

OCTOBER 2024



POST-SECONDARY STUDENT CHOICE DURING THE PANDEMIC IN ILLINOIS

PART OF THE 2022 ILLINOIS
COLLEGE-GOING SURVEY SERIES

WRITTEN BY:

Mariana Barragan Torres
Paul Hatch

Illinois Workforce and Education Research
Collaborative (IWERC)
Discovery Partners Institute
University of Illinois System



PART OF THE UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS SYSTEM

Suggested Citation:

Barragan Torres, M., & Hatch, P. (2024). Post-secondary student choice during the pandemic in Illinois. *2022 Illinois College-Going Survey Series*. Chicago, IL: Illinois Workforce and Education Research Collaborative (IWERC), Discovery Partners Institute, University of Illinois. <https://dpi.uillinois.edu/appliedresearch/iwerc/current-projects/illinois-college-going-survey-series/>

External Review:

To ensure that its reports are rigorous, accurate, and useful to educators and policymakers with varying levels of background knowledge, IWERC solicits feedback from experts. Reviewers of this report included Elliot Regenstein of Foresight Law + Policy and Shana Rogers of the Illinois Student Assistance Commission. We deeply thank these reviewers for their time and expertise.

Acknowledgements:

This report is possible due to a partnership between IWERC and the Office of Governor JB Pritzker. Numerous staff from the Office and from state agencies provided feedback on survey questions and design, as well as supported dissemination of the survey across the state of Illinois. We thank them for this partnership and hope this work can inform the state in developing policies and practices that support our state's young people in accessing and completing college.

IWERC is supported by a group of foundations including the Brinson Foundation, CME Group Foundation, Crown Family Philanthropies, Joyce Foundation, Pritzker Traubert Foundation, Robert R. McCormick Foundation, Spencer Foundation, Square One Foundation, Steans Family Foundation, and two anonymous donors. We thank them for allowing IWERC to pursue important research questions of interest to the State of Illinois and its people.

Last revised: October 7, 2024

Post-Secondary Student Choice During the Pandemic in Illinois

Part 4 of the 2022 Illinois College-Going Survey Series

Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic affected many areas of education leading to long-lasting changes. In this study we analyze the viewpoints of 287 high school seniors that graduated in 2022 regarding how the pandemic influenced their choice to continue their education. Our findings show that the isolated and restricted academic environment experienced through the pandemic affected a small number of students' choice of higher education. Importantly, their heightened awareness and concerns for institutional constraint, their family(ies), and issues related to health appear to have influenced their choice of college location.

Post-Secondary Student Choice During the Pandemic in Illinois

The COVID-19 pandemic affected students of all ages, disrupting their education, social, and family lives (see Cashdollar et al., 2022; Duckworth et al, 2021; Wang, 2022). This two-year period, from School Year (SY)19 to SY21, may have changed students' views on higher education and their goals for later careers (for example, Jemini-Gashi, 2022), also affecting how colleges and communities aimed to meet their changing needs. This analysis is part of a larger study which surveyed high school seniors in Illinois about the factors that influenced their decisions to pursue higher education (see Barragan Torres, 2023). In this report, we reveal how the pandemic may have changed high school seniors' choice of higher education. We accomplish this by analyzing survey responses on whether and how the pandemic affected their postsecondary choices and decision-making processes. While students' responses centered on the effects of the pandemic, they highlighted some changes to students' values that are less temporal and may shed light on how colleges or education as a whole could adapt towards students' changing needs.

Analytic Approach

Survey Data

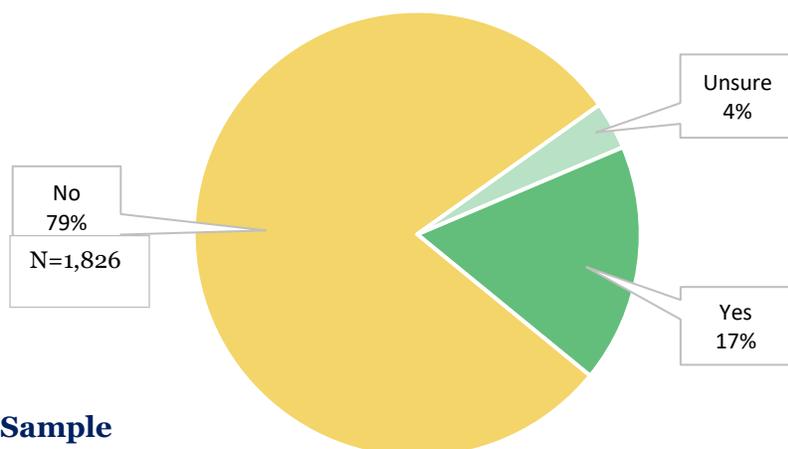
The Illinois College-Going Survey was conducted in the Spring of 2022. We obtained a sample of 2,464 high school seniors prior to starting at their outgoing choice of post-secondary education.^a The timing of this research meant the respondent students had faced the last two years of high school during the COVID-19 pandemic, and therefore it was also the intent of the survey to capture what effect, if any, this may have had on their choices.

We asked students “*Did the pandemic (COVID-19) influence your decision about what to do this Fall?*” As shown in Figure 1, a sample of 1,826 students responded to this question, and, of this group, 21% (n=379) responded “yes” or “unsure” and were prompted to provide a written description to explain their response. Of those, 76% (n=287) provided a written response. This report focuses on the 287 students who explained their response to understand how the pandemic affected the students' choices of higher education. While this group of students is not representative of the population of high school seniors in Illinois, their detailed

^a For details on the representativeness of our survey data, please see Barragan Torres (2023).

responses do provide important context on how student experiences were affected by the pandemic.

Figure 1. Proportion of students whose decision was affected by COVID-19.

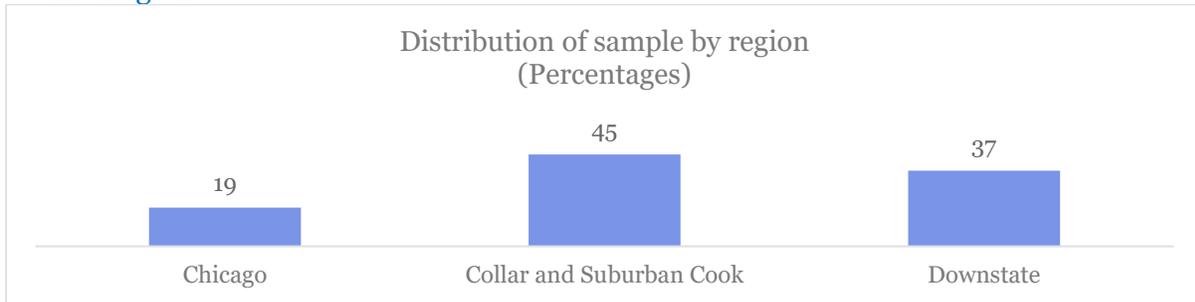


Sample

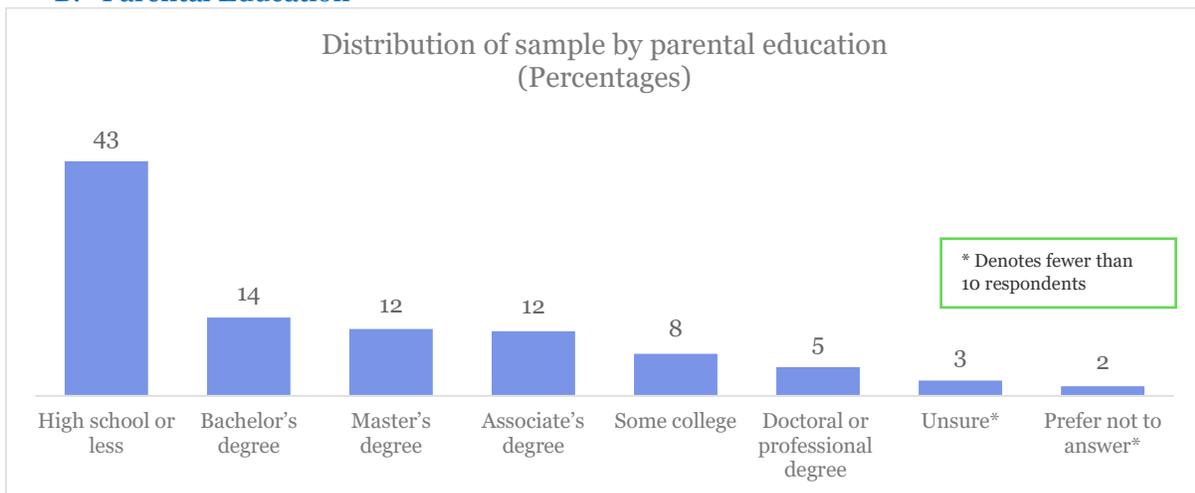
Of the 287 students in our sample, 45% attended high schools in suburban Cook and Collar counties, 19% in Chicago, and 37% elsewhere in Illinois, which we refer to as downstate (see Figure 2). Of this same group, 43% reported that their parents had a high school degree or less, whereas 32% of parents had a bachelor's degree or higher. Further, 46% of the students in the sample identified as White and 27% as Latinx, whereas students who identified as Black or Asian made up only 9% and 6% of the qualitative sample, respectively. Compared to all those who responded to the survey (see Barragan Torres, 2023), those who provided a written explanation for COVID impacting their college decision-making were more likely to be from Chicago or the suburbs, and less likely to be downstate. COVID responders were also more likely to be Latinx and less likely to be White than the full sample. This overrepresentation of some student groups in the COVID-impacted sample suggests that students from Chicago and the suburbs, as well as Latinx students, were more likely to have their college choice impacted by COVID than other populations.

Figure 2. Overview of region, parental education, and race/ethnicities of the respondents in our qualitative sample.

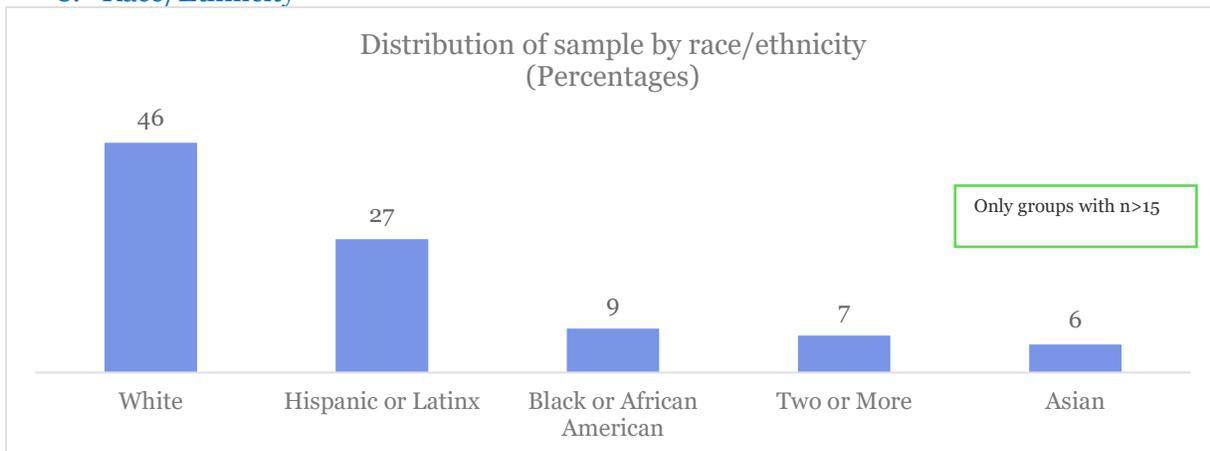
A. Region



B. Parental Education



C. Race/Ethnicity

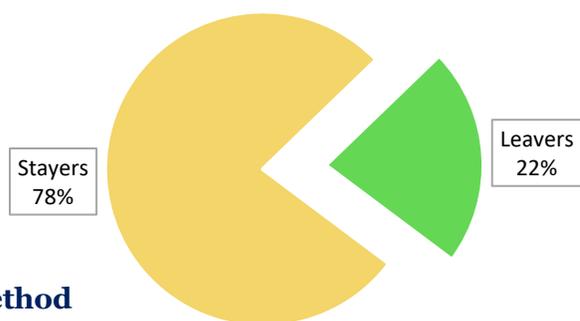


Of the respondents in our sample, 78% stayed in Illinois for college, *stayers*—and the rest decided to leave Illinois for college, *leavers*.^b This is depicted in Figure 3. This can be explained

^b The distribution of leavers in our sample was: 4% for 2-year collegegoers, 41% for 4-year collegegoers, and 18% for seniors pursuing less than 2 year programs.

because we have a larger number of students attending a 2-year college (51%) and this group of students has a greater likelihood of staying in Illinois (see Barragan Torres & Bates, 2023). Similarly, 42% of students in this sample said they would attend a 4-year degree in the Fall of 2022, and only 7% of students disturbed by the pandemic said they would not attend postsecondary education at the time.

Figure 3. *Leavers and stayers affected by the pandemic.*



Method

We analyzed the data using a Thematic Analysis approach (Braun et al, 2018) to qualitatively identify patterns in the data from students' perspectives and to provide a grounded understanding of their views. To conduct the thematic analysis, we created detailed notes from several reviews of the survey responses and, using an inductive approach, 32 semantic codes were generated. We then identified thematic clusters within these semantic codes which informed the creation of emergent category codes, such as '*wanting to leave Illinois*' and '*concerns about family's health*.' We discussed both semantic codes and emergent categories at several stages to find consensus on observations. Responses were coded only in one major category. A third researcher analyzed the responses data for inter-rater agreement of the category codes ranging from 50% to 98%, which indicates moderate-to-substantial agreement (McHugh, 2012). This led to further refinement of the category codes, and we conducted a final round of data analysis that included unweighted double-coding; i.e., coded by two raters. Agreement rates and Kappa coefficients can be found in Appendix A.

We also analyzed how our coding aligned with other students' responses in the rest of the survey and made final revisions to our coding accordingly. For example, where a student's response may have stated they changed their mind on whether to stay in Illinois, the greater context of additional survey responses informed us whether this resulted in their staying or leaving the state (see Figure 3). Finally, we analyzed the data to see if any of the emergent

themes were common among students of particular locations, parental education, race or ethnicity, or the type of higher education they ultimately chose.

We included other survey variables to provide further context to the resulting thematic observations. However, because this dataset involves a relatively low volume of applicable responses, we were unable to test for the statistical significance of our findings.

Emergent Categories.

In this section we discuss how the participants' comments formed the semantic codes, and thereby aim to provide further clarification of the scope of each category. These codes can be further understood by reviewing the 'semantic codes' described in Appendix B. Figure 4 summarizes the frequency of these categories in our qualitative sample.

1. Issues with being able to apply to their desired college refers to participants' concerns about issues related to their meeting application and acceptance requirements. This includes issues such as the effects of the pandemic on their grades, reduced recruiting opportunities, and/or hinderances to students' ability to visit colleges to help inform their choice.

2. Negative change of mindset refers to participants that felt the pandemic had adverse effects on their mental state, reduced their motivation, made them unsure about their direction forward, and/or influenced their decision to change from a 4-year to a 2-year college. Note that we coded students changing from 4-year to 2-year college as "negative change of mindset" because that is how students described the feelings and factors that led to this change; it is not a value judgment about the quality or importance of 2-year versus 4-year college.

3. Positive change of mindset. This category includes data on students' comments that expressed that the pandemic gave them more time to think about options, made them more inspired about their future, promoted a new preference for online classes, and/or changed their desired college from a 2-year or trade school to a 4-year college. Again, we coded students changing from 2-year to 4-year college as "positive change of mindset" because that is how students described the feelings and factors that led to this change; it is not a value judgment about the quality or importance of 2-year versus 4-year college.

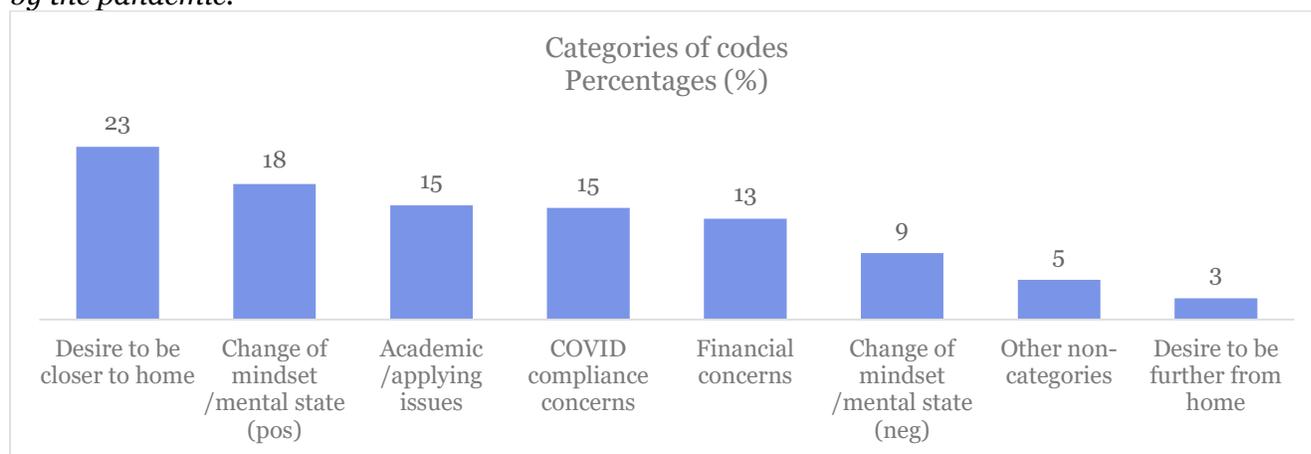
4. COVID-19 compliance concerns includes comments where students expressed that colleges' COVID-19 responses influenced their decision, in that they had concerns about compromises to college life, disagreed with state or college vaccination mandates, and/or wanted to leave Illinois because of COVID-19 restrictions.

5a. Desire to study closer to home includes students' comments that expressed a need to stay closer to home due to concerns about family health, personal health concerns about in-person college life, general concerns about their own health and risks, and/or a general desire to study closer to home.

5b. Desire to study further from home includes students' comments that expressed a desire to move out of Illinois, leave home to seek independence, and/or be further from home for other reasons not related to COVID compliance concerns.

6. Financial concerns includes students' comments that expressed the COVID-19 pandemic negatively affected their ability to afford their previously desired college and/or expressed concerns about new financial risks.

Figure 4. Distribution of response categories of those who expressed their choice was affected by the pandemic.



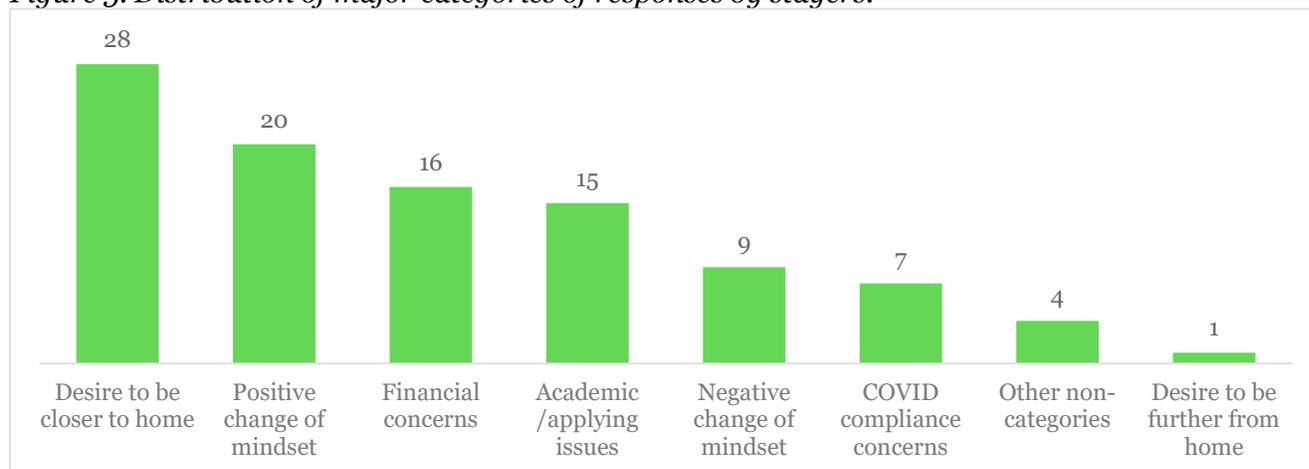
Findings

In this section, we first discuss the responses of *stayers* and *leavers* who decided to pursue higher education in Illinois or out of state, respectively. We do so because of the economic and pragmatic importance of losing college students (primarily 4-year college students) to out-of-state institutions, an issue that was explored in depth in Report 1 of this series (see Barragan Torres & Bates, 2023). Second, we discuss the demographic characteristics of students within each type of response to understand how their intersectional identities may have affected their responses. This analysis can inform how colleges and other institutions support different student populations in the wake of the pandemic.

Stayers: The Pandemic's Effect on Choosing to Study in Illinois

The distribution of the categorization of stayers' responses is shown in Figure 5. While it is unclear whether any specific factors directly caused staying in Illinois for college, we see that three emergent categories, *desire to be closer to home*, *positive change of mindset*, and *financial concerns*, were expressed more frequently by stayers compared to those who left Illinois. Specifically, 28% of stayers explicitly expressed the pandemic had increased their *desire to study closer to home*. The most prevalent reason was a concern about their family's health, typically expressed in comments such as *"Because my family could get sick at any moment, I wanted to make sure I was in state in case anything were to happen to them."* Concerns about their own health typically reflected concerns about campus life and in-person classes: *"I had to think about how I can catch covid while being in person [sic]"* and *"[The pandemic] stopped how I wished to experience college, living in dorms, and public spacing."* Respondents also expressed health concerns related to traveling to and from college: *"...it affected how I'm willing to travel and get back and forward from home and school if students at my school get affected by covid [sic]."*

Figure 5. Distribution of major categories of responses by stayers.



We also uncovered that 20% of the stayers expressed having had a *positive change of mindset*. Some expressed being inspired to make more effort after the lull of the pandemic, such as *"Covid made me rethink everything in my life and made me realize to push through the struggles and keep moving forward,"* or *"It made me realize how fast time can go and that I needed to put myself out there more."* Many reflected that *"[d]uring [the] pandemic, I had time to reflect on myself, resulting in the change of my whole future plan"* and *"think about what I wanted to do after high school."* This additional time allowed some students to *"find new*

hobbies that I consider now as options on what to do.” One student expressed, *“If it weren't for Covid-19, I wouldn't have known anything about coding. Thanks to Covid-19 I decided to become a software engineer.”* Another student’s hobby also helped them decide on a career path: *“I switched over to art. Being cooped up in my room really helped me decide.”*

The role of pandemic frontline-workers also inspired career directions. One student expressed, *“I knew I wanted to work helping people but seeing how hard nurses and doctors were working gave me more of a reason to become a nurse. Helping others is my main goal in life.”* Another student remarked, *“I chose teaching because I saw how much kids needed a caring/good teacher that had [their] interest at heart.”* This newfound inspiration also led some students to change from a 2-year to a 4-year program. Some expressed perceived benefits from colleges’ changes to acceptance scores: *“Originally I was planning on attending a community college but because the state university I picked didn't need SAT scores I was able to attend my dream school.”*

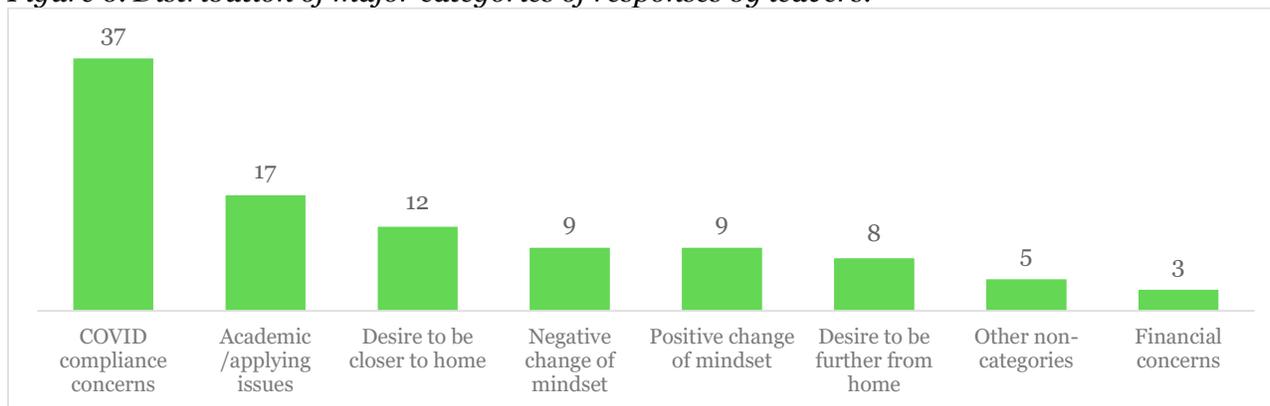
Many stayers also expressed *financial concerns* (16%) due to the effects of the pandemic on their financial stability. Many expressed they or their family could no longer afford their previously desired college because *“Covid affected my family a lot financially,”* or *“I am paying for college myself and I wasn't able to work for a while because of covid.”* Many also expressed new risks posed by the pandemic, such as, *“I didnt want to go further away because I knew I didnt have the money to come home if another covid hit [sic],”* and *“[t]he cost of living has increased dramatically since COVID and I didn't want to struggle financially the entire time I was in school.”* Similarly, many stayers described *issues with being able to apply to their desired college* (15%) due to worsened academic results, lack of exposure to sports recruiters, or lack of access to college tours.

Leavers: The Pandemic’s Effect on Choosing to Study in Illinois

We found that *COVID-19 compliance concerns* and *desire to be further from home* were expressed more frequently by leavers than by stayers. However, by far, the most prevalent reason given by leavers was *concerns about Covid-19 compliance* (37%), as shown in Figure 6. Many of these respondents expressed their choice of college was affected by how the college responded to the pandemic, because *“I didn't want insane mandates and I wanted to for sure be in person.”* Some students expressed leaving Illinois because of concerns about strict mandates compromising college life: *“I didn't want to pay for the ‘college experience’ if Covid was just going to prevent a normal four years at college.”* Some simply disagreed with Illinois colleges’ vaccination mandate, considering *“the idea of being forced to get a vaccination to*

attend college absurd because I am [not] in any high-risk categories and should not be forced to get something I don't need." However, some expressed they chose an out-of-state college for its stricter regulations, that they *"wanted to go somewhere where the risk of Covid was taken seriously."*

Figure 6. Distribution of major categories of responses by leavers.



Surprisingly, slightly more leavers expressed a *desire to study closer to home* (12%) than expressed a *desire to study further from home* (8%). Leavers expressed similar reasons to stayers on why they would want to stay closer to home, such as concerns about their family's health, their own health, and financial limitations. The desire to be *further* from home was expressed as a simple desire to *"get[...] away from home,"* or that the circumstances of the pandemic *"made me want to move out and be independent."* Some also expressed specifically leaving the state to *"get the hell out of Illinois,"* or *"leave the Midwest and try to put myself into a new place."*

Similarities between stayers and leavers

Many of the leavers indicated *issues with being able to apply to their desired college* (17%) due to worsened academic results, lack of exposure to sports recruiters, or lack of access to college tours. This percentage was similar to that of stayers. In fact, a common remark was about how students felt the pandemic had affected their grades. Many expressed their lower grades were due to learning difficulties in online classes, and that *"online school tanked my GPA,"* or *"only going to school 2 days a week"* caused them to *"struggle a lot,"* especially during their junior year, 2020-21. Some remarked their grades sank due to *"the mental stress and blocks it caused"* and that it *"really affected me in how I learned."* Students also expressed how the pandemic affected their ability to practice sports for recruitment. Specifically, they stated the pandemic *"made me become weaker"* and also blamed the lack of sports practice: *"I missed a season"* and *"I couldn't play soccer for a year and a half."* This decrease in the availability of

sports practice and related activities “*made it hard during the recruiting process*” because “*the pandemic took away a lot of exposure I would have received from college coaches.*”

Additionally, some students noted the pandemic reduced their ability to visit colleges as “*college tours were cancelled*” and they were “*unable to go on a lot of college visits and learn about many colleges,*” or at least found it “*more difficult for me to tour schools farther away from home.*” This may have caused some to filter their choice of college based on “*which colleges would allow me to visit.*”

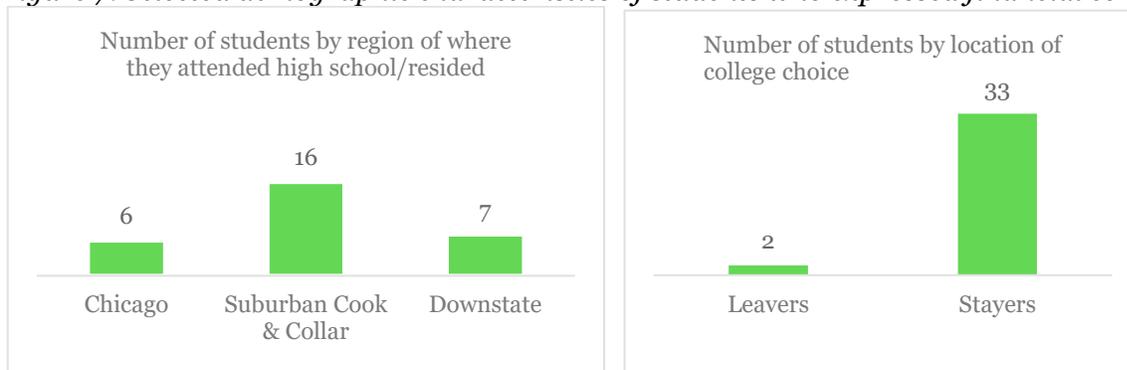
A similar percentage of leavers and stayers expressed having a *negative change of mindset* (9%). Many of these responses discussed how the COVID-19 pandemic “*made me realize how much school was impacting my mental health.*” One expressed, “*I was a wreck, I struggled with mental health issues, and I never thought I’d make it.*” This appeared to demotivate some: “*It made me unsure of what I wanted to do after high school,*” or it “*made me less motivated and more unsure of my future and what career I wanted to pursue.*” Some felt the pandemic “*made me hate school and NOT want to continue studying at college,*” or it “*made me apply to less schools.*” Some expressed how they didn’t feel ready for college due to their recent lifestyle changes, “*with Covid-19 changing my living style and having things more important than college at the forefront of my mindscape.*” Finally, some expressed the pandemic made them change from a 4-year college to a 2-year college or trade school, as “*Covid-19 made me want to ease into college rather than jumping right in.*”

Demographic Characteristics Within Each Category

Finally, we’ll discuss each category and highlight the demographic patterns to provide additional context for students’ responses. Please note that, throughout this section, we give the total number of respondents who selected each category (e.g., 38 respondents selected “financial concerns”). We also give the number and percentage of respondents in that category who have a specific characteristic (e.g., 33 of those who selected financial concerns were stayers). Because not all respondents gave demographic information, the percentages are derived from the total of respondents who did provide the relevant demographics. So, for instance, if 33 stayers and 2 leavers selected “financial concerns,” with the other respondents being unknown as to whether their college was in- or out-of-state, the percentage of stayers would be 33 out of 35, or 94% (instead of 33 stayers out of 38 total respondents, or 87%). We do this to provide the best sense of proportion of respondents with certain characteristics, while recognizing the limitations of this approach.

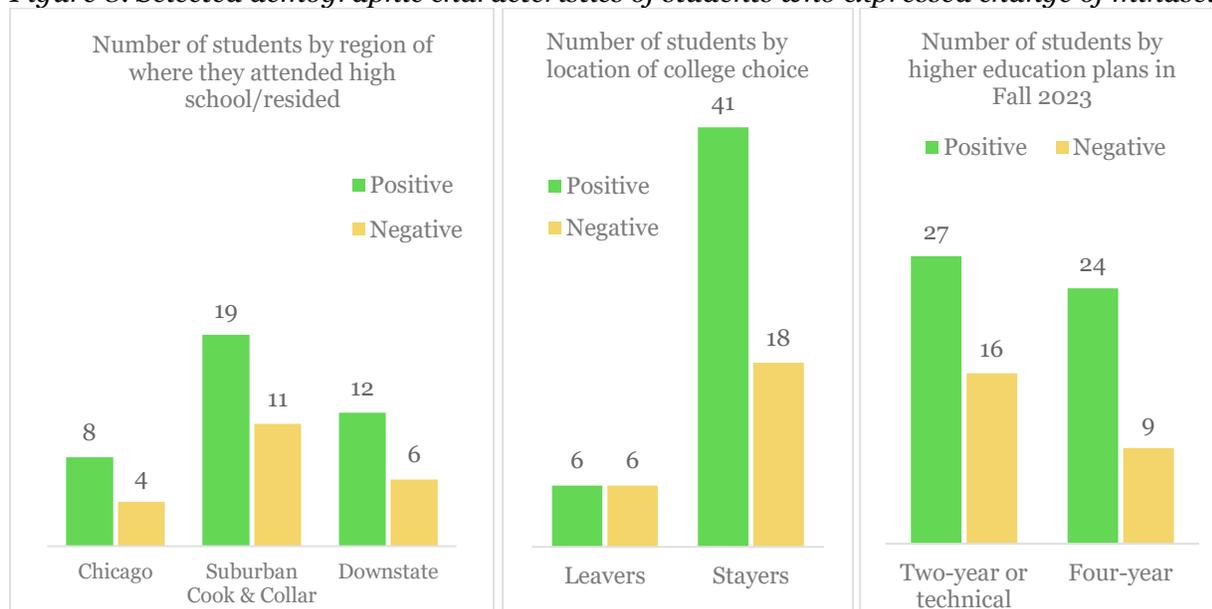
Of the students expressing *financial concerns* (n=38), we observe that 33 were *stayers* and just two were *leavers*; the remaining 3 did not declare where they would attend postsecondary education. Financial concerns from the pandemic impacted suburban and Latinx students more than others. Comparing demographic trends to the full sample of 287 students, we found that suburban and Latinx students were overrepresented as having financial concerns, while White and downstate students were actually underrepresented.

Figure 7. Selected demographic characteristics of students who expressed financial concerns.



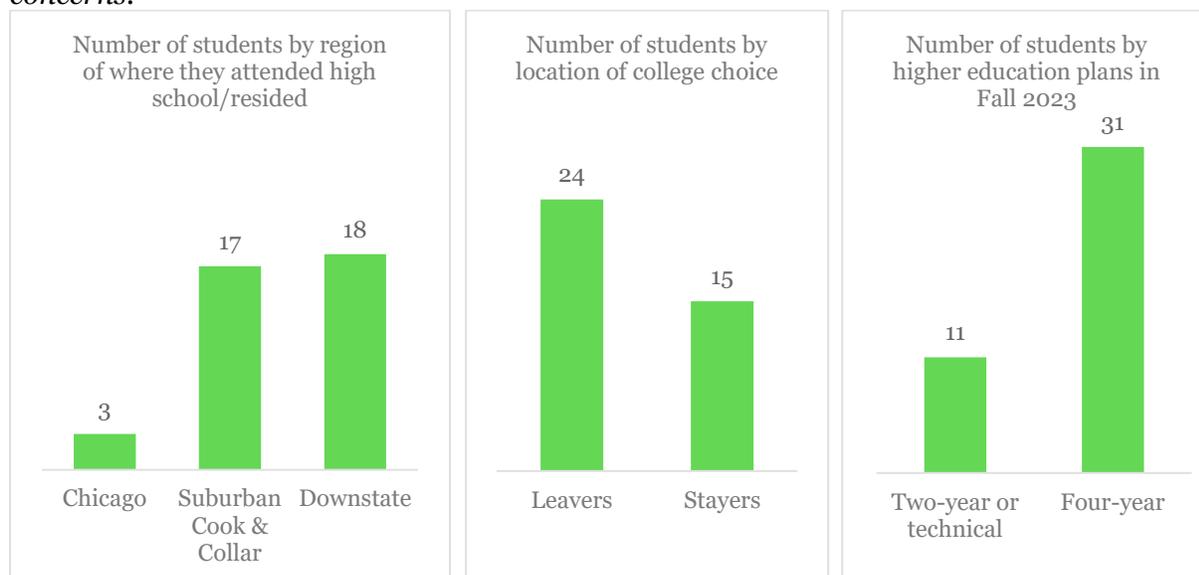
Of the students expressing a *negative change of mindset* (n=25), a plurality were from suburban Cook County and Collar counties (52%; n=11), and most chose 2-year colleges or trade schools (64%; n=16). A comparison to the full sample of 287 indicated that suburban and Latinx students were overrepresented in having a negative change of mindset, while White students were underrepresented. Interestingly, those who expressed a *positive change of mindset* (n=51) had similar demographic characteristics: Latinx and suburban students were more likely than others to report a positive change of mindset; a plurality lived in the suburban Cook County and Collar counties (49%; n=19), compared with just 31% (n=12) and 21% (n=8) for students living downstate and in Chicago, respectively. These selected categories are shown in Figure 8, except for race/ethnicity due to sample size limitations.

Figure 8. Selected demographic characteristics of students who expressed change of mindset.



When looking at the response category *COVID compliance concerns* (n = 45), we observed that these responses were predominantly from students who identified as White (n=30), and none came from students identifying as Asian or Black. Compared to the full sample of 287 students, White and downstate students are *highly* overrepresented, suggesting that they were much more concerned about COVID compliance than other groups. Distributions are shown in Figure 9 (except for race/ethnicity).

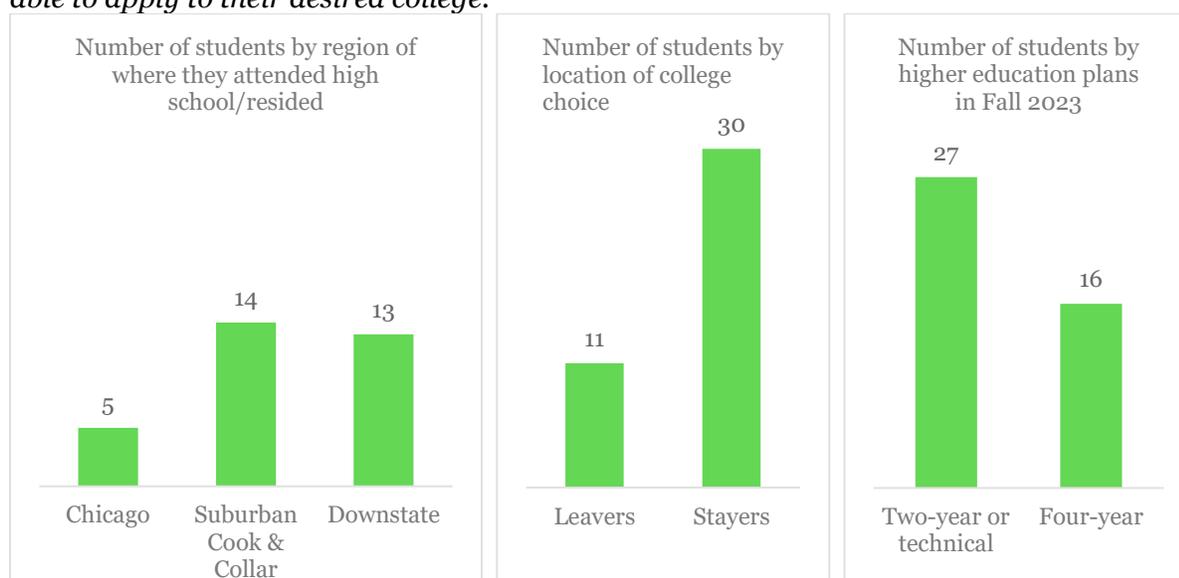
Figure 9. Selected demographic characteristics of students who expressed COVID compliance concerns.



Of the students expressing a *desire to stay closer to home* (n=65), many identified as White (45%; n=25), but the percentage aligns with the percentage of White students in the 287-student sample, suggesting they are not more likely than other groups to want to stay closer to home. These responses were from more students choosing 4-year colleges than 2-year or trade schools (60%; n=39 vs. 40%; n=23, respectively), and near-equal amounts of students from each region.

Finally, *issues with being able to apply to their desired college* (n=43), were expressed predominantly from students who identified as White (53%; n=17), followed by students identifying as Latinx (28%; n=9). In comparison to the full sample of 287, White students are particularly overrepresented here. Responses were primarily from students in the downstate or suburban Cook and Collar counties (41% and 44% respectively; n=13 and n=14), and mostly from students who went on to study at a 2-year college or trade school (63%; n=27) rather than a 4-year college (37%; n=16). Furthermore, 73% (n=30) of these responses were from stayers compared to 27% (n=11) from leavers. Figure 10 displays these differences.

Figure 10. Selected demographic characteristics of students who expressed issues with being able to apply to their desired college.



Implications

This study explored how the pandemic influenced Illinois high school students' decision-making about college. Overall, most students did not consider the pandemic to have influenced their decision-making. For the 21% of students who did, many provided reasoning about the influence that allowed identification of key trends. The biggest trend was related to students' choice of higher education location—specifically, studying closer to home. Students who desired to be

closer to their family often reasoned that this was due to recent or potential health risks within the family, and/or financial concerns caused by newly reduced incomes. Conversely, students that wanted to move further away from home—or Illinois—attributed this to their disagreement with how local colleges enforced vaccination and mask mandates and how they addressed online versus in-person classes. More leavers than stayers voiced frustration over their personal experience of education restrictions such as online classes, possibly fueling their desire to study in a less-restrictive environment further from home.

We further note that the COVID-19 pandemic not only influenced students' decisions about higher education but also shaped their aspirations and career goals in unexpected ways. In particular, the pandemic acted as a catalyst for self-reflection and personal growth among high school seniors, as many mentioned that the pandemic provided them with the time and space to rethink their goals, explore new hobbies, and even discover new passions. This newfound clarity and inspiration led some students to shift from a 2-year to a 4-year college, pursue different academic paths, or even embark on careers they hadn't previously considered. For example, the data suggests that nearly 20% of students were motivated by the efforts of frontline workers during the pandemic, such as nurses and doctors, and are now more inclined to enter healthcare-related professions. This could have far-reaching implications for the future workforce composition in the healthcare industry, as these students bring a heightened sense of purpose and dedication to their chosen fields.

While the educational situation during the COVID-19 pandemic was atypical of regular school years, it may have lasting effects. This study shows that the effects of the pandemic go beyond immediate decisions about college location, signaling a potential transformation in how students perceive their future and engage with their chosen fields of study. These insights not only enrich our understanding of the pandemic's influence on education but also open avenues for further research and exploration into the evolving aspirations of the post-pandemic generation.

References

- Barragan Torres, M. (2023). *Technical guide*. 2022 Illinois College-Going Survey Series. Chicago, IL: Illinois Workforce and Education Research Collaborative (IWERC), Discovery Partners Institute, University of Illinois. <https://dpi.uillinois.edu/appliedresearch/iwerc/current-projects/illinois-college-going-survey-series/>
- Barragan Torres, M., & Bates, M. (2023). *Cost, location, and academics: How Illinois high school seniors decide on a 4-year college*. 2022 Illinois College-Going Survey Series. Chicago, IL: Illinois Workforce and Education Research Collaborative (IWERC), Discovery Partners Institute, University of Illinois. <https://dpi.uillinois.edu/appliedresearch/iwerc/current-projects/illinois-college-going-survey-series/>
- Braun, V., Clarke, V., Hayfield, N., & Terry, G. (2018). Thematic Analysis. In P. Liamputtong (Ed.), *Handbook of Research Methods in Health Social Sciences* (pp. 1–18). Springer Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-10-2779-6_103-1
- Cashdollar, S., Barragan Torres, M., Wang, Y., & Bates, M. (2022). Does Student Instructional Modality Predict Student Achievement? *Learning During the Pandemic in Illinois Series*. Chicago, IL: Illinois Workforce and Education Research Collaborative (IWERC), Discovery Partners Institute, University of Illinois. <https://dpi.uillinois.edu/applied-research/iwerc/current-projects/learningmodalities/>
- Duckworth, A. L., Kautz, T., Defnet, A., Satlof-Bedrick, E., Talamas, S., Lira, B., & Steinberg, L. (2021). Students attending school remotely suffer socially, emotionally, and academically. *Educational Researcher*, 50(7), 479–482. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X211031551>
- Jemini-Gashi, L., & Kadriu, E. (2022). Exploring the Career Decision-Making Process During the COVID-19 Pandemic: Opportunities and Challenges for Young People. *SAGE Open*, 12(1). <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440221078856>
- McHugh, M. L. (2012). Interrater reliability: The kappa statistic. *Biochem Med (Zagreb)*, 22(3), 276–82. PMID: 23092060; PMCID: PMC3900052.
- Wang, Y. (2022). *Trauma-informed care for supporting young children in low-income families*. Illinois Workforce and Education Research Collaborative (IWERC), Discovery

Partners Institute, University of Illinois. https://2h1h5c1nlnt71of6g8yfvpnlpengine.netdnassl.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/IWERC_TIC_Young-Children_Wang2022.pdf

Appendices

Appendix A. Inter-rater reliability agreement and Kappa Rates.

Code	Agreement %	Expected Agreement %	Kappa
Academic/Applying issues	91	91	0.0***
Change of mind/mental state (positive/negative)	50	59	-0.20
COVID compliance concerns	96	75	0.85***
Desire to be closer to home	91	67	0.73***
Desire to be further from home	98	82	0.90***
Financial concerns	87	73	0.52***
Health/ Family concerns	91	91	0.00***

Appendix B. Emergent categories and semantic codes with examples.

Emergent Category	Semantic Code	Example Response
Issues with being able to apply to their desired college	Grades were lower than wanted	I didn't get the grades I wanted or the SAT scores due to online learning. So my options were limited. Made me lack in school so I would've had to pay more for the colleges I wanted to go to.
	Lacked ability to explore options, visit colleges	College Tours were cancelled during my Junior year and some during my senior year The lack of knowledge and being able to visit the schools before making a decision
	Lacked sports practice, exposure and/or recruiting	I couldn't play soccer for a year and a half I'm playing softball in college, and the pandemic took away a lot of exposure I would have received from college coaches.
Negative change of mindset	Affected mental state	I was a wreck, I struggled with mental health issues and I never thought I'd make it; I felt like I was robbed of my time to decide and help myself. Made me realize how much school was impacting my mental health
	Became unsure about direction forward	I did not know what to do because I could no longer do remote It made me unsure of what I wanted to do after high school.
	Changed from 4-year to 2-year college	Covid-19 made me want to ease into college rather than jumping right in. With that being said, I decided to start at a 2-year university and then I will transfer to a 4-year to finish my masters degree. It unmotivated me to not go straight to a 4-year college and first go to a 2-year college.

	Lost motivation	I lost motivation for everything Made me less motivated and more unsure of my future and what career I wanted to peruse.
	Needed more time to decide, felt rushed	I had less time thinking seriously about what college to attend, what with Covid-19 changing my living style and having things more important than college at the forefront of my mindscape. I did not feel like I was prepared to leave home for college because I have not learned how to be independent [sic]. The pandemic started when I was 16 years old, a sophomore in high school, and lasted until my senior year. Not only was the high school experience taken from us, but we had no time to grow independent. Being locked at home with our family made all of us rely on others...
	Put off from continuing in education	It made me apply to less schools It made me hate school and NOT want to continue studying at college
Positive change of mindset	Changed or chose career direction	During pandemic, I had time to reflect on myself, resulting in the change of my whole future plan. It made me find new hobbies that I consider now as options on what to do.
	Changed from 2-year to 4-year college	Encouraged me to do to a four-year college instead of starting in community college then transfer, which was my original plan. Originally I was planning on attending a community college but because the state university I picked didn't need SAT scores I was able to attend my dream school.
	Had time to think about options	During that time I had a lot to think about what I wanted to do after high school It made me have the time & opportunity to think
	Inspired to make more effort	covid made me rethink everything in my life and made me realize to push through the struggles and keep moving forward. It made me realize how fast time can go and that I needed to put myself out there more.
	Found preference for online classes	It was hard because I was unsure and I wanted to choose a career that I was able to take some classes online I really liked it when we did this due to COVID I worked better Online classes were so much better for [me] and that's why I want to do online classes
COVID-19 compliance concerns	Chose college based on their COVID response	I didn't want insane mandates and I wanted to for sure be in person Wanted to go somewhere where the risk of Covid was taken seriously.

	Concerns about compromised college life	I didn't want to pay for the "college experience" if Covid was just going to prevent a normal four years at college. It affected it because I didn't want to go pay for college if it was going to be all online I didn't see a point in that
	Disagreed with vaccination mandate	I didn't want to be forced to take the vaccine so I chose something that I could do online Yes 100%, the idea of being forced to get a vaccination to attend college absurd because I am [not] in any high risk categories and should not be forced to get something I don't need .
	Wanted to leave state to avoid COVID restrictions	I did not want to stay in a state that continuously shut down the universi[ties]. Illinois had too many covid restrictions and requirements
Desire to be closer to home	General desire to be closer to home	I wanted to stay in Illinois because if we ever go back to lockdown I will be near my family and not in a different state with none of my family members to relay [sic] on It set me back a bit in becoming more independent so being closer to home just felt like the best option right now.
	Concerns about own and family health and risks	Because my family could get sick at any moment, I wanted to make sure I was in state in case anything were to happen to them I want to stay closer to home incase something is to happen to my father as he is more likely at risk for Covid-19
	Health concerns about in-person college life	it stopped how I wished to experience college, living in dorms, and public spacing I had to think about how I can catch covid while being in person
Desire to be further from home	Wanted to get away from home, seek independence.	It made me want to move out and be independent. Getting away from home
	Wanted to move out-of-state	Get the hell out of Illinois I wanted to leave the midwest and try to put myself into a new place
Financial Concerns	Could no longer afford desired college	Covid affected my family a lot financially so we could not afford Northwestern University's tuition. It affected the way I will pay for college. I am paying for college myself and I wasn't able to work for awhile because of covid.
	Concerns about new financial risks	I didnt want to go further away because I knew I didnt have the money to come home if another covid hit The cost of living has increased dramatically since COVID and I didn't want to struggle financially the entire time in school.