Teaching During a Pandemic

Spring Transition, Fall Continuation, Winter Evaluation

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Special thanks go to Cengage, who provided the underwriting for the entire project, were excellent listeners, and allowed the partners to set the research directions.

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PARTNERS

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The Online Learning Consortium (OLC) is a collaborative community of education leaders and innovators, dedicated to advancing quality digital teaching and learning experiences designed to reach and engage the modern learner – anyone, anywhere, anytime. OLC inspires innovation and quality through an extensive set of resources, including, best-practice publications, quality benchmarking, leading-edge instruction, community-driven conferences, practitioner-based and empirical research and expert guidance.

The growing OLC community includes faculty members, administrators, trainers, instructional designers, and other learning professionals, as well as educational institutions, professional societies and corporate enterprises. Visit http://onlinelearningconsortium.org for more information.

Bay View Analytics is a statistical research firm with a focus on survey design, implementation, and analysis. Formerly known as the Babson Survey Research Group, the scope of Bay View Analytics' consulting engagements includes scientific statistical analyses, clinical trial statistics, and survey designs for a range of topics, with a particular focus on online education. Bay View Analytics has been conducting research and publishing annual reports on the state of online education in U.S. higher education for thirteen years. Visit https://bayviewanalytics.com for more information.

INTRODUCTION

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 to be a global pandemic. In the following weeks, many cities and countries worldwide went into lockdown, and much of the world shifted to remote learning for students from kindergarten through higher education. The impact was unprecedented.

The year 2020 was likely one of the most challenging ever for the higher education sector. As higher education institutions across the United States rapidly pivoted from in-person classes to online course delivery, administrators and faculty worked from home using various digital technologies to help students complete the spring semester. They had to adjust and plan for a fall term during a period of high uncertainty as to how they could teach and then deliver that instruction. The pandemic forced massive short-term, and both faculty and administrators needed to adjust to new ways of conducting their day-to-day operations.

This project provides a series of three snapshots examining the nature and magnitude of these changes in teaching and learning from faculty and academic administrators' points of view. Informed by survey studies using nationally representative samples, the project examined the state of higher education at three points in time:

- April 2020: The pivot to emergency remote teaching was well underway.
- August 2020: Prepping and planning for the fall offerings.
- December 2020: Looking back at the fall term.

The study represents a partnership of the Online Learning Consortium (OLC), WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies (WCET), University Professional and Continuing Education Association (UPCEA), Canadian Digital Learning Research Association (CDLRA), Every Learner Everywhere, and Cengage. These organizations came together to help identify and focus the resources needed to support educators and institutions in addressing teaching challenges during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.

Inside Higher Ed (IHE) provided media support, while Bay View Analytics designed and administered the surveys for all three snapshots in consultation with the partner organizations. Bay View Analytics also conducted all of the data analysis and report writing.

Each phase of the project informed the next step, with follow-up questions designed to probe specific topics that respondents identified as critical. The snapshots addressed the following questions:

- What situations were faculty and administrators facing?
- How did faculty adapt the processes and techniques used for teaching?
- What resources did faculty and administrators think they needed to be successful, and did they have access to these resources?
- What did faculty and administrators expect the next steps to be as the pandemic continued?
- What did faculty experiences teach them about teaching and learning?
- Which new processes and techniques, if any, did faculty and administrators believe would continue post-pandemic?

The project focused on teaching and learning. Other higher education responses to operating in a pandemic, such as changes in business practices, staffing levels, enrollment declines, etc., are addressed only to the extent that survey respondents reported that they directly impacted teaching and learning.

All respondents were either teaching faculty or academic administrators at U.S. higher education institutions. As such, the results represent their personal views and perceptions. Statements about student actions and attitudes, for example, represent faculty or administrative perceptions, not direct student responses. Likewise, administrator statements about faculty attitudes and beliefs represent administrator perceptions of these elements.

THE BIG PICTURE

The collective findings indicate that the COVID-19 pandemic has advanced digital technologies in teaching and learning. Most notably, attitudes toward teaching online, which have been relatively stagnant since the turn of the century, have become markedly more positive over the past year.

The experiences of 2020 will likely have far-reaching impacts on higher education. The post-pandemic institution and classroom may not immediately look or function in radically different ways. Still, pandemic-driven effects will reach far, impacting some institutions and some instructional activities more than others.

What We Learned

Higher education institutions, and the faculty and administrators within them, proved to be highly agile, adaptable, and resilient when faced with numerous challenges between March and December 2020. The pivot in Spring 2020, coming well into the term for most institutions, required an immense and coordinated effort from hundreds of thousands of faculty and administrators.

Institutional responses to faculty support needs between the spring and the beginning of the fall term made a significant difference to faculty. Faculty expressed considerable concern in the spring about how they would teach the following fall. By the end of the summer, that attitude had turned to cautious optimism, with most faculty reporting that they felt prepared for the semester ahead.

It is important to keep in mind the magnitude of the transformation institutions had to support during these few months. According to the most recent federal data, there are over 19.6 million total students in U.S. higher education. These students are supported by 1.5 million faculty members, and 2 million other staff members. All of these individuals were impacted by transitions to remote or alternative forms of teaching and learning. The number of faculty who taught their first online course during the ten months of this study is greater than the number of faculty who did so over the past decade.

A New Appreciation for Online Instruction

Many faculty, if not most, had a negative opinion about online learning prior to 2020. The need to teach online did not completely erase these perceptions. That said, nearly all faculty have now gained exposure to various forms of digital education, whether one classifies it as emergency remote, online, hybrid, or hyflex. Faculty gained a new appreciation of online education, or perhaps used a number of the tools traditionally used in online teaching and learning. They learned and used new instructional techniques, and received professional development that may support them and their institutions well into the future. While some professional development focused on using tools and technologies, others concentrated on topics necessary for teaching faculty to explore, including assessment techniques, instructional alignment, and varying teaching and learning strategies. To this end, experiences with online instruction had two results: first, some faculty came to new understandings and appreciations of online learning, and second, some faculty, due to the transition to online learning, came to receive worthwhile professional development that can support them and their students in any modality.

Future Instruction Will Include More Technology Use

When put in a situation where the only option was to teach remotely, faculty could experience different teaching methods and try new instructional strategies. For many, these techniques created a sense of optimism towards digital materials in their instruction post-pandemic. For instance, more faculty are now familiar with incorporating video, digital materials, and OER into any mode of course delivery. Further, more institutions support the use of such tools. Future in-person offerings will likely make greater use of varying technologies to support instruction and learning.

Issues of Equity Will (and Should) Remain a Topic of Interest

Faculty and administrators expressed concern around equity issues prior to the pandemic, but COVID-19 laid bare the inequities that exist in higher education institutions. These inequities stem from economic, class, racial, gender, and geographic issues, impacting student access and success. The impacts are manifested in many ways, including unequal access to tools and technologies. Another example of inequities relates to students learning from home. Some had quiet areas to use during video meetings or while studying, while others

shared a living space with family members, and had very little space and privacy.

Faculty and administrators noted the impact of remote and online teaching on equitable learning. They attempted to address the repercussions and impacts of systemic inequities in their instructional and institutional practices. Yet, this area will require continued attention, regardless of the modality that institutions pursue in the years to come. Inequity is not exclusive to online and remote forms of learning. In-person education leaves many people behind, such as those who have employment or family demands that are incompatible with a traditional class schedule. Continued attention to these issues, and institutional efforts to expand access in all its forms, will remain necessary post-pandemic.

A New Flexibility

Much of the conversation about instruction during the COVID-19 pandemic has focused on modality (e.g., emergency remote, online, hybrid, in-person), but the continuity of teaching and learning during the pandemic has relied on more than platforms and tools. Flexible approaches to teaching and learning — whether through allowing learners to choose between graded and pass-fail options, or employing asynchronous modes of delivery — have enabled faculty and students to attend to education, while simultaneously addressing the numerous challenges of life during the pandemic. The widespread experience of teaching and learning remotely during the pandemic highlighted that flexibility in education is valued: from students having the flexibility to access course materials digitally, to faculty having the flexibility to access professional development asynchronously. Flexibility is a design feature that we anticipate becoming increasingly relevant in post-pandemic education.

APRIL: EMERGENCY REMOTE TEACHING

Key Findings

The options for facilitating engaging, high-quality online instruction have increased substantially over the last decade. Academic institutions have produced a remarkable array of online courses and programs. New digital tools, pedagogical models, and instructional strategies have emerged as possibilities for enhancing the learning experience. However, despite effective tools, models, and strategies, the spring of 2020 represented a major turning point for the development of online teaching skills among faculty and the establishment of support among institutions.

- Almost all institutions (97%) moving classes online had to call on faculty with no previous online teaching experience.

- One-half (50%) of the institutions could rely on at least some faculty with online teaching experience.

- A majority of faculty (56%) who moved courses online were using teaching methods that they had never used before.

- Faculty had to make many adjustments to their courses to complete them online. While only a few faculty (17%) made changes to required readings, roughly half (48%) reduced the amount of work they expected. About one-third (32%) lowered their expectations for the quality of student work.

- Faculty's most pressing concern was for their students; 57% identified additional support for their newly online students as their top concern — rating it more important than support for themselves.

- Faculty reported that the uncertainty around the upcoming fall semester was creating a sense of anxiety.

- The impact of the change was not just on faculty. The institutional response involved people at every level of the organization, including deans of professional and continuing education, chief online learning officers, instructional designers, and online student service personnel.

Almost Everyone Moved Online

The April results demonstrated that virtually all higher education institutions employed emergency remote teaching to complete the term. Only 11% of institutions reported that they did not move any face-to-face courses online. Fully-online institutions, where all courses were already online, did not need to transition. Also included in this group were a few institutions that closed rather than converting to online, some that were not in session at the time, and a number located in areas where stay-at-home orders were not in place.

SOME OR ALL OF THE INSTITUTION'S CLASSES
TRANSITIONED TO ONLINE

- Yes
- No

11%

89%
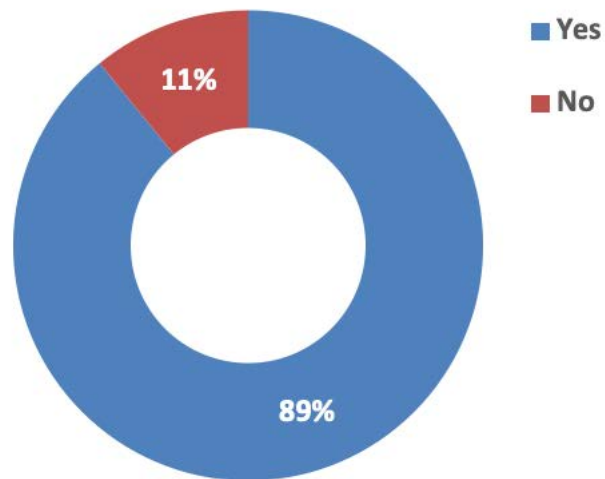
There were some differences among different types of institutions. Four-year public institutions the most likely to have converted some courses to emergency remote teaching, while four-year public institutions were the least likely. However, the differences between types of institutions were small, as almost all institutions of all kinds were forced to convert courses to emergency remote teaching.

SOME OR ALL OF THE INSTITUTION'S CLASSES TRANSITIONED TO ONLINE

Institution Type	Percentage
Four-year Public	93%
Two-year	91%
Four-year Private	87%
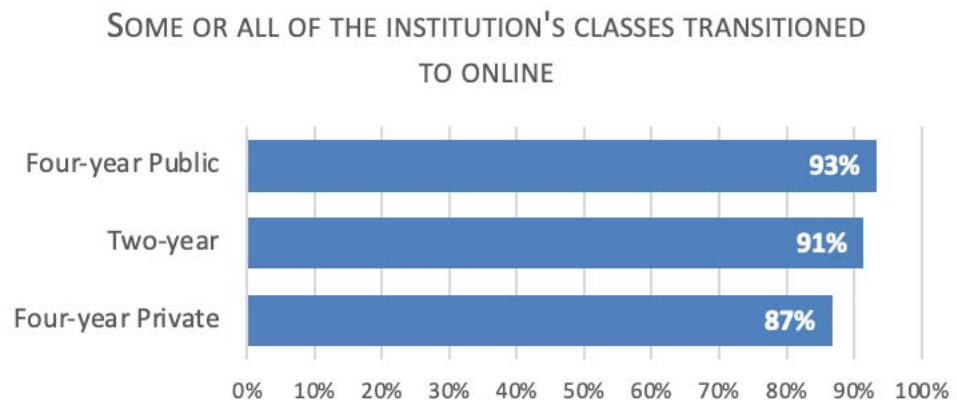
First Time Online for Many Faculty

Virtually all institutions moving classes online (97%) had to call on faculty with no previous online teaching experience to deliver emergency remote instruction. Institutions with existing online programs had experienced faculty that could take the lead. However, the scale of the transition and the short timeline required that institutions rely on many faculty with no online teaching experience to switch to teaching in unfamiliar and unchartered contexts.

WHO IS TEACHING THE CLASSES BEING MOVED ONLINE?

Faculty who have not previously taught online	97%
Faculty who are experienced in teaching online	49%

0% 10% 20% 30% 40% 50% 60% 70% 80% 90% 100%
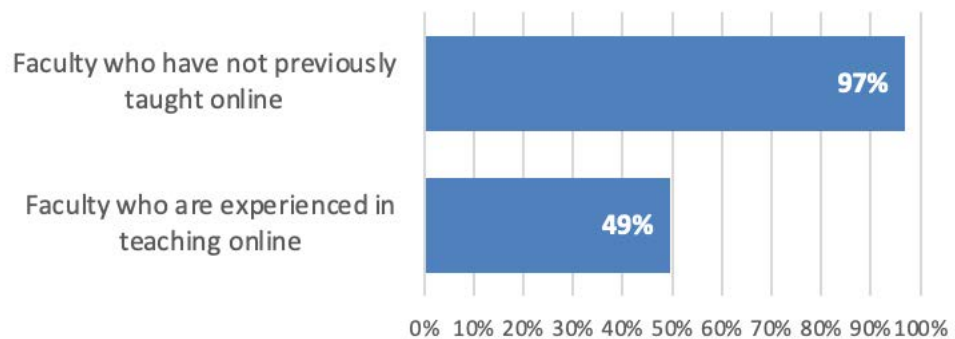
Relying on faculty without online teaching experience for at least some transition to emergency remote teaching was universal across all types of institutions. Likewise, the number of experienced online instructors teaching in remote settings was consistent across various types of institutions.

WHO IS TEACHING THE CLASSES BEING MOVED ONLINE?

Institution	Faculty who have not previously taught online	Faculty who are experienced in teaching online
Two-year	98%	49%
Four-year Public	99%	53%
Four-year Private	95%	48%

■ Faculty who have not previously taught online
■ Faculty who are experienced in teaching online
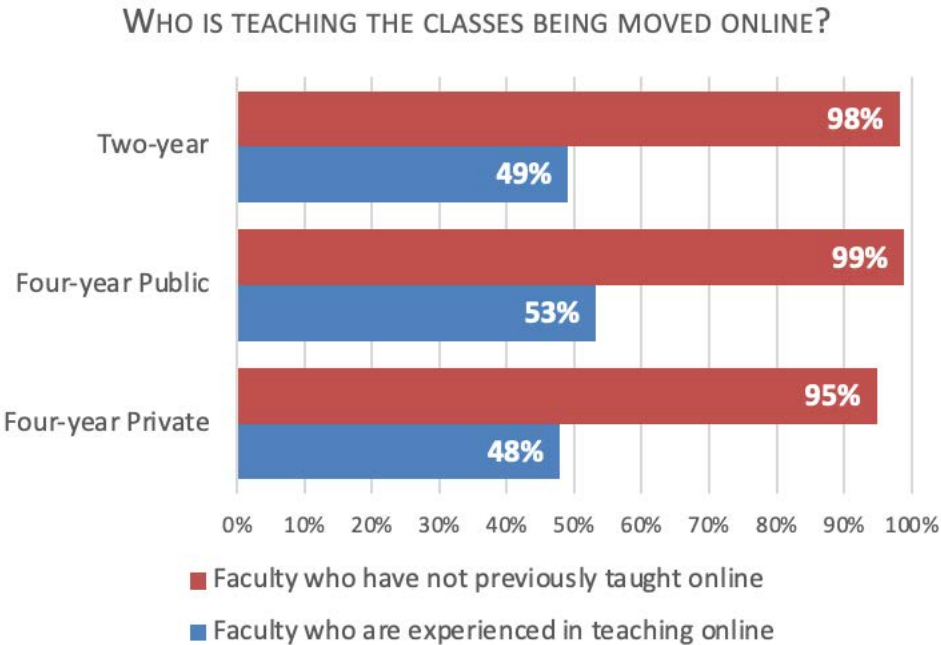
Teaching Had to Change

As a result of the rapid transition and the need to finish the term, most faculty found themselves using teaching methods that they had never used before. A little more than half of faculty members reported that they used teaching methods that they had never previously employed in their teaching to convert their courses and complete the term.

I AM USING NEW TEACHING METHODS
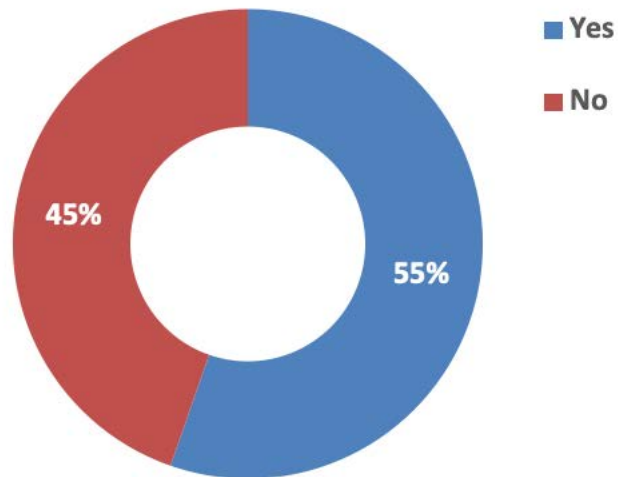
Faculty without online teaching experience weren't the only ones that found themselves using new techniques. A majority of faculty with prior online teaching experience reported using new teaching methods to finish the term. As emergency remote teaching is different from a pre-planned and pre-designed fully online course, even experienced online instructors had to explore and mobilize new practices that would accommodate pandemic restrictions on the spot. That said, the adoption of new teaching approaches was more pronounced for those who had not previously taught online. Two-thirds of those with no previous online teaching experience reported using new teaching methods for their classes being moved online.

FACULTY USE OF NEW TEACHING METHODS BY EXPERIENCE TEACHING ONLINE
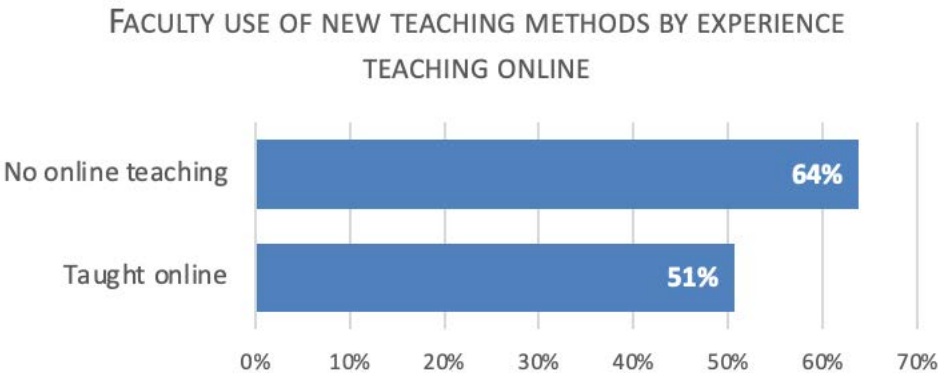
In addition to using new teaching methods, faculty had to make multiple adjustments to their courses. Only a few faculty made changes to the required readings. Still, roughly one-half reduced the amount of work they expected students to complete, and about one-third lowered their expectations for the quality of the work they required. While in ordinary circumstances, such changes may lead some to question the quality and integrity of courses, faculty and students were not in normal circumstances. Furthermore, speculations about integrity and quality are unhelpful in this area. The efforts and choices that faculty made to ensure continuity likely salvaged education from worse alternatives during this time.

CHANGES FACULTY MADE WHEN MOVING CLASSES ONLINE

Change	Percentage
Changed assignments or exams	64%
Option to choose pass/fail	49%
Lowered expectations for amount of work	48%
Dropped some assignments or exams	46%
Lowered expectations for quality of work	32%
Dropped some of the readings	17%
Other	16%
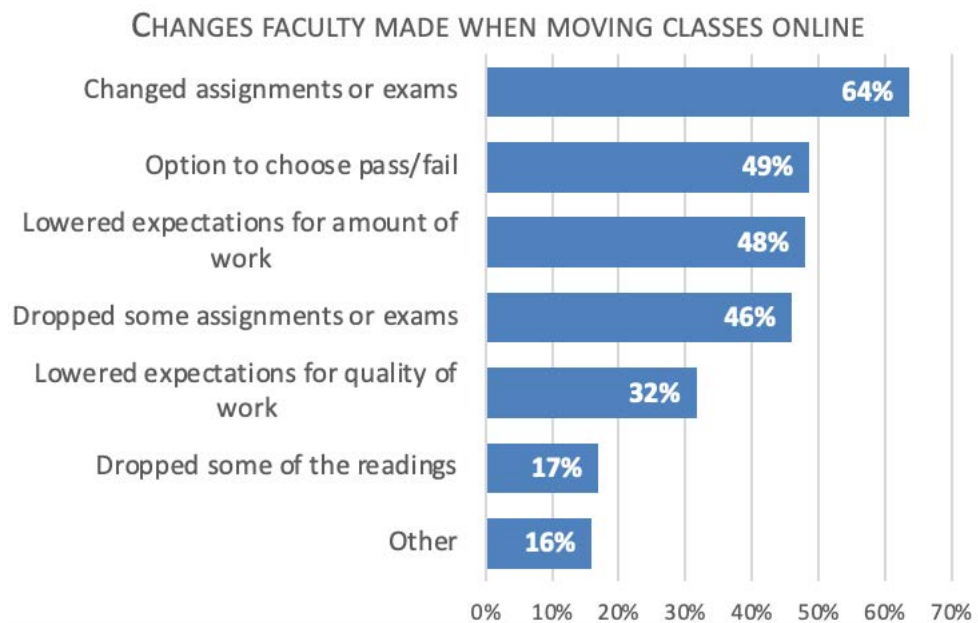
The open-ended comments revealed that effectively supporting students during the transition to emergency remote teaching was a pressing concern among faculty and administrators. Faculty teaching courses that included hands-on activities, such as physical lab exercises, expressed particular concerns about providing the same instruction level remotely.

As they thought ahead to the fall semester, respondents remarked that they wanted to learn more about supporting student engagement and learning outcomes. There was also an interest among respondents to learn more about strategies for assessing students online and preventing academic dishonesty.

The need to revise courses to complete the term was not restricted to faculty new to online instruction. Faculty with online teaching experience made only slightly fewer adjustments to their classes than did faculty who had not taught online previously. The biggest difference reported was that faculty with prior online teaching experience were less likely to offer a pass/fail grading option than those with no online teaching experience.

CHANGES FACULTY MADE WHEN MOVING CLASSES ONLINE

Change	No online teaching	Taught online
Changed assignments or exams	69%	61%
Option to choose pass/fail	54%	41%
Lowered expectations for amount of work	48%	46%
Dropped some assignments or exams	45%	43%
Lowered expectations for quality of work	32%	29%
Dropped some of the readings	18%	16%
Other	12%	20%
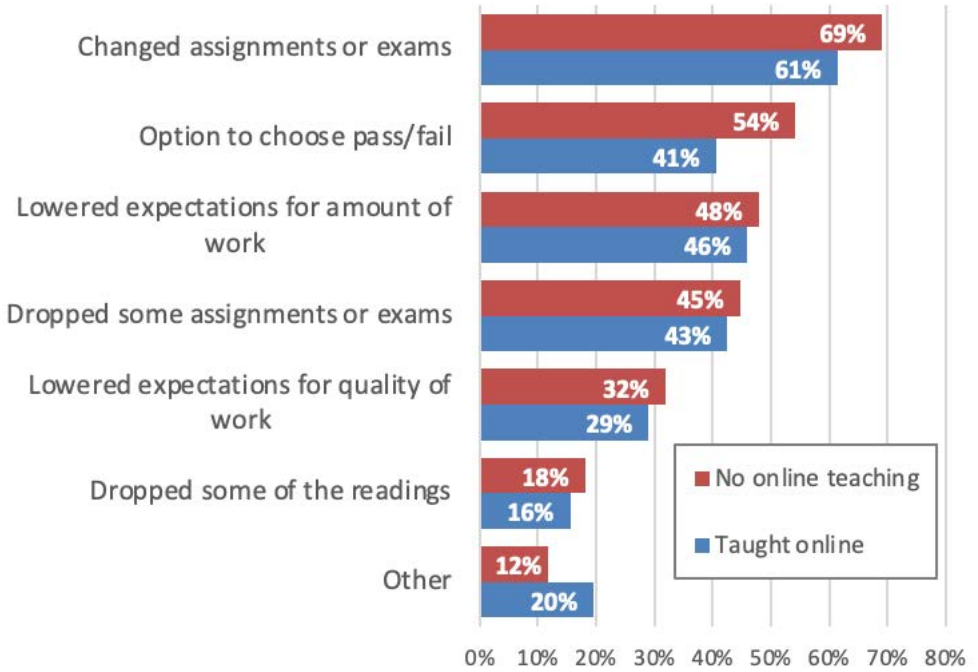
Faculty Assistance Needed

Faculty were asked what assistance would be most helpful to them as they delivered courses online. The majority of faculty indicated that they would like more information and training on how to best support remote students, a webinar for students on how to succeed in online courses, greater access to online digital materials, and best practices on working and teaching from home.

A sizeable minority also indicated that an online resource hub with information about how to rapidly transition to online learning, advice on adhering to accessibility requirements, and assistance with technology to support online education would be helpful.

WHAT ASSISTANCE WOULD BE MOST HELPFUL FOR FACULTY

Category	Percentage
Webinar for students	58%
How to support remote students	58%
Greater access to digital materials	53%
How to work and teach from home	53%
Online resource hub	50%
Advice on accessibility requirements	46%
Assistance with technology	44%
Training materials	36%
Webinars by online learning experts	35%
One-to-one with experts	30%
Other	11%

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Administrator Assistance Needed

Administrators were also asked what assistance would be most helpful to them at the institutional level, and their responses mirrored those of faculty. In particular, administrators reported that information on how to best support remote students, and greater access to online digital materials, would be most helpful. The majority of administrators also registered an interest in best practices for supporting faculty transitioning to working from home.

WHAT ASSISTANCE WOULD BE MOST HELPFUL FOR INSTITUTIONS

Category	Percentage
How best to support remote…	64%
Greater access to digital materials	61%
How to support faculty working…	57%
Advice accessibility requirements	55%
Webinar for students	55%
Training materials for faculty	54%
Online resource hub	52%
Shared emergency plans	49%
Webinars for faculty	45%
Support for organizational change	39%
Assistance with technology	38%
Webinars for institutional leaders	37%
One-to-one with experts	19%

In addition to questions about the aspects of support for converting to emergency remote learning, administrators were asked what policy assistance would be most beneficial for them as they struggled with changes to their programs. Fewer administrators saw the immediate need for policy assistance, with about one-third seeing these as helpful.

WHAT POLICY ASSISTANCE WOULD BE MOST HELPFUL FOR INSTITUTIONS

Category	Percentage
Licensure requirements for students	40%
State requirements for authorization	38%
Federal financial aid requirements	35%
Accreditation requirements	35%
Department of Defense or VA requirements	32%
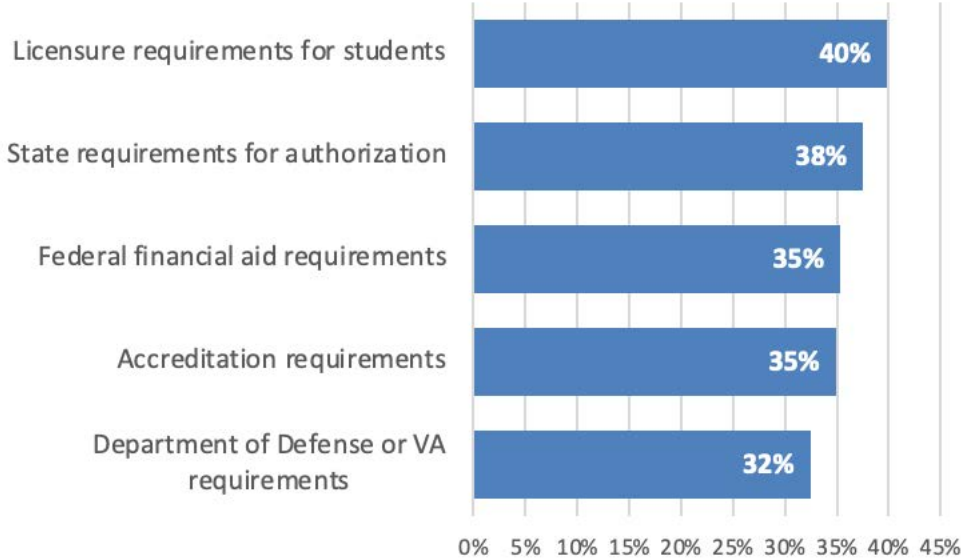
April Open-ended Comments

Considering the vast number of faculty with no prior online teaching experience, the issue of professional development related to teaching and learning online became a priority as institutions looked ahead to the fall semester. Respondents were asked an open-ended question about what would help them plan for the fall. Many faculty and administrators' responses centered on preparing faculty to continue teaching online and training them to do so effectively.

Respondents highlighted a need for professional development related to adapting course materials for online delivery, learning how to prepare an online course, and pedagogical training specific to teaching online. One administrator noted the importance of *"having faculty trained in knowing how to teach online/distance EFFECTIVELY and not just using Zoom to teach as if they were teaching f2f classes."* Such comments echo decades of online learning and distance education research, urging practitioners to avoid merely replicating in-person offerings online.

A similar sentiment was echoed by a faculty member who stated the need for *"ideas and assistance for instructors bridging the different online formats and migrating and blending materials from many sources into the classroom management program (Moodle, Blackboard, Canvas, etc.). And, perhaps even more important, educating and training the Admins in what is involved, how it works, and the fact that the educational world is very changed from what they have settled into, even before COVID-19, and it is, for certain, a topsy-turvy place just now."*

"Many of my students don't have consistent access to the technology needed to make the online classes possible. I worry we will lose our most vulnerable students if we continue to be online in the fall." (Faculty)

"I am at a new institution this fall. I've relied on an ongoing relationship with students (and word of mouth) to be able to set expectations and establish myself as an approachable and helpful ally in learning. I am not sure how I will make that personal connection with a brand new group of students if we start online." (Faculty)

"Not knowing if we'll be able to resume our normal site-based instructional model is one of the hardest parts of planning for fall. It seems like twice the work, as we are operating under two assumptions and trying to be prepared for either while navigating uncharted territory. I am concerned that we are ensuring academic integrity and are able to preserve, and perhaps enhance, our quality of instruction. I am also desiring to be constantly mindful of student needs and the realities they are facing at home so that we are able to be a semblance of stability and strength, not another stressor in their life". (Administrator)

"That we will have to still be fully online, and that we may end up having to pivot back and forth between distance and in seat given the unpredictable nature of the virus spread." (Administrator)

"Will the students be engaged?? Accountability will be lessened in online learning, so will it be valuable? What in fact I.S. important in the students' learning and takeaways from courses?" (Faculty)

Some faculty worries were far more serious than how they would teach in the fall: *"Having a job. Not being dead. Not being homeless. Having incredibly incompetent leadership at the federal and state level. Enrollment crash at our college. Not psychologically crashing. This stuff is pretty visceral. My stress levels are unbelievable. I hate having my work invade my home--it makes it virtually impossible to 'turn-off'."* (Instructional Designer)

Concerns for the Future

Before the COVID-19 pandemic, many faculty did not have experience teaching online. The open-ended comments revealed that providing quality instruction in an online setting was front-of-mind for faculty and administrators. Respondents noted the importance of ensuring that students and faculty had access to the requisite technology and the technological literacy necessary to teach and learn online. As one administrator commented,

"We moved quickly online without worrying about quality. By fall, we need to be focused on how to do it the right way."

While some faculty mentioned being concerned about the fall semester, administrators' common sentiment was the potential of decreased enrollments if students were expected to continue learning online in the fall. The ongoing uncertainty in the spring semester about how long the pandemic would force alternative modes of course delivery had some faculty and administrators wondering whether their institution would be able to handle the financial impact.

AUGUST: PREPARING FOR FALL

Key Findings

- A majority of institutions provided faculty with multiple opportunities for professional development related to teaching online in advance of the fall semester.

- Faculty reported feeling prepared and ready to deliver their courses online in the fall, and administrators agreed to an even greater extent that faculty were prepared.

- All professional development offerings were perceived as being effective by faculty, with webinars being the most common offering and being rated as most effective.

- Student equity remained a concern among faculty and administrators.

- Email was the predominant technology used by faculty to communicate with students, followed by one-to-one video conferencing.

Prepared for Fall

After a spring where faculty had to convert their courses to emergency remote instruction with no planning or time for preparation, the summer months of 2020 afforded the opportunity to better plan for the fall term. Faculty and their institutions had the time to determine necessary supports and training in anticipation of the upcoming term. When asked whether they felt prepared to teach online in the Fall semester of 2020, most faculty indicated that they now felt ready to teach online. This marked a considerable change in attitudes from the worries expressed in April.

I feel prepared to teach online this fall

- Strongly Agree
- Somewhat Agree
- Neutral
- Somewhat Disagree
- Strongly Disagree

50%
36%
6%
5%
3%
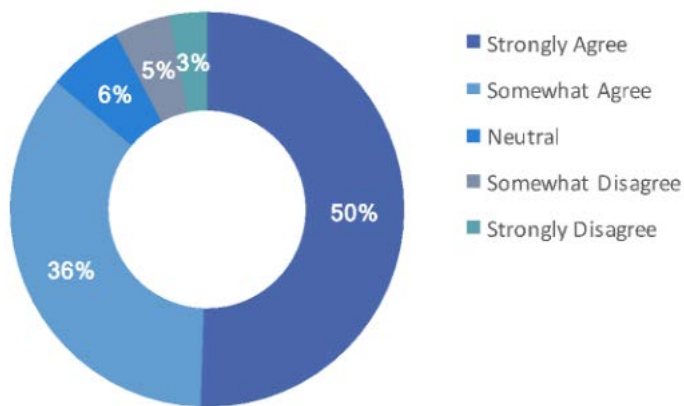
Faculty at all types of institutions reported that they felt ready to teach online. Those at public four-year institutions were the least positive, but even in those institutions over 80% agreed or strongly agreed that they were prepared.

I FEEL PREPARED TO TEACH ONLINE THIS FALL

Institution	Strongly Agree	Somewhat Agree
Two-year	50%	38%
Four-year private	49%	39%
Four-year public	50%	31%
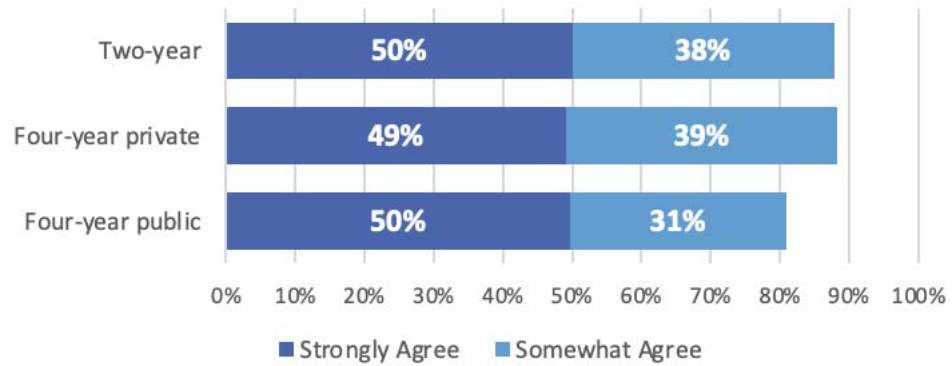
Administrators were even more optimistic than faculty about their level of preparation for the fall term. More than half of administrators strongly agreed that their institution was prepared to teach online in the fall, with another 38% somewhat agreeing. Less than 5% of administrators were neutral or disagreed with the statement.

My institution is prepared to teach online this fall

- Strongly Agree: 58%
- Somewhat Agree: 38%
- Neutral: 1%
- Somewhat Disagree: 2%
- Strongly Disagree: 1%
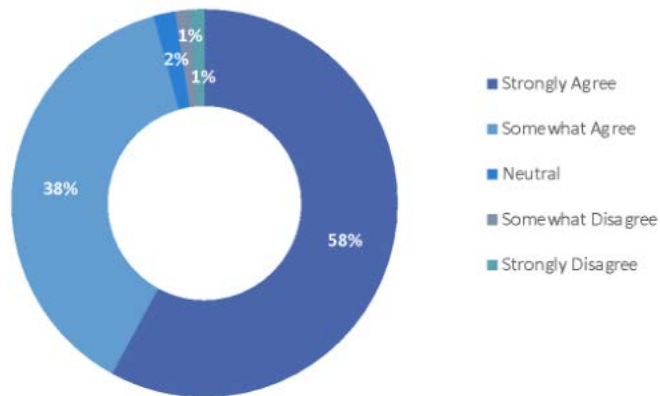
Professional Development

One potential reason for the upturn in faculty confidence was that they reported having access to multiple forms of professional development since the spring term. Webinars were the most common type of professional development offered, with 83% of faculty reporting that these were available to them. A majority of faculty noted that they had self-paced training available, as well. Only 3% of faculty mentioned no availability of professional development.

RECOMMENDED AND/OR PROVIDED PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Category	Percentage
Live or recorded webinars	83%
Self-paced training	55%
Online resource hub	48%
Online faculty community	43%
Faculty mentoring program	41%
In-person training	30%
Other	7%
None of the above	3%

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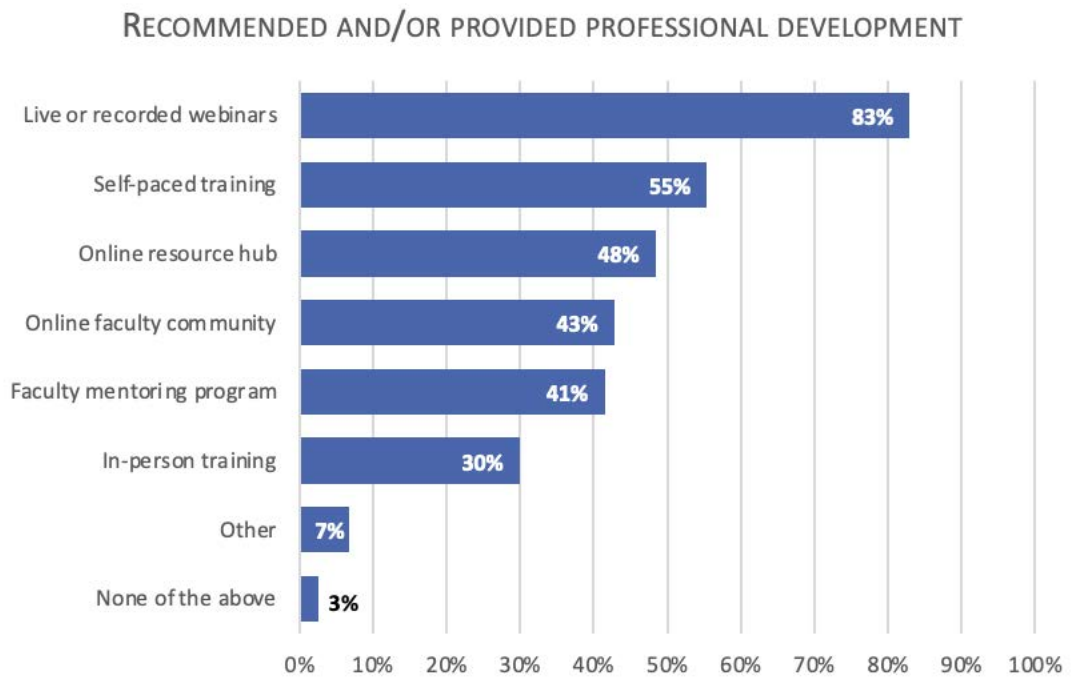
As important as providing such training might be, it was equally critical to understand the degree to which such training was productive and useful. To that end, more than half of faculty noted that professional development offerings were effective, with more individuals rating webinars as effective over other professional development forms.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WAS EFFECTIVE

Category	Percentage
Live or recorded webinars	69%
Self-paced training	66%
Online faculty community	65%
Online resource hub	63%
Other	62%
In-person training	61%
Faculty mentoring program	61%

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Optimism – Pessimism

As they prepared for the fall semester's onset, faculty were asked whether they felt optimistic or pessimistic about the future in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Nearly half of the respondents indicated that they felt optimistic about their higher education role, their institution's future, and the overall future of higher education. Faculty were least likely to feel pessimistic about their personal role in higher education.

How optimistic or pessimistic are you?

	Optimistic	Neutral	Pessimistic
Your personal role in higher education	47%	35%	18%
The future for your institution	46%	27%	27%
The overall future of higher education	46%	27%	27%
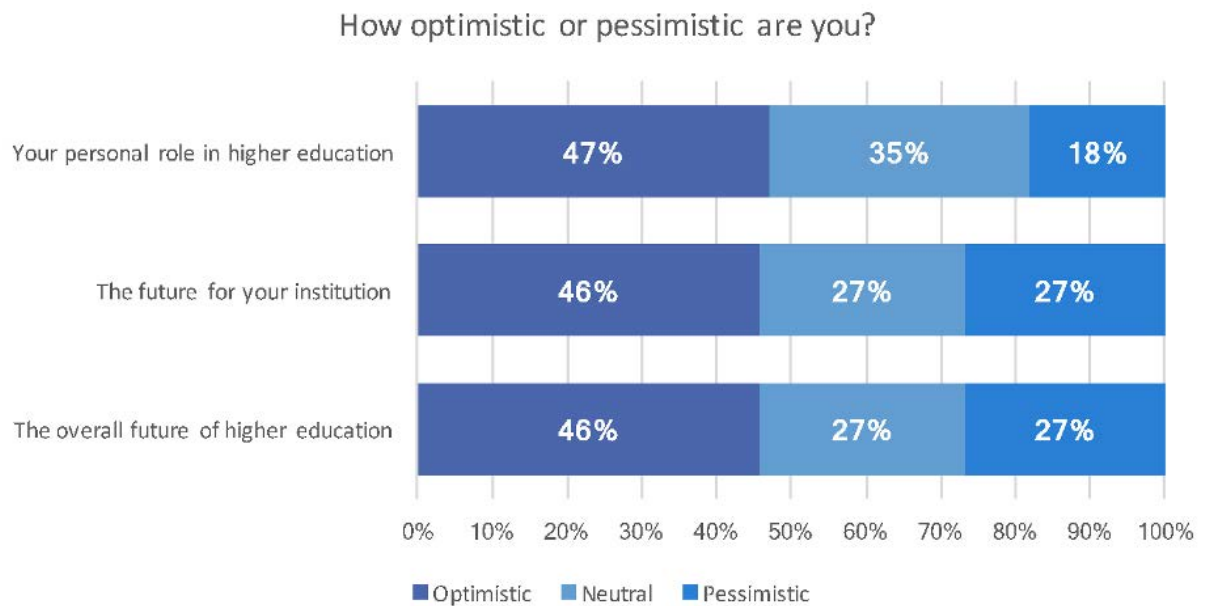
Equity

Both faculty and administrators expressed concerns about student equity in the spring and fall, especially concerning how the switch to emergency remote learning would negatively impact student equity. The results from the August survey show that equity remained a concern as fall term approached. The majority of respondents indicated that they were either very concerned or somewhat concerned about delivering equitable learning opportunities online.
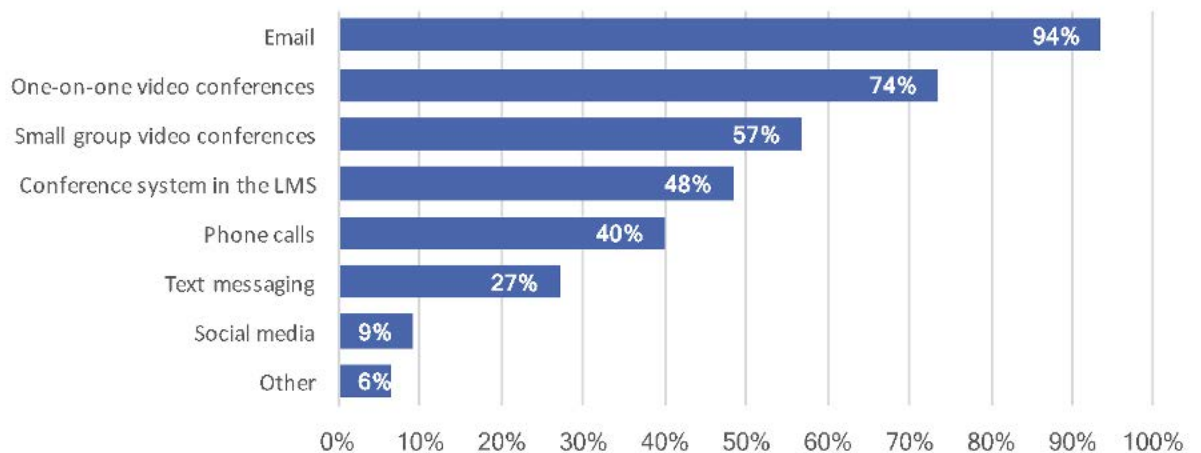
Concern about delivering equitable learning opportunities online

Legend:
- Very concerned
- Somewhat concerned
- Neutral
- Somewhat unconcerned
- Unconcerned

Values: 18%, 41%, 14%, 16%, 11%
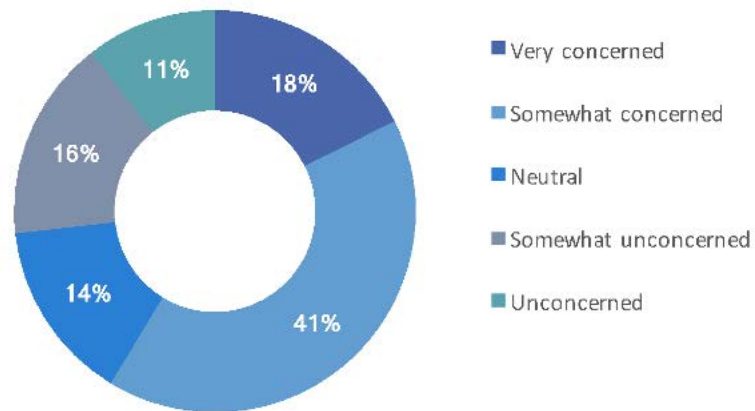
Communication with Students

Improving student communication, engagement, and support was also emphasized in the April survey results. As they prepared for the fall semester, all faculty were asked how they planned to communicate with students outside of class sessions. Overwhelmingly, nearly all planned to use email for student communications, followed by three-quarters of faculty planning to use one-on-one video conferences. A smaller majority of faculty planned to use small group video conferences, and roughly half planned to use the conference system embedded within their institution's Learning Management System (LMS). Again, these findings reiterate the significance of video technology as a communication tool and point to the effectiveness of basic communication methods, like email.

Communicate with students outside of class sessions

Method	Percent
Email	94%
One-on-one video conferences	74%
Small group video conferences	57%
Conference system in the LMS	48%
Phone calls	40%
Text messaging	27%
Social media	9%
Other	6%

August Open-ended Comments

"I think many universities and for-profit institutions will shut down. Schools will need to cut unnecessary and wasteful "extras" that have nothing to do with education and only serve to create the "college experience." Students will be more selective since they see no reason to spend extra when the amenities are the same. Depending on the length of the acute issues with Covid-19, the student loan and tuition issues may need rethinking. I hope to see the U.S. adopt a very different system of education, not just at the college level but from the start." (Faculty)

"This pandemic will have a positive impact on higher education. We are finally utilizing all the technology we have to make education more accessible. Personally, I am enjoying teaching online." (Faculty)

"The online learning genie is out of the bottle. It is time to recognize the benefits of remote and hybrid learning offers to non-traditional students and to our increasingly diverse student body. Higher ed will have to work hard to justify increases in tuition for a program that is remotely delivered. It is possible that institutions of higher ed will need to offer a buffet of learning experiences, from the full, in-person, on campus experience to the fully online remote experience, appropriately priced." (Faculty)

"There will be fewer institutions of higher education standing after the pandemic. We will need to re-think what we are offering and what we should do to best equip our students for the new world out there. There are fewer and fewer tenure track jobs available these days. Increasing numbers of those who decide to get a doctoral degree will become professors and doctoral programs themselves will have fewer students as they may not have the resources to support them and the job prospects of these students once they complete their degree are bleak." (Faculty)

"I am flipping my classroom, and I expect that I will keep this style in the future. I would not be surprised if you start to see consolidation among universities. Let's be honest most classes at universities across the U.S. are highly similar. With online learning why do we need a Calc I at every university in the country? Frankly things become even more standardized when you look at things like the ACS certified chemistry degree. Most lectures can in the future come from a repository and then the faculty can deal with small group interactions to

reinforce the material and if needed supplement for their programs specific desires." (Faculty)

"I think higher ed will respond and change. It will be difficult, but those institutions who are able financially and strategically weather the storm will come out stronger on the other side. This will cull institutions, like the one at which I work, who were already at risk because of changing demographics and razor-thin budgets. I believe that my current role as an upper-level administrator will become redundant in the new higher ed landscape. I will need to be nimble and ready to radically change my area of expertise to remain marketable." (Administrator)

"There will be long-term impact on labor practices, business processes, and the nature and delivery of products and services across the economy. Higher education will need to adapt to those changes with respect to its own practices and its preparation of students for the workforce. Those institutions of higher education that do so successfully will play a vital role in the post-pandemic recovery." (Administrator)

"The pandemic has accelerated the disruption that new technology and digital learning have brought to higher ed — While it may be efficient to stand and lecture to a class of 300, students do not find this teaching/learning strategy effective (They probably never did, but for so many years, it was all we knew.). Every institution has experienced administrative bloat, and when we encounter new regulations or demands, we are generally not creative in thinking about how to address the problem — we default to hiring a new person to handle it. With most institutions' expense budgets consisting of something like 60-75% personnel-related expenses, there is no way to manage expenses without reducing staff or cutting under-enrolled programs. Higher education has always been in an additive mode, and the pandemic is causing us to have to do some deep soul-searching as an institution to figure out where to prune so the rest may thrive. Individual campuses have also typically operated pretty independently, but the potential for more collaborations among consortia participants will accelerate." (Administrator)

"Long term, we are reshaping our team to be more rapid response to the educational needs of our area. For our learners, they are far more accepting of hybrid learning models. Lastly, the pandemic is reshaping the economy, so our institution needs to pivot to ensure that our citizens have credentials/ certificates and degrees of value in the post-COVID19 economy." (Administrator)

"I think that there will be a shift away from the "traditional" two- to four-year diploma and degree programs being the bread and butter of the institutions to shorter, more flexible learning opportunities that, ideally, can stack into higher credentials." (Administrator)

DECEMBER: TAKING STOCK

Key Findings

- Most faculty reported changes to their teaching practices compared to teaching prior to the pandemic, and nearly all expect to incorporate these changes to some extent after the pandemic.

- Faculty were mainly satisfied with student learning during the fall term.

- Faculty expect that teaching will continue to be different following the pandemic.

- Video-based technologies were heavily used by faculty, and faculty anticipate continued use of video-based technologies post-pandemic.

- Faculty and administrators feel more optimistic about using digital materials.

- Following the fall semester, most faculty perceived the professional development they received related to teaching online to meet their needs.

- Administrators were more critical than faculty when asked to assess their institution's ability to meet the professional development needs of faculty.

Teaching is Different

One-quarter of all faculty reported that their teaching during Fall 2020 was very different from what it was prior to the pandemic, with an additional 45% saying that they had made a number of changes to their instruction. Only 6% of faculty reported that fall term teaching was "Much the same" as pre-pandemic.

Faculty: How does your teaching now compare to pre-pandemic?

Legend:
- Much the same
- Small changes
- Number of changes
- Very different
- Other

Chart values: 1%, 6%, 22%, 45%, 26%
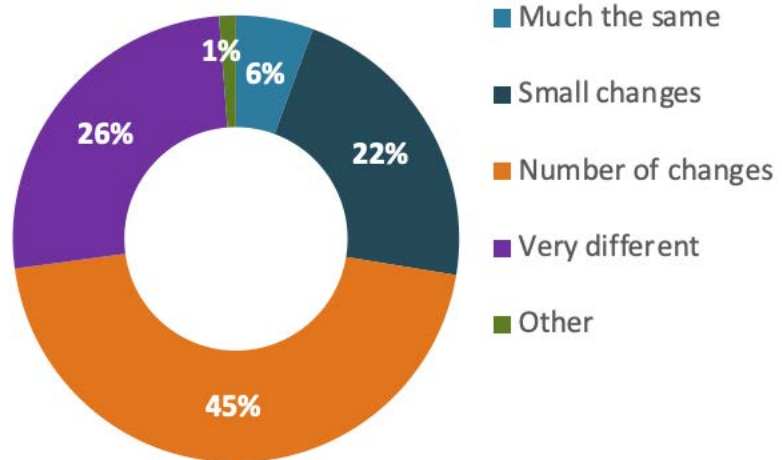
It is Working

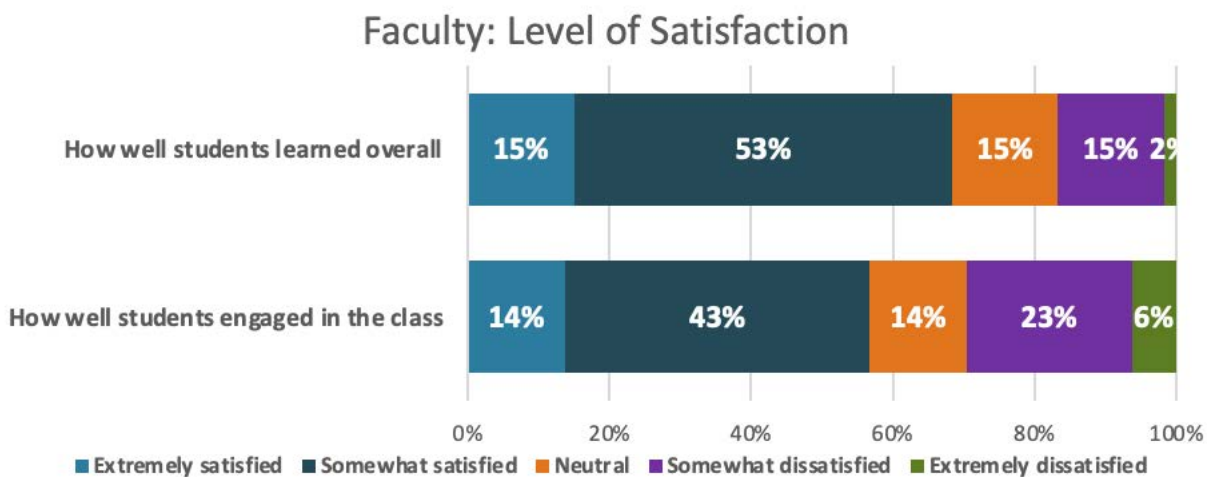The magnitude of the transformation for faculty and institutions during Fall 2020 was immense. Nearly all of the 1.5 million faculty members were teaching online, most of them for the first time. Likewise, almost all of the 19.6 million total students in U.S. higher education were receiving some instruction online. For all the changes brought about by the pandemic, many faculty reported being satisfied with how the experience was going. Three-quarters said that they were either extremely or somewhat satisfied with how efficiently they could communicate with their students; only 2% were extremely dissatisfied. Interacting with students had been a major concern of faculty during the spring. Satisfaction levels were also high for technology use, with rates very similar to those for student communications.

Faculty: Level of Satisfaction

	Extremely satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Neutral	Somewhat dissatisfied	Extremely dissatisfied
How efficiently I communicate with students	27%	49%	10%	12%	
How efficiently the technology works	23%	55%	11%	10%	

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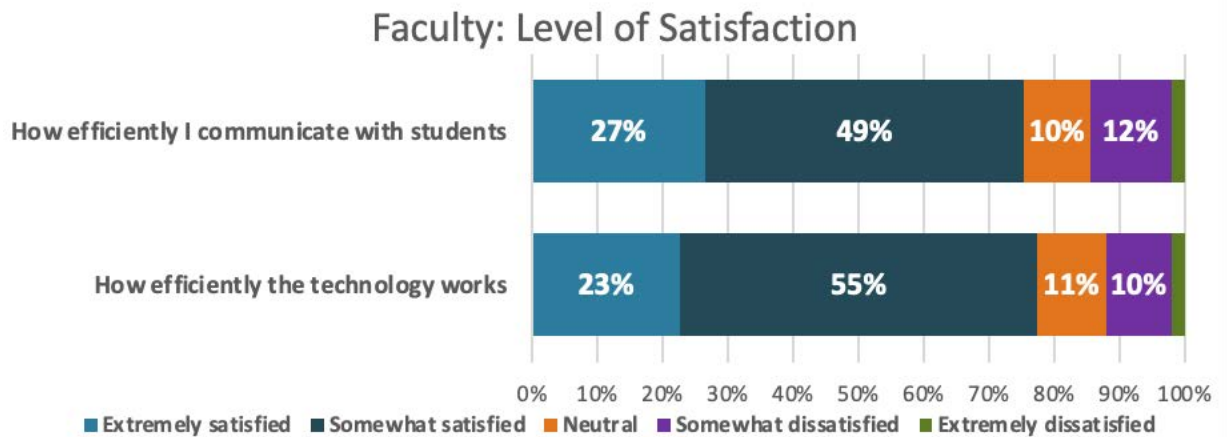
Perhaps the most important measure was the faculty's assessment of how well they thought their students learned during the term. The measure is a general view of faculty perceptions of student progress and learning, not a direct measure from students. Using this metric, 68% of faculty responded that they were either extremely or somewhat satisfied with how well their students learned. Fifteen percent were neutral, and around 17% were either extremely or somewhat dissatisfied. While this generally positive result is reassuring, it needs to be considered in context. What steps are necessary (at the individual, institutional, and social level) to improve these numbers? How do these compare to a more typical term??

Faculty: Level of Satisfaction

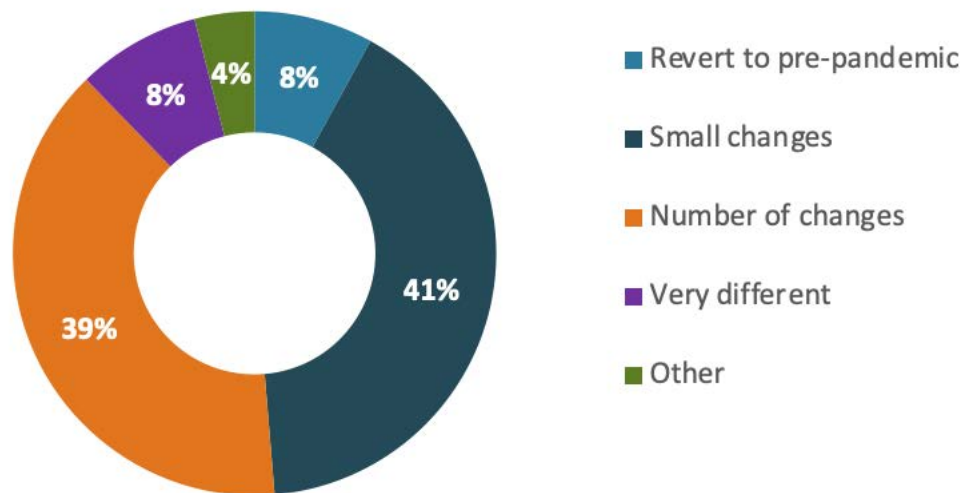|	Extremely satisfied	Somewhat satisfied	Neutral	Somewhat dissatisfied	Extremely dissatisfied
How well students learned overall	15%	53%	15%	15%	2%
How well students engaged in the class	14%	43%	14%	23%	6%

One area where faculty were slightly less satisfied was how well they thought students were engaged in class. Most faculty were either extremely or somewhat satisfied, but the proportion expressing dissatisfaction is much higher for this question.

Expectations: Teaching will Evolve

Nearly one-half of all faculty expect that their post-pandemic teaching will differ from what they were doing prior to the pandemic. A small group (8%) thinks it will be very different, while 39% believe it will involve many changes. An additional 41% expect small changes in their teaching, with only 8% reporting that they expect their post-pandemic teaching to revert to what it was pre-pandemic.

Faculty: Post-pandemic teaching expectations

Legend:
- Revert to pre-pandemic
- Small changes
- Number of changes
- Very different
- Other

Values shown: 8%, 41%, 39%, 8%, 4%
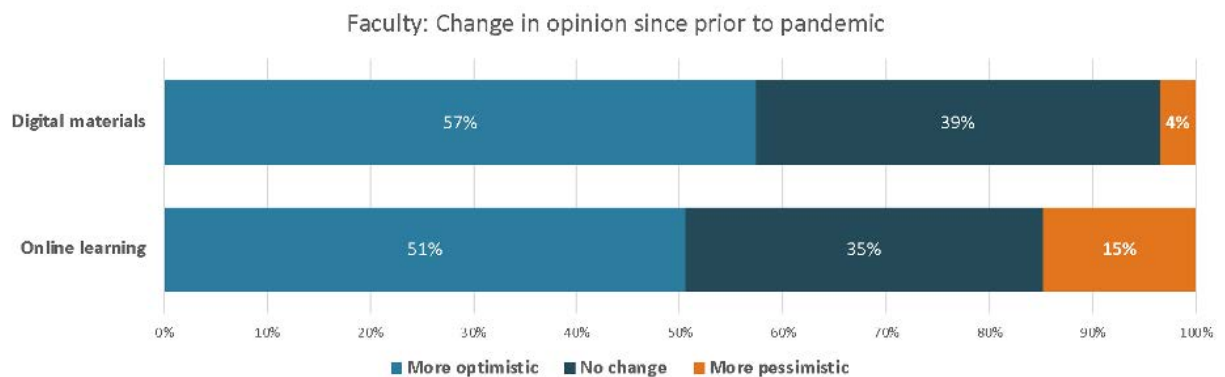
Growing Use of Video in Teaching

One particular aspect of teaching online that has resonated with faculty was the use of video for both group and individual meetings. Most faculty used video for full-class meetings (63%) and one-on-one sessions with students (70%). Nearly one-quarter of all faculty report that they will continue using full-class video meetings, and a majority expect to continue using one-on-one video meetings post-pandemic.

Faculty: Current and Future Use of Video

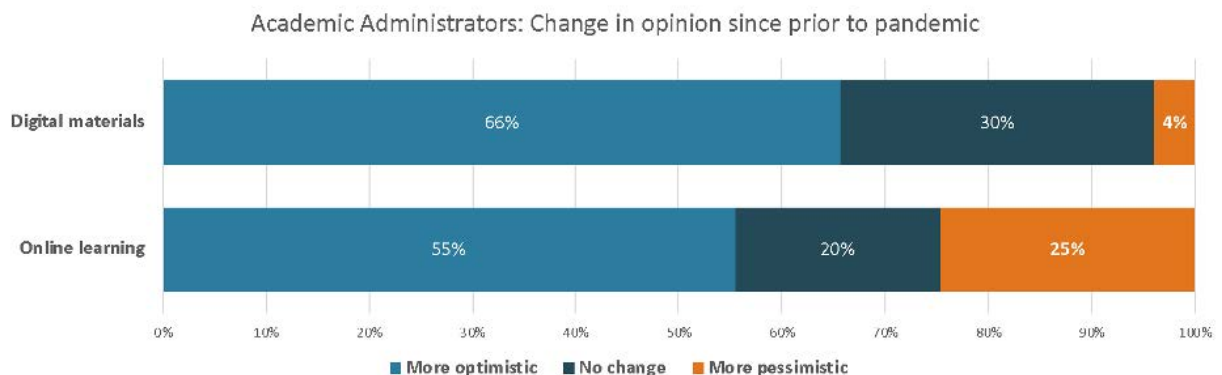|	Continue	Fall 2020 only
One-on-one video meetings	53%	18%
Full-class video meetings	24%	39%
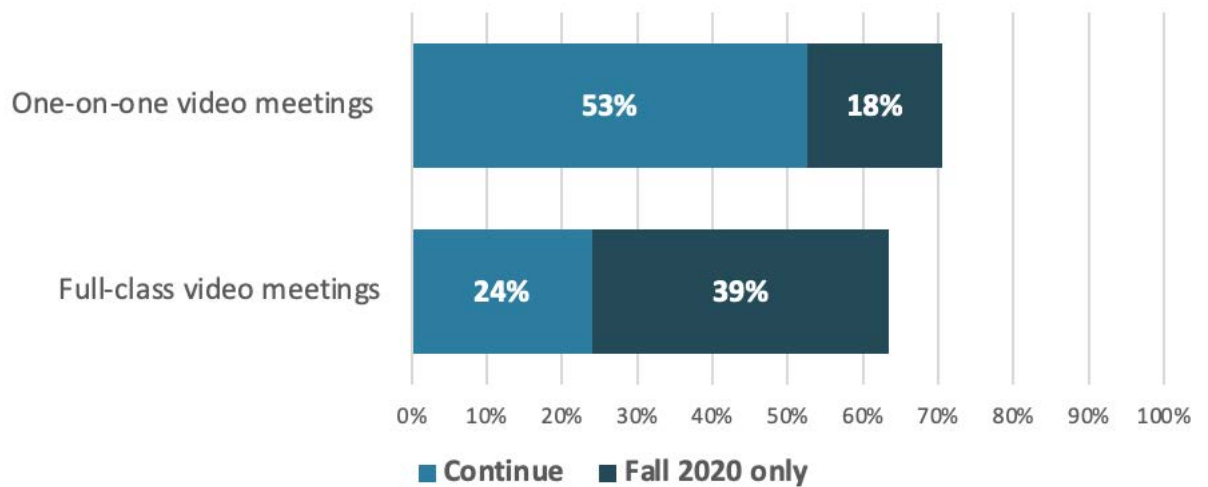
Changing Attitudes

A majority of faculty say that they are more optimistic now than before the pandemic about using digital materials. Only 4% of faculty reported that they were now more pessimistic about the use of digital materials than they were prior to the pandemic. Faculty opinions about online learning were also more optimistic for Fall 2020 than they were before the pandemic, with most reporting that they are more optimistic and 15% saying that they were more pessimistic now than previously.

Faculty: Change in opinion since prior to pandemic

	More optimistic	No change	More pessimistic
Digital materials	57%	39%	4%
Online learning	51%	35%	15%

Academic administrators were asked to respond to these questions about overall institutional attitude changes. The administrator responses concerning digital materials are very similar to those of the faculty, albeit a bit more optimistic. Administrators have similar optimism levels about online learning. That said, a much larger group reported that they are pessimistic about the future of online education for their institution. It is unclear what is driving the higher level of concern, but open-ended responses about student dissatisfaction and maintaining enrollment levels may be behind this response.

Academic Administrators: Change in opinion since prior to pandemic

	More optimistic	No change	More pessimistic
Digital materials	66%	30%	4%
Online learning	55%	20%	25%

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Open Educational Resources (OER) are defined by Creative Commons as:[1]

(T)eaching, learning, and research materials that are either (a) in the public domain or (b) licensed in a manner that provides everyone with free and perpetual permission to engage in the 5R activities.

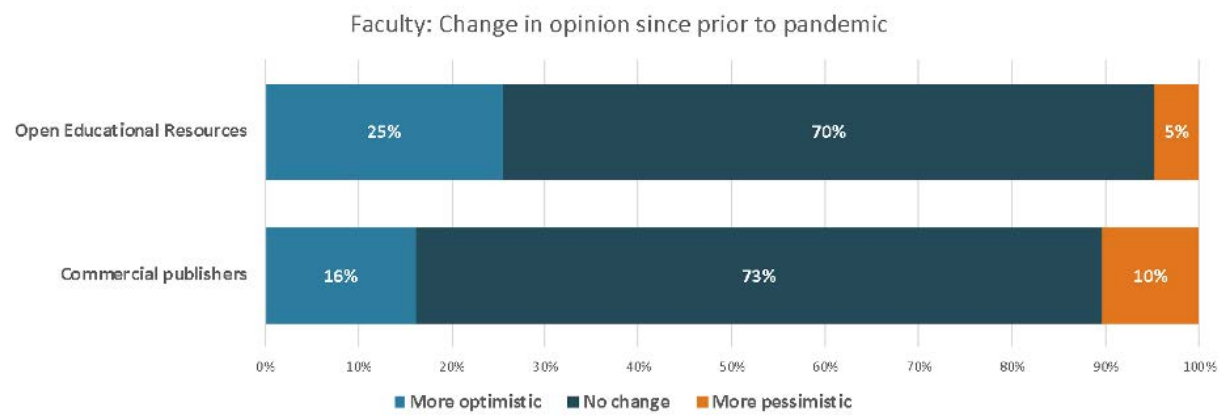*Retain – make, own, and control a copy of the resource*

Reuse – use your original, revised, or remixed copy of the resource publicly

Revise – edit, adapt, and modify your copy of the resource

Remix – combine your original or revised copy of the resource with other existing material to create something new
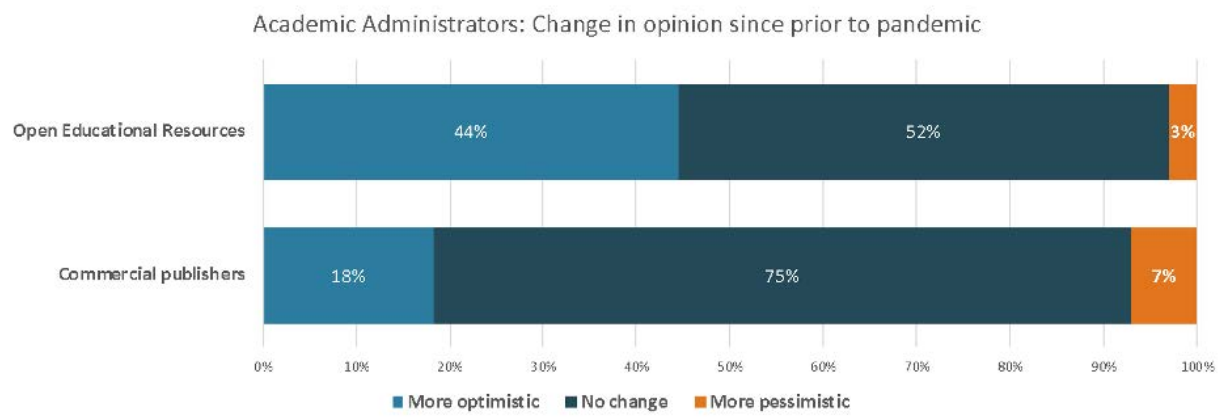
Redistribute – share copies of your original, revised, or remixed copy of the resource with others

Faculty and administrators were asked specifically about how they view commercial publishers and Open Education Resources (OER). One-quarter of faculty report that they are more optimistic about OER than before the pandemic, with a somewhat lower percentage (16%) saying that they were more optimistic about commercial publishers.

Faculty: Change in opinion since prior to pandemic

|	More optimistic	No change	More pessimistic
Open Educational Resources	25%	70%	5%
Commercial publishers	16%	73%	10%

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The administrators' results mirror those of faculty for commercial publishers, but are much more positive than faculty about OER. It is unclear from this data if administrators started with a lower opinion of OER, and therefore are showing a more significant change, or if administrators now see considerably more advantage of OER from an institutional perspective.

Academic Administrators: Change in opinion since prior to pandemic

|	More optimistic	No change	More pessimistic
Open Educational Resources	44%	52%	3%
Commercial publishers	18%	75%	7%

Continuing Professional Development

One concern going into the fall term was that while faculty reported access to considerable professional development prior to the term, they might discover things that they missed once they were underway in the full term. However, that does not appear to have been the case. Most faculty (54%) reported they had everything they needed in terms of professional development, with an additional 31% saying there were only a few gaps. A total of 12% said they were large gaps (10%) or they did not have access to any professional development (2%).

Faculty: Does your institution provide access to the professional development that you need

- Everything I need
- A few gaps
- Large gaps
- No
- Other

54%
31%
10%
2%
3%
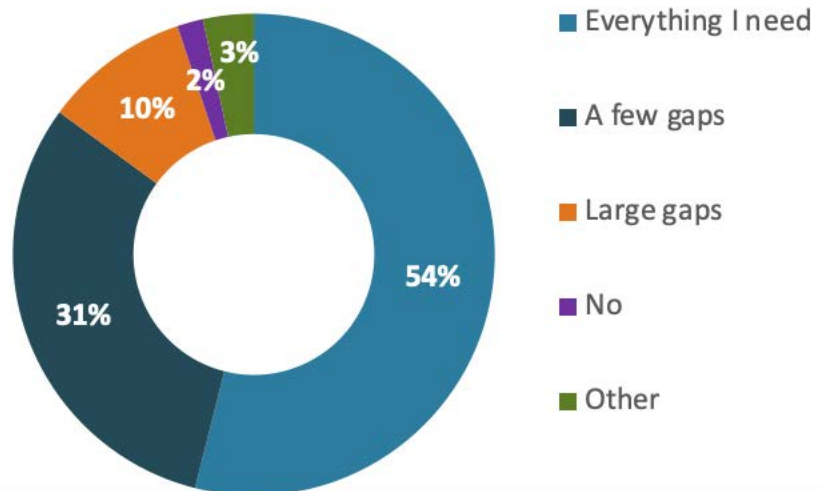
As is typical in surveys of faculty and administrators, the administrators believe that things are going well, and the faculty expressed more concerns. That is not the case for professional development, where the administrators are much more critical of their institution's current offerings than the faculty are. Less than a quarter (24%) of administrators believe that the institution provides everything that faculty need for professional development, a rate that is less than half what faculty report (54%). Likewise, the proportion of administrators that see a lack of professional development or large gaps is greater than the rate reported by faculty 20% (as compared to 12%).

Administrators: Does your institution provide access to the professional development that faculty need

Legend:
- Everything they need
- A few gaps
- Large gaps
- No
- Other

Values: 24%, 53%, 16%, 4%, 2%
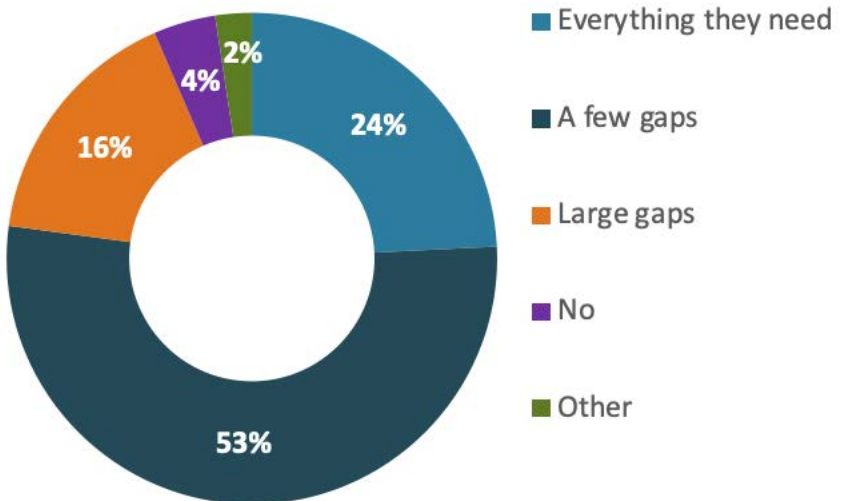
December Open-Ended Comments

"Although there was a significant learning curve to adjust to remote online teaching, I found it a challenge that I came to enjoy and would like to continue. It was more convenient for many students. However, it was more difficult to give students experiential opportunities that had been a part of my counseling skills course; I did begin to use breakout rooms for that." (Faculty)

"I have been pretty resistant to the move to digital humanities / learning / tools in the classroom. Largely because I think colleges/universities often see them as a way to be progressive without considering what that really means, and often make the argument that the world is changing (becoming more online) and that we have to meet students where they are. I have always argued that we also need to not forget that students are not ONLY their technological selves, and the more they are kept online the more they are being targeted & shaped by corporations. I still believe that, and still will have my students buy physical books so they can go outside or in the library and immerse themselves in true engagement (vs the online world of endless distraction), but I now see how some of the digital learning tools can nicely supplement their in-class in-book learning, especially the incorporation of well-made videos, discussion boards, and one-on-one conferencing that falls outside of office hours (and are more convenient for everyone). I also hope more meetings go digital as the going to & from administrative meetings is a big drain on deep work time." (Faculty)

"I have grown interested in alternative ways of assessing students — such as self-assessments and ungrading. The use of pass/fail seemed to alleviate some stress for some students. However, we did not hold the pass/fail option for Fall 2020. I'm not sure why since students are facing some of the same struggles. I actually felt Fall 2020 was more stressful, since the expectations for everyone were higher, as well as with my young daughter distance learning. Managing all the pieces was very overwhelming, and I can only imagine the same could be said for my students with their work, studies, children, families, etc." (Faculty)

"I think the biggest challenge for me was the institution treating online learning as 'f2f in a web site.' Granted the decisions were made in an emergency but it did not help to have them made by people with little pedagogic or ed tech background." (Faculty)

"I'd like to actually get back to teaching. My institution eliminated adjunct faculty as a cost saving measure once the pandemic started. I miss the students terribly." (Faculty)

METHODOLOGY

Information for this report comes from three national surveys of higher education administrators and teaching faculty. The first survey collected data from April 6 through April 19, 2020, the second collected between August 4 and August 14, 2020, and the third collected data between December 2 and December 4, 2020.

All surveys used the same distribution method of two mailing lists from Market Data Retrieval. One list included a representative sample of all U.S. higher education teaching faculty (defined as faculty who were teaching at least one course during the current academic year). The second was a representative sample of relevant academic administrators (e.g., provosts, deans, department heads). This primary distribution was augmented by announcements and invitations from several partner organizations, including the survey link in mailings or newsletters. Some organizations posted the survey invitation to their social media channels (e.g., Twitter, Facebook), where other individuals further disseminated these invitations through typical social media activities (e.g., retweeting, reposting, etc.).

Participants

For the April study, 897 higher education faculty and administrators from U.S. higher education institutions responded to the survey. Participants represented 672 institutions from 47 states. For the August survey, there were a total of 887 higher education faculty and administrators representing 597 institutions from 45 states. A total of 1,708 faculty and administrators responded to the December survey, representing 1,204 different institutions.

Participant institutional affiliation was matched to the federal Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS) to retrieve institutional characteristic data, allowing for analyses to be conducted by the type of institution.

The largest group of respondents for the April survey (47%) were from four-year public institutions, with 36% from four-year private institutions and 17% from two-year institutions. For the August survey, the largest group of respondents (49%) were from four-year public institutions, with 36% from four-year private institutions and 14% from two-year institutions. The largest group of December respondents (57%) were also from four-year public institutions, with 32% from four-year private institutions and 11% from two-year institutions.

Materials

All three surveys consisted of questions designed for faculty, questions directed to administrators, and questions appropriate for both groups. Where appropriate, questions included an 'other' response, where the respondent could provide a detailed answer.

Procedures

All data were checked for completeness, missing values, or erroneous codes. All responses entered as 'other' were reviewed to determine if they should also be coded as one of the fixed responses. The only required question for the survey was that of the respondent's role (faculty or administrator). Respondents could skip any other question. Very few respondents skipped questions, but all surveys where less than three-quarters of the eligible questions were completed were omitted from the analysis.

Potential participants were provided the option to include their email to receive a copy of a final summary report. Email addresses were separated from the rest of the data prior to any analyses. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, results are presented in aggregate and summary statistics.