



Bay View Analytics

Pandemic-Era Report Card

Students, Faculty and Administrators Reflect Upon the Academic Year

Jeff Seaman, PhD
Nicole Johnson, PhD

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Academic Year

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This project would not be possible without students, faculty, and academic administrators taking the time to respond to our questions. In what must be one of the most stressful periods for higher education, the willingness of our respondents to provide such detailed answers is commendable. We thank them.

Our partner organizations made this project possible. They all contributed to the overall project and were instrumental in getting out the word to their members. We thank the Online Learning Consortium (OLC), WICHE Cooperative for Educational Technologies (WCET), University Professional and Continuing Education Association (UPCEA), Canadian Digital Learning Research Association (CDLRA), and Every Learner Everywhere for all their assistance.

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.

Jeff Seaman, PhD
Nicole Johnson, PhD

PARTNERS

Cengage is the education and technology company built for learners. As the largest US-based provider of teaching and learning materials for higher ed, we offer valuable options at affordable price points. Our industry-leading initiatives include Cengage Unlimited, the first-of-its-kind all-access digital subscription service. We embrace innovation to create learning experiences that build confidence and momentum toward the future students want. Headquartered in Boston, Cengage also serves K-12, library and workforce training markets around the world. Visit us at www.cengage.com or find us on Facebook or Twitter.

WCET is the leader in the practice, policy, & advocacy of digital learning in higher education. WCET is a member-driven non-profit which brings together colleges, universities, higher education organizations, and companies to collectively improve the quality and reach of technology-enhanced learning programs. Learn more at <https://wcet.wiche.edu/>.

UPCEA is the association for professional, continuing, and online education. Founded in 1915, the association serves its members with innovative conferences and specialty seminars, research and benchmarking information, professional networking opportunities and timely publications. Based in Washington, D.C., UPCEA builds greater awareness of the vital link between adult learners and non-traditional learners and public policy issues. Visit www.upcea.edu.

The mission of the Canadian Digital Learning Research Association (CDLRA) is to measure the evolution of digital learning at publicly funded post-secondary institutions in Canada and to assess its impact on employment, skills development and digital competencies across the country. Learn more at <https://www.cdlra-acrfl.ca>

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

The year 2020 was likely one of the most challenging ever for the higher education sector. The pandemic forced massive rapid changes, and faculty, administrators, and students all had to adjust to new ways of conducting their day-to-day operations. This project is the fourth in a series of snapshots examining the nature and magnitude of these changes in teaching and learning. The first three stages of this project explored the state of higher education in:

- 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.

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

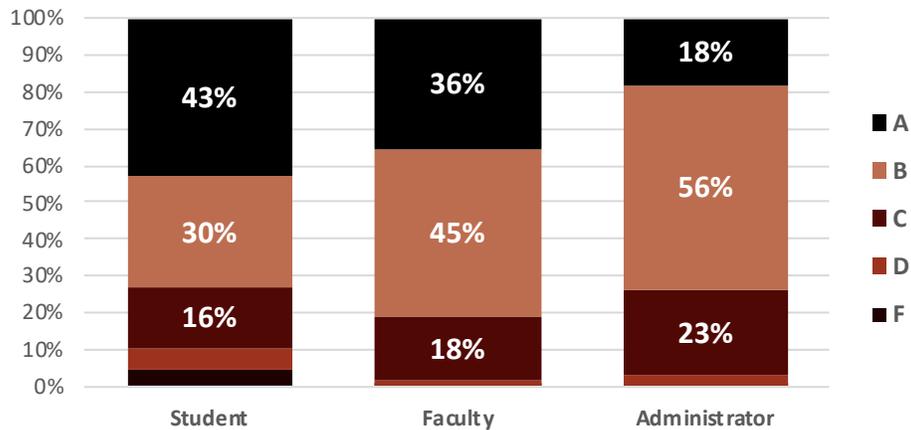
- What situations were faculty and administrators facing?
- How did faculty adapt their processes and techniques used for teaching?
- What resources did faculty and administrators think they needed to be successful, and did they have access to these resources?
- What did faculty and administrators expect 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?

This fourth and final installment of the project examines faculty and administrators to see if the second term of teaching in a pandemic was better than the first. This stage also included students, surveying those enrolled for both the Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 terms. All three groups were all queried as to how they thought things were going, what issues they are facing, and their hopes for the future of higher education.

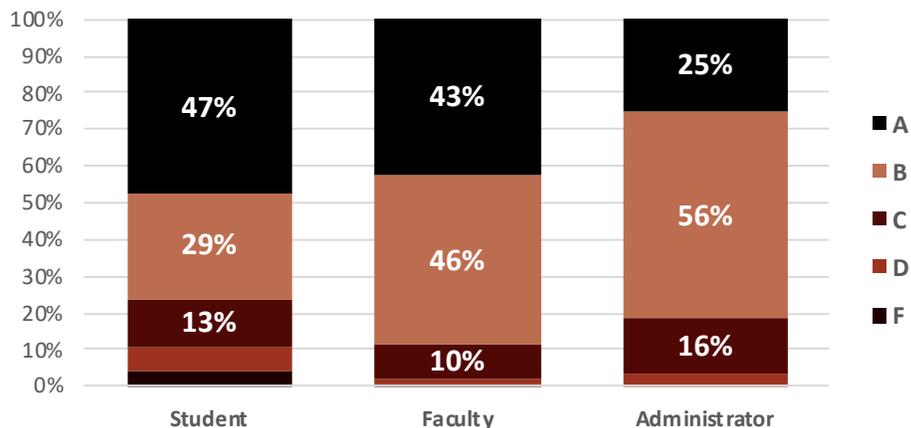
EDUCATIONAL NEEDS

Students, faculty, and administrators were asked how well their courses in Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 met educational needs. The majority of each group graded their courses as an A or a B, with students most likely to give an A rating. As the year progressed, courses were perceived to have improved, with all three groups gave more A ratings for classes in Spring 2021 than Fall 2020.

Letter grades for how well Fall 2020 courses met educational needs



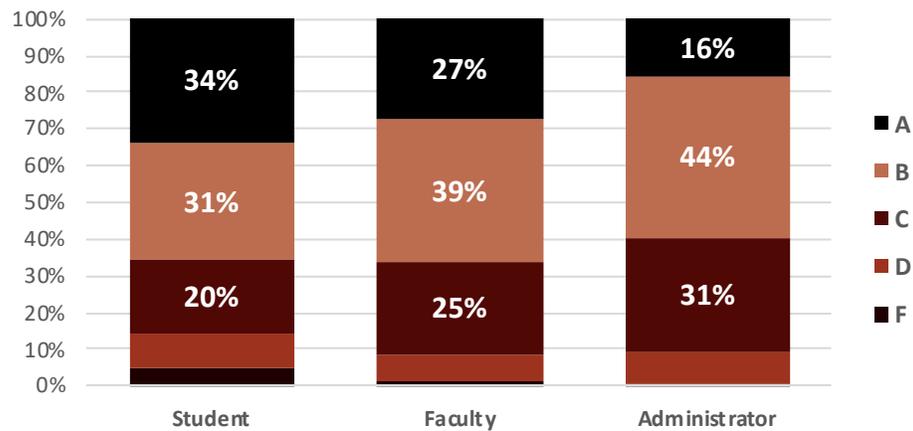
Letter grade for how well Spring 2021 courses are meeting educational needs



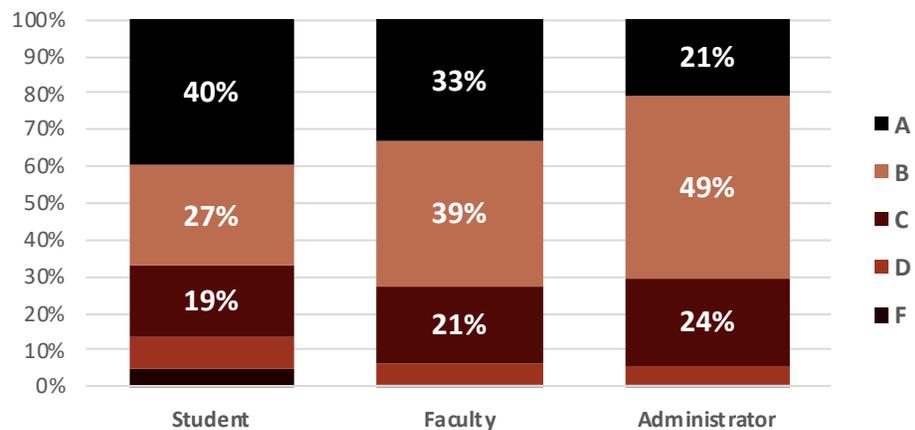
FACULTY-STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Roughly two-thirds of students and faculty gave student-faculty engagement an A or B grade throughout the 2020-21 academic year. Administrator perceptions of faculty-student engagement were lower in Fall 2020 but improved over the year.

Fall 2020: How well faculty were engaged with students



Spring 2021: How well faculty are engaged with students



PROBLEMS FACING STUDENTS

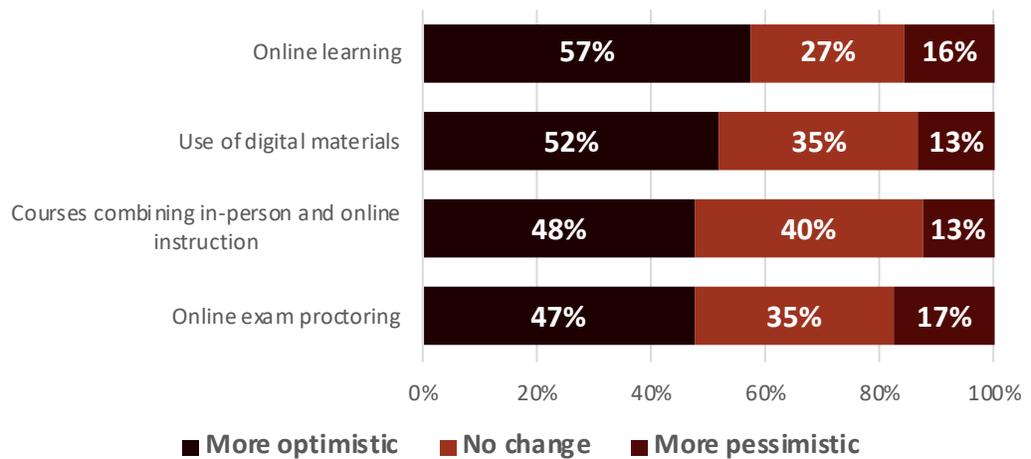
Respondents were asked to rank the challenges experienced by students in Spring 2021. The table below shows that faculty and administrators were well-attuned to which issues and challenges were the most pressing problems for students, providing the same top three issues as the students themselves.

Rank	Students	Faculty	Administrators
1	Feelings of stress	Feelings of stress	Feelings of stress
2	Level of motivation	Level of motivation	Level of motivation
3	Having time to do coursework	Having time to do coursework	Having time to do coursework
4	Support from my academic institution	Having a suitable workplace to do coursework	Internet connectivity (e.g., WiFi)
5	Internet connectivity (e.g., WiFi)	Internet connectivity (e.g., WiFi)	Having a suitable workplace to do coursework
6	Having a suitable workplace to do coursework	Support from my academic institution	Access to a learning device (laptop, home computer, tablet)
7	Access to a learning device (laptop, home computer, tablet)	Access to a learning device (laptop, home computer, tablet)	Support from my academic institution

CHANGES IN STUDENT ATTITUDES

The pandemic experience impacted students' views about teaching and learning. More than half of the students surveyed reported feeling more positive about online learning and the use of digital materials than they did pre-pandemic. Nearly half of students also reported feeling more optimistic toward courses that combine in-person and online instruction and online exam proctoring. Students also stated that they were now more optimistic about online exam proctoring than before the pandemic.

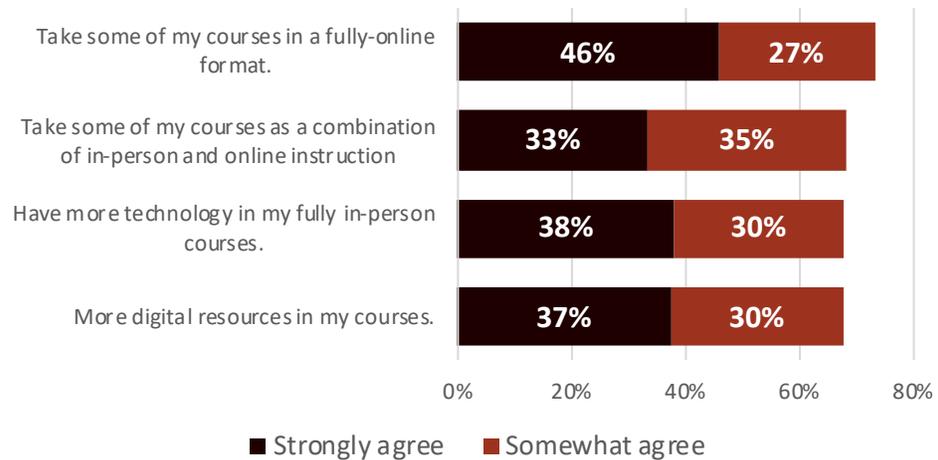
Student changes in attitudes since prior to the pandemic



STUDENT POST-PANDEMIC PREFERENCES

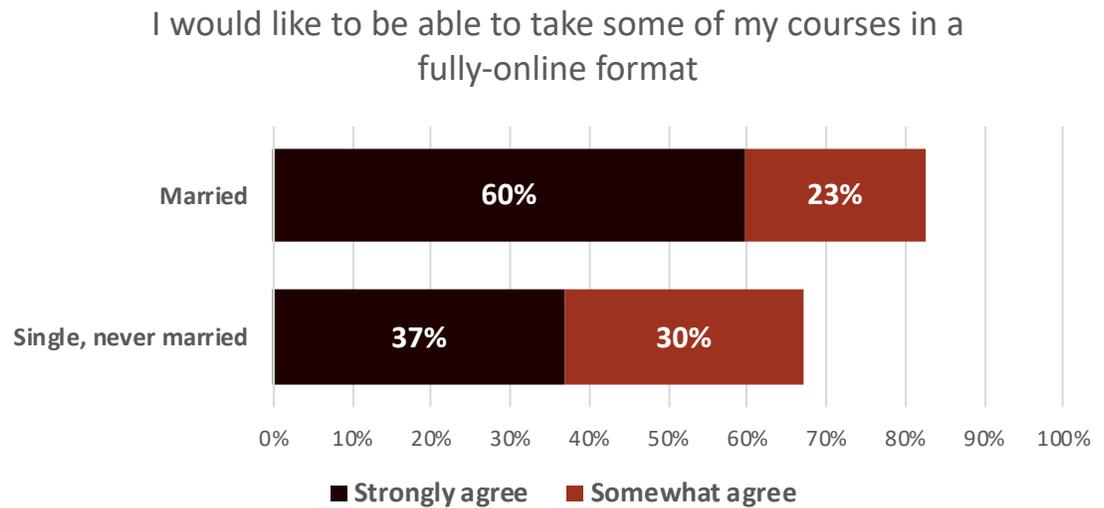
The past decade has been marked by a steady increase in the proportion of students who take one or more online courses. If anything, the recent experiences may have accelerated the student demand for this type of instruction. Going forward, the majority of students expressed preferences for having online and hybrid learning options, for more technology use integrated into in-person learning, and for the use of more digital materials in courses. With 46% of students saying that they strongly agree that they would like to take future online courses, and another 27% agreeing, nearly three-quarters of students are now expressing a preference for courses of this nature.

Preferences for my post-pandemic academic experiences

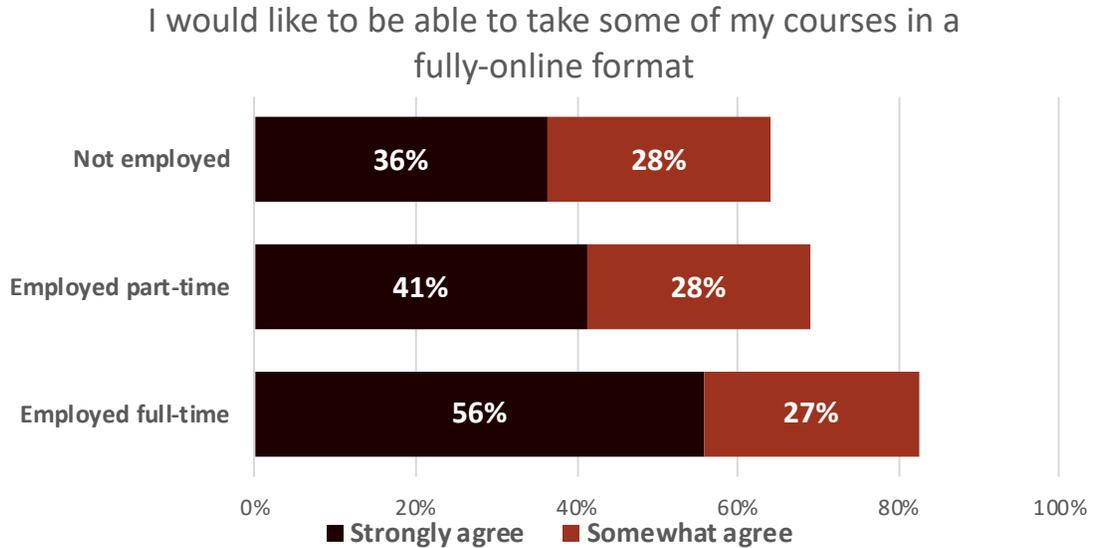


DIFFERENT STUDENT PREFERENCES

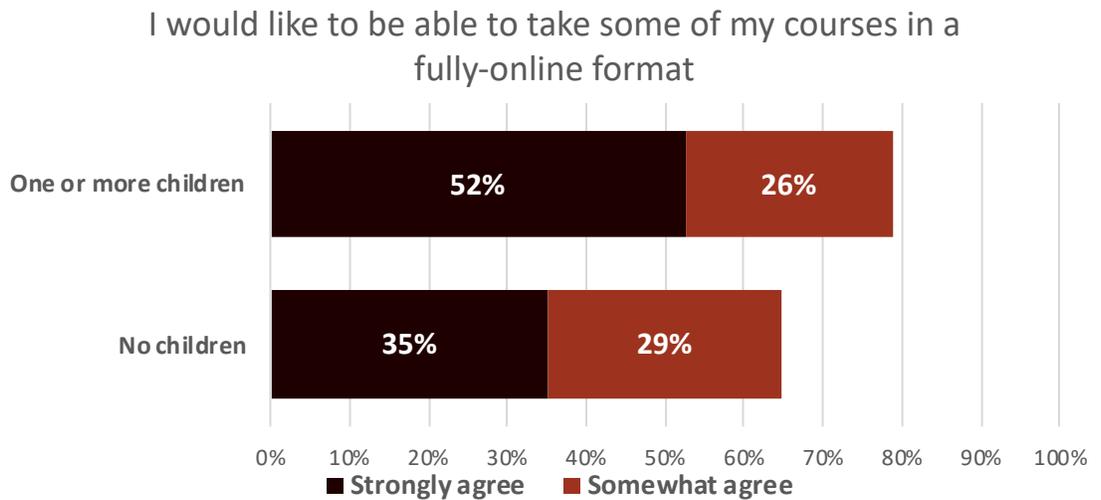
While most students expressed a preference for online courses, several subsets of students are much more likely to say that they would like to take some courses in a fully online format in the future. Students for whom coming to campus pose the most significant challenges were more likely to prefer online courses. Married students, for example, were more likely than unmarried students to express an interest in taking courses online.



Employed students were more interested in taking more courses online, with the strongest preference for online learning being among those employed full-time.

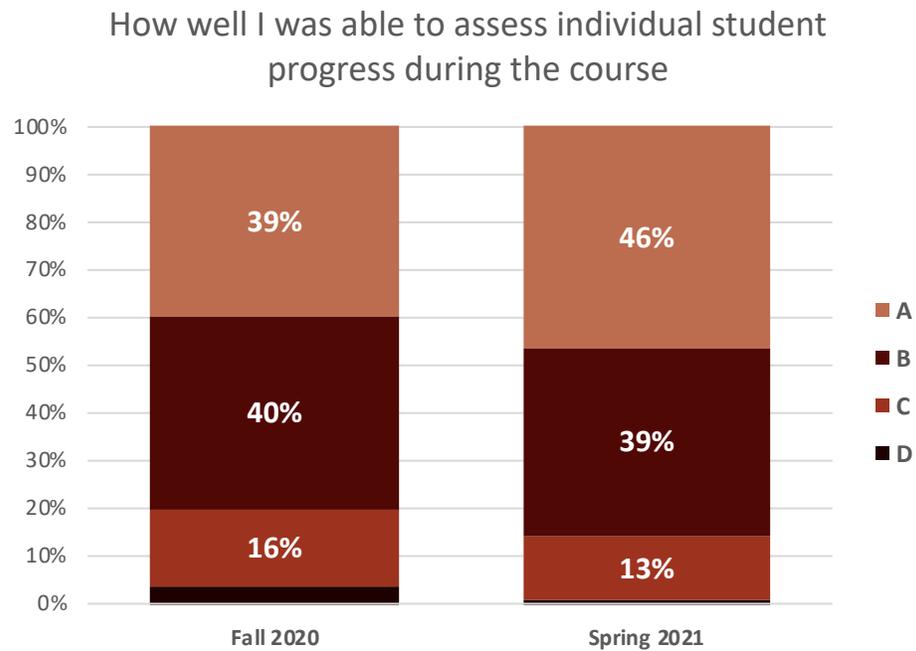


Likewise, students with one or more children wanted to be able to take some courses entirely online.



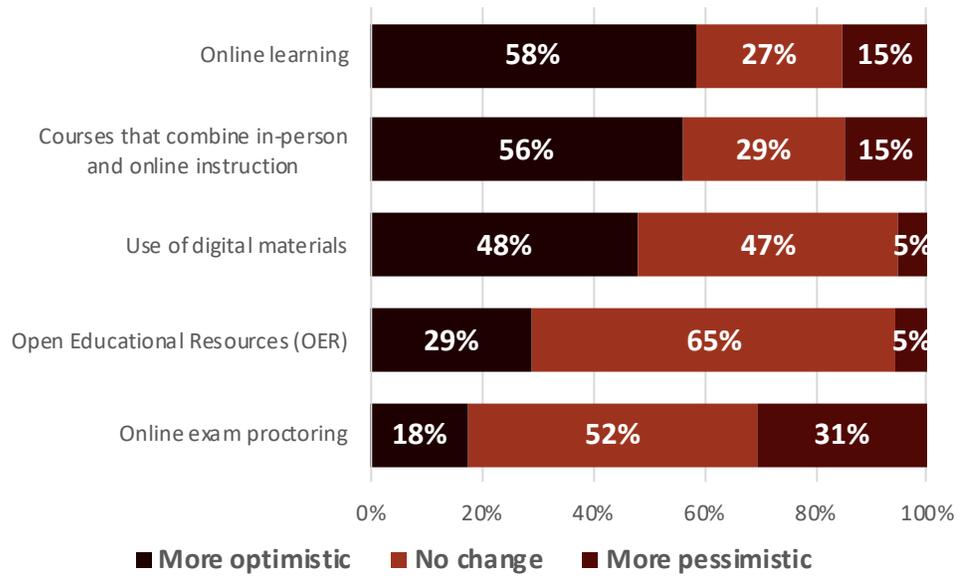
FACULTY EXPERIENCES

Faculty mostly gave themselves an A or B grade when asked how well they could assess individual student progress in courses taught during the 2020-21 academic year. The results for Spring 2021 showed that they thought the assessment process was getting better over time, with a larger proportion giving themselves a grade of A.



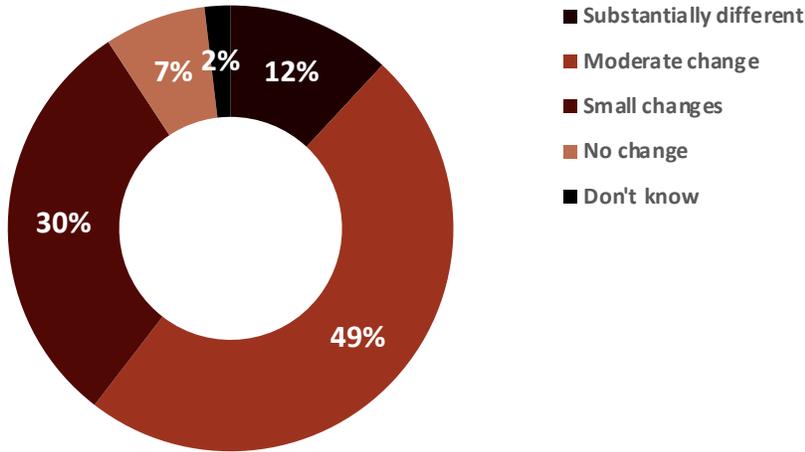
Like students, the experience of teaching during a pandemic has changed faculty options as well. More than half of faculty reported that their perceptions of online and hybrid course delivery have become more optimistic since the onset of the pandemic. Faculty were somewhat more optimistic about Open Educational Resources now. However, unlike the student responses, they were more pessimistic about online exam proctoring than before the pandemic.

Faculty changes in attitudes since prior to the pandemic



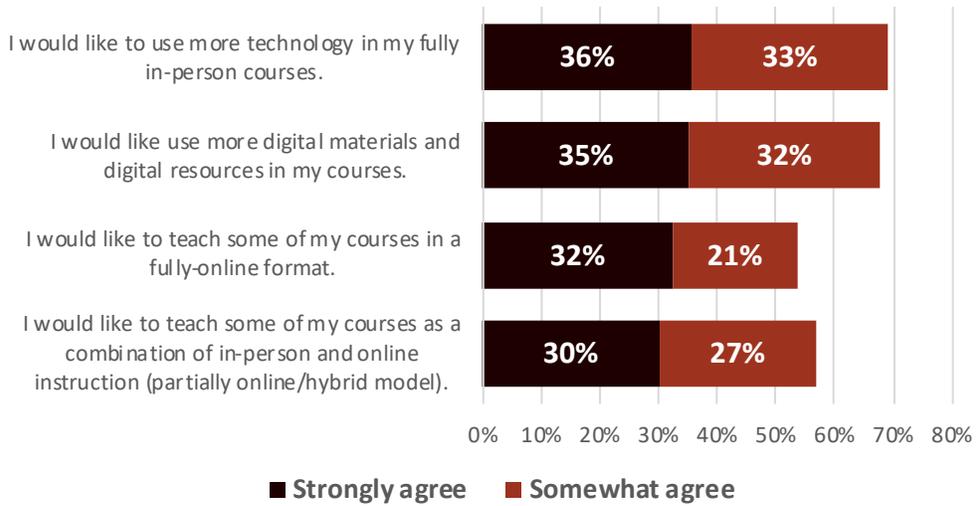
The vast majority of faculty expect some changes to their teaching techniques in the future, with nearly two-thirds of faculty anticipating moderate to substantial change.

Will your future teaching techniques change as a result of your teaching experiences during the pandemic?



Students reported a growing preference for online courses, the use of more digital materials, and the inclusion of more technology for in-person classes. Faculty preferences are a good match for those expressed by the students. The majority of faculty expressed an interest in using more technology in their courses and would like to teach in an online or hybrid format after the pandemic.

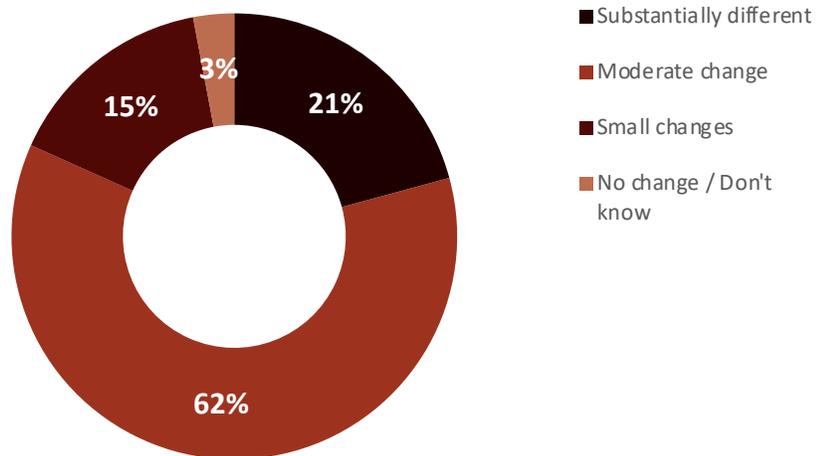
Faculty preferences for post-pandemic teaching



ADMINISTRATOR EXPERIENCES

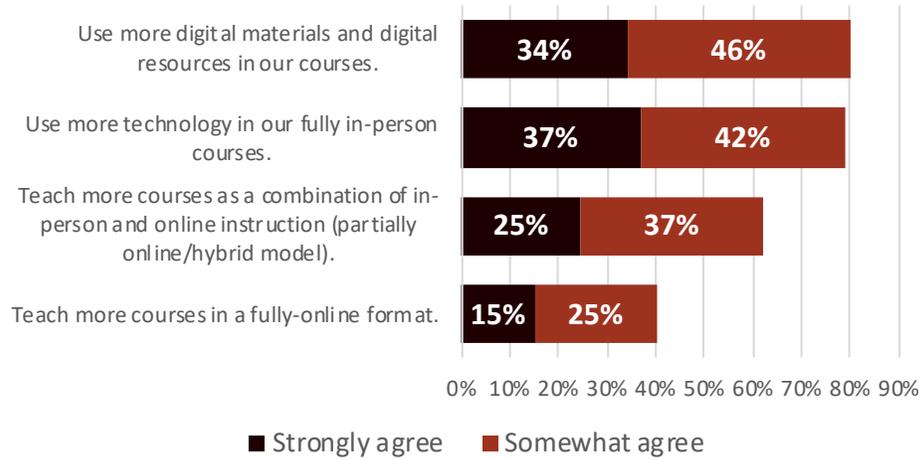
Academic administrators are even more convinced that post-pandemic teaching will be different than are the faculty. Over eighty percent say they expect future teaching techniques to be substantially or moderately different. Only 3% did not expect there to be any changes.

Will your institution's faculty teaching techniques change as a result of their teaching experiences during the pandemic?



Academic administrators are less favorable for future online teaching than either students or faculty. They agree with students and faculty on using more digital materials and more technology to be employed in in-person courses.

Administrative preferences for post-pandemic teaching



CONCLUSION

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, students, faculty, and institutions gained considerable online and technology-supported learning experience. Further, many rated their learning experiences positively. Since the onset of the pandemic, attitudes toward online learning and technology use have become more optimistic. Many students, faculty, and administrators hope that the future holds more options for learning online, using technology in the classroom, and using digital resources.

METHODOLOGY

Information for this report comes from national surveys of higher education students, academic administrators, and teaching faculty. The data were collected from March 30 through April 12, 2021.

The administrator and faculty surveys were distributed using mailing lists from Market Data Retrieval. One list included a representative sample of all U.S. higher education teaching faculty (defined as faculty 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).

Participants

A total of 1,286 higher education faculty and administrators from U.S. higher education institutions responded to the survey. Participants represented 856 institutions from 48 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia. A total of 1,469 student survey responses were received, each of which represented a student who was enrolled at a higher education institution for fall 2020 and spring 2021.

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

Materials

The bulk of the questions in the survey were common for all three groups. In addition, there were a few questions designed for faculty, a few questions directed to administrators, and questions that were unique for students. 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 incorrect codes. All responses entered as 'other' were reviewed to determine if they should also be coded as one of the fixed responses. Respondents could skip any question. Very few respondents skipped questions, but all surveys where respondents completed less than three-quarters of the eligible questions were omitted from the analysis.

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