

How Has the Covid-19 Pandemic Transformed the Relevance of the Traditional College Experience?

Introduction

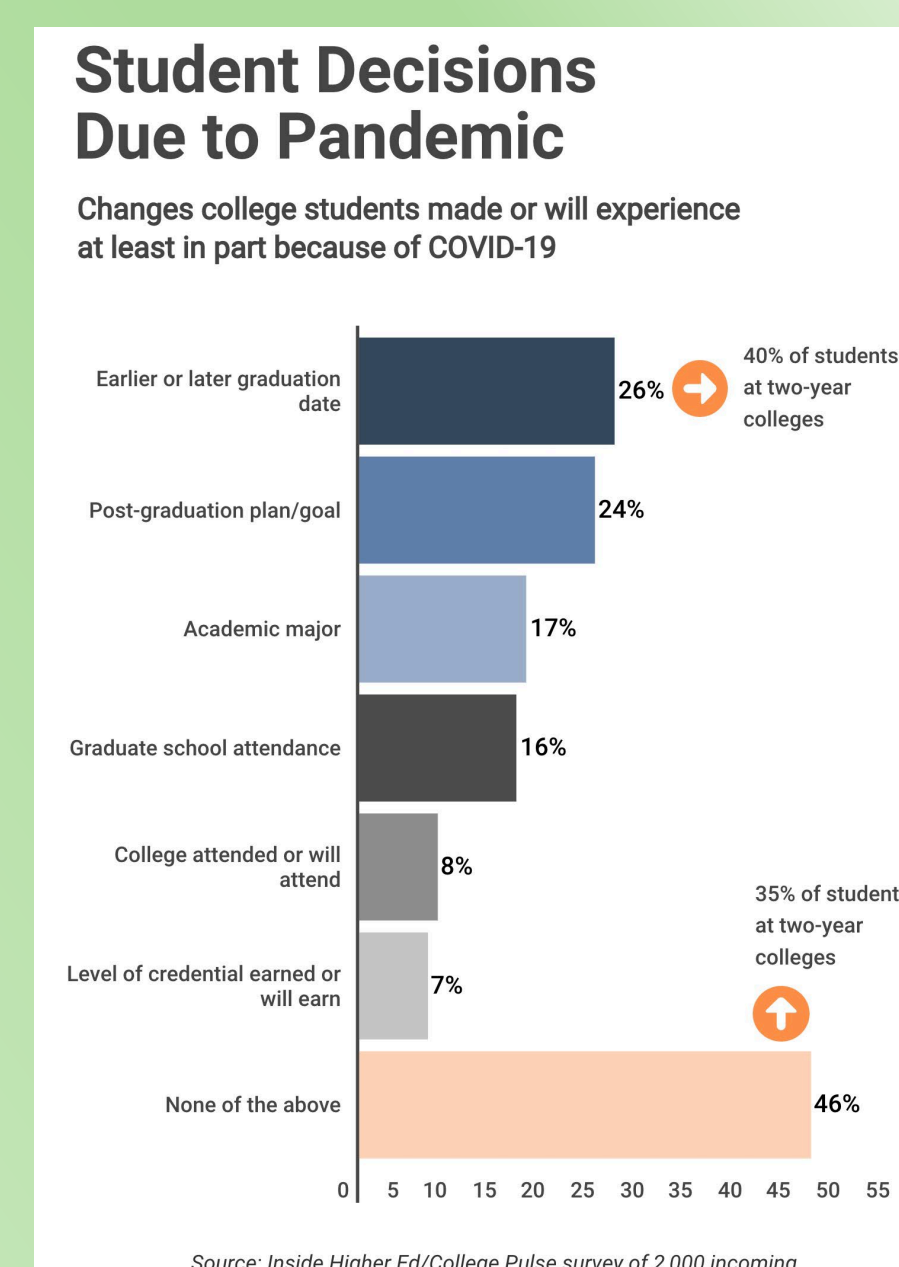
- Over the past three years, the Covid-19 pandemic has fundamentally altered students' college experience through its location format and delivery.
- While there is data on the short-term effects of Covid-19 on students there are a number of questions about the long-term that are left unanswered.
- Through my literature review and interviews conducted with students at Bemidji State University, I attempt to answer these questions and explore whether the disruptions and changes Covid-19 caused to students' college experience are unique short-term effects or if this is part of an overall systemic shift in higher education.

Literature Review

- Messy transitions: Students' perspectives on the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on higher education
- Sharaievska et al.
- Reimagining higher education during and post-COVID-19: Challenges and opportunities
- Neuwirth et al.
- The impact of COVID-19 on student experiences and expectations: Evidence from a survey
- Aucejo et al.
- The rapid transition from campus to online teaching – how are students' perception of learning experiences affected?
- Warfvinge et al.

What the data says

There is very limited data on what the future will look like. The data that has primarily been put together is in the form of smaller surveys from non-academic sources such as the graph shown below from Third Way.



Implications

The feedback shared by students in the interviews suggest that students do believe that Covid-19 has altered their college experience.



“Since the beginning, I think that culture and you know, interactions and all my classes have really changed a lot because of COVID ... it's just not as engaging even when they're in person.” – Sophomore at BSU



“I was on track and then COVID hit, and I think the lot of the unknown increased like my burnout rate. So, the pandemic just kind of wore me out academically, and I'm not as focused as I was before” – Senior at BSU

What can universities do to increase the value of a traditional college learning experience?



“ I think just really build back like the community feeling because at least from my experience here so far, it sounds like a lot of students don't really feel a lot of community ... it still feels really individualized and isolated” – Sophomore at BSU

Student Recommendations

- More course options
- Smaller class sizes
- Simplify the orientation process
- More student programming

Results from interviews

- Most students interviewed indicated that they gain more benefits from a traditional on-campus learning experience than then do through online learning.



“The intangible like community feelings just really aren't there online” – Junior at BSU



“I think I'm a better learner in person, but I also think that professors are better teachers in person rather than online. And also, if you're online, you miss that social connection you have with other students” – Sophomore at BSU



“In person, get human interaction you can ask questions a lot easier. And you get the report with your professors that you don't necessarily get online” – Senior at BSU



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