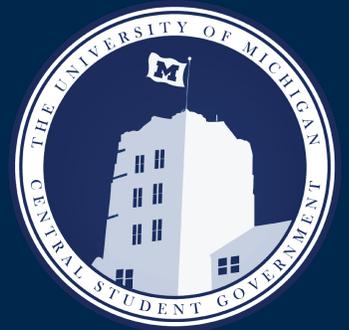


Survey report COVID-19 tuition and enrollment

Wednesday, June 17, 2020

Central Student Government



Central Student Government

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Our commitment to the students

Dear reader,

Thank you for reading this report on our survey of the students about their opinions, thoughts, and needs for fall semester as it relates to the current public health crisis.

Across the country, colleges and universities had to close to protect the health and safety of the students, faculty, staff, and surrounding communities. No doubt, this was the right decision. We saved potentially hundreds of thousands of lives.

But now, we must decide how to move forward. By no means is this an easy decision. The steps we take will affect tens of thousands of lives, both on campus and in the community. And there's no denying that the decision we make will balance reducing the spread of the virus and advancing the education for which the University of Michigan is so well known for.

We distributed this survey with the goals of truly understanding, on a broader scale than our anecdotal evidence from our conversations with our colleagues, what the students want and need. We accomplished this goal, and we have input from undergraduate and graduate students at every school and college.

We hope you will find this report informative and useful in understanding the voice of the student body. We're proud to be Wolverines, and we believe what the students need should be of the utmost importance in making decisions as to how to move forward.

Sincerely,

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Executive summary

Central Student Government performed a survey of 8,000 randomly selected incoming and current members of the student body at all schools and colleges, and received 2,860 responses, 2,416 of which were fully complete. We asked many things related to enrollment, tuition, and personal circumstances for the fall 2020 semester.

We formed the following overall impressions:

Enrollment plans. Students are wary about online instruction. There is a serious risk of a major decline in enrollment if courses are all or mostly online. A small but significant portion of students may withdraw from the University and not come back. This risk is increased if the University fails to discount tuition.

Expectations and preferences. Students already expect and understand that they will be doing some sort of hybrid model, even though they would much prefer fully face-to-face.

Grading policy. Students were highly satisfied with the grading model for the winter 2020 semester and expect there to be similar modifications for fall 2020.

Student residential plans and related barriers to success. Students are about evenly split on whether they'd come to campus anyway if classes are online—about 1/3 say they will, 1/3 say they won't, and 1/3 don't know. Up to 27% of students say they aren't sure their residence is suitable for online learning (either hybrid or fully online), for various reasons including poor internet connection and lack of a suitable workspace.

Time zone and immigration. Time difference was, and will be, a serious issue if we have students participating from afar. Immigration difficulties could prevent international students from making it to campus for any type of in-person instruction.

Discounts to tuition and fees. The University must discount tuition if courses are fully online. If courses are hybrid, it may still be prudent to discount tuition. Some fees—in particular, the University Unions and Rec Sports fee—need to be waived if fully online and heavily reduced if hybrid because the services are not available. Whether or not a discount is offered is at least moderately important to more than half of the students.

Anxieties are high and students feel strongly about the matter, whichever side they are on. Some students believe it is not safe to come back to campus, and some believe that it would be an unacceptable detriment to their education to have courses online. Most seem to be understanding that these decisions are quite difficult to make.

Students' plans for fall semester

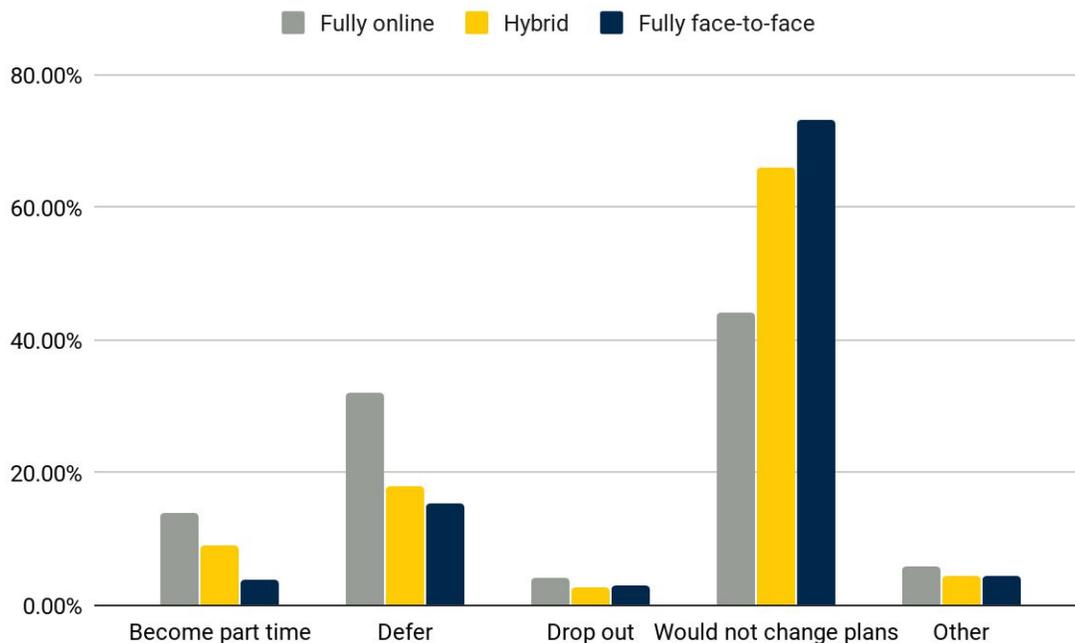
We inquired as to whether students would change their plans based on the course delivery medium that the University uses in fall semester.

For this survey, we gave three different scenarios.

- *Fully online*: no classes in person, and students would not be expected to be physically on campus
- *Hybrid*: some instruction will be online (perhaps large lectures) and some instruction will be face-to-face (perhaps discussions and small courses); students would be expected to be physically on campus so they could attend the face-to-face portions
- *Fully face-to-face*: instruction would be primarily face-to-face, just like a usual semester

We did not further define or break down the meaning of hybrid instruction, because of the many different ways this could be offered, and how much this would depend on the type of course, the instructor, and the school or college.

We asked whether students would seriously consider becoming a part time student, deferring/taking a leave of absence, dropping out entirely, or something else—or, whether their plans would not change if the University adopted that medium of instruction.



We found that many students would seriously consider changes in their enrollment if courses were entirely online, but that the difference between hybrid instruction and fully face-to-face instruction is negligible.

“If instruction was hybrid, I would still want an option for any student to participate 100% online and not be penalized for doing so. If this were an option, I would attend online. If not, I would consider deferring.”

Likely, this represents the tension between students who want as much of a residential instructional semester as possible and students who find in person instruction to be too big a risk. For these students, the specifics of the delivery matter quite a bit—in regards to both pedagogy and health and safety measures.

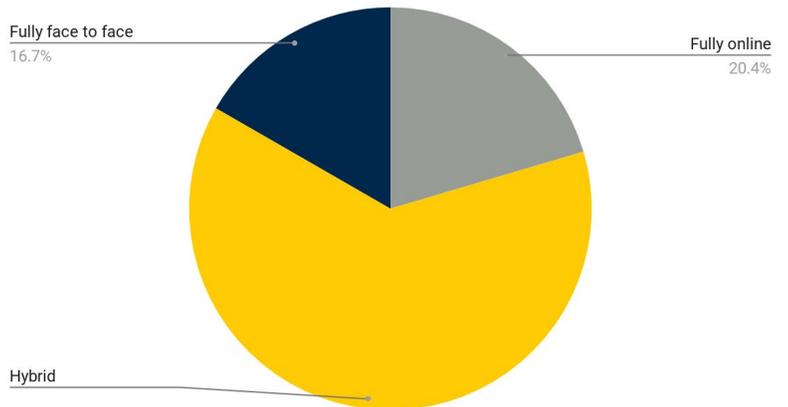
Based on the responses to this question specifically, enrollment is highly likely to be adversely affected by holding classes entirely online, in comparison with hybrid or fully face-to-face instruction.

“I would have to discuss it with my family because I have family members with pre-existing conditions. While I would like to come back to school, I have to consider their health first and foremost.”

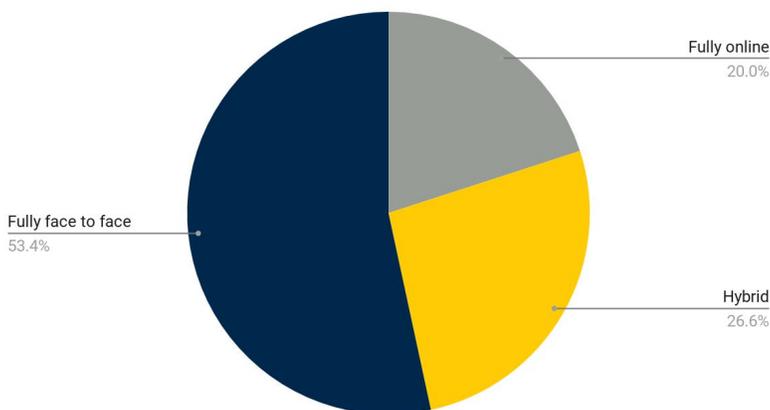
Expectations and preferences for fall semester course delivery

Students seem to understand that courses are likely to have at least some online format. Fewer students responded that they anticipate having fully face-to-face classes in the fall than there were students responding to other options.

What students anticipate for fall



What students would prefer for fall



However, it's clear that this doesn't mean students don't want a fully face-to-face fall semester. A solid majority of students responded that they want a fully face-to-face semester, seemingly notwithstanding the risks involved.

“Please do everything in your power to have in person classes along with study spaces and gyms open.”

“We NEED to have classes in person... [T]he learning environment is much better in person. Classes HAVE to be there.”

“Online instruction is not enough. Classes need to be in person, especially smaller, seminar and discussion style classes.”

Grading policy

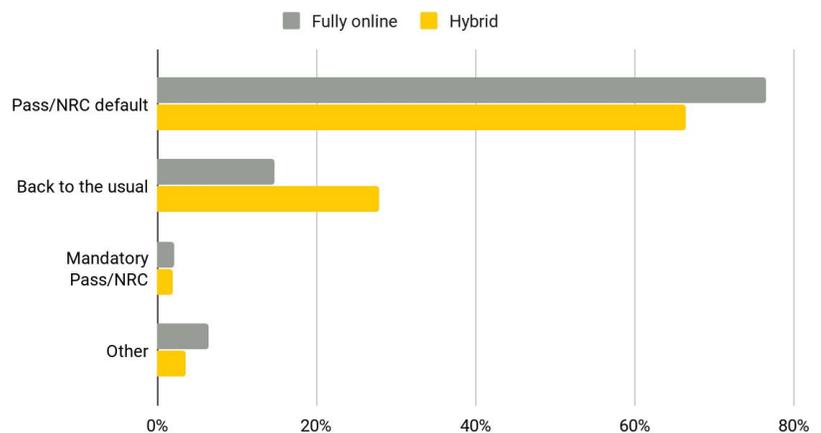
In response to the difficulties students experienced as a result of the pandemic, the University responded by [changing the grading basis for most courses](#). All undergraduate courses switched to a default of Pass or No Record COVID (NRC), where C- and above would receive a Pass and receive full credit and grades below would receive an NRC and no course credit, and most graduate programs switched to either this default or a slightly different Satisfactory or NRC with a higher cutoff of B-. Under both of these policies, students had the ability to switch back to a letter grade upon request after they had the chance to review the letter grade.

Three programs deviated from this general format: the Law School instituted mandatory pass/fail grading with no option to record a letter grade, the School of Medicine implemented changes on a case by case basis, and the School of Nursing did not change the grading basis. **An overwhelming majority of students supported the University in changing the grading basis—over 94% responded that the University was right to make changes to the grading basis for winter semester.**

We inquired as to whether students believed this grading policy, or a version of the grading policy, should carry over to fall semester, should instruction be different than it has been in the past. Again, **students overwhelmingly support modifying the grading basis.**

Though the numbers are not quite as extreme, it's undeniable that students expect there to be some accommodations when it comes to grades.

Grading basis preferences



“Regardless of online or hybrid (these should be the only two options), the University should maintain the winter 2020 grading policy. Readjusting to a “new normal” takes a toll on our community and excelling in academia should not be an added pressure to our current crisis.”

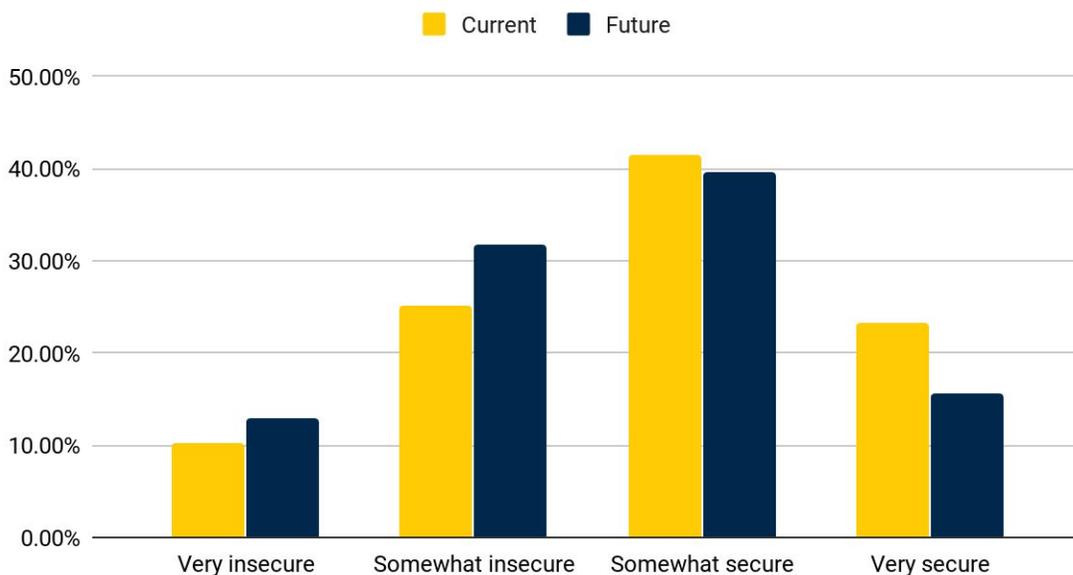
Most comments in the “other” category focused on there being a difference between grading for classes that are online and classes that are in person, or simply a desire for more lenience from instructors. We believe it is imperative for the University to modify the grading policy again if courses are not fully face-to-face, and the same grading basis as winter 2020 is likely the most appropriate way to do this.

Student financial situations

Students at the University often feel in precarious financial situations already, and the pandemic has only exacerbated this. Many have lost jobs themselves, or have reduced family income due to family job losses, and anticipate difficulty paying tuition and living expenses.

We tried to assess this by asking students how they feel about their current and their future financial situation.

Financial situation sentiment



Put another way, if “very insecure” was scored as a 1 and “very secure” was scored as a 4, students rate their current financial situation as a 2.78 and their future financial situation as a 2.58, a decrease of about 7%.

“Some students have to work to pay for their tuition and with COVID, finding work can be impossible.”

“People lost a lot of money and their business so it will be hard to pay for tuition.”

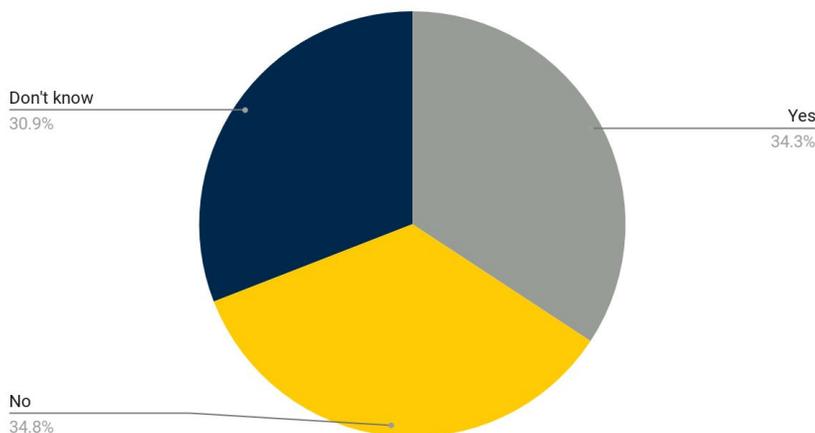
“Out-of-state tuition is absurdly high... Family's financial situation in question due to the economic crash... Other colleges have reopened their enrollment periods and waitlists due to COVID-19, so I may have to consider those options if tuition is not reduced.”

Student residential situations

We wanted to know about students' living situations for two reasons: to understand whether students would be coming to campus whether courses are entirely online or not, and to understand the difficulties they may face that could hinder their ability to work from home.

Knowledge of housing plans. About 25% of students responded they are still looking for housing and don't know where they will be staying in fall yet. Just over 7% of students said they don't plan to come to campus. We don't have any prior reference data, so we don't know whether these numbers are normal, but we know that a number of students don't secure housing until summer, and that some enrolled students don't come to campus for a number of reasons, such as studying abroad, being a dissertation-writing candidate and not living near campus, or undertaking an internship.

Would stay near campus with online classes



Coming to campus with fully online courses. We found that a good number of students would still come to campus even if courses are fully online. The distribution was almost exactly one third for each option. Many students clearly have not decided whether they would come to campus with fully online classes. This could be for many reasons—they could be part of the 25% without housing plans right now who want to see what kind of

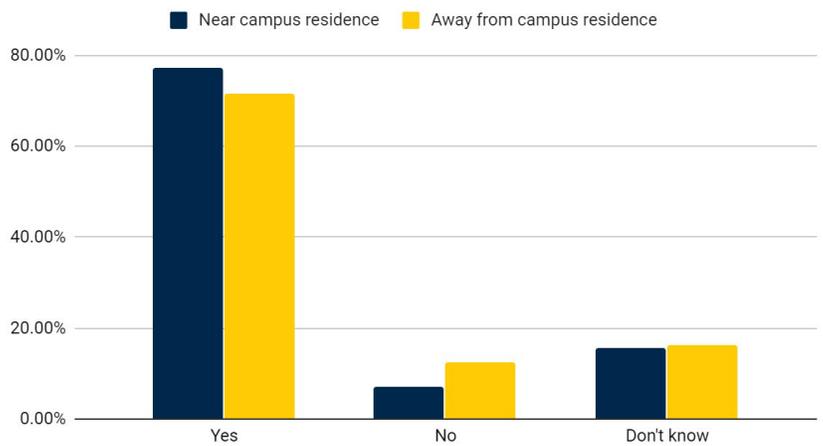
housing they are able to obtain, they could be waiting to see if friends would come back, they could make their decision based on whether the University still offers some services even if classes are fully online. **Regardless, it's clear that a large chunk of the student body will be in Ann Arbor for fall whether there are classes on campus or not. Therefore, any of the University's plans to reduce the spread of the virus by reducing contact between students will be attenuated by the fact that some students plan to come to campus anyway, and are likely to spend time with friends off campus and at home.**

Suitability of home for online courses. We also asked about students' feelings about the suitability of their residence for online classes. We made sure to ask students only about the residences they indicated—students responding that they would stay on campus for online classes were not asked about their away from campus residences, and vice versa. Students who didn't know yet were asked both. We initially asked simply whether the student thought their residence was suitable for online learning. We were pleased to see that most students believed their residence

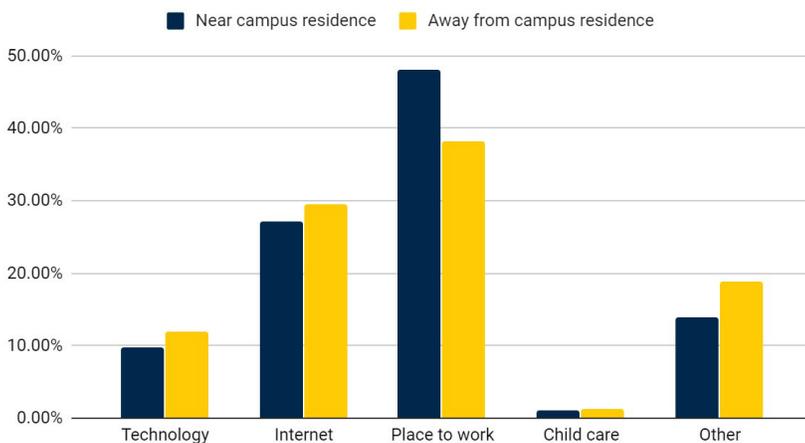
was suitable. However, there were **certainly differences in how students felt about their Ann Arbor homes versus their non-Ann Arbor homes**. 77% of students feel their Ann Arbor residence is suitable; only 71.5% of students feel their non-Ann Arbor residence is suitable.

To unpack these sentiments, we asked about specifics. We identified four material barriers to success in online education: **a lack of suitable technology hardware**, such as a laptop or desktop with a webcam, input devices such as a keyboard or drawing tablet if appropriate, headphones or speakers, etc.; **a lack of a suitable internet connection** to meet the demands of

Is your residence suitable for online learning?



Barriers to success in online learning



videoconferencing, streaming video, and accessing remote resources such as a virtual desktop; **a lack of appropriate work space**, however that is defined by the student, but likely most would agree that it needs to be a dedicated desk or similar surface with a reasonable degree of quiet when it is needed; **and a lack of child care** so that students need not worry about child care responsibilities while learning. We left an option for “other” in case we

missed anything. We did not find the results too surprising. Any student or faculty member who took classes can attest to the fact that internet connections often left much to be desired when videoconferencing or uploading files, and many could hear colleagues’ roommates or family speaking or walking in the background. We did miss two things—one, we saw that many students checked “other” and indicated that they just weren’t sure because they hadn’t visited their campus residence yet, and could not see their workspace or test their internet connection; and two, time zone difficulties, which we will discuss in the next section.

Overall, we find that it is important to keep these things in mind when designing online instruction, whether combined with in person instruction or not. Many, but not all, of these problems can be alleviated with providing space and resources on campus for all parts of courses, but accommodations must be made, especially for poor connections.

Time zone and immigration difficulties



We added this section to the report because these issues came up throughout the survey. We did not have specific questions about these difficulties, but we noticed them to be so pervasive that we had to analyze the sentiments using the data we had.

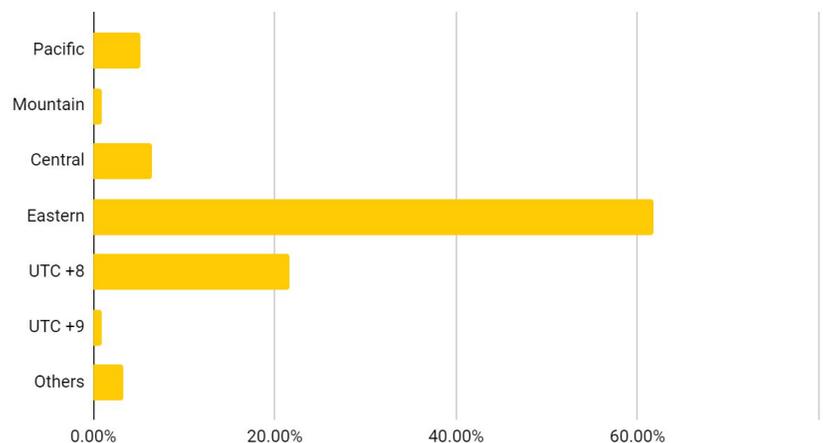
The University of Michigan enrolled 7,255 students from 130 countries in fall 2019, including all 50 states of the US, and responses to this

survey came from a broad array of places, mapped above. As we saw earlier, it's likely that students from every state and every country might stay where they are, instead of coming to Ann Arbor, if instruction moves online.

We **did** ask about time zone, knowing that it could make a difference. University of Michigan students come from almost every time zone in the world. We found the main time zones to be the four standard contiguous US time zones—Eastern, Central, Mountain, and Pacific—and UTC +8 and +9.

UTC +8 includes all of China, Singapore, Malaysia, and the Philippines, as well as parts of Russia, Australia, and Indonesia. UTC +9 includes Japan, South Korea, Palau, East Timor, and other parts of Russia and Indonesia. We found that while most students do live within a reasonable offset from Eastern Standard/Daylight Time, a significant portion of students do not. **Scheduling was, and would be, extremely difficult for online students in UTC +8 and +9, making up around 23% of students.** This is also a consideration domestic for students in Pacific, Hawaii, or Alaska time zones. These students are likely to have to take classes and meetings early in the morning and late at night.

Time zone



“It was difficult when professors didn’t understand and respect that there are students across the world.”

Time zone difficulties came up in over 50 open ended “other” responses in the section on barriers to success at away-from-campus residences, easily surpassing responses about child care difficulties.

We didn’t include questions about immigration difficulties at all. However, we easily noticed these in any open ended response questions.

As of the writing of this report, the US Department of Homeland Security and related agencies have noted that they have not yet issued guidance on fall semester student visas, and the United States and China just came to an agreement on offering only a few flights a week to and from China, and China states this policy is unlikely to change until at least October.

137 students mentioned visa issues in their comments in the survey, 37 mentioned flight issues, and 81 mentioned travel in any form (this could be domestic or international travel).

“Due to China and the US’s flight policy, it is extremely difficult for Chinese students to cross the border. Please consider that as an important factor and please offer full time online classes to them if the school is hybrid.”

This is an important consideration for fall planning—the regulations on student visas, inability to obtain them, and reduced availability of seats on flights back to the United States could hamper the ability of a significant portion of the student population to take classes that require an in-person component.

Discounts to tuition and fees

We inquired with students as to how much of a discount they would expect on tuition in both modification scenarios (fully online or hybrid).

Though the primary purpose of tuition is instruction, no one can deny that students expect more from a university education. Having instruction entirely online has deprived students of the resources in the libraries, prevented them from using campus computing services, and postponed their performances.

"Just as the university is likely hurting on funds, so are students. And we all know online education is not the same as in person education."

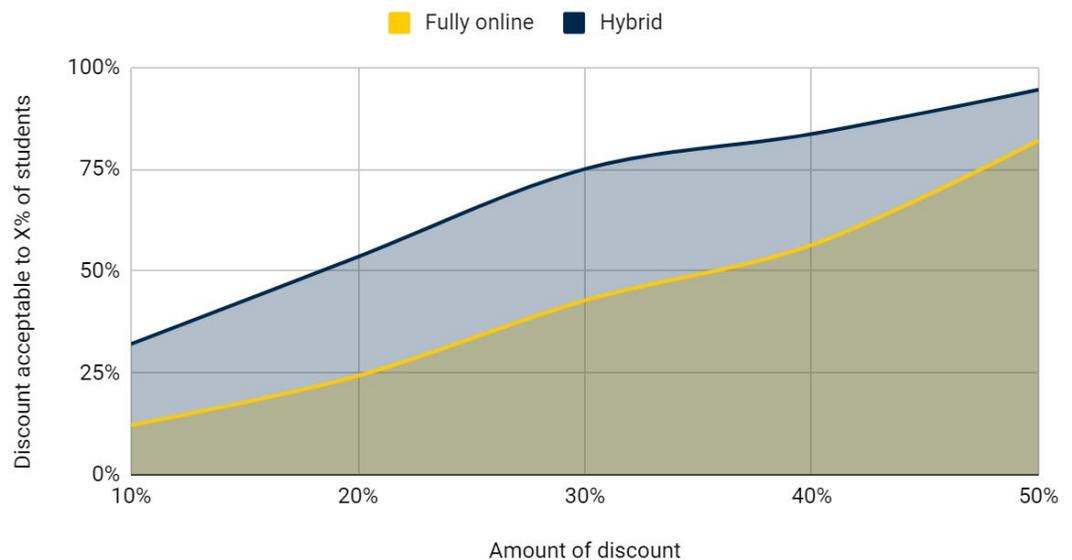
Students don't just see online instruction as depriving them as customers of services they paid for, though this certainly could be a fair perspective. Rather, they see these as core parts of instruction that are simply unavailable in an online format. As hard as instructors may try, the education is not equivalent to what students experienced before.

We asked how much of a discount students would expect to receive—no discount, at least 10%, at least 20%, at least 30%, at least 40%, at least 50%, or greater than 50%.

Above is a chart outlining student expectations for discounts for fall semester. The vertical axis notes

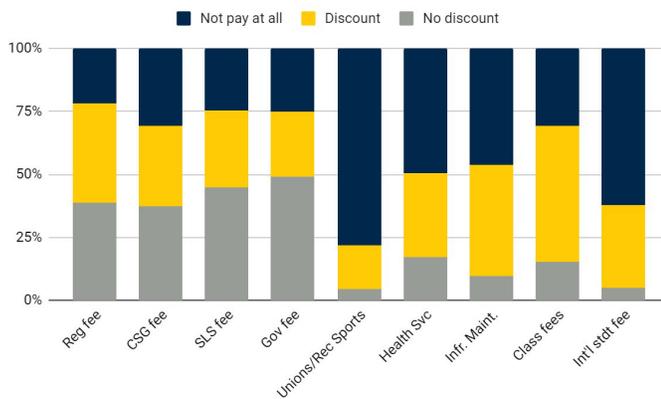
how many students would find that discount acceptable (A 10% discount would be acceptable to students who marked "at least 10%" and "would not expect a discount"; a 20% discount would be acceptable to those students and the "at least 20%" students, etc.) and the horizontal axis indicates how much of a discount. **We see that a majority of students would find a discount of just under 20% to be acceptable if courses are hybrid, and for fully online courses, the discount would need to be around 35%.**

Discount expectation

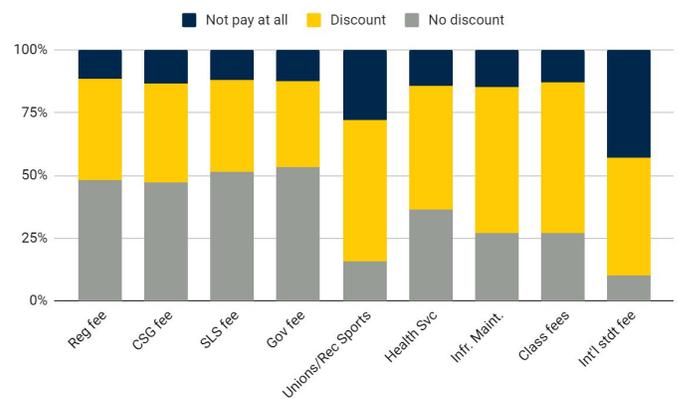


We asked about the fees separately—both about the fees actually written out separately on the tuition bill, and about the fees included in the amount billed as “tuition”. In all, we asked about the registration fee (\$80), Central Student Government fee (\$9.19), Student Legal Services fee (\$8.50), School & College Government fee (\$1.50), University Unions & Recreational Sports fee (\$65), Health Service Fee (\$199; included in “tuition”), Infrastructure Maintenance Fee (\$185; included in “tuition”), any applicable class fees (varies by class, if any), and the International Student Service fee (\$500; this was only asked of international students).

Fully online course delivery



Hybrid course delivery



Students very clearly feel **they should not have to pay the Unions & Rec Sports fee** if we are fully online in fall, and they feel they **should receive a discount** if course delivery is hybrid. Plainly, students who aren’t on campus at all can’t use the Unions or recreational facilities, and even if we are hybrid, social distancing and maximum capacity requirements are likely to prevent full use, depriving students of their ability to use these services. Students feel similarly about the Health Service Fee, the Infrastructure Maintenance Fee, and class fees.

International students also feel strongly about not paying the International Student Service Fee for online courses, and receiving a discount on the fee if instruction delivery is hybrid.

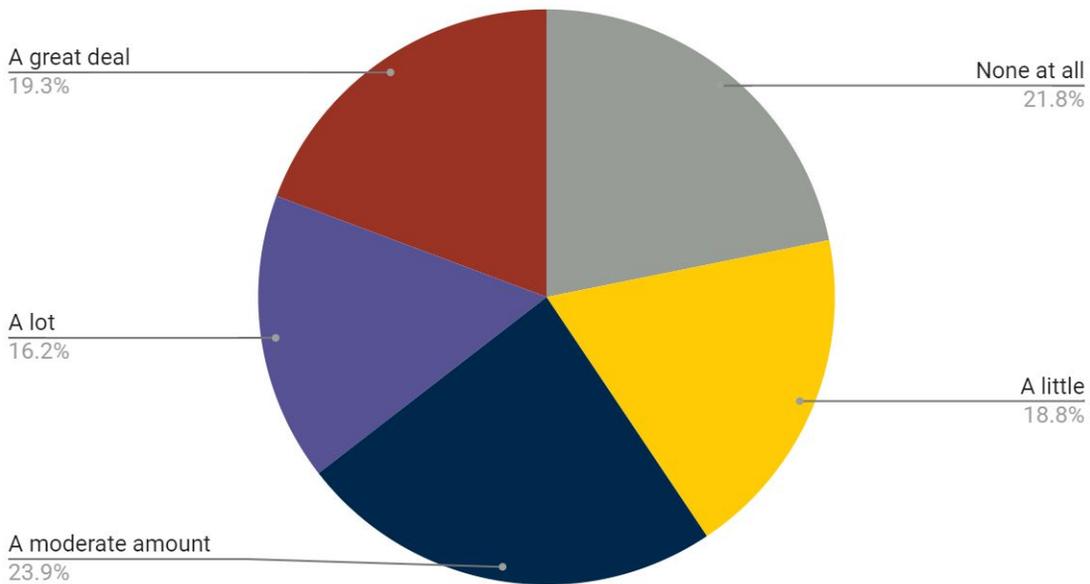
“If we will be charged full tuition, I expect all services the university normally provides. If that is not the case, I expect significant tuition discounts.”

Students feel less strongly about reductions to or waivers of the registration, CSG, Student Legal Services, and School & College Government fees. This could be due to their relatively lower cost, the ability of services to be available online easily, the priorities of students, or a combination of the above.

Importance of discounting tuition and fees

While we could have guessed that students expect a discount, it was important to find out whether this would actually affect their decision to enroll. So, we asked them, and we found that it certainly would. Well over half of the students responded that the University's decision to reduce or not reduce tuition and fees would influence their willingness to enroll in the fall "a moderate amount", "a lot", or "a great deal".

How much would the discount decision influence enrollment?



“The University needs to know that if they do not discount tuition at all and decide to go fully online or hybrid, the enrollment numbers will suffer greatly.”

Given this, and the previous section, **it's imperative the University heavily discount tuition if all instruction is online.** This would entail a greater than 30% discount on tuition, and a waiver of the Unions/Rec Sports fee, as well as a reduction in most other fees. **If instruction is hybrid, a discount may still be in order,** as the cost of tuition would still influence students' decision to enroll, and their decision would most likely be made based on both the cost and the format defined more specifically.

General sentiments

If there was one thing that was clear, it's that students feel very strongly about how the University will run classes in the fall. They should—these decisions will affect them for the rest of their lives. The comments in the open ended section can pretty much speak for themselves.

<p>“We can't be the leaders and best sitting on our beds taking courses via Zoom!”</p>	<p>“The opportunity to be infected by the virus will highly increase will the campus fully reopen, and if one person gets COVID-19 the whole campus needs to consider closing again, which will cost a lot more than the University thinks.”</p>	<p>“At some point you need to stop waiting for new information and just make a decision.”</p>
<p>“I wanna come back to school :(“</p>		<p>“I expect the University to treat the matter of disease spreading with utmost seriousness. Our health is the most important factor, then comes learning. You can't have one without the other.”</p>
<p>“Think about equity for students who may be vulnerable to COVID-19. Even a hybrid option may not be viable for some students, so it's important to make it available for students to be able to do completely online.”</p>	<p>“The ability to collaborate in-person with peers, colleagues, and professors cannot be replaced by a computer screen and webcam. Students attend UofM to seek and investigate new ideas to further push the envelope of what it means to succeed together.”</p>	<p>“I would hope that the university proceeds with even more consideration for students who don't come from much wealth. That might look like a willingness to cover personal protective equipment and ensure that money does not become an obstacle for one's proper education and good health.”</p>
<p>“Honestly, hybrid classes seem like the worst of both online and face to face classes. Please no!”</p>	<p>“I really do not think I can do another semester of this, especially not with the steep cost of tuition. If we're fully online I'm going back to community college.”</p>	<p>“I was really surprised that the university decided not to refund any part of the tuition fee, including the recreational fee. It was ridiculous.”</p>
<p>“I would like as many in person classes as possible.”</p>	<p>“I just didn't feel like I was a student at Michigan. Part of the experience is being on campus, participating in orgs, and collaborating with other students and I felt like I couldn't effectively do that during the past semester.”</p>	<p>“Please make my freshman year in person, I really want to experience UMich how it is meant to be experienced”</p>
<p>“This whole situation sucks but u guys are doing ur best”</p>		<p>“It's just ... not something easy for international students.”</p>

Overall impression

The University has much to consider when making its decisions. Determining how to hold instruction in the fall, and how much tuition to charge, is an unenviable position to be in.

Students strongly believe tuition needs to be discounted, and this is regardless of the medium of instruction (though the amount certainly is dependent on the level of in-person instruction and services). It's unlikely that with the social distancing requirements and limits on the size of groups that campus life will be the same—and tuition should be reduced according to this reduced level of services, programs, activities, and facilities.

“We know the university needs to retain its students from a financial perspective. We want to come to Ann Arbor and learn. If you take measures to make it safe, we will come!”

This is important to students—they are going to take it seriously when deciding, among many other factors, many of which are specific to this crisis, whether to come back to the University in the fall, or whether to change their plans and possibly hit pause on their education.

Some degree of in-person classes are important to students. They miss the interaction with other students and faculty members. Many students specifically indicate that they believe this despite the risks. Many (though not all) were dissatisfied with the online portion of winter semester. Students seem to understand that it's highly unlikely that the semester will look like what it does in normal times.

But other students point out that any kind of in-person instruction is going to be a problem. Many point to the public health risk, and argue that it will not be possible to adequately control the spread of the virus. International students worry about whether they'll be able to get to campus at all, even if they wanted to. Both of these groups of students seem to indicate consistently that they recommend the University offer some fully online courses, regardless of the “normal” medium of instruction selected.

With the exception of a discount on tuition if the University decides to have courses entirely online, there are few hard-and-fast rules that can come from the responses to this survey, at least in our view. That's not to say that the scale is not tipping in one direction or another, but the unfortunate reality is that there are going to be many individuals who will be dissatisfied with some aspects of the instruction delivery medium, and the University operations more broadly. Confounding the issue is that students feel very strongly about their position on the operations of fall 2020, regardless of which side they're on.

Thank you for reading this report. We hope you have found it informative and useful. Please email csg.contact@umich.edu if you have any questions or comments.

Appendix: Methodology

Central Student Government put together a survey asking students about their thoughts on enrollment, tuition, and various related topics in regards to the fall 2020 semester and COVID-19's impact on University life.

The survey was conducted using Qualtrics, a commercially available survey tool to which the University has a subscription. To the best of our ability, the survey design is fully compliant with Section 508 and the current version of the Web Accessibility Content Guidelines (WCAG). We determined this study to be exempt from Institutional Review Board oversight.

We sent out emails to a randomly selected 8,000 University students, both incoming and current, through the Office of the Registrar. We did not set an end date to the survey in the email, but we closed it after one week.

We received 2,860 responses, giving us a 35.75% response rate. 2,416 of these responses were considered complete by Qualtrics, giving an 84.48% full completion rate and a 30.2% complete response rate. The median time it took participants to complete the survey was 6 minutes and 47 seconds.

The survey was anonymous. No personally identifiable information was collected by the respondent¹. We did collect the respondent's IP address (automatically captured), location (automatically captured; only accurate to the city level), student status, residency for tuition purposes status, school or college, and time zone. We cannot see whether a participant who received the survey chose to complete it or not.

All questions were optional, except for the first question asking for student status, so that individuals answering that they were not a student would be immediately sent to the end of the survey. Any questions skipped, not answered, or not viewed by or displayed to the respondent were not included in the analysis of the survey. The survey used skip logic and display logic to avoid displaying questions that would be irrelevant to the respondent based on their answers to previous questions.

You can obtain a full list of questions, or ask any other questions about survey methodology, by emailing Hayden Jackson at haydencj@umich.edu.

¹ We did, however, link to a separate, optional Google Form that did collect names and emails if students indicated they wished to be on a panel for potential later questions about this. Responses there could not be associated with the responses in this survey.



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