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Assessment Advisory Council, Beginning College Student Survey of Engagement: First-Year Student Experiences with COVID, 2021-2022

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Entering Students and the COVID-19 Disruption Implications & Challenges

Results from the 2021 Beginning College Student Survey of Engagement ("BESSIE"): First-year Students

QUANTITATIVE RESULTS: SUMMARY



40% of first-generation students reported the pandemic interfered with their ability to pay for college, compared to 16% of non first-generation students. 28% and 16% of first-generation students reported concerns about their ability to pay bills and food increased over the pandemic, compared to 10% and 4% of non first-generation students.



First-generation and non first-generation students were most impacted, respectively, by the following mental health issues: exhaustion (64% vs 58%), depression (43% vs 33%) and inability to concentrate (37% vs 33%).



The pandemic interfered with first-generation and non first-generation students' college plans (31% vs 23%) and ability to succeed in college (39% vs 28%).



First-generation and non first-generation students had different academic experiences during the pandemic. 64% of first-generation students attended their last year of high school mostly or entirely online, compared to 53% of non first-generation students.



A majority of first-generation (80%) and non first-generation (86%) students reported being very and moderately optimistic about their first year of college.

QUALITATIVE RESULTS: SUMMARY



Students are grieving the loss of relationships, social opportunities, academic experiences, and the pandemic's impact on future opportunities. Students also reported feeling supported. *Sample comment: "I spent over 400 days in quarantine in my house and I have never felt more depressed and anxious in my life. my teachers were aware of my situation and they helped me tremendously."*



Students report being more distracted due to increased time at home and increasing amounts of time online. *Sample comment: "As a student, the pandemic really took a hit on how much I was able to learn and concentrate for my classes as a senior."*



Students report more concern with gaps in curricular and co-curricular experiences. *Sample comment: "I feel like my life has been on hold ever since I graduated and have just been waiting for college to start."*

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IMPLICATIONS

- In addition to anxiety about lack of academic preparation and concern about related effect on their career/future, students are navigating several mental health issues and could need increased support.
- Students' feeling about a lack of academic preparation may impact their confidence and motivation in the classroom.
- The pandemic further emphasizes the need to shift from a deficit-based to an asset-based approach in teaching and learning.
- Instructors and staff may need to proactively reach out to students from vulnerable populations (i.e., first-generation) who may have been disproportionately impacted by COVID and possess gaps in academic preparation.

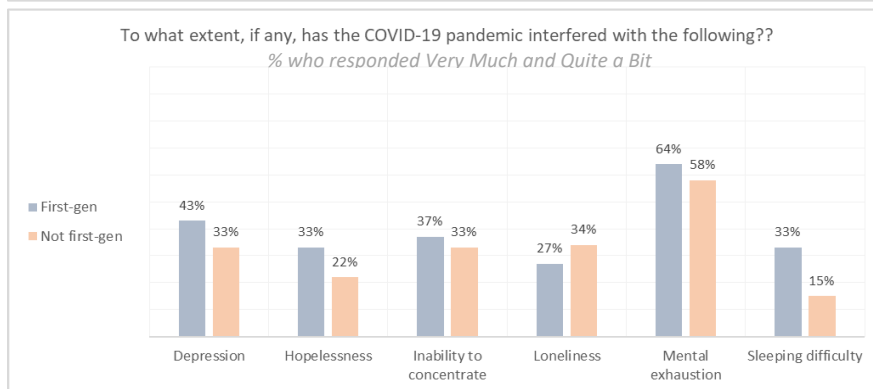
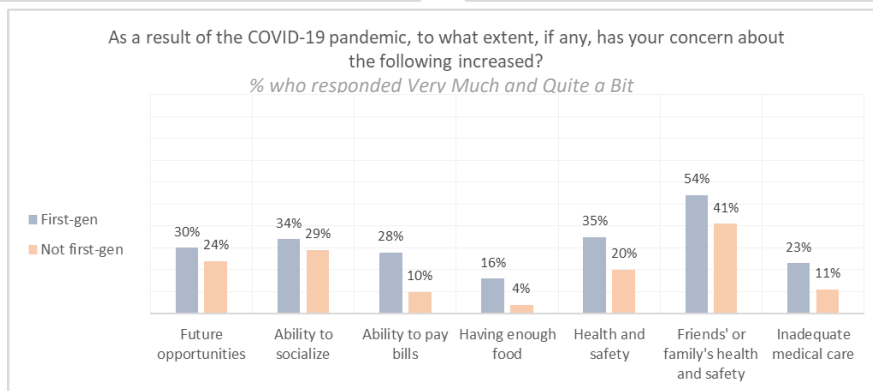
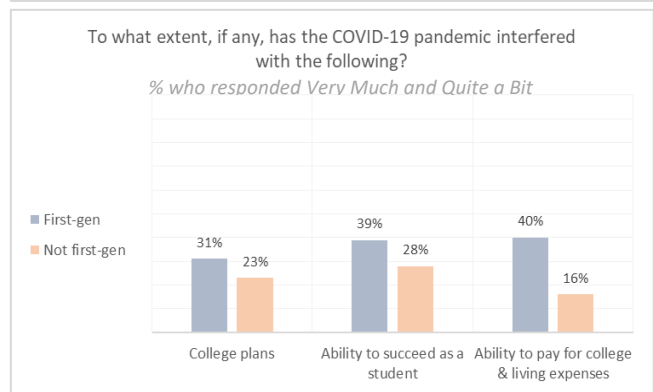
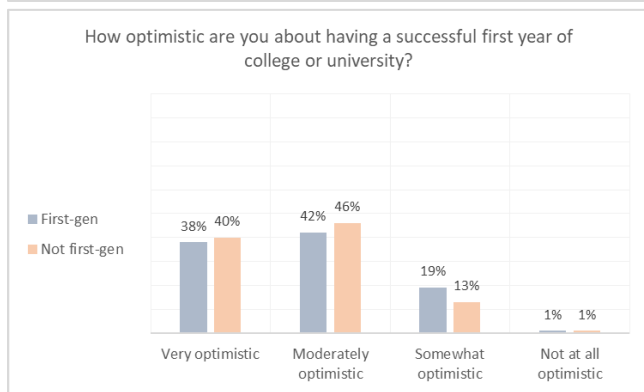
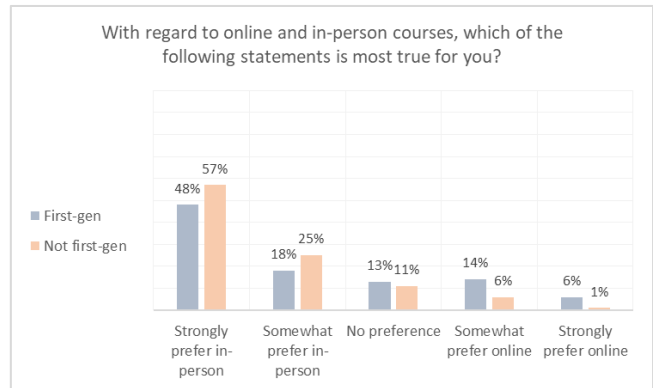
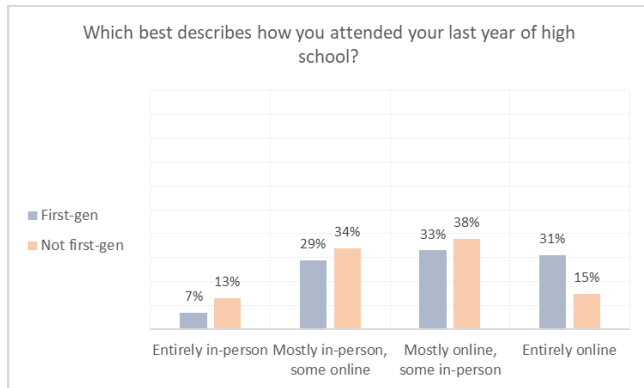
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QUANTITATIVE RESULTS



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QUALITATIVE RESULTS

Please describe anything else you would like to share about your experiences as a student during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- During the COVID-19 pandemic, while many of us were home, I did not know whether I was comfortable going away for school. I am the youngest of two kids, and just before the pandemic, my older brother was leaving. All my life, I had always been afraid of change but I've also wanted to push my boundaries. There were numerous changes occurring in life and I fell into a deep depression. I am unsure of whether or not I have completely come out of it. Hopefully, I will be soon. This made school very difficult.
- It ruined a lot of things my senior year, but I am a lot more hopeful about my first year of college.
- Made me more cautious of being around people especially when it was growing since my dad's immune system is more delicate now cause of the radiation he's going through and the chemo.
- I would prefer to not live on campus as not everyone you live with has the same mindset. Also most colleges students are extremely dirty and as someone who is not it is very off putting.
- My senior year of high school during the COVID-19 pandemic was the worst. My home circumstances make it difficult for me to learn, and online was a nightmare. I prefer online instead of in person because of the risk of catching COVID.
- I'm honestly quite frustrated that students are being required to wear a mask even tho we are all either vaccinated or testing weekly to assure we are negative for COVID-19. The vaccinated students especially should not have to wear a mask.
- I spent over 400 days in quarantine in my house and I have never felt more depressed and anxious in my life. My teachers were aware of my situation and they helped me tremendously
- As a student, the pandemic really took a hit on how much I was able to learn and concentrate for my classes as a senior. It brought up a lot of mental health issues for me, both new and old but aggravated.
- If the COVID-19 takes away more of my learning experience I fear that I will not be prepared for my career path and it will effect my future immensely
- We need to stay in person. If people are complaining about not being online, then they can choose to go online themselves. There is no reason people that are scared of covid-19 can't do their work entirely online. But for those that choose to do in person, should continue to be in person. It is pretty simple if you ask me. Especially if people are getting tested weekly.
- It was very difficult being behind a screen trying to learn material the same way we would have if we were in person. It was also difficult not really seeing any of my friends or really interacting with people all day long.
- Online learning for weeks and months at a time took a massive toll on my mental health. Due to little to no outside interactions, I started having minor depressive symptoms that greatly enlarged as we found out we would still not be going back to school. I could not see my friends nor my peers and I felt incredibly lonely and isolated. The only time I would go out was if I had to work, but even then, I was working to help my mom pay bills and that put an even heavier weight on my shoulders. I started taking medication so help with my depression. I stopped taking it after almost a year because that was when school reopened and I was finally able to not be lonely. I could interact with people and feel as though I belonged and was cared about.
- I feel that covid may have made me not learn Everything I should know before coming to college but I will always do my best.
- When the pandemic hit and took away all in person learning opportunities, not only did it hinder my ability to learn through a computer screen, but also robbed me of key socializing which somewhat effected me.
- I thought that online learning was tougher because it was harder to focus during class due to looking at a screen for a long time. It was weird having a later lunch since the cafeteria could not hold the amount of students found in lunch.
- While the virus makes learning more inconvenient and harder to stay focused for some, for me it made everything easier. This seems like a good thing but I wanted my last year of high school to be challenging. Instead, I went to school for four hours a day with about 30 minutes of homework per day. I feel like my life has been on hold ever since I graduated and have just been waiting for College to start.
- It was hard online since there was so many distractions not being in the classroom
- Some teachers got lazy and stopped having good expectations for the class and let anything go. In some of my classes we didn't do 2/3rds the curriculum they do in a normal year.
- During this pandemic, I have realized we have to watch out for each other and give people grace. Everyone was affected differently and it increased anxiety among many people. We are not done with this crisis. It is important to take it seriously and we all need to do our best to see an end to it. It was difficult attending a very conservative high school that seemed to not be

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guided by science in many of the decisions made in regards to safety for all. While I was able to have some normalcy Senior year, it was still a tough year. When we had to go virtually occasionally, it was tough. I struggled with online learning. Again, so many people are struggling emotionally and financially due to the health crisis. Patience and understanding are key to get through this.

- Last year my high school decided to do half of the week days in person and half online. I noticed that I was able to get a lot more studying and homework done when I was in person. I also talked to many other students that felt the same. They were not as motivated when doing online learning. I believe I would have done better in my classes if I had been able to be in person everyday.
- I used to be an A/B student and Covid messed me up mentally so i barely made it past senior year.
- I feel online can cause some people to get distracted by things around them. Such as, phones, video games, tv, or things happening outside.
- I tested positive for Covid-19 and that was a challenging time. I lost a family member to the virus and my peers lost their parents. This was a difficult time for students in the City of Chicago
- I’m very excited to move forward with several other fully-vaccinated individuals where we can move forward and go back to more of a normal experience soon.
- I was able to do really well during online learning but being in person with other people around me is always preferred!
- The in-person experience is crucial for students to learn well and honestly. I believe all this online learning has trained students to rely on technology rather than working towards their grades, and I feel like this year will be very difficult for many after adjusting from what last year threw at us.
- Due to the pandemic, I was unable to visit colleges in-person. So, I feel less confident in my choices as I am entering college, because I was not able to visit anywhere. I still learned about many schools, but I feel the inability to visit in-person did affect my confidence in my college plans.