Will Students Come Back?  
Undergraduate Students’ Plans to Re-Enroll in Fall 2020

The majority of students at research universities (90%) plan to continue their education in Fall 2020, 9% are unsure about their plans, and 1% say they won’t re-enroll, shows a recent SERU Consortium survey of 19,155 undergraduate students at five public research universities.

The percentage of not re-enrolling/undecided students is higher within the following subgroups: international students; students who relocated to a different state or a country after campus closures; students with caretaking responsibilities; students with disabilities (a learning disability, cognitive disability, or emotional/mental health disability or disorder); and students who reported they had not adapted well to remote instruction (Fig. 1). There are substantial differences across majors (see Tables 1-2). There are no differences by students’ gender, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, social class, and parental education.

![Fig. 1. Percentage of not re-enrolling/undecided students, within each subgroup](image)

**Table 1.** Top-5 majors with the **highest** number of not re-enrolling/undecided students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major (2-digit CIP Code Name)</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social sciences</td>
<td>14 (1.08)</td>
<td>1,017</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communication/journalism</td>
<td>14 (1.36)</td>
<td>643</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mathematics/statistics</td>
<td>14 (1.86)</td>
<td>339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Visual and performing arts</td>
<td>14 (1.48)</td>
<td>533</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical sciences</td>
<td>13 (1.52)</td>
<td>505</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Standard errors in parentheses

**Table 2.** Top-5 majors with the **lowest** number of not re-enrolling/undecided students

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major (2-digit CIP Code Name)</th>
<th>%</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health professions/clinical sciences</td>
<td>4 (0.53)</td>
<td>1,248</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parks/rec./leisure/fitness studies</td>
<td>5 (1.82)</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Security and protective services</td>
<td>6 (1.75)</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public administration/social services</td>
<td>6 (1.85)</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>7 (2.36)</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:** Standard errors in parentheses
Domestic and international students refer to somewhat different factors contributing to their decision not to continue at their university in Fall 2020.

Top-3 reasons for domestic students not to re-enroll in Fall 2020:

- 71% Concerns that all classes will continue to be held online
- 49% Financial constraints
- 48% Their experience at the university during the COVID-19 pandemic

Top-3 reasons for international students not to re-enroll in Fall 2020:

- 66% Concerns about it being safe to study in the U.S. because of the COVID-19 pandemic
- 54% Travel restrictions
- 36% Financial constraints

About SERU COVID-19 Survey:

Student Experience in the Research University (SERU) Consortium is administering a special survey on the impact of COVID-19 on student experience at 10 US public research universities. The SERU COVID-19 Survey assesses 5 areas of the student experience for both undergraduates and graduate students impacted by the pandemic and campus closures: (1) the transition to remote instruction, (2) the financial impact of COVID-19 on students, (3) student health and wellbeing, (4) belonging and engagement, and (5) future plans.

Sample: Census survey of undergraduate students at 5 large public research (R1) universities. Data collection started in the second half of May and is still ongoing at most universities. The report uses data from 19,155 students who completed the survey as of June 11, 2020. The response rate as of June 11, 2020 was 7-22%.

The Student Experience in the Research University (SERU) Consortium is an academic and policy research collaboration based at Center for Studies in Higher Education at the University of California – Berkeley (CSHE) working in partnership with the University of Minnesota and partner institutions. More information: https://cshe.berkeley.edu/seru

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