

CALIFORNIA STUDENT AID COMMISSION

COVID-19 Student Survey

The survey provides invaluable data and insight directly from students about their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis of Spring 2020 and their views on issues related to college attendance in Summer and Fall of 2020.

JULY 2020



CALIFORNIA
STUDENT AID
COMMISSION

CALIFORNIA

EDUCATION LAB

UC DAVIS SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Dear Colleagues,

I am pleased to share the initial results from the California Student Aid Commission's (CSAC) Spring 2020 "COVID-19 Student Survey." The survey provides invaluable data and insight directly from students about their experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis of Spring 2020 and their views on issues related to college attendance in Summer and Fall of 2020.

At the time of the survey administration (May 2020), many of the 76,000 student respondents expressed great concern about what the future holds. They were uncertain about where they would attend and how they would afford college, and a substantial number expressed concern about taking online instruction. However, we are encouraged that the survey findings show that most students intend to begin or continue their enrollment in higher education in future terms; we are hopeful this finding holds true as colleges admit and enroll students in the coming months.

The survey was designed and administered during the spring of 2020 when many students, both in K-12 and higher education systems, were still enrolled at their respective high schools and colleges and experienced academic disruptions due to COVID-19. The survey occurred after some large higher education systems and individual campuses (most notably the California State University) announced that future terms (summer and fall 2020) would be delivered in a primarily online format; students attending these institutions were cognizant of this when they responded to the survey about their plans and concerns.

Some striking initial findings emerged from the survey. Over 70% of current students lost some or all of their sources of income as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. A quarter of students dropped courses in their Spring 2020 college term. Almost half of all students had their living arrangements change.

The administration of this survey aligns with CSAC's mission and desire to better serve both current and future Cal Grant recipients, specifically during this crisis. These initial findings provide important data points that can be used to estimate future demand trends of financial aid. They also help us understand and focus on issues students worry about most, especially paying for basic living expenses during this uncertain time.

CSAC remains dedicated to providing students with the financial aid they need to ensure uninterrupted enrollment in higher education. We are extremely grateful to the College Futures Foundation, the funder of this work, as well as the researchers and our valued college students who participated in this critical survey.

Respectfully,



Marlene L. Garcia

Executive Director

California Student Aid Commission



COVID-19 has changed my plans for college financially and emotionally. I am currently debating whether I should drop my Fall Semester classes because I need to find a full-time job to help my family.

- Student Survey Respondent

About the COVID-19 Student Survey

In partnership with the California Education Lab at the University of California, Davis, the California Student Aid Commission (CSAC) surveyed current college students and high school seniors over two weeks in May 2020. The survey was emailed to a random sample of students statewide who submitted financial aid applications to CSAC for intended college enrollment in the 2020-21 academic year.

More than 60,000 currently enrolled California college students and 16,000 high school seniors completed the survey, a response rate of 12% and 11% respectively, making this one of the largest surveys in the nation to document how the COVID-19 pandemic is impacting students and their families. For more information on the survey construction, administration procedures, survey questions and tables of responses, see the Technical Appendices posted at www.csac.ca.gov/survey2020.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CSAC and researchers from the California Education Lab at UC Davis are grateful to the College Futures Foundation for their ongoing support of policy-relevant research. The research reported here was approved by the UC Davis Institutional Review Board (Case #1600635-1). The opinions expressed are those of CSAC and the individual researchers from UC Davis and do not represent the views of any foundations or public agencies who provide data or funding for the California Education Lab.

CSAC recognizes the outstanding efforts in designing, administering and analyzing this survey by:

Michal Kurlaender, UC Davis
Sherrie Reed, UC Davis
Derek Rury, UC Davis
Jessica Moldoff, CSAC
Patrick Perry, CSAC

For questions about the survey, please contact CSAC at research@csac.ca.gov.

Current College Students

How did the COVID-19 pandemic affect current college students?

The COVID-19 pandemic caused an immediate and harsh impact for current college students. When the pandemic and subsequent shelter-in-place orders hit, the majority of college students were in the middle of, or about to start, their spring term. Dramatic shifts in student living, income sources and instructional delivery greatly disrupted students' lives.

90%

of students reported concern about the shift to online classes

71%

of students lost some or all of their income

46%

of students experienced a change in their living situation

24%

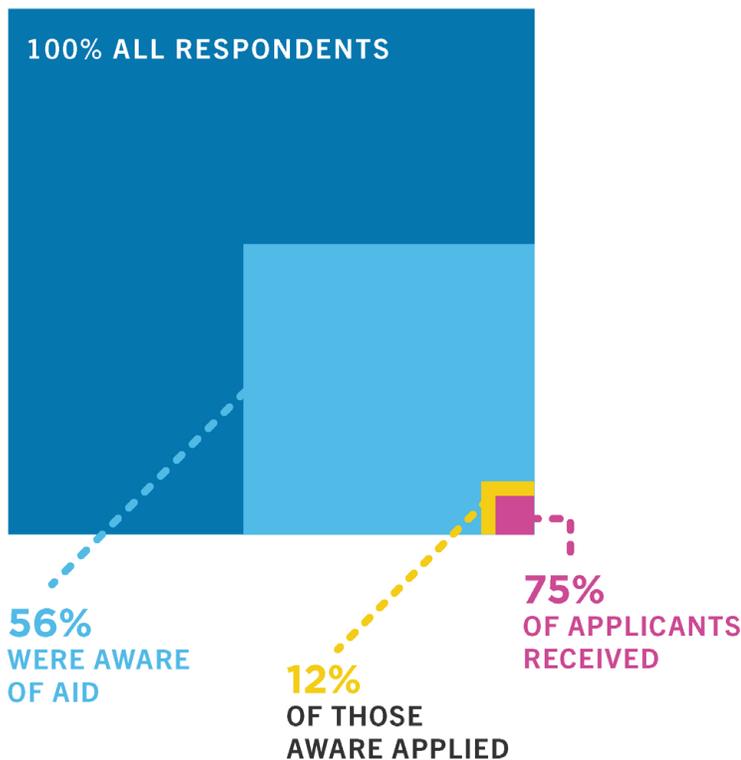
of students dropped 1 or more courses in the spring term

Were students aware of and did they receive emergency aid?

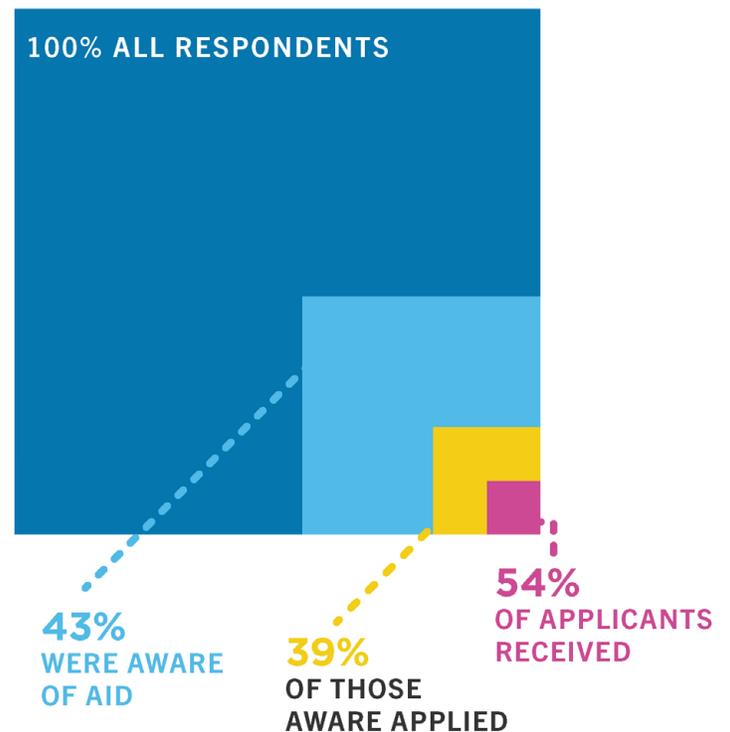
California colleges offered emergency aid to students for living expenses and technology. Not all students knew about these opportunities or requested aid, but more often than not, aid was provided for those who applied.



FREE OR LOANER LAPTOP



AID FOR LIVING EXPENSES



What are current students' plans for Fall 2020?

Looking ahead, California's college students are committed to staying enrolled in college, but their plans, including college choice, living arrangements and employment are shifting, while their worries intensify.

Over 80%

of current students have either changed some aspect of their plans for fall or are still uncertain of their plans

Only 2.4%

of students state that they do not plan to attend college in the Fall 2020, and 1/3 of those plan to successfully complete their degree prior to the Fall term

For many students, their plans changed due to reported financial hardship:

34%

think they need to work more

21%

think they need to attend a less expensive college

For others, plans changed for a variety of reasons:

25%

state they want to stay closer to family

22%

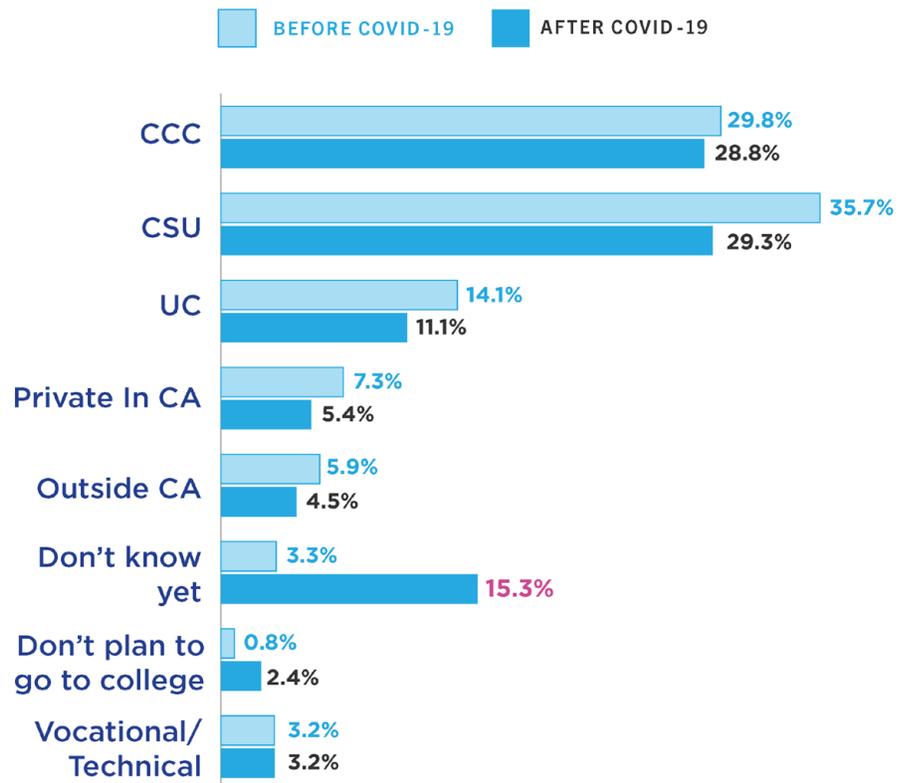
state they don't want to take online courses

15%

state they need a break from college due to the pandemic

Are current students planning on attending a different college in Fall 2020?

When asked about enrollment for Fall 2020, respondents were asked to specifically indicate their plans prior to the pandemic, and their plans now as a result of the pandemic. Responses show an almost **five-fold increase in the rate of uncertainty** about where students will continue their studies in Fall.



(It is important to note that these are students' stated intentions about their plans for the fall, which are still subject to change, and therefore should not be interpreted as fall enrollment projections.)

How much have current students' concerns about their finances and basic needs increased as a result of COVID-19?

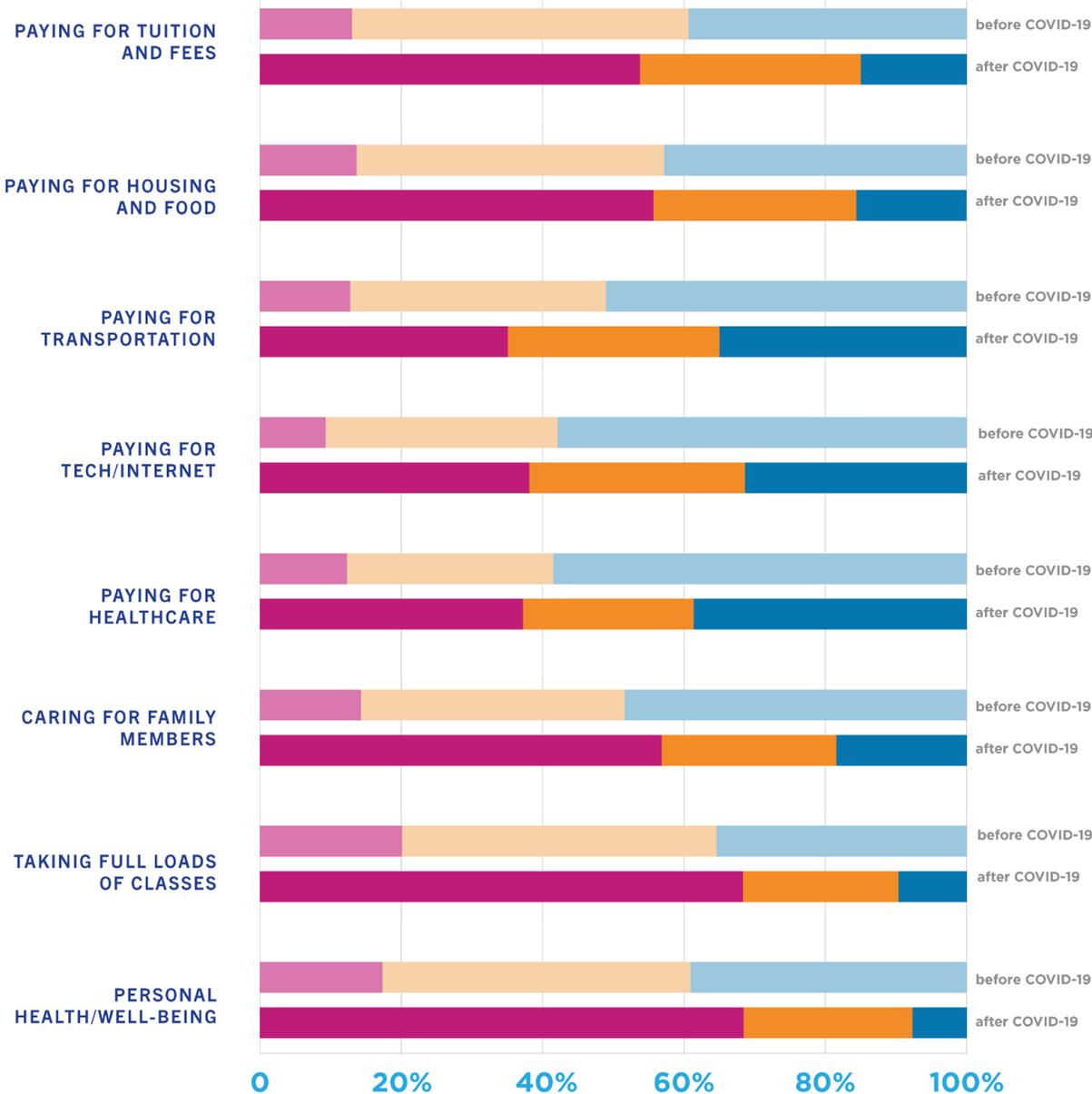
Students' shifting plans and persistent uncertainty are accompanied by increasing levels of anxiety for their financial stability, academic demands and health and well-being. Across the board, students reported dramatically higher levels of stress and concern over key economic and well-being measures in all areas as a result of COVID-19.

LINE 1
BEFORE COVID-19

LINE 2
AFTER COVID-19

A LOT A LITTLE NOT AT ALL A LOT A LITTLE NOT AT ALL

CONCERN ABOUT



PERCENTAGE OF COLLEGE STUDENTS



I am concerned about being unable to pay rent or other educational expenses. This has added a lot of stress that is distracting me from my academic goals. -Student Survey Respondent

Greatest Concerns for the Class of 2020:

82%

are concerned about taking online classes

73%

are concerned about their personal financial situation

71%

are concerned about financial hardship in their family

How has COVID-19 affected where the Class of 2020 high school graduates intend to enroll?

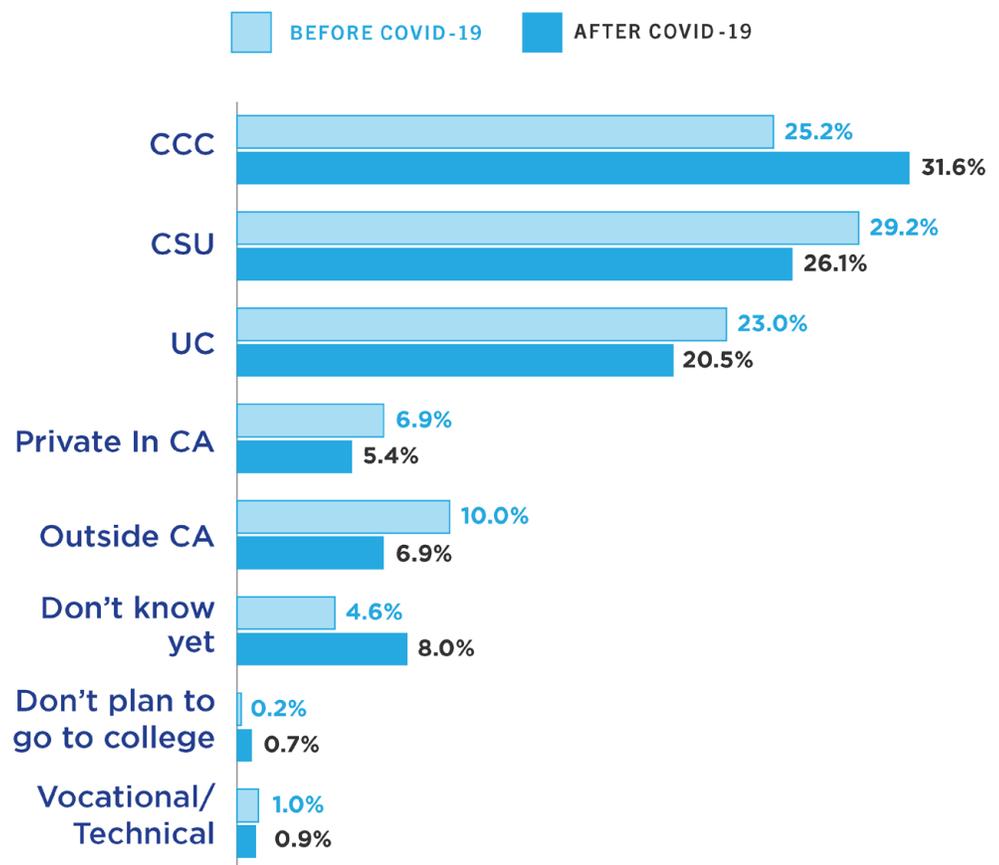
9%

of respondents planned to delay their college enrollment

33%

expressed concern about attending a college far from their home

Students reported shifts in their enrollment plans away from California's public and private four-year universities and out-of-state colleges to the California Community College system; others remained uncertain about their plans.



(It is important to note that these are students' stated intentions about their plans for the fall, which are still subject to change, and therefore should not be interpreted as fall enrollment projections.)

Despite their intentions to enroll in college, first-time college freshmen are concerned about online class delivery and their financial situation.

Financial Worry High

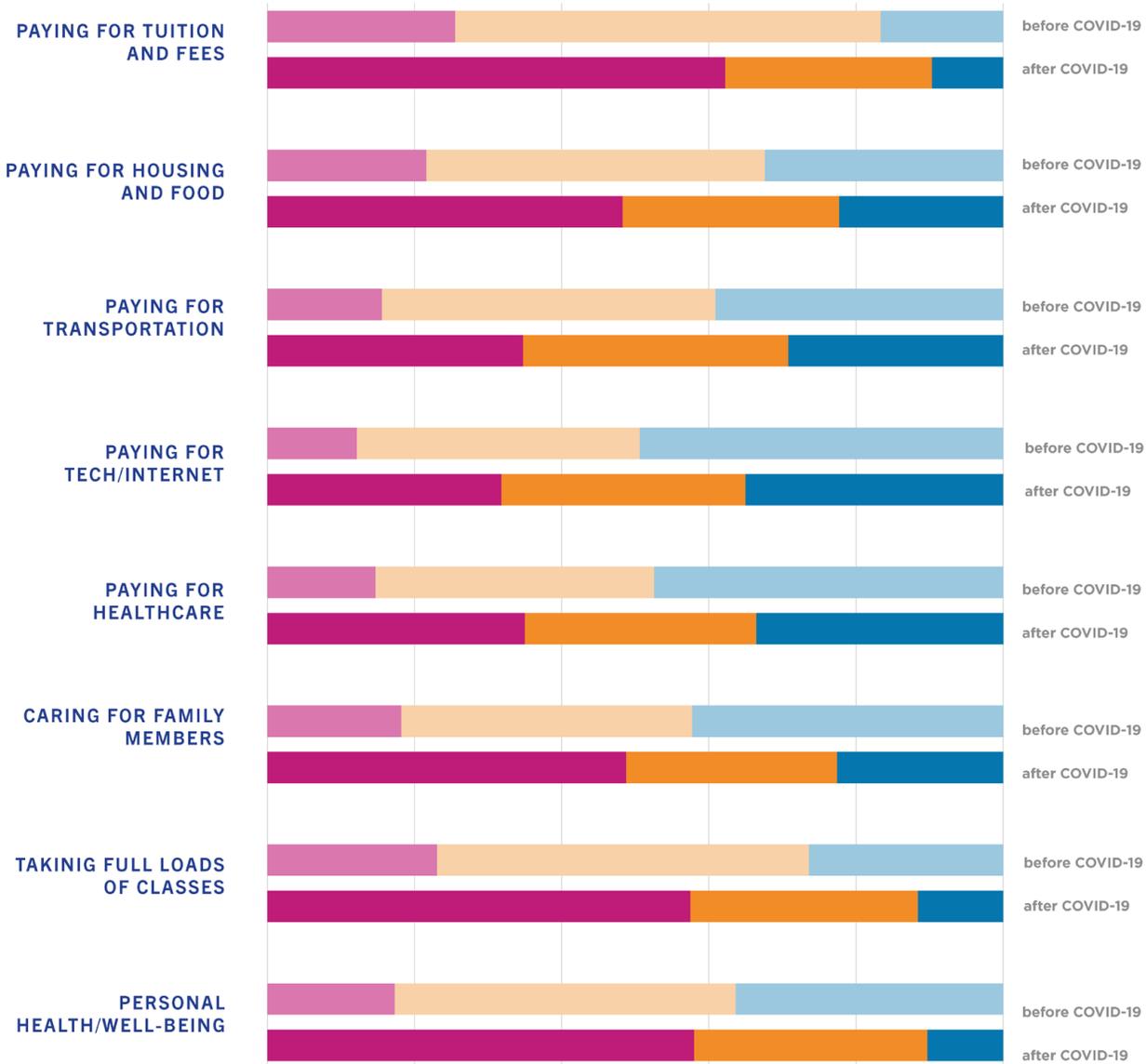
The graduating high school class of 2020 reported dramatic increases in levels of worry about financial and basic needs issues as a result of the pandemic.

LINE 1
BEFORE COVID-19

LINE 2
AFTER COVID-19

A LOT A LITTLE NOT AT ALL A LOT A LITTLE NOT AT ALL

CONCERN ABOUT



0 20% 40% 60% 80% 100%

PERCENT OF ENTERING COLLEGE STUDENTS



No one thinks that they will have a global health crisis in their lifetime. No one thinks they will see their mother cry at seeing a loss in their retirement that questions the future. No one hears their parents talking worriedly through the walls discussing college plans...

We attempt to see through their worrisome glances over their laptops, having researched tuition, housing and added cost... We support our parents, our guardians, by reassuring them that it will pass, and we'll have a future just as exciting, just as ample.

- High School Senior Student Survey Respondent



**CALIFORNIA
STUDENT AID
COMMISSION**



**CALIFORNIA
EDUCATION LAB**
UC DAVIS SCHOOL OF EDUCATION

Download a PDF of this survey at www.csac.ca.gov/survey2020