
TRAININGS**
FOR USING TECH PLATFORMS
AND ONGOING IT SUPPORT WERE
MOST HELPFUL



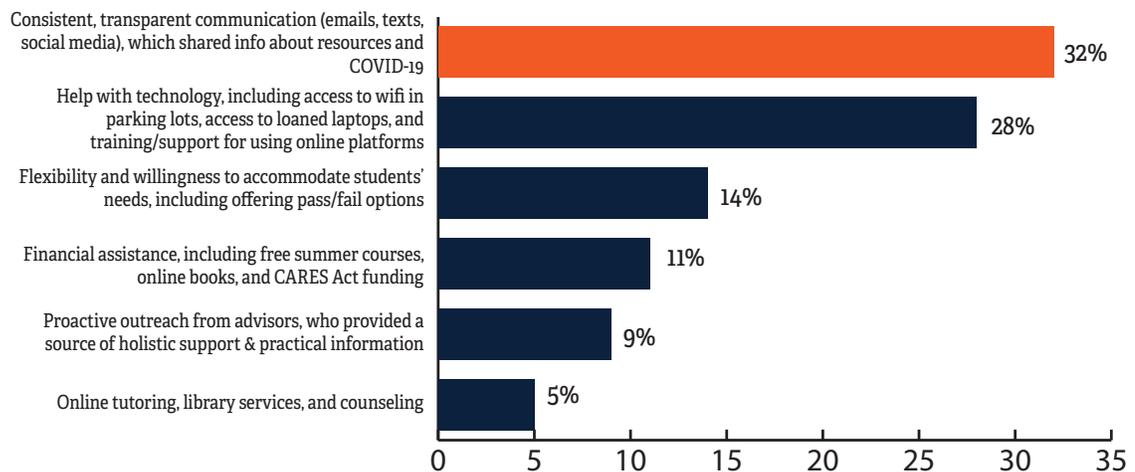
32%

OF STUDENTS FELT
THE COLLEGES'
**CONSISTENT
COMMUNICATION**
WAS MOST HELPFUL

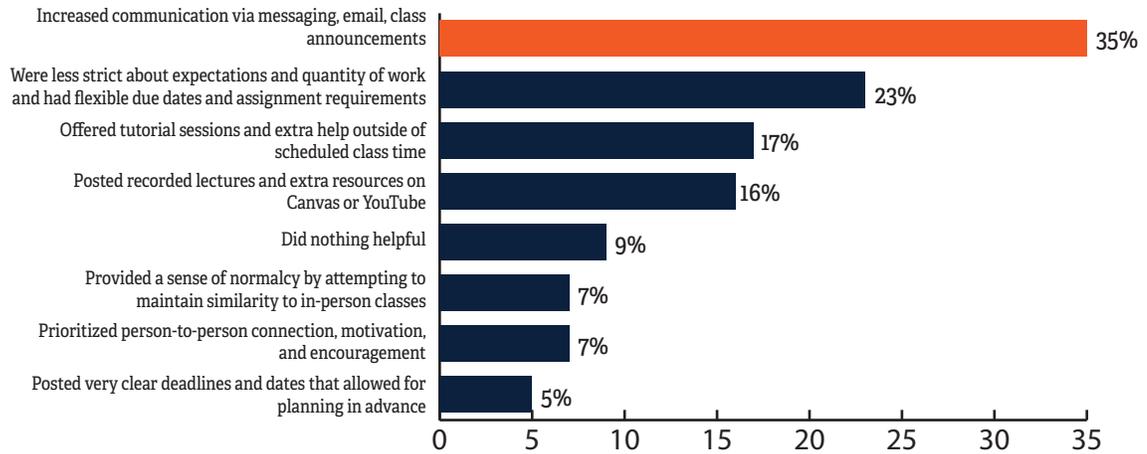
FACULTY: WHAT WAS MOST HELPFUL?



STUDENTS: WHAT WAS MOST HELPFUL?



STUDENTS: WHAT DID INSTRUCTORS DO TO BE HELPFUL?



WHAT THEY SAID a sampling of responses

WHAT FACULTY SAID WAS MOST HELPFUL:

“Our IT department remained in continual communication with everyone offering mini tutorial sessions, and consistently updating everyone on new ways of making our transition easier and smooth. They also always answered the phone when called upon.” – Adjunct Professor, Northeast Lakeview College

“[The college provided] extreme support for the students. There was a process to follow if any of our students had IT problems from e-texts to internet access. They responded immediately to all my referrals.” – Adjunct Professor, Northeast Lakeview College

“Our faculty got great support from our supervisors, coordinators and chairs. They were open, honest and available which encouraged us to be as well.” – Adjunct Professor, Northwest Vista College

WHAT STUDENTS SAID WAS MOST HELPFUL:

“The payment plans were helpful. The incentive to help pay for expenses helped. The advisors were very hands-on and responded to my emails within hours. My advisor was great and updated me a lot.” – Northeast Lakeview College full-time student

“Getting two free summer classes was amazing! I wasn’t planning on taking summer classes, but when they offered them it was like, ‘How could I not take those?’ The money they sent to us helped a lot. I know for some people, it’s been so hard getting through this. I also think the communication from the school has been good with both text and email.” – Northeast Lakeview College part-time student

“[The college] had a lot of resources. They never made you feel alone. The school was always sending resources. Just knowing they were there was helpful for me, through it all. They understood that we were having a hard time but said, ‘Hey, we’re going to get through this.’” – Northwest Vista College full-time student

“My advisor was always emailing me to see if I was okay, or if I needed any help. I’ve been seeing weekly updates about the virus and about campus plans for reopening. I really liked that – it was very informative.” – Northwest Vista College full-time student

“The tech people were really awesome. I called the IT department, and they walked me through everything. My advisor was very understanding. When I wanted to drop a class, he encouraged me not to. Through his work and wisdom, I ended up enrolling in Summer 1 and Summer 2. I couldn’t see myself not going back.” – Palo Alto College full-time student

“[The college] kept us up-to-date with everything going on. They were very supportive. I am proud to go to college at SAC.” – San Antonio College part-time student

“Alamo Colleges offered wifi hotspots in their parking lot if we needed it. I utilized that regularly. That was my main source of internet. They offer great tutoring programs that have really helped me.” – St. Philip’s College part-time student



FACULTY CHALLENGES

Faculty indicated that most of their early challenges centered around adapting lessons that are typically dependent on in-person student engagement to the digital, remote world. In particular, they said they missed interacting with students and had to seek new ways to support social and emotional connections with them. Some faculty experienced issues with technology access and use, but most found their college responsive and ready with necessary training or help.

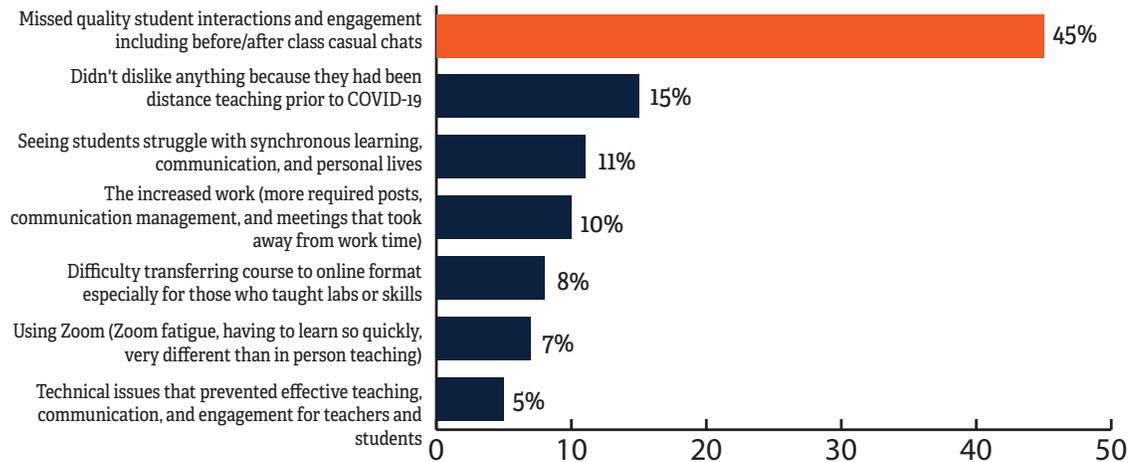
WHAT DID FACULTY DISLIKE ABOUT DISTANCE TEACHING?



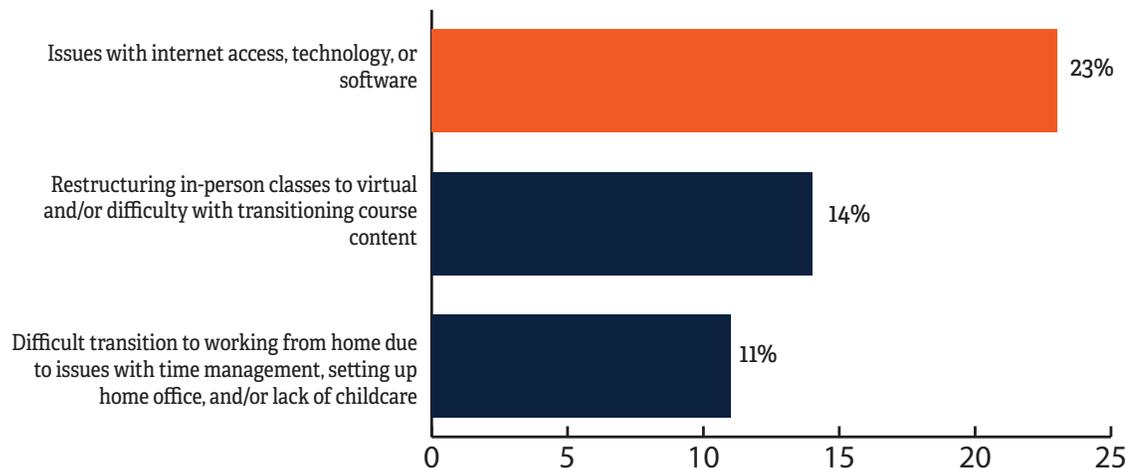
45%

OF FACULTY SAID THEY
MISSED
PRE-PANDEMIC,
IN-PERSON
STUDENT INTERACTIONS
AND ENGAGEMENT

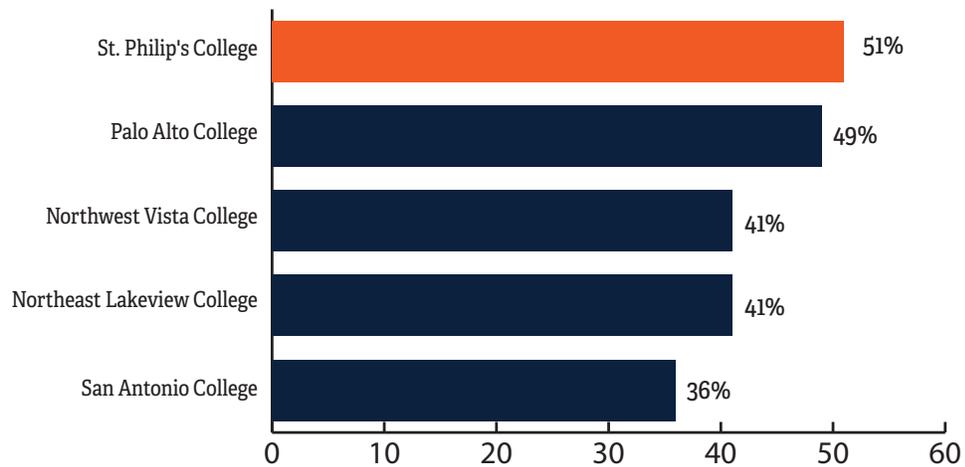
FACULTY: WHAT DID YOU DISLIKE ABOUT DISTANCE TEACHING?



FACULTY: WHAT WAS MOST CHALLENGING?



FACULTY FREQUENCY OF EARLY CHALLENGES WITH DISTANCE TEACHING



WHAT THEY SAID a sampling of responses

WHAT FACULTY SAID WAS CHALLENGING:

“I strongly dislike that I am talking to a ‘wall.’ Students have control of their videos being on or off, therefore, I no longer am able to engage and make eye contact with them. As a math professor, my video camera is on my hands and what I am writing on; therefore, they do not get to see my face either. As the spring semester neared the end, not one student had a video camera on and I was literally talking to myself. There is really no way to change this, nor make this teaching method easier. If there is, I’d love to hear about it!” – Adjunct Professor, Northeast Lakeview College

“I do not like that my higher ups think that since there is no traveling involved that they can schedule meetings literally back-to-back.” – Adjunct Professor, Northeast Lakeview College

"I do not like that I have no physical human interaction with my colleagues, even more so my students. I miss this part for sure about my job." – Adjunct Professor, Northeast Lakeview College

"I do not like that since working from home, my work life and home life are mixing. I am noticing that I need to set an alarm to tell myself to "come home," otherwise I lose track of time and end up working way more than anticipated, and I am not getting paid for those extra hours put in." – Adjunct Professor, Northeast Lakeview College

"Lack of connection with the students. I was drained after each and every class. The flat instruction to black screens was dreadful. " – Adjunct Professor, Northeast Lakeview College

"I felt like I was attached to my computer and was working all hours of the day to try to accommodate my students' needs." – Adjunct Professor, Northeast Lakeview College

"I don't like having to struggle with my time that I give my students and having to find the time to parent at home as well." – Adjunct Professor, Northwest Vista College

"I enjoy teaching in a distance learning environment. The only thing I dislike is that sometimes it is challenging to effectively communicate with students who are not doing well in the course. Face-to-face is much easier when communicating with students who may not be doing well." – Adjunct Professor, Palo Alto College

“I had the most stress about having to sit in the same position in front of my computer class after class after class with no chance to move around during the lesson presentation. It was also difficult to determine how many students were engaged in the lesson.” – Full-Time Professor, Palo Alto College

“The difficulty in demonstrating and evaluating hands-on skills and the student lack of exposure to clinical and lab experience.” – Adjunct Professor, San Antonio College

“Lack of contact with the students. Over half of my students had small children at home and could not meet at the regularly schedule class time. I had to learn how to make lecture videos and upload those videos so those students could access the material.” – Full-Time Professor, St. Philip’s College

“Being micromanaged by an administration that told us we had to teach the course a certain way when the administration had no idea of the issues we were encountering.” – Full-Time Professor, St. Philip’s College

ENGAGING APPROACHES TO TEACHING & LEARNING

Alamo Colleges students and faculty demonstrated great resilience amid the unexpected shift to distance learning. They reported finding new ways to engage with each other and with class material. Students said sessions where they could meet virtually with peers and instructors “live” at the same time, known as synchronous learning, were most beneficial. Faculty said they learned new ways to deliver content with video and audio recordings. They said students seemed to respond most favorably to small group discussions in virtual breakout rooms and group project work.

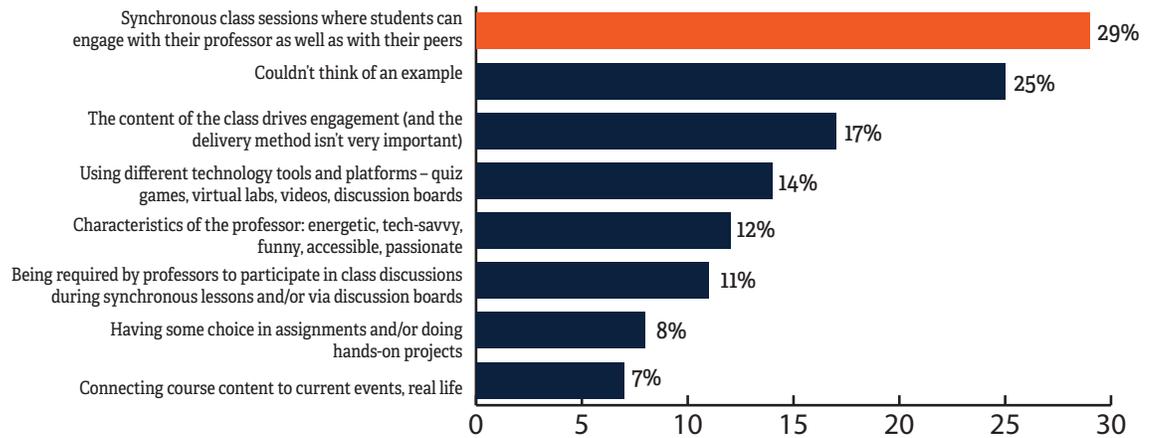
WHAT DID STUDENTS FIND MOST ENGAGING?



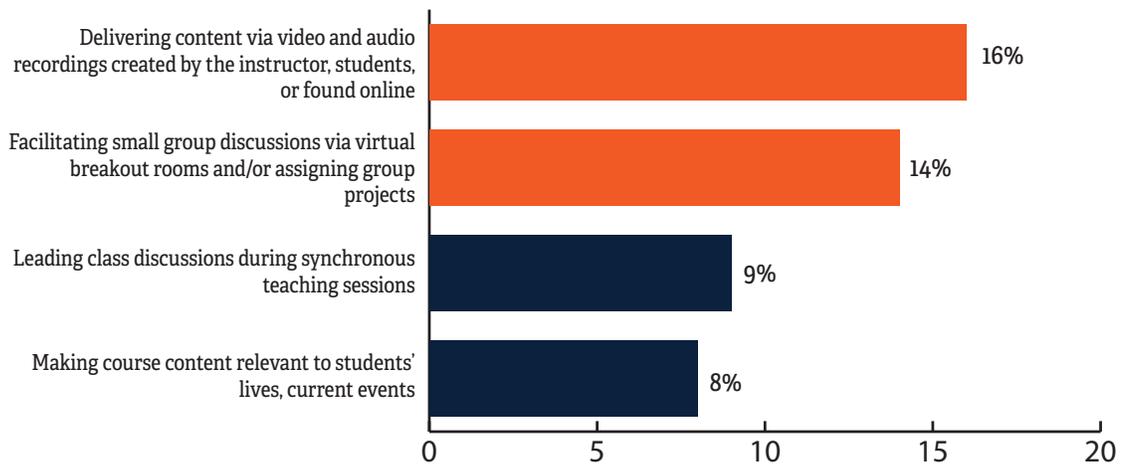
29%

OF STUDENTS SAID
SYNCHRONOUS
CLASS SESSIONS
WHERE STUDENTS COULD
ENGAGE
WITH PROFESSORS AND PEERS
WERE MOST ENGAGING

STUDENTS: WHAT MADE LESSONS MORE ENGAGING

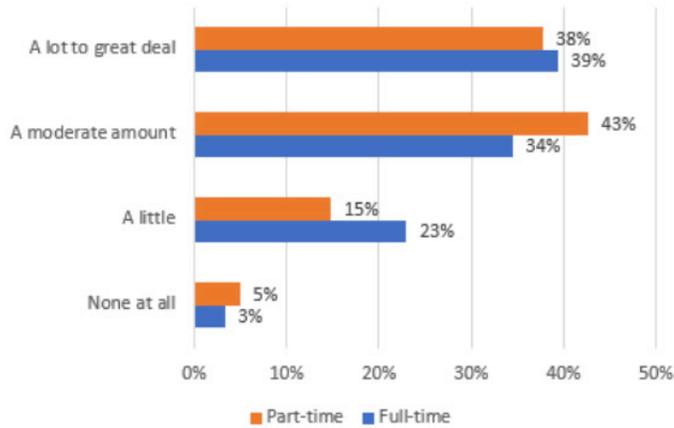


FACULTY: WHAT MADE LESSONS MORE ENGAGING

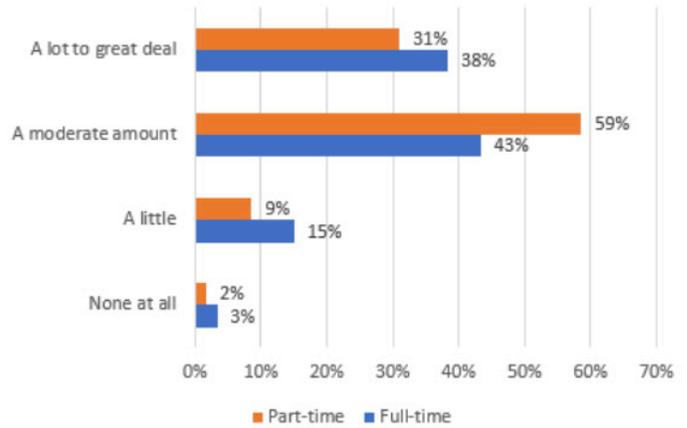


PERCENT OF STUDENTS WHO GAINED NEW KNOWLEDGE & SKILLS DURING DISTANCE LEARNING

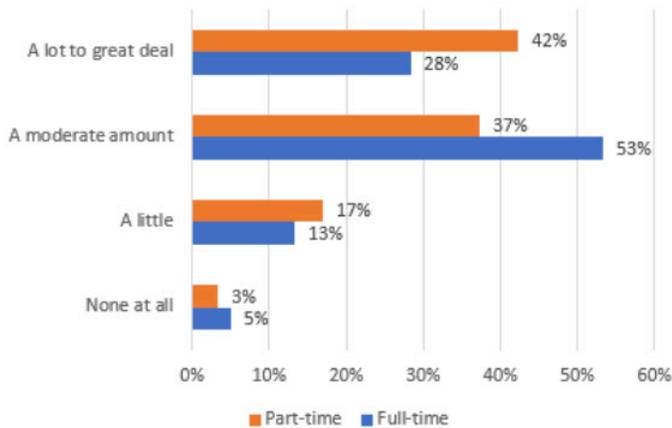
NORTHEAST LAKEVIEW COLLEGE



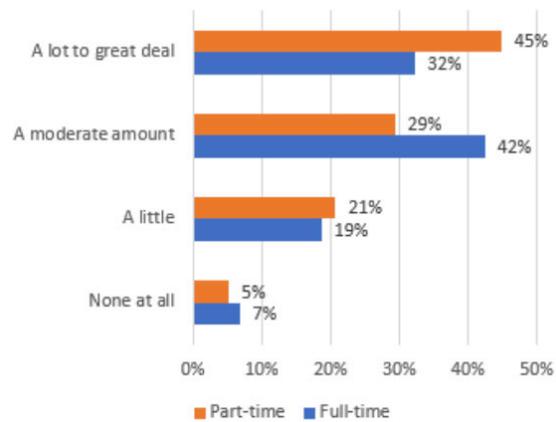
NORTHWEST VISTA COLLEGE



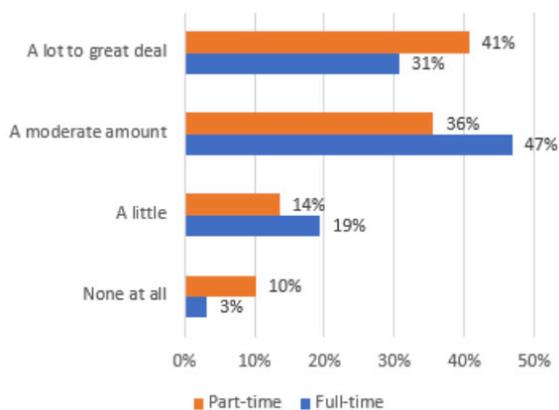
PALO ALTO COLLEGE



SAN ANTONIO COLLEGE



ST. PHILIP'S COLLEGE

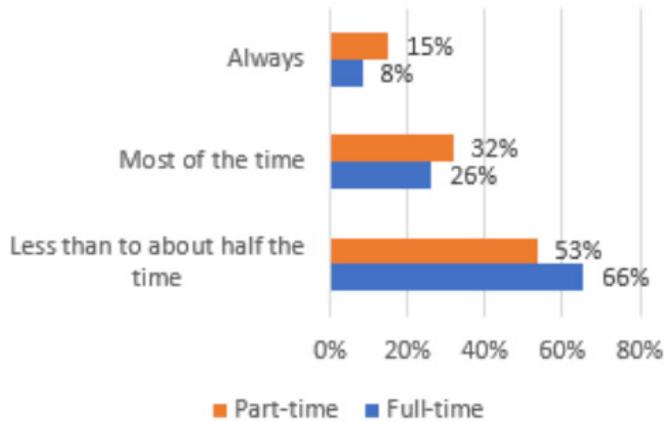


COMMON THEMES of what students learned:

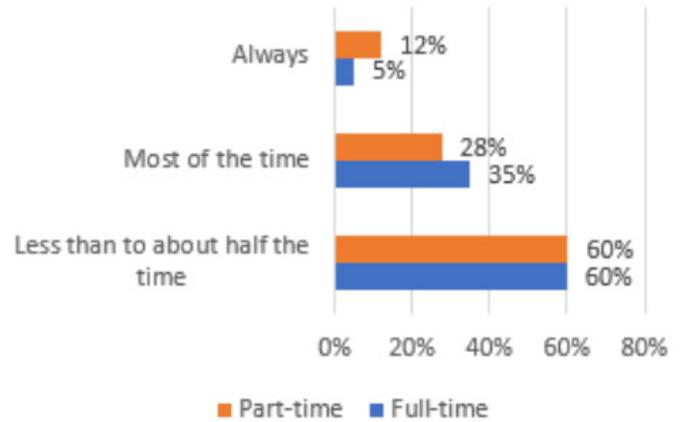
- New technology skills (especially Zoom and Canvas)
- Better time management & organization
- Improved self-discipline
- Taking charge of finding resources and “figuring things out”
- How to write more effective emails

FREQUENCY OF LESSONS THAT GRABBED STUDENTS' ATTENTION AND MOVED THEM FORWARD IN THEIR LEARNING

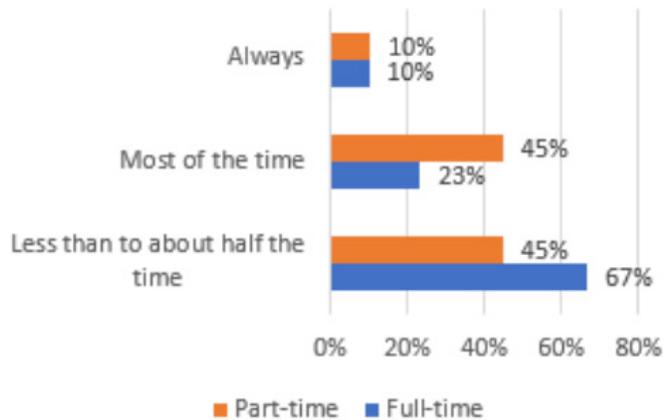
NORTHEAST LAKEVIEW COLLEGE



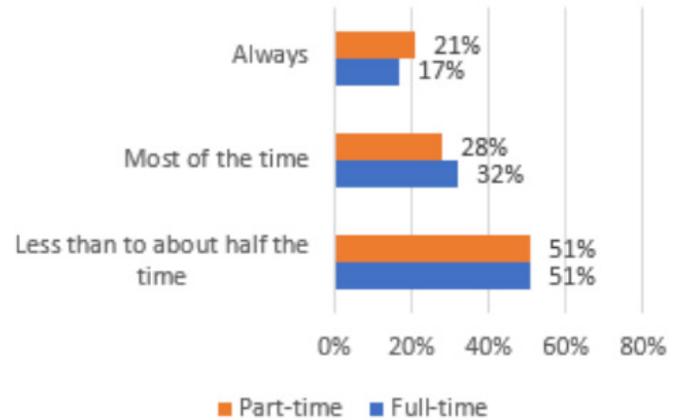
NORTHWEST VISTA COLLEGE



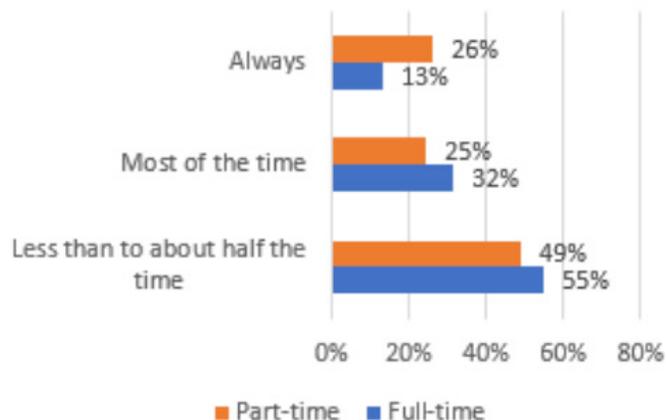
PALO ALTO COLLEGE



SAN ANTONIO COLLEGE

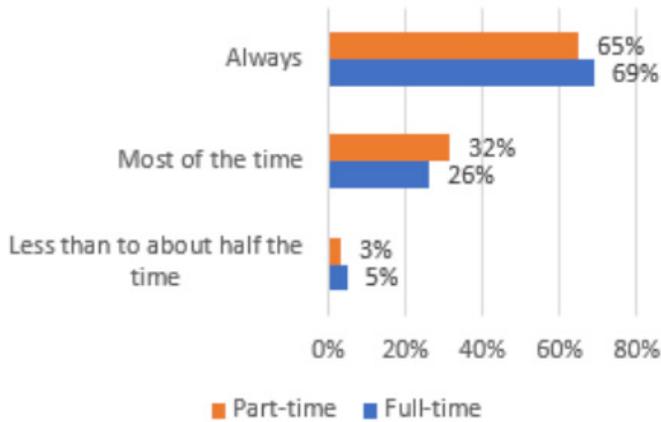


ST. PHILIP'S COLLEGE

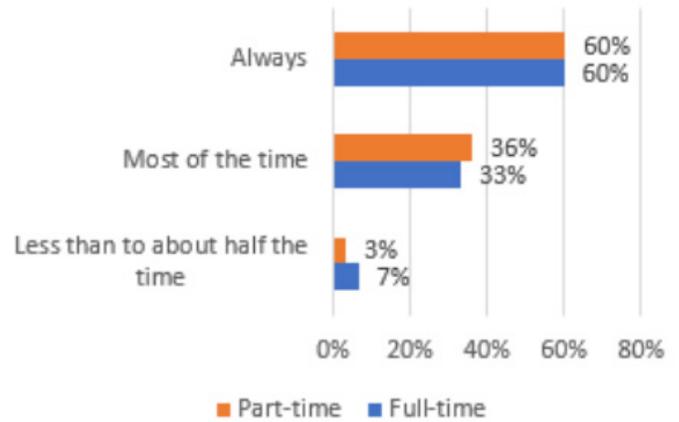


STUDENTS: FREQUENCY OF TURNED IN SCHOOL ASSIGNMENTS DURING DISTANCE LEARNING

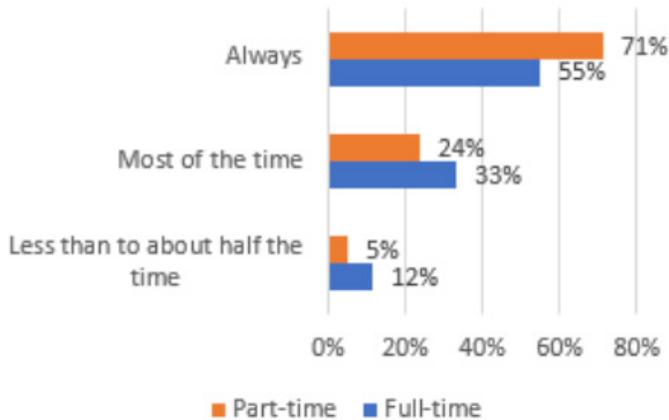
NORTHEAST LAKEVIEW COLLEGE



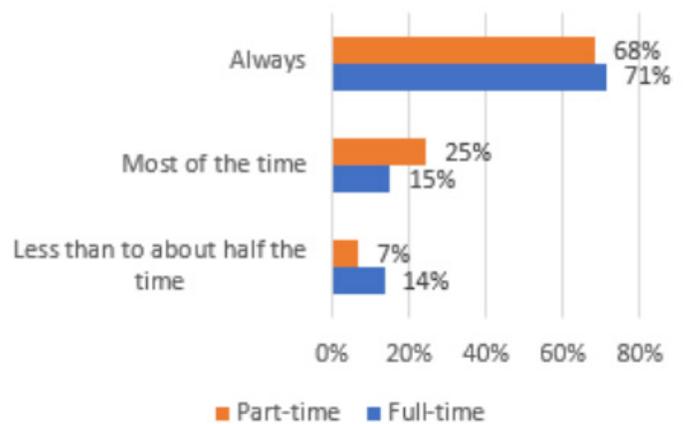
NORTHWEST VISTA COLLEGE



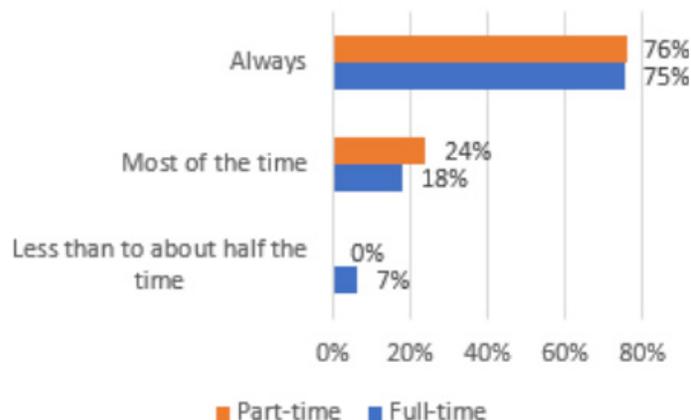
PALO ALTO COLLEGE



SAN ANTONIO COLLEGE



ST. PHILIP'S COLLEGE



WHAT THEY SAID

a sampling of responses

WHAT FACULTY SAID MADE LESSONS MORE ENGAGING:

“Students had positive feedback about group presentations, surprisingly. The ability for them to meet together in small groups, learn and organize material, and then share that material with the class was well received by observers and classmates.”

– Full-Time Professor, Northwest Vista College

“[Students were most engaged] when it was a topic that related to their day-to-day lives, past and present.” – Adjunct Professor, Northeast Lakeview College

“[I used] PowerPoint with my voice recorded, YouTube videos, and free textbook sections for reading. The most engaging behaviors on my part were to be extremely flexible, encouraging, welcoming, and sincere in what was happening during that time.” – Full-Time Professor, Palo Alto College

WHAT STUDENTS SAID MADE LESSONS MORE ENGAGING:

“[Class was engaging when] we had productive Zoom class discussions. I think they should make it mandatory for students to have their cameras on during class.”

– Northeast Lakeview College full-time student

“Zoom classes were the most engaging. We were able to see the professor and the other students. We could see examples of the assignments and then we could interact with each other.” - Palo Alto College full-time student

“Online classes were way more engaging because people actually participated online during discussions. During Zoom, everyone had so many questions, as opposed to in person. Many people feel more comfortable speaking out when they turned off their video and just spoke behind a blank screen.” – St. Philip’s College part-time student

“My Texas government class was engaging because it aligned with current events. It would show up on the news and then show up in the lesson. That was very engaging.”
– San Antonio College part-time student



WORK, HOME, AND FINANCES

Research into pandemic learning and teaching would be incomplete without a look at the socioeconomic issues that community college students and staff faced during this time. As a community institution, ACD bridges divides for students – not just with technology and learning – but also with food, safety, and security. Each of the five campuses provided emergency financial aid grants to students whose lives were disrupted due to COVID-19. Food and other resources were distributed and counseling was given. These things helped students, many of whom lost jobs or had their hours cut due to the pandemic.

ACD STUDENTS AND FOOD INSECURITY

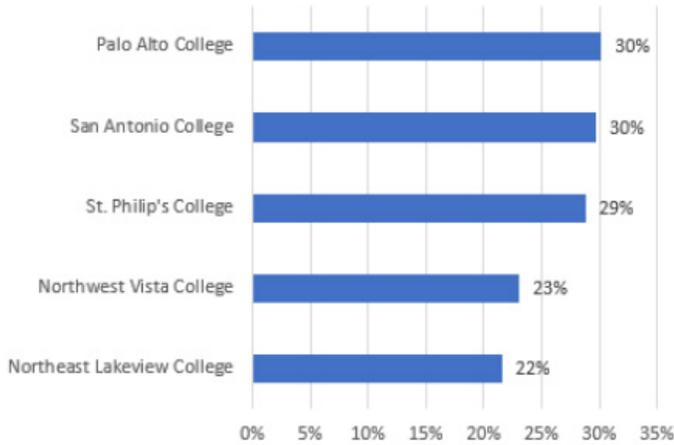


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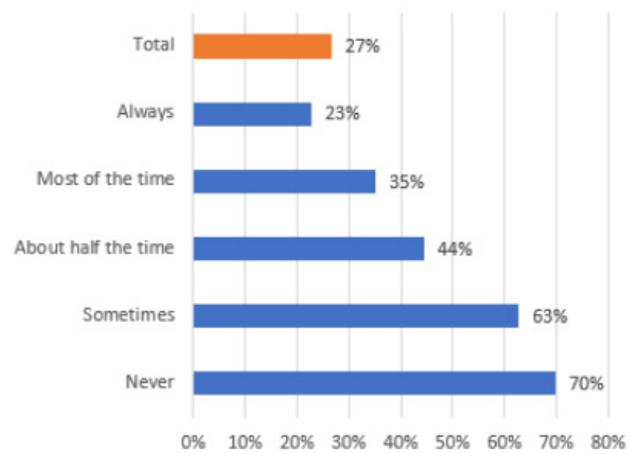
OF STUDENTS ON AVERAGE
**EXPERIENCED
FOOD INSECURITY**
ACROSS ALL CAMPUSES

STUDENTS: FOOD INSECURITY

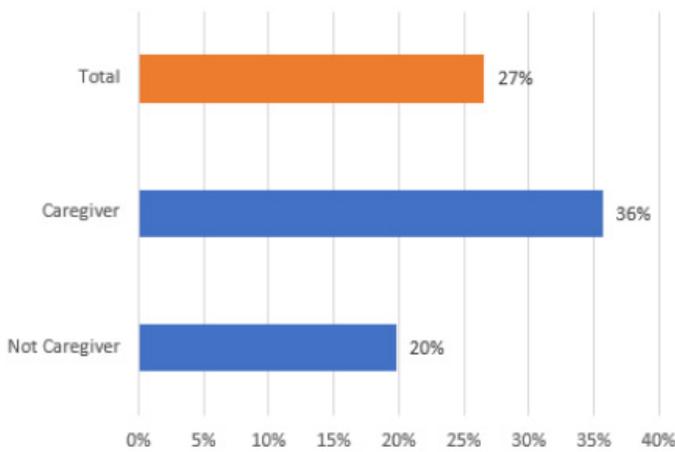
FOOD INSECURE BY CAMPUS



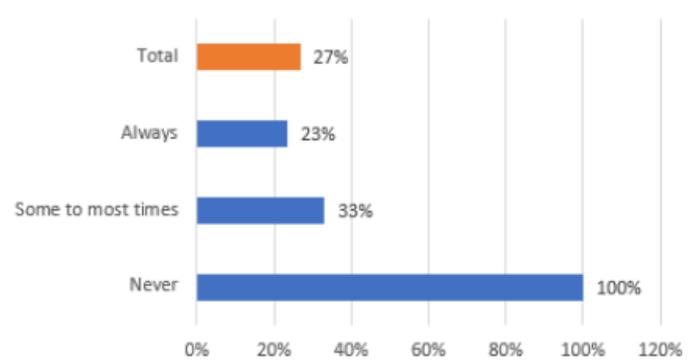
FOOD INSECURE BY INTERNET ACCESS



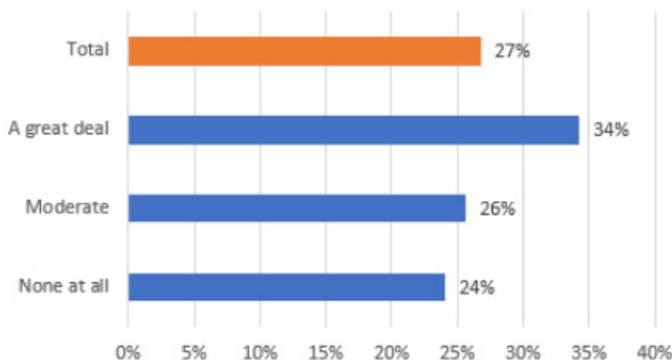
FOOD INSECURE BY CAREGIVING STATUS



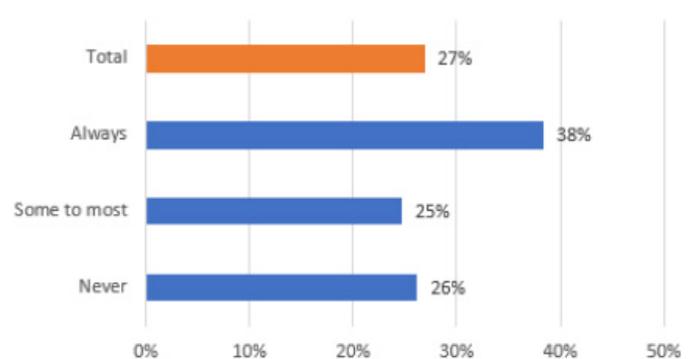
FOOD INSECURE BY SCHOOL ASSIGNMENT COMPLETION



FOOD INSECURE BY AMOUNT OF NEW KNOWLEDGE



FOOD INSECURE BY ATTENTION GRABBING LESSONS



WHAT THEY SAID a sampling of responses

WHAT STUDENTS SAID ABOUT FOOD INSECURITY:

"[My family was] badly affected. Like trying to decide between eating for the rest of the month and buying my mother's insulin. We had to reach out and get help from organizations that help disabled veterans in order to pay bills." - Northeast Lakeview College full-time student

"We had very little food for a while and we had a smaller income due to less hours at work." - Palo Alto College full-time student

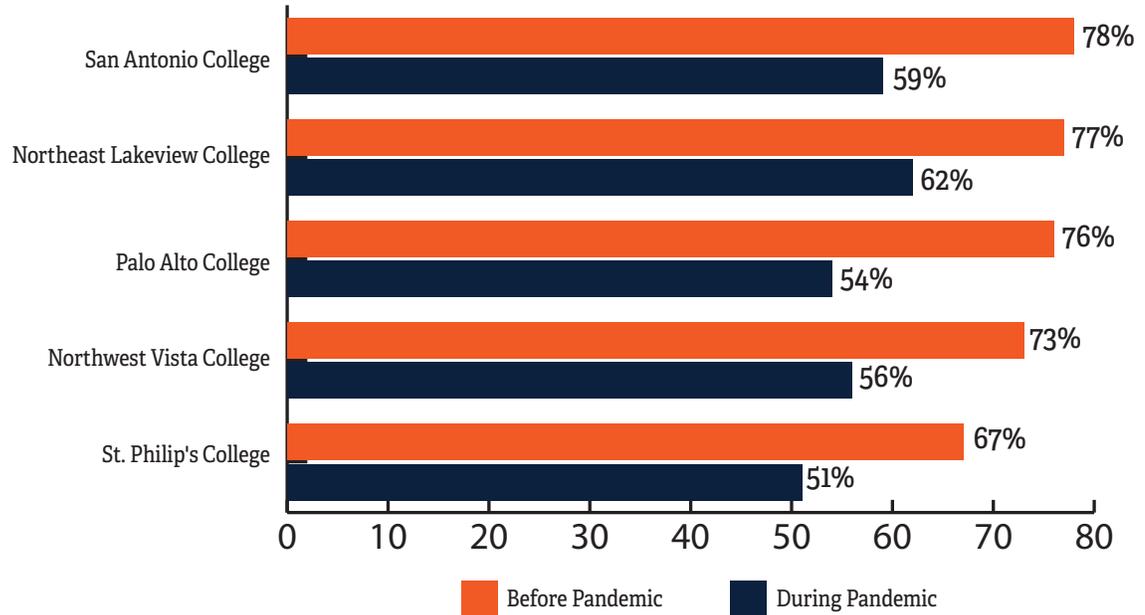
"Well, considering that I support myself, losing my job was a big thing. Being on unemployment really helped. I did struggle a bit because of rent and groceries, but I managed." - Palo Alto College full-time student

"We have no income, no daycare, and not enough food stamps to be able to sustain food for the week." - Palo Alto College part-time student

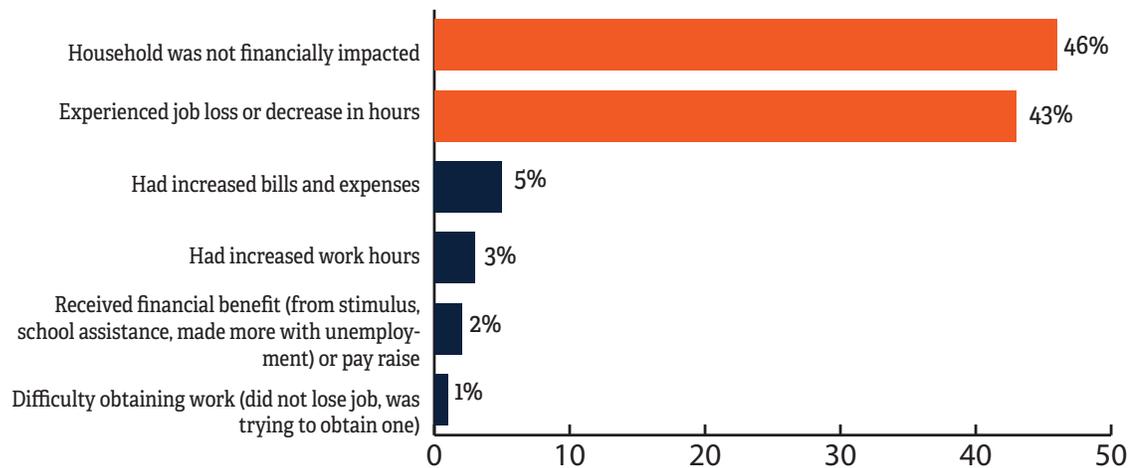
"[My family] was majorly affected. Mostly because we got laid off and others were only working a few days a week. There was really no way to pay for groceries or food. We could barely pay the bills." - San Antonio College part-time student

"Both my parents had moved to remote working and they had to figure out a workspace. My parents didn't have any issues buying groceries, but for me as a college student, I often didn't have enough money for groceries." - Northwest Vista College full-time student

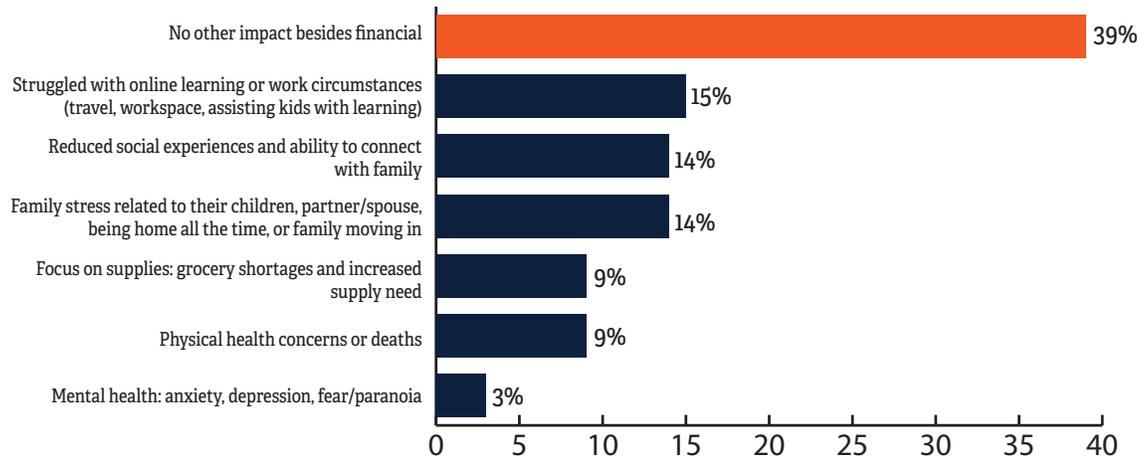
STUDENTS: EMPLOYMENT STATUS



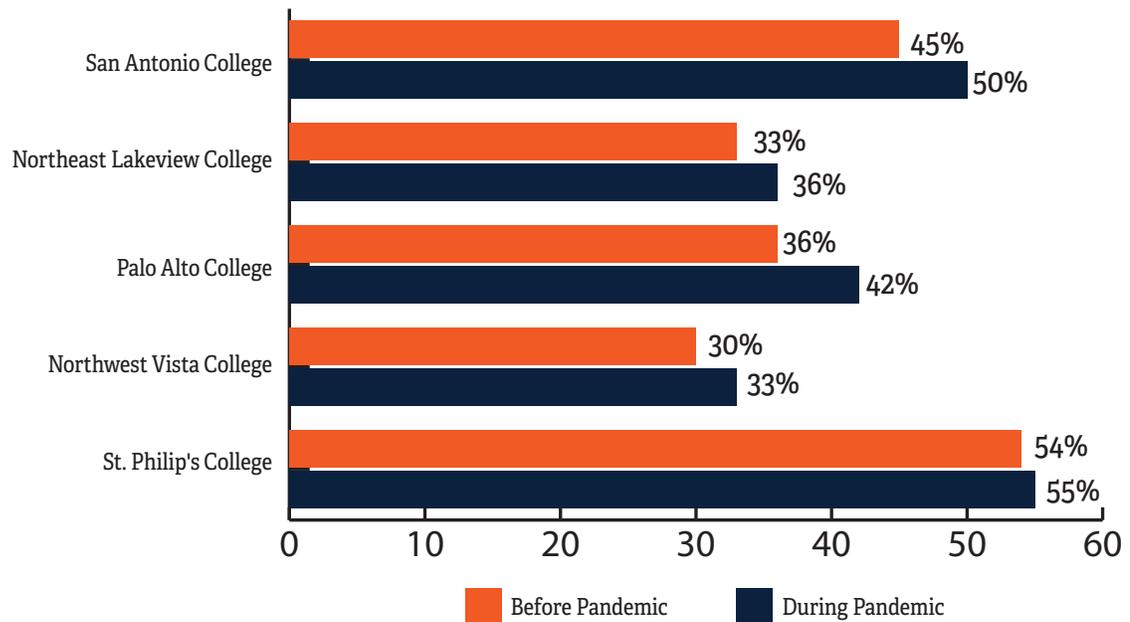
STUDENTS: FINANCIAL IMPACTS ON HOUSEHOLDS



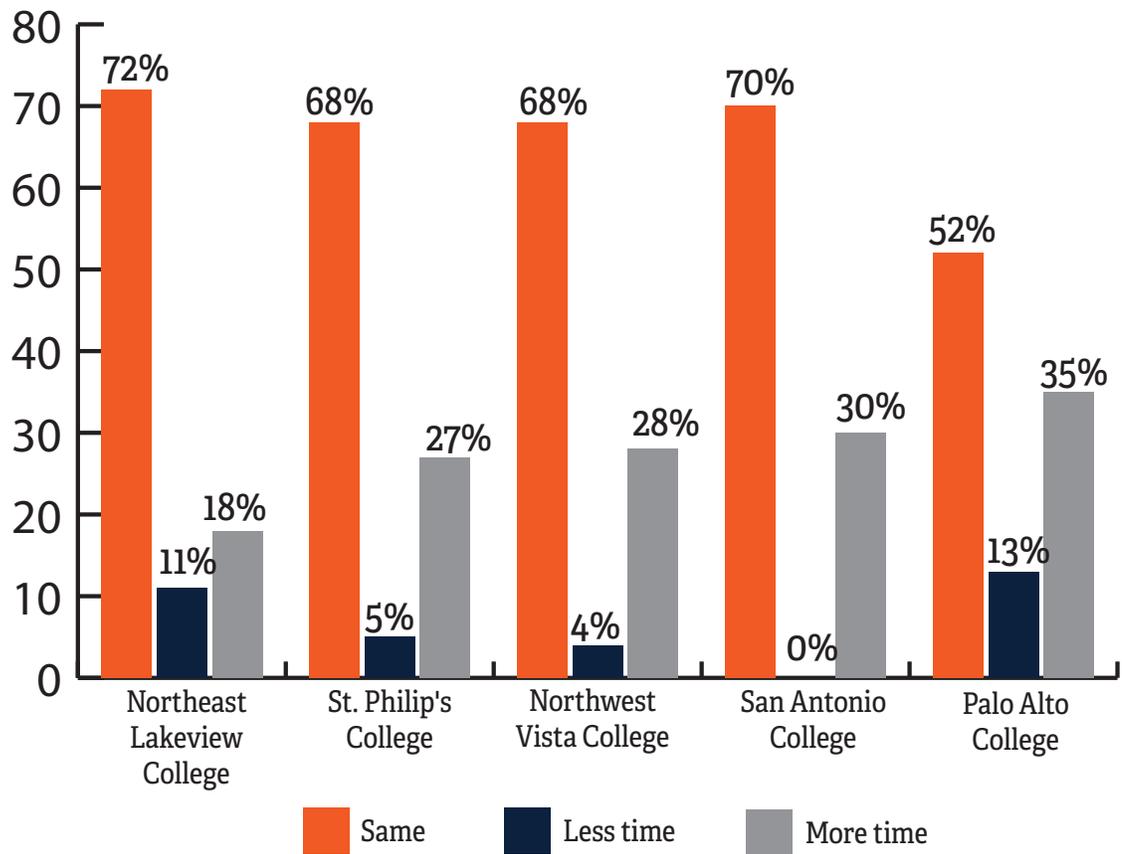
STUDENTS: OTHER IMPACTS/CHALLENGES ON HOUSEHOLDS

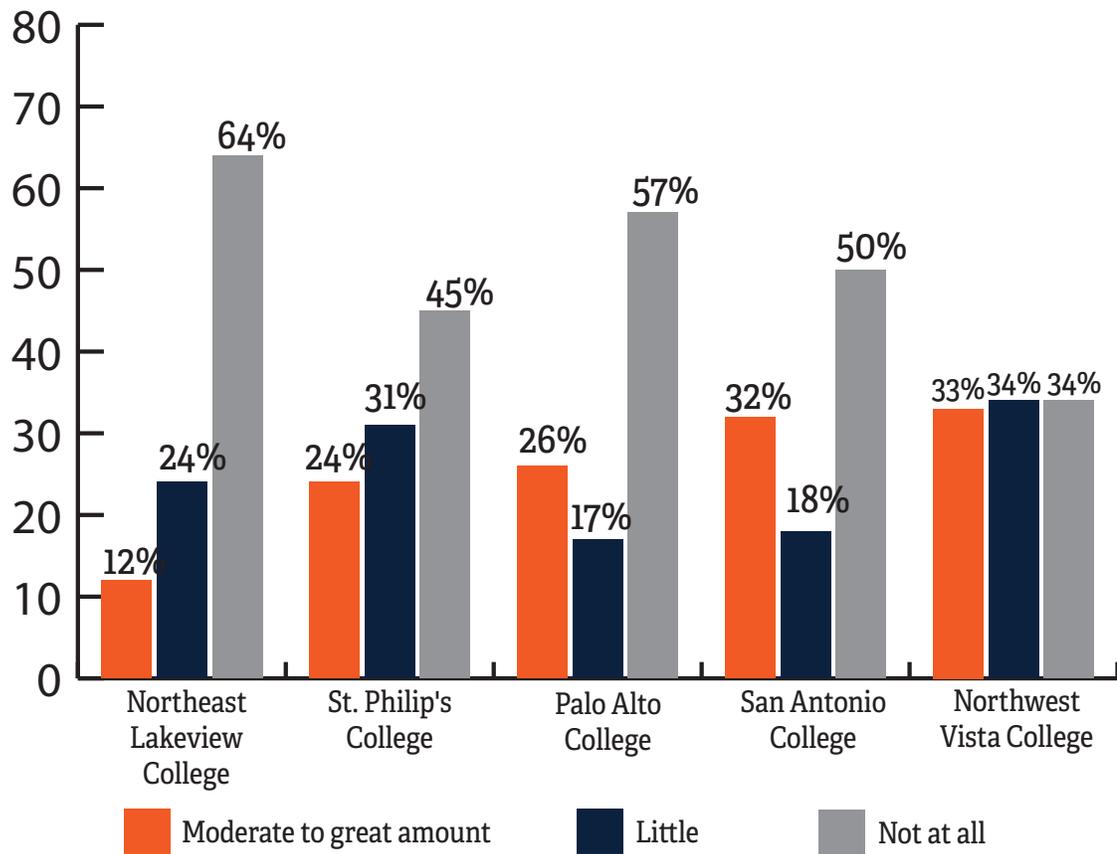


STUDENTS WITH CAREGIVING RESPONSIBILITIES



FACULTY WITH CAREGIVING RESPONSIBILITIES: FREQUENCY DURING PANDEMIC COMPARED TO PRE-PANDEMIC



FACULTY: CAREGIVING IMPACT ON TEACHING

WHAT THEY SAID

a sampling of responses

WHAT STUDENTS SAID ABOUT THE SOCIAL/ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC

“Well, we are all essential [workers]. Our workload increased, so it was a challenge for me to be able to balance the academics and the work.” - Northeast Lakeview College full-time student

“Both of my parents took pay cuts. I was still working at the beginning of COVID, and I’m not working anymore and it was hard to keep money. My 9-year-old sister had to go get a laptop. We are still dealing with the pay cut and still needing resources to continue learning.” - Northwest Vista College full-time student

“It’s just my dad and me. He was able to keep working and we were lucky he still had his job. We weren’t affected financially.” – San Antonio College full-time student

“We were greatly affected. I stopped having an income. The school kept us from drowning. Prior to COVID, we weren’t even in the water. We were good. It really affected us. Without the school and state’s help, we would have been up the creek.”
– St. Philip’s College full-time student

“Well, I’m no longer working. My boyfriend lost his job. My mom’s job got moved online, but she lost her second job. My stepdad is still working but at reduced hours. No one is hiring right now. Financially, it sucks.” – Northeast Lakeview College full-time student

“So my mom lost her job, my schedule was reduced. I worked like 15 hours a week. Then my grandma moved in so we could take care of her. It was harder. She’s been battling breast cancer and I’ve been helping out more with her.” – Northeast Lakeview College full-time student

“It was affected big time we had a reduction in work hours. And having to pay for internet was big blow to our finances.” – Northeast Lakeview College part-time student

“They cut my hours, so that was financially hard. Also having my kids here full time was hard. My bills are extremely high because more water and electricity were being used.” – Palo Alto College full-time student

“Dramatically, I lost my job, my husband got diagnosed with congestive heart failure and other illnesses, and the bills are piling up.” – Palo Alto College part-time student

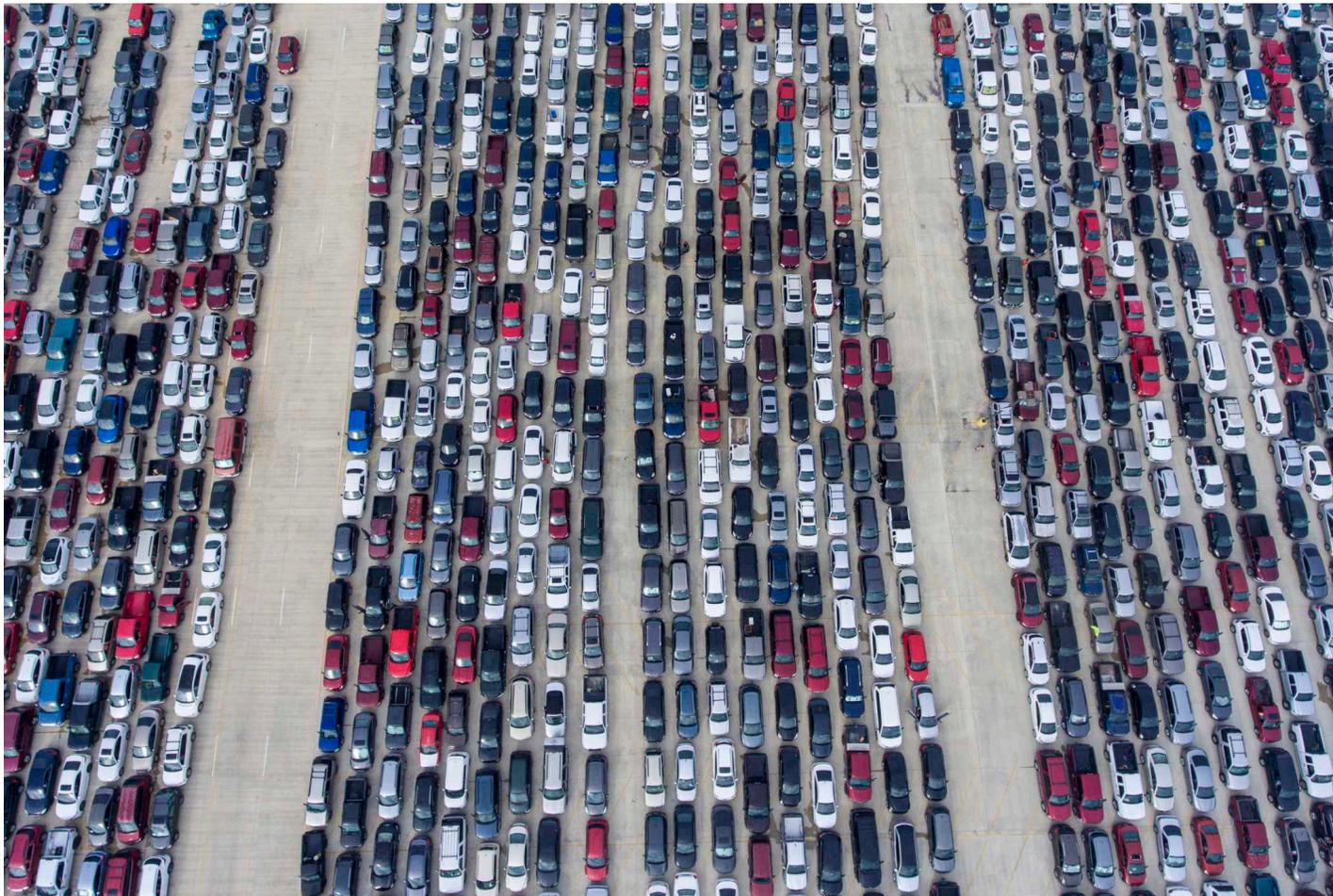
“I have four younger siblings, and they’re all in school. They all needed laptops, and only two of us had them. Three of them had to get laptops, and it was a lot to help all the kids. I have school, and my mom worked 8-5. My sister in high school was too busy to help. I had to help them with school when my mom was working. It was a computer class, but they didn’t have the laptops to do the work.” – Northwest Vista College full-time student

“It was very isolating and lonely. It was like being in a cage.” – Palo Alto College full-time student

“Definitely emotional stress. I suffer from anxiety so it was really hard to adjust to the social changes.” – San Antonio College full-time student

“Not having time to study with other people around. It’s hard to study and do classwork with a house full of people.” – St. Philip’s College full-time student

“I had to focus on my kids. I came home from a full-time job to have to help them with all their schoolwork. I was often so tired I couldn’t complete my own schoolwork. I was able to get food from friends at our church. If that wasn’t an option, I would have had to pick up a second job to make ends meet.” – St. Philip’s College part-time student



Thousands wait at a San Antonio Food Bank distribution at Traders Village in April 2020, a reflection of the economic hardship here. Photo courtesy William Luther/San Antonio Express News

POSTSECONDARY PLANS

The coronavirus pandemic understandably sent shocks through the nation's higher education system and its full effects won't be understood for some time. Almost half of Alamo Colleges students surveyed said the pandemic did not impact their postsecondary plans, but 14 percent did report changing majors or course schedules. That same share of students, 14 percent, said they were uncertain or stressed about their future due to jobs, kids, relationships, finance, safety, and health.

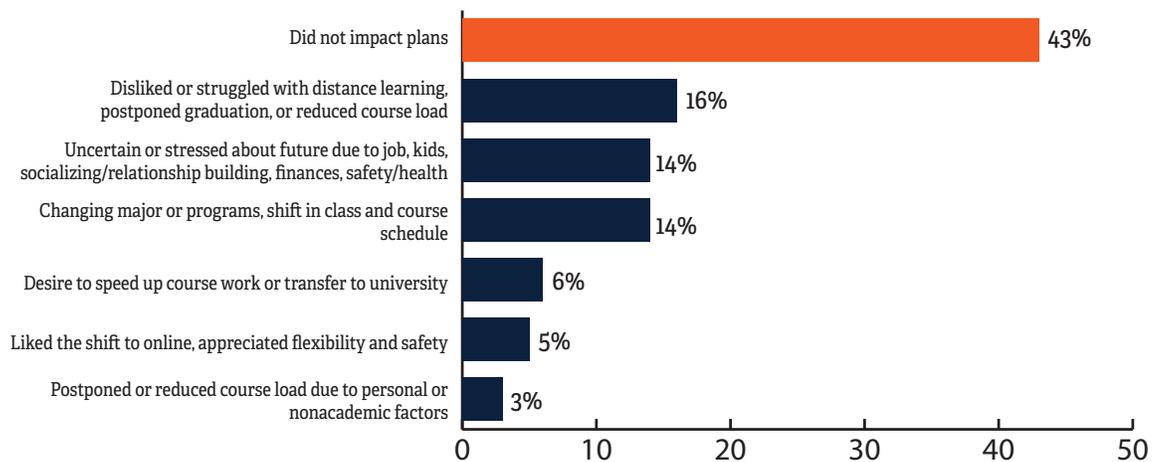
PANDEMIC'S IMPACT ON STUDENTS' POSTSECONDARY PLANS



43%

OF STUDENTS'
POSTSECONDARY
PLANS
WERE NOT
AFFECTED
BY THE PANDEMIC

STUDENTS: IMPACT ON POSTSECONDARY PLANS



WHAT THEY SAID a sampling of responses

WHAT STUDENTS SAID ABOUT HOW THE PANDEMIC AFFECTED THEIR POSTSECONDARY PLANS:

“I’m not sure if I will be going or not because I’m not sure if it will be online. If it’s online I will take less classes than I normally would. Or instead of taking something like biology that I would want to do in-person, I might just take an easier class. I’m kind of still scared to go back in person but I’m such a hands-on learner.” – Northeast Lakeview College part-time student

“I had to put school on the back burner because I have a lot of family members here and I am also a newlywed. I have to balance things here at home because my wife’s a respiratory nurse and not here to help as often at home.” – Northeast Lakeview College part-time student

“I was already enrolled in school and planned on applying to a Bachelor Science in Nursing. When the pandemic hit, many people were out of work except for “essential workers. This solidified my goal of being a nurse. No matter what is going on in the world, there will always be a need for healthcare. This pandemic made me more dedicated to succeeding.” – Northeast Lakeview College part-time student

“I had a plan to finish my pre-requisites by the end of the year, but now I am taking more physical classes (like chemistry and statistics). I don’t want to have to take them online, because they are harder courses. I want to finish at the end of this year, so I can transfer. It puts a halt on the age I want to be done with everything and have a job.”
– Northwest Vista College part-time student

“Before the pandemic, I already was a struggling student, so I was glad I already dropped my classes and started a new job. I found out college isn’t for me.” – Northwest Vista College part-time student

“You have to go to college in order to be successful and be somebody. Since the pandemic, I’m talking to more people in my field. On LinkedIn, the people I talk to didn’t go to school. They went ahead and did the certifications. I’ve been thinking of dropping out of school. College isn’t cheap. The inflation in the rate for the supply and demand of school has gone up.” – Palo Alto College full-time student

“After 5 years I was ready to go back to school, but then this happened and it was so much harder for me. I failed my classes. It makes me emotional, I was so ready to go back to school. Now, because I failed I’m on academic probation and can’t enroll again until spring 2021. I’m sorry I’m getting emotional. No one has ever asked me about it and I haven’t told my parents.” – San Antonio College full-time student

“As an international student, my plans must be flexible and in accordance with decisions made by the college and government.” – San Antonio College full-time student

“I really wanted to finish this coming semester and graduate, but now it’s going to take another semester. I wanted to take another class, but I don’t know what’s going to happen with work. I’m just uncertain about what’s going to happen with all of this. I don’t know what’s going to happen. I’m worried about my family’s health. I was sick for three days, but I don’t want to get sick again while they are sick. I don’t want to take on too much and end up dropping. I’d rather just stick to that one class.” – San Antonio College part-time student

“It just makes it more difficult to actually decide whether or not to continue my education due to the fact that we aren’t getting the same attention from our professors or being able to ask questions. All of our classes are online and we either have to write the question down and email the professor and wait for a response when it may no longer be needed. Grades were also affected. I’d rather wait so I can ensure I don’t fail or struggle.” – St. Philip’s College full-time student

“My classes require hands-on learning. I couldn’t complete the coursework required of my degree online. I need to be on campus in labs.” – St. Philip’s College full-time student

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR IMPROVEMENT

Faculty and students have been learning and employing new techniques and strategies throughout the sudden shift to distance learning. While 75 percent of students said no improvements were necessary in the process, about 30 percent of faculty indicated a desire for continued technology and teaching trainings. This stemmed mostly from their interest in creating engaging distance learning course content to keep student interest and motivation high.

WHAT IMPROVEMENTS DO FACULTY AND STUDENTS RECOMMEND?



29%

OF FACULTY RECOMMEND
**INCREASING
TRAINING**
RESOURCES AND SUPPORT
FOR FACULTY MEMBERS

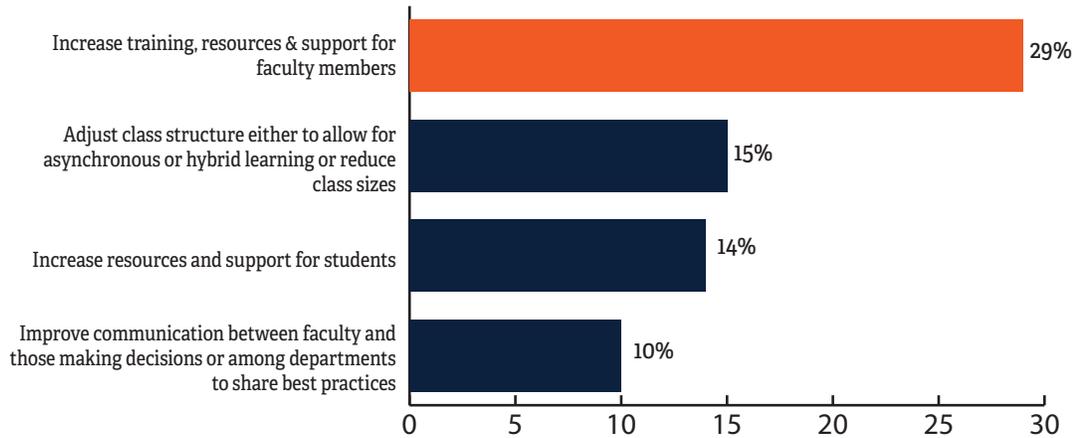


75%

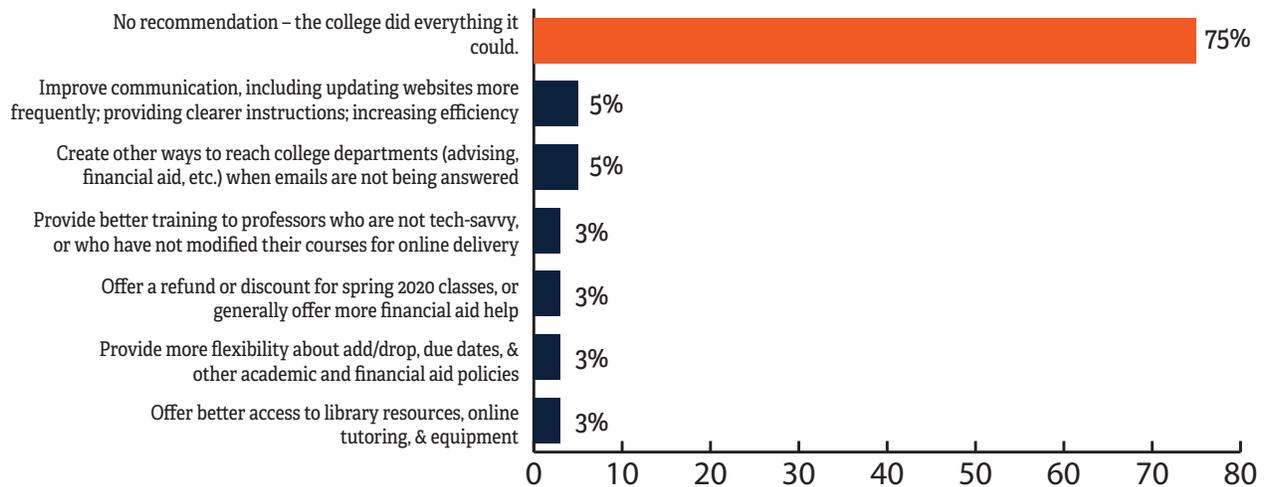
OF STUDENTS SAID

NO
IMPROVEMENTS
WERE NEEDED

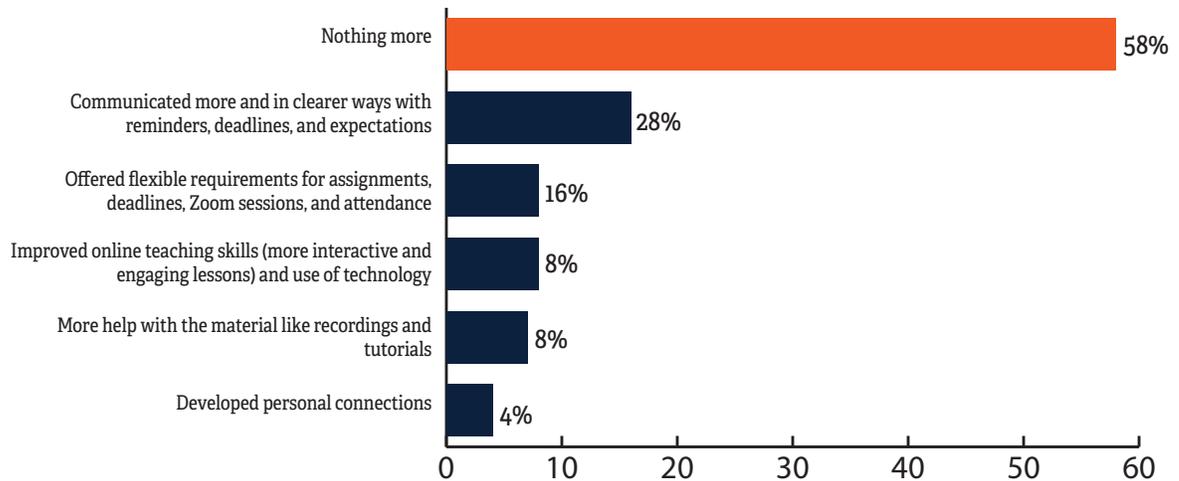
FACULTY RECOMMENDATIONS



STUDENT RECOMMENDATIONS



STUDENTS: WHAT INSTRUCTORS COULD HAVE DONE TO HELP MORE



WHAT THEY SAID a sampling of responses

WHAT FACULTY RECOMMENDED:

“I think that faculty sharing of resources would be incredibly helpful. As I write about restructuring and reconceptualizing, I realize that many of my colleagues are doing the same in their own isolated worlds. If we came together and shared our resources, this would be so much easier for everyone. It would be very helpful for the college to help facilitate this across our campus and other campuses.” – Full-Time Professor, Northwest Vista College

“[I recommend] not requiring us to teach live and synchronous. Allow the instructor the flexibility to teach a more hybrid model or asynchronous online if that fits more with our teaching style. I think I am going to be required to teach synchronously live and I am dreading it.” – Adjunct Professor, Northwest Vista College

“[Faculty need] different levels of support for the various levels of personal online expertise for the instructors. Some need more guidance than others, and due to pride or basic human nature it can be difficult for those who do need more to reach out and ask. Just because all the help you need is out there, maybe an active ‘test’ of skills (or something of this nature) could automatically lead to custom-tailored levels of support.”

– Full-Time Professor, St. Philip’s College

“Ensure every student has the technology they need, whether it be connectivity or laptops, etc. Also, ensure they are aware of their technical resources and services which can assist them.” – Adjunct Professor, Northeast Lakeview College

WHAT STUDENTS RECOMMENDED:

“I can’t really say the college could have done anything better. The Alamo Colleges are already really good with their students.” – San Antonio College part-time student

“They should have given out more contact information, like to counselors and staff. People have questions. When I went to the website, there would only be one or two numbers listed. I had to jump through hoops to contact people, just to ask a couple questions.” – Northeast Lakeview College full-time student

“Dealing with the school is sometimes frustrating because we get directed to help desks and voicemails that are full. I’ll send an email and it’ll take a day or two [for someone to respond back].” – Palo Alto College full-time student

“They could have made it easier for students to set up appointments. It took a long time to even get a call back. It was so much tougher [than in person]. It was harder to contact the school.” – San Antonio College full-time student

“I would have appreciated them extending the semester at least by a week. That would help alleviate some of the deadline anxiety. Other than that, I think they did the best they could, given the circumstances.” – San Antonio College part-time student

“I think they could have made phone calls to students to check on them. Other than email, no one checked in with me on a personal basis.” – St. Philip’s College full-time student

“I guess they could have kept a better eye on professors. I wish more surveys would have been done during the year. When I generally have a problem with a class, it’s usually the professor and not the school.” – San Antonio College part-time student

“Some instructors were still asking for assignments that required access to the library, and [I] didn’t know how to access the library online. I just thought the assignments could have been altered a little... It’s not like you could go to the 5th floor and get help.” – San Antonio College part-time student

METHODOLOGY

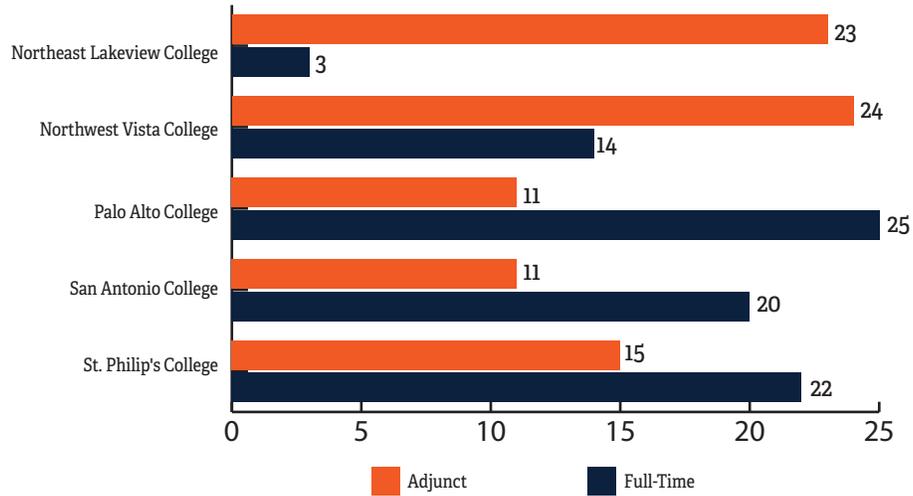
SAMPLING STRATEGY

The research team received anonymized lists of full-time and adjunct faculty identification numbers from all five colleges, which were used to randomly select 174 faculty members at each college. The team received contact information for these 870 randomly selected faculty members and then invited them to participate in the web-based survey. A total of 168 faculty members across all five colleges completed the survey.

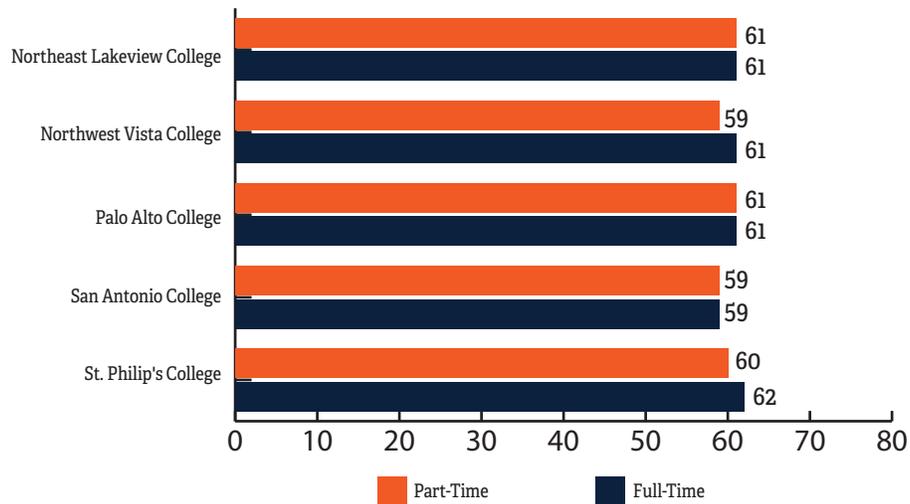
Directory data was received for all ACD students who were enrolled in 3 or more credits in spring 2020; were certificate- or degree-seeking; and who were not dual-credit high school or co-enrolled students. These students were sorted into full-time (enrolled in 12+ credit hours in spring 2020) or part-time (enrolled in 3-11 credits in spring 2020) randomized lists, then phone surveys were conducted with the first 60 students who were willing to participate from each list. This resulted in approximately 60 full-time and 60 part-time student participants from each college, resulting in 604 student phone survey responses across all five colleges.

See the figures on the following page for the detailed distributions of the faculty and student samples across the colleges.

FACULTY



STUDENTS



OPEN-ENDED ANSWERS

For the student and faculty surveys' open-ended answers, researchers conducted human-based content analysis to identify the manifest and latent ideas within response data. A coding system was developed per question that was uniformly applied to quantify qualitative data. Researchers discussed approaches and questions that arose during coding to improve inter-rater reliability.

LIMITATIONS

This study may have two sources of biases stemming from the voluntary nature of study participation. Specifically, respondents voluntarily participated in the study as well as answered the questions. If certain characteristics of the respondents were correlated with survey response rates, the study results should be interpreted with caution.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ABOUT THIS RESEARCH BRIEF

This research brief was created through the contributions of a team at the Urban Education Institute that included our entire staff, a team of UTSA student field researchers, and through the insights and work of other contributors.

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