Digital Learning Pulse Survey: Immediate Priorities
A Snapshot of Higher Education’s Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

The 2020 Digital Learning Pulse Survey explores how postsecondary institutions are responding to the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting shutdown of campuses, particularly public and private universities and colleges in the U.S. The survey was conducted from April 6 – April 19. The survey was made possible through a partnership with five leading online learning organizations and was underwritten by Cengage.

826 Administrators & Faculty

641 U.S. Institutions across

Immediate Priorities

In order to complete the Spring 2020 term, virtually all institutions surveyed—public and private universities and colleges in the U.S.—had to turn to some form of emergency distance learning and call upon faculty with no prior online teaching experience to quickly prepare themselves, their courses and their students.

The survey of higher education’s immediate priorities related to the COVID-19 pandemic was conducted between April 6 and April 19 by Bay View Analytics in partnership with five leading online learning organizations and underwritten by Cengage.

Respondents:

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The Current State of Online Teaching

90% of institutions reported transitioning some or all of their classes online. Of those institutions, 97% reported using faculty with no prior online teaching experience for some of their courses.

Emergency online instruction is different from a pre-planned fully online course, and even experienced online instructors have had to adapt on the fly. In their best efforts to replicate in-person classes in an online environment, the majority of faculty have had to rely on new teaching methods and make adjustments to their original course curriculum.

Instruction on the Fly

Distribution of material via institution’s Learning Management System

Synchronous video (Zoom, GoToMeeting, Google Hangouts, etc.)

Asynchronous recorded video of lectures

Pre-recorded videos from external sources (YouTube, etc.)

Institutional conference/chat function

Other

Communicating via social media

83% 80% 65% 51% 24% 14% 12%

"I changed the kinds of assignments or exams I am asking students to do."

"I lowered my expectations about the amount of work that my students will be able to do."

"I (or my institution) allowed students the option to choose pass/fail instead of A-F grades for this semester."

"I dropped some assignments or exams."

"I lowered my expectations about the quality of work that my students will be able to do."

"I (or my institution) lowered course expectations for this semester."

"I (or my institution) allowed students to choose a pass/fail grading option for the fall."

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Teaching Techniques Being Used by Faculty in Classes Moved Online

Changes Faculty Made When Moving Classes Online

What Help is Needed?

What Assistance Would Be Most Helpful for Online Instruction?

1 Information on how best to support remote students

2 Greater access to online digital materials

3 Advice on how to adhere to accessibility requirements when moving online

4 Webinar for students on how to succeed in online classes

5 An online resource hub with links to information about how to quickly transition to online learning

6 Assistance with technology to support online education

64% 57% 44% 55% 48% 51% 44% 37% 52% 61% 39% 49%

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32% 24% 12% 8% 6%

Better virtual emergency operations center at the institution would be helpful

24% 12% 8% 6%

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17% 12% 8% 6%

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1/3 would find training materials on moving courses online and webinars hosted by online learning experts helpful

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52% 61% 49% 39% 45% 53% 63%

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