

SECOND EDITION

COLLEGE

2030™

EMERGING FROM THE PANDEMIC:
REIMAGINING HIGHER EDUCATION



BUILDING THE ROAD AHEAD. **TOGETHER.**

UNDERSTANDING THE STATE OF HIGHER EDUCATION

The impact of the pandemic on higher education cannot be understated. While campuses reopened their doors for in-person learning this past year, the environment has not been stable, with students and faculty alike working to find their footing and pave their path forward to prepare for a post-pandemic world.

The world has adapted and developed solutions to conquer COVID-19, and higher education must do the same, revising offerings and solutions to best accommodate emerging student needs.

To help surface opportunities for improvement and best prepare institutions for the days, months, and years ahead, Barnes & Noble College Insights™ is pleased to share our research on the needs and mindset of students, faculty, and administrators.

One thing is clear: higher education has been changed forever and students and institutions are now on the path to prepare for a post-pandemic future.

METHODOLOGY AND CONSIDERATIONS

Barnes & Noble College Insights™, Barnes & Noble Education's dedicated research platform, surveyed college students, faculty, and administrators nationwide. This survey was administered online in March 2022 using the Qualtrics platform. The analysis includes a total of 2,600 respondents from 2-year, 4-year, public and private institutions in the U.S. Trending is shown where there is at least +/- 5 percentage points (pp) vs. previous study (2020).

To provide the most comprehensive outlook possible, the collected data has been augmented with our industry expertise gathered from years of immersion in the college space. We're sharing our insights built from daily conversations with our university partners and unparalleled understanding of trends and forces shaping higher ed.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

SURFACING OPPORTUNITIES TO SERVE

Higher education has played a pivotal role in the betterment of our country and our people, contributing significantly to economic growth, cultural advancement, and overall well-being. With such far-reaching and long-lasting impacts, the system of higher education has had to evolve over time to reflect the continued changes of the world around it.

In 2021, we published our inaugural COLLEGE 2030™ report, providing a snapshot of the current state of higher education: what we've learned from students, faculty, and administrators and what our findings tell us about the gaps and opportunities, as well as our outlook for the next decade.

We've continued our journey to understand and harness the forces that will have a profound impact on higher education over the next eight years by addressing mental health, career preparedness and how to foster an environment of diversity, equity, and inclusion.



THE COLLEGE 2030™ SECOND EDITION REPORT ADDRESSES:

+ THE VALUE OF A COLLEGE EDUCATION:

how it continues to be at the forefront of students' minds and what both students and faculty perceive as key value drivers.

+ CAREER PREPAREDNESS:

resources students need to be successful post-graduation.

+ THE STATE OF STUDENT LOANS:

when and how students are planning to pay.

+ SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH:

what mental health support students and faculty seek.

+ FOSTERING DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION:

the state of DEI on campus and the needs of those underrepresented.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WE ARE HERE TO SUPPORT HIGHER EDUCATION AND INSTITUTIONS REDEFINE THE VALUE, ROLE, AND IMPACT OF COLLEGE EDUCATION, WITH THESE GOALS IN MIND:

- + Arm the nation's colleges and universities with data-driven insights to make decisions today, firmly positioning them for 2030 and beyond and strengthening their brands upon clear and relevant differentiators.
- + Understand what college students need and how they will learn, study, socialize, and work in our transformed world. From that, draw a clear picture of how higher education can influence lifetime success of this population.
- + Inform the strategic planning process as schools establish priorities and allocate investments. Focus on areas that will deliver the greatest value to students and, at the same time, foster the growth and longevity of our U.S. institutions - large and small, public and private, 4-year and 2-year.
- + Leverage extensive industry insights and understanding of market and technological forces to build the optimal college experience.



The change in higher education has been greater during the pandemic than it has been in the last two decades cumulatively, challenging universities to take a business-focused approach to student retention. As we move through the next decade, it will be more important than ever to ensure administrators are not just asking for faculty feedback, but also listening to their students' wants and needs and creating a personalized learning experience that will fit each students' path forward.



Michael P. Huseby
Chief Executive Officer & Chairman, BNED

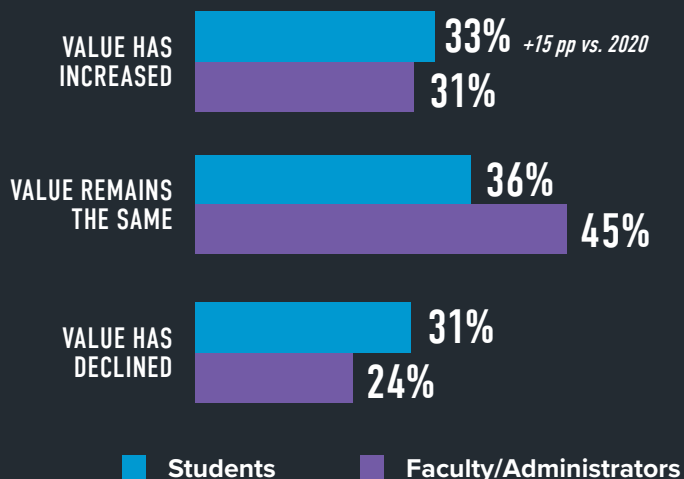
COLLEGE 2030™

THE VALUE OF A COLLEGE EDUCATION

Views on the value of a college education have improved since campuses reopened after the height of the pandemic.

In late 2020, when our initial COLLEGE 2030™ survey was conducted, concerns over the value of a college education were elevated as campuses were shuttered and classes moved online. As the cost of tuition continued to remain high and the student loan debt crisis made headlines, the value of a college education came under fire. Yet, despite the challenges students experienced over the past two years, it is surprising to see how far perceptions have swung in the other direction, with one third of students stating the value of higher education has increased. This was primarily driven by community college students, graduate or professional students, and older students (25+ years old).

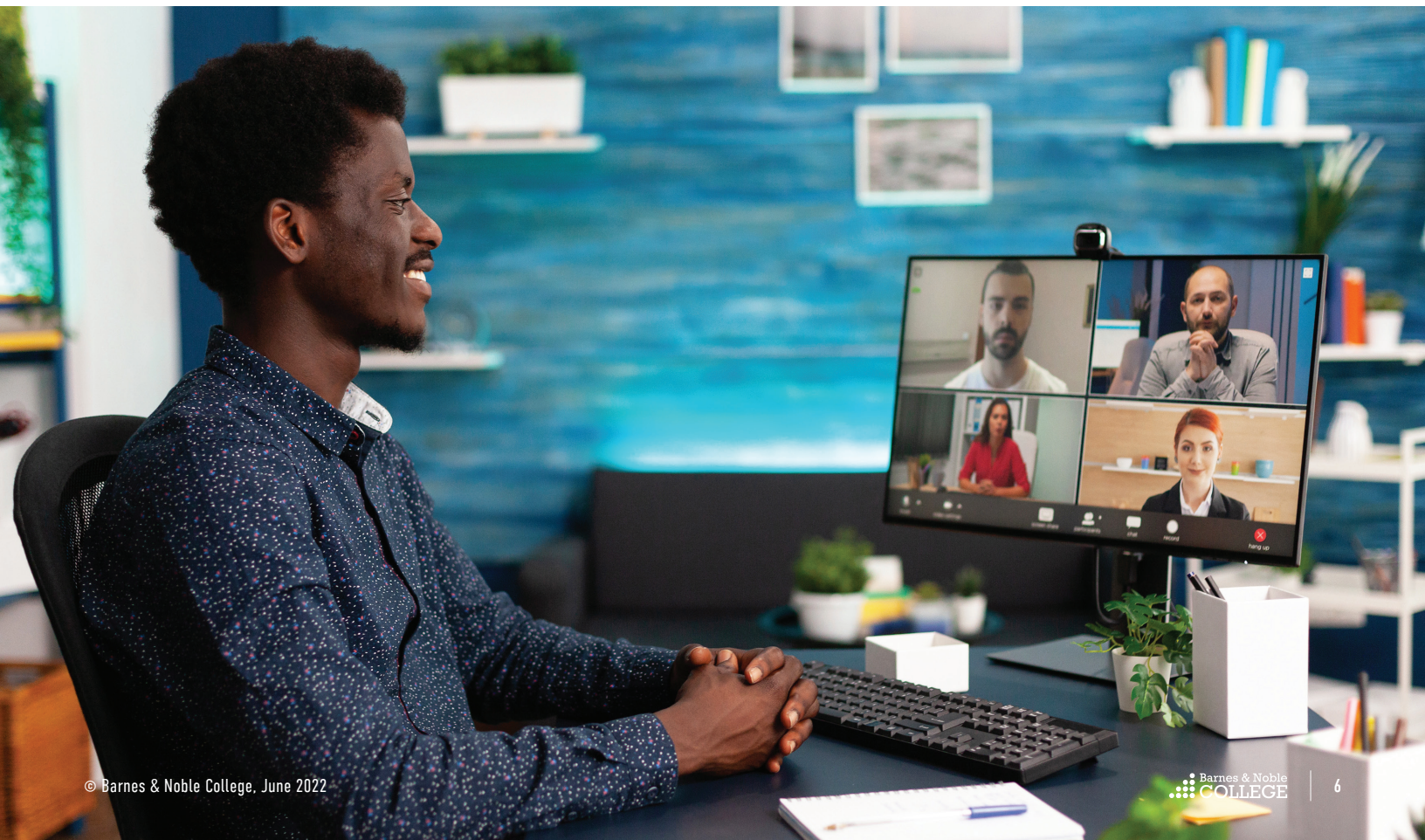
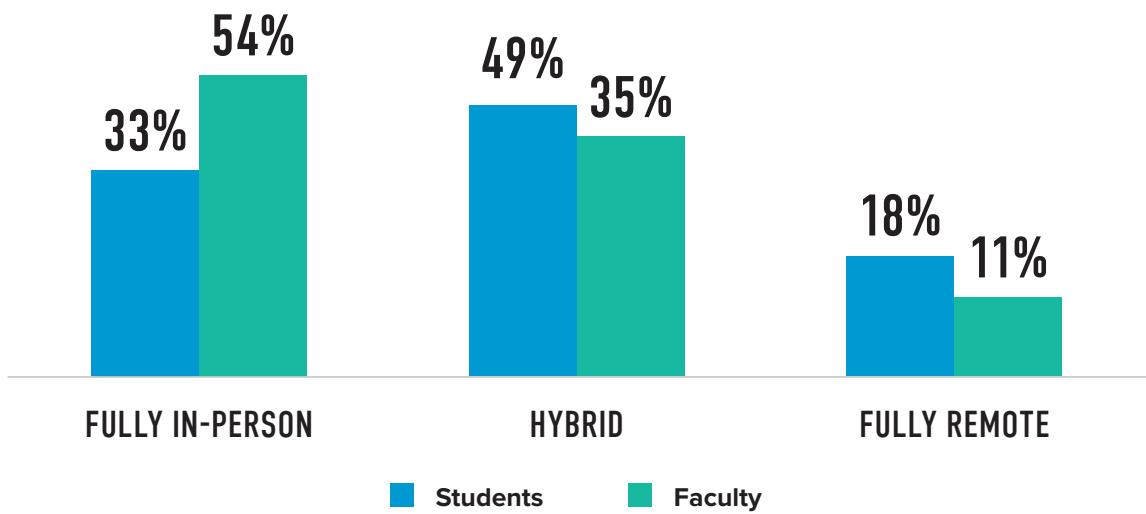
THE PANDEMIC HAS AFFECTED VIEWS ON THE VALUE OF EDUCATION



THE VALUE OF EDUCATION

While some students are now more positive about the value of a college education, the pandemic's impact on class formats has uncovered a discrepancy in preferences between students and faculty. Nearly half of students prefer a hybrid class format, while 54% of faculty favor a fully in-person environment. This poses a challenge for institutions to align the two groups' differing preferences.

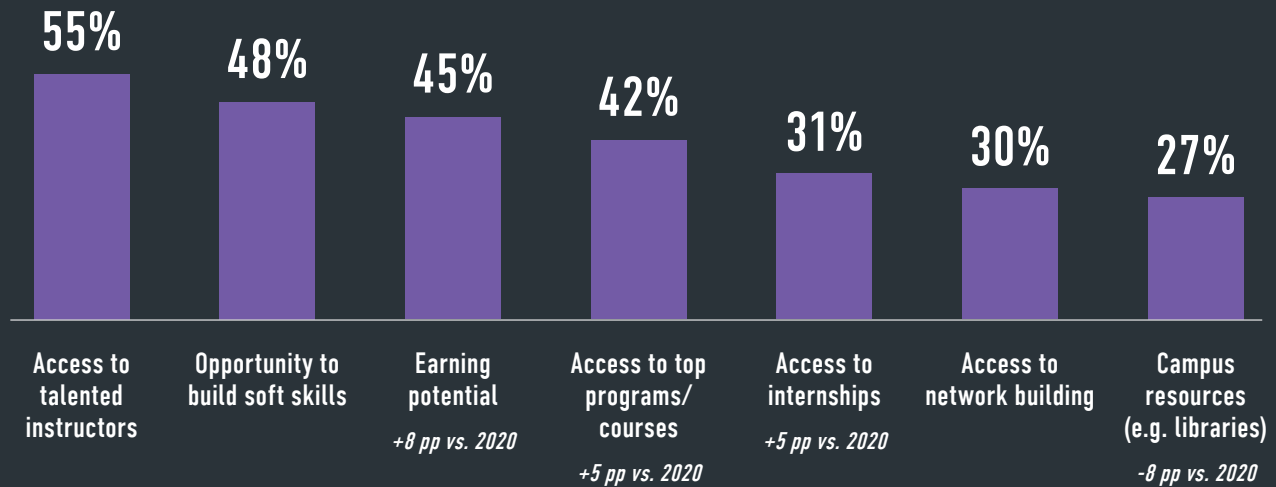
PREFERRED CLASS FORMAT



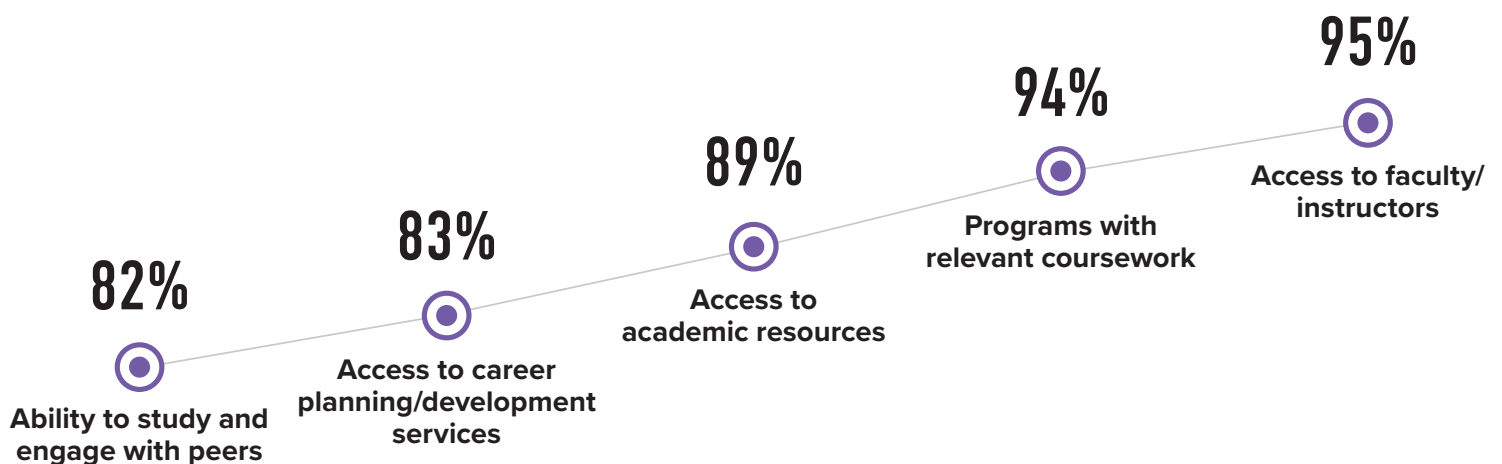
THE VALUE OF EDUCATION

FACULTY/ADMINISTRATORS VIEWPOINT

What makes education most valuable?



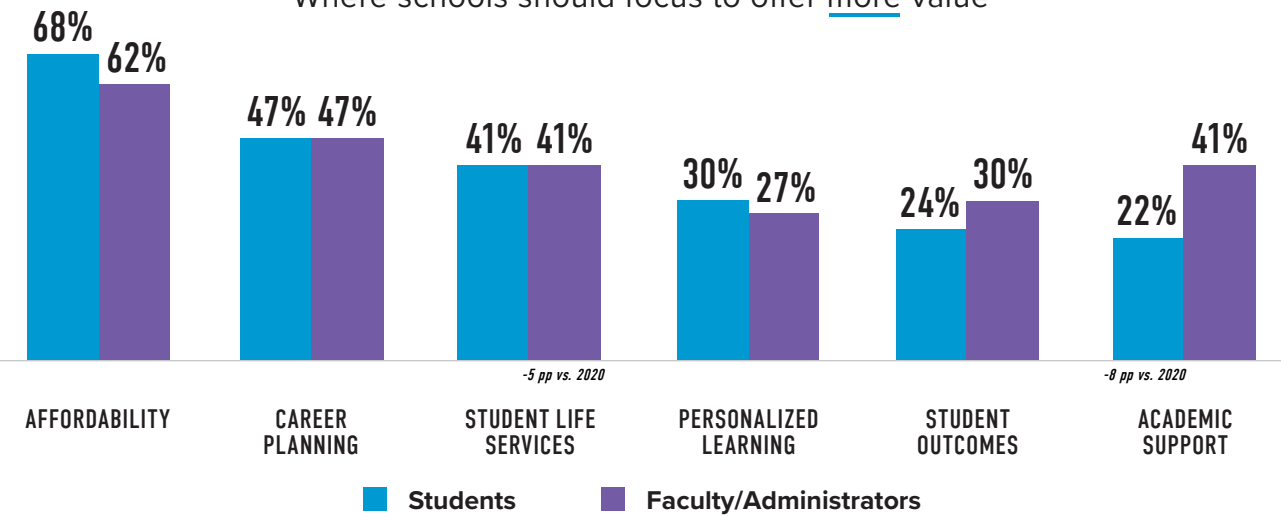
WHAT IMPACTS ACADEMIC SUCCESS?



THE VALUE OF EDUCATION

AFFORDABILITY & CAREER PLANNING ARE TOP OF MIND FOR BOTH STUDENTS AND FACULTY/ADMINISTRATORS

Where schools should focus to offer more value



FACTORS STUDENTS CONSIDERED WHEN CHOOSING A SCHOOL



80%
COST OF
ATTENDANCE
-7 pp vs. 2020



76%
LOCATION
-5 pp vs. 2020

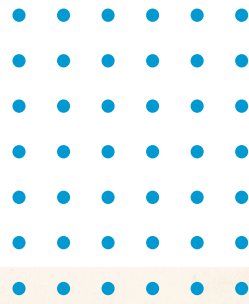


67%
REPUTATION
-13 pp vs. 2020



COLLEGE 2030™

CAREER PREPAREDNESS



Enhancing the value of higher education can be achieved by offering more tangible career prep programs and developing soft skills.

While students felt their courses are preparing them for years beyond college, they still want more career preparation support - such as building out the educational experience with soft skills development and tangible resources around networking, resumes, job searching, and mentorship.

From Students:

"Classes should expose you to more things that you're likely to experience day to day in your career/field of choice."

– Second Year Student, 4-Year Public School

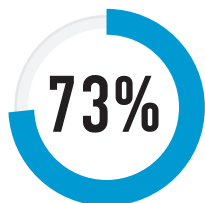
"Colleges offer courses that fit a person's degree; however, I wish they would provide a class that talks about what types of careers a person can get with that degree - jobs that students don't know exist."

– Second Year Student, Community College

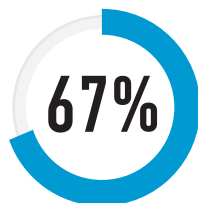


CAREER PREPAREDNESS

STUDENTS FEEL COURSES HAVE PREPARED THEM WELL FOR THEIR CAREERS



Feel prepared for the industry/field I want to pursue



Feel prepared for the job I want



Feel prepared for graduate school/professional degree (medical, law school)

*Asked to those who plan on attending



My teachers have made a continued effort in creating scenarios that I could come across in the real world and implementing them into the course workload.

– Second Year Student, Community College



I am only a first-year, but my major has gone over our 4-year plan of what courses we will take and how this will prepare us for, not only my career path, but other career paths in the medical field that will help us apply to other institutions after I graduate.

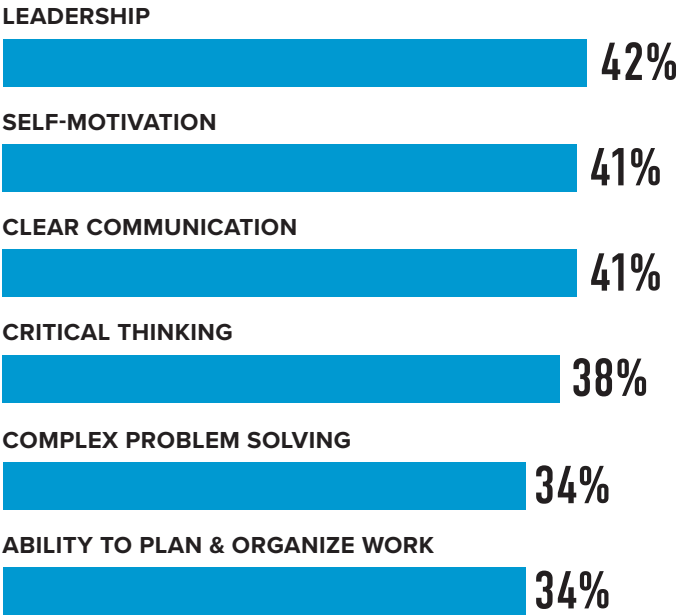
– First Year Student, 4-Year Public School



CAREER PREPAREDNESS

When it comes to job planning and career prep, students are interested in receiving help to develop leadership, self-motivation, communication, and critical/analytical reasoning skills. They would find resources such as networking assistance, resume help, general job search help, and mentors most helpful while in college.

STUDENTS WANT HELP DEVELOPING SOFT SKILLS



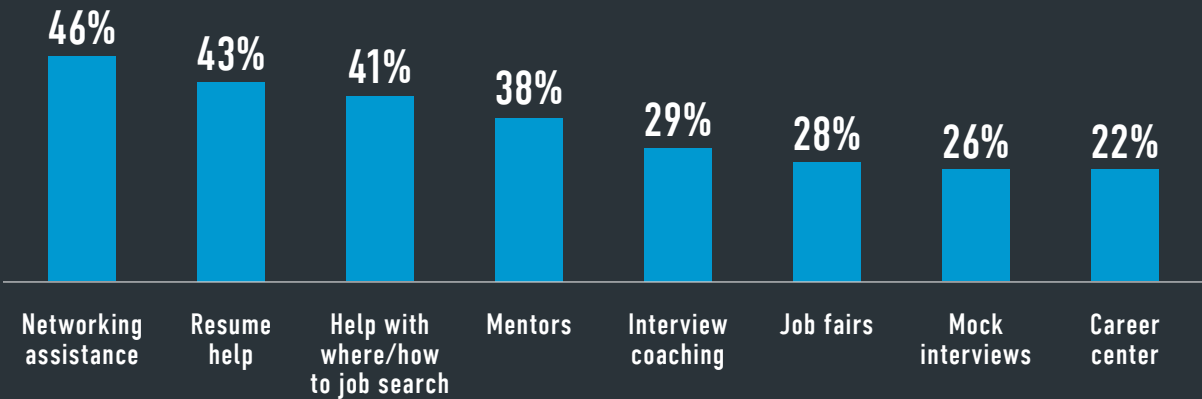
FACULTY AND ADMINISTRATORS AGREE...



indicated that the opportunity to build soft skills (time management, leadership) increases the value of a college education.

STUDENTS ARE LOOKING FOR SCHOOLS TO PROVIDE TANGIBLE CAREER TOOLS AND JOB SEARCH HELP

Students want help connecting directly to the workforce with networking assistance and resume help being the most requested.



COLLEGE 2030:™

THE STATE OF STUDENT LOANS

Finances and how students fund their college education influences their perception on the value of a college education.

Although college tuition has largely remained steady throughout the pandemic, rising inflation and the end of federal stimulus funding will likely increase college costs, directly impacting students' ability to pay. Slightly fewer than half of students have taken out student loans, while more than half of those with loans said they had to apply for new and/or additional student loans as a result of the pandemic.

Despite the federal student loan pause, when asked about paying back their loans, nearly 80% of students said they plan to begin payments after graduating, while some have already begun repayment. This is positive, considering the widespread media discussion about students not intending to repay loans.



THE STATE OF STUDENT LOANS

DO YOU HAVE STUDENT LOANS?



YES

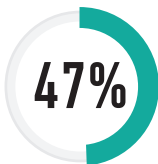


NO

DID YOU APPLY FOR LOANS AS A RESULT OF THE PANDEMIC?



YES



NO



ARE YOU PLANNING TO BEGIN PAYMENT AFTER GRADUATION?



YES



I'VE ALREADY
STARTED REPAYING
MY STUDENT LOANS



NO

WHY AREN'T YOU PLANNING TO BEGIN PAYMENTS AFTER GRADUATING?

I'm planning to attend graduate school/pursue additional education	44%
I am hoping for additional student loan forgiveness	39%
I do not anticipate having the financial means to pay them off after graduation	35%
I am hoping student loan repayment will be deferred again	27%

COLLEGE 2030™

SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH

The future of student success is contingent upon a healthy mindset and well-being.

While mental health had already been a growing concern for many institutions, student well-being declined even further during the pandemic. It's critical that schools provide accessible resources (like counseling and education), work to build an environment that acknowledges the importance of mental health, and remove the stigma attached to seeking help.

Looking back to 2020, students experienced increased levels of stress due to their schools' rapid shift to full online learning and because of pandemic-related issues. They indicated the online environment was less conducive to learning, harder for them to engage and focus, and lacked much needed social interaction. In addition to academics, students were overwhelmed by increased family, financial and job pressures brought on by the pandemic.

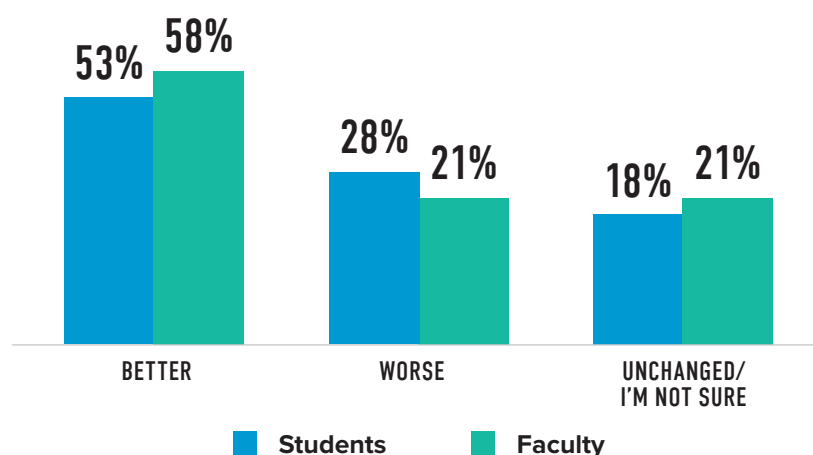
Fast forward to 2022. Now, students generally feel better mentally since returning to campus and faculty, who have returned to in-person or hybrid classes, are feeling better largely driven by in-person teaching and social interactions. However, both students and faculty experienced downsides to the transition/return to campus that need to be addressed by administration.



SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH

Overall, student and faculty mental health and well-being have improved since campuses re-opened. However, some students reported a decline in their mental health after returning to campus - and those students were more likely to be women, or working 35+ hours per week, or have taken out student loans.

MENTAL HEALTH SINCE RETURNING TO IN-PERSON OR HYBRID LEARNING



IN-PERSON BENEFITS: PHYSICAL CLOSENESS FOSTERS SOCIALIZATION AND AN IMPROVED LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

STUDENTS

A RETURN TO IN-PERSON LEARNING HAS IMPROVED SOCIALIZATION, COMMUNICATION, AND MOTIVATION.

"As someone with a mental illness, it's very hard to focus and absorb information. Online school was a hindrance to me, and I struggled quite a lot academically. Now that we're back in-person, I am doing much better as I get to be in the learning environment, and I get to see and feed off the energy of my peers."

– Third Year Student, 4-Year Public School

"I like to interact with teachers and students and to attend classes in-person. The environment is much more amicable and motivating."

– Second Year Student, 4-Year Public School

FACULTY

IN-PERSON TEACHING IS MORE EFFECTIVE AND ENJOYABLE FOR FACULTY, BUT ALSO IMPACTS STUDENTS' LEARNING AND ENGAGEMENT.

"I love being in the classroom with students. The personal interaction is great and there is more energy in the class when it is in person."

– Professor, 4-Year Public School

"Personal interaction with both faculty and students increased which helps relieve stress. Additionally, students seem to learn better in this mode."

– Full-time Faculty, 4-Year Private School

SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH

YET, THE TRANSITION BACK TO CAMPUS AND INTO THE CLASSROOM HAS BROUGHT ON NEW PRESSURES

STUDENTS

PERCEIVED LACK OF PREPARATION FOR TRANSITION TO IN-PERSON CLASSES AND ANXIETY AROUND COVID-19 REMAINS.

"After two years, I forget what it's like to be in class with others. The schedule changes and the routine I have been in for two years changes, which gets difficult to get used to."

– Third Year Student, 4-Year Public School

"A lot of my professors mentioned that the switch from online to back to in-person has felt like a race that hasn't stopped. I feel like online was a lot easier and professors gave us "easier" assignments because they weren't used to being online and they had to figure it out as they went. Now, we have hit the ground running and I feel like it hasn't slowed down."

– Third Year Student, 4-Year Public School

FACULTY

CONCERNS AROUND STUDENTS NEEDING MORE SUPPORT, REMAINING ADAPTABLE/FLEXIBLE FOR CHANGE, PRESSURE FROM ADMINISTRATION, AND GENERAL HEALTH.

"For a number of reasons, there is more conflict and strife among faculty and administrators. The students are stressed and distracted. Many are working more hours in their jobs and focused less on school."

– Full-time Faculty, 4-Year Public School

"The constant flux of changes in the way that professors are expected to deliver instruction to students has been highly frustrating."

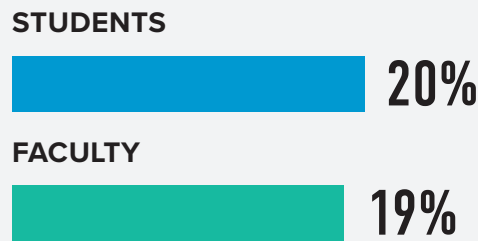
– Assistant Professor, 4-Year Public School



SUPPORTING MENTAL HEALTH

Awareness around on-campus mental health and well-being services and resources is high, with 81% of students and 92% of faculty indicating they knew their school offered them. However, among students and faculty who were aware, only 20% of each group have used the mental health services on campus. It is important that schools continue to promote these services' value and encourage usage while also seeking to understand what type of mental health resources students need and would use. While only 20% of students and faculty are using mental health services, majority believe faculty, other staff and students would benefit from additional mental health resources on campus.

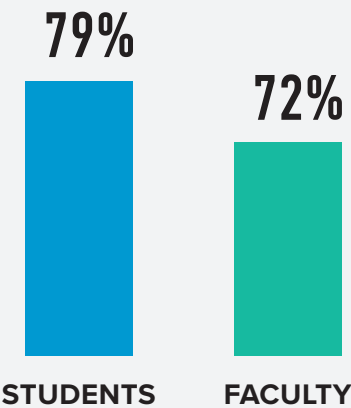
HAVE USED CAMPUS-PROVIDED MENTAL HEALTH SERVICES



Reasons for NOT using:

- There's nothing to talk about
- I don't have time
- I don't believe it would help
- There's a stigma attached to seeking treatment

WOULD STUDENTS, FACULTY, & OTHER STAFF BENEFIT FROM ADDITIONAL MENTAL HEALTH RESOURCES ON CAMPUS?



COPING STRATEGIES STUDENTS USED DURING COVID

Making time to unwind/for my interests (i.e., watching tv/movie, video games)	69%
Connecting with others (i.e., family, friends)	59%
Taking care of my body (i.e., eating healthy, exercising regularly)	51%
Taking breaks from watching, reading, or listening to the news	42%

37% of students prefer to speak to friends about their mental health.

45% of students would like to see their school offer free 1:1 counseling sessions.

COLLEGE 2030™

FOSTERING DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION

Fostering a diverse, equitable, and inclusive campus community will enhance communications, acceptance, and drive student success.

Students generally felt their campuses were inclusive and diverse, yet underrepresented students were less likely to see representation of themselves. There are opportunities for schools to proactively involve students and faculty to seek feedback on DEI efforts and also educate them on DEI issues. When asked if their school has asked for feedback on diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts, 43% of students and 33% of faculty answered no.

While students, faculty, and administrators believe financial aid and scholarships will greatly impact DEI efforts, the two groups responded very differently beyond that. The majority of faculty and administrators indicated their schools had committed to a diversity action plan, but a smaller number have indicated specific actions their schools had taken. The top areas faculty and administrators felt schools should focus their DEI efforts on were around hiring practices, curriculum, and financial aid/scholarships.

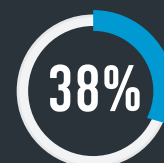
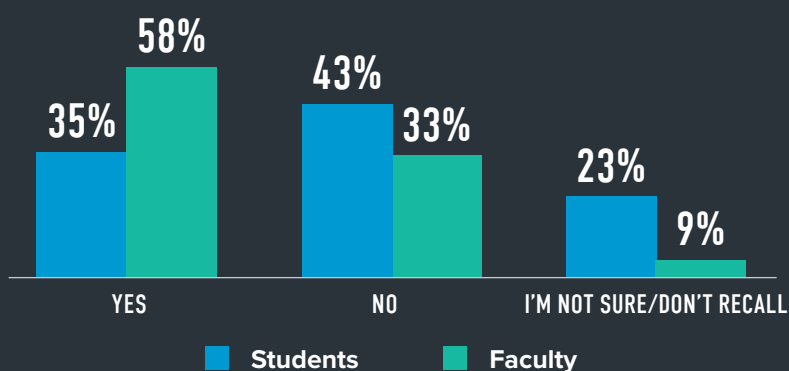


FOSTERING DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION

PERCEPTIONS ON DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION ON CAMPUS

	STUDENTS		FACULTY	
	All	Underrepresented	All	Underrepresented
My campus is inclusive and welcoming	79%	77%	77%	49%
I see representation of others who look like me	71%	66%	74%	67%
The student body (faculty) reflects a wide range of diversity	66%	64%	53%	46%

HAS YOUR SCHOOL EVER ASKED YOU FOR FEEDBACK ON DEI EFFORTS?



38% of students say that diverse student demographics were a factor when selecting school

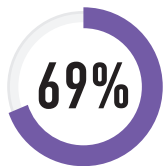
WHERE SHOULD SCHOOLS FOCUS ON TO IMPACT DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

	STUDENTS	FACULTY/ADMINISTRATORS
Financial aid/scholarships	61%	40%
Expand remote learning opportunities	33%	16%
Equitable textbook programs	31%	19%
Improved racial/cultural awareness in the curriculum	28%	45%
More culturally responsive emotional support	25%	34%
Diverse hiring practices	23%	48%
Adding diversity, equity, inclusion as a core value for the school	21%	31%

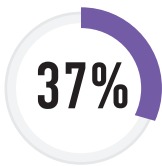
FOSTERING DIVERSITY, EQUITY, & INCLUSION

FACULTY/ADMINISTRATOR VIEWPOINT

School's current DEI Initiatives:



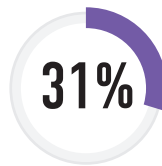
Committed to a diversity plan



Conducted focus groups with minority groups to assess needs/areas for improvement



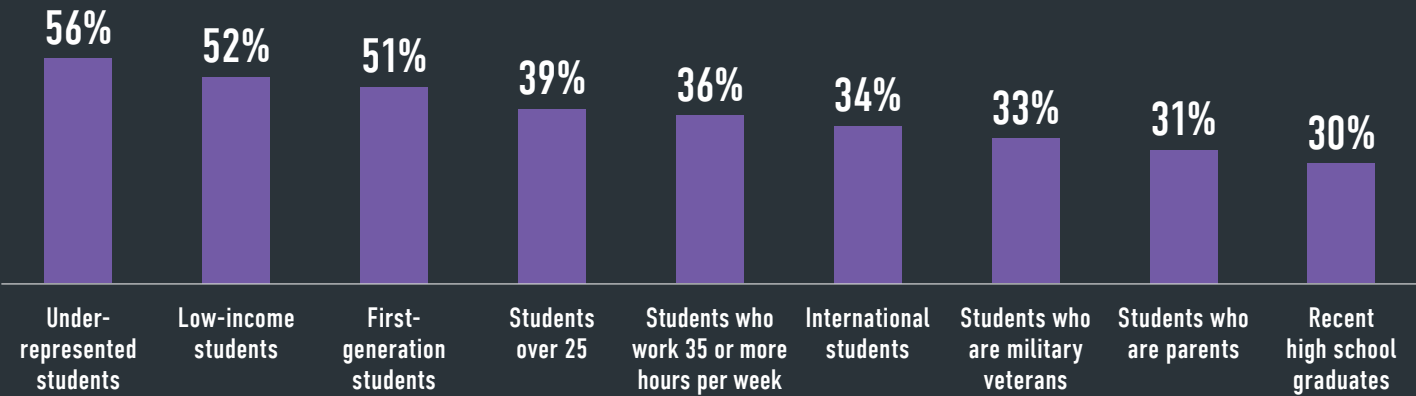
Revised job descriptions to ensure non-discriminatory language



Made school website ADA-compliant

SERVING NEW STUDENTS IN THE FUTURE

Faculty and administrators believe there is great opportunity to grow and diversify by meeting the needs of underserved groups over the next three to five years.



OUR OUTLOOK: THE ROAD TO 2030



As we continue to examine and explore the path to COLLEGE 2030™, the higher education landscape will evolve, and new themes and findings will emerge. Taken together, the trends from 2022 show that students and faculty continue to prepare for the future and have shifting perceptions on what they need to thrive while in school and beyond.

THIS YEAR, THREE KEY THEMES EMERGED:



1. THE VALUE OF A COLLEGE EDUCATION WILL CONTINUE TO BE CHALLENGED

While the pandemic has been a catalyst for dramatic shifts within higher education, other high-impact forces are ahead. Inflation and economic concerns, dwindling governmental aid, shifting employer expectations and lower birthrates, which negatively affect future enrollment numbers, will all have an impact on college's perceived value. While more students believe the value of a college education has increased since campuses reopened, students are still questioning if the benefit of their education exceeds the costs. With a continued focus on student debt, the proposed plans around debt relief are only one part of the solution. Ultimately, the underlying problems around the debt crisis need to be addressed including the ability for students to pay back their loans. With financial pressures around repayment and graduating students entering a competitive job market with employees leaving their jobs for higher pay and more personally fulfilling opportunities, institutions must continue to deliver strong student outcomes, success, and career preparedness to help graduates secure financially sufficient employment and a return on their investment. Addressing this gap is one of many challenges institutions will face in their quest to deliver greater value.



2. STUDENTS REQUIRE SEAMLESS, HOLISTIC SUPPORT THAT GOES BEYOND ACADEMICS

Critical to student success is fostering a seamless support network. This means academic and mental health resources; a diverse, equitable and inclusive campus culture; and career and life preparedness. Working together, institutions, faculty and the campus bookstore can each play a role in building this support infrastructure by listening to student perceptions and expectations. Institutions will need to expand mental health services, provide equitable access course material programs, offer flexible hybrid learning and include career readiness programs into curriculum. By listening to students' wants and needs and creating a personalized learning experience, institutions can build a support network that fits each students' path forward. The need for academic programs that connect classroom to career - incorporating real-life, practical examples and experience - will also remain important and provide a more personalized path. Students are also asking for soft skills, such as leadership, critical thinking, and complex problem solving. It's these transferrable skills that can help students adapt and adjust successfully as they transition to the workplace.



3. FLEXIBILITY & CONTINUOUS PIVOTS ARE THE NEW NORM

Flexibility and agility will be required as higher education moves forward. Institutions must evolve their program offerings, support, and experiences to adapt to the continued disruption of industries stemming from the pandemic. This means updating current curriculum, learning methodologies, and developing new academic programs that are pertinent to new and emergent jobs/fields. However, institutions should also offer more flexible program options intended for mid-career adults – especially in light of the Great Reshuffle. This calls for shorter non-degree/certification programs to help non-traditional students looking to further develop or completely pivot their career. While the pandemic created incredible challenges for higher education, it also brought about clarity for what's ahead. As we chart our path forward for the next eight years to support higher education, we will continue to be informed by student and faculty voices together with institutional perspectives.



ABOUT US

This research was conducted by Barnes & Noble College Insights™, the research platform for Barnes & Noble College that delivers impactful insights to help support student accessibility, retention, and academic success. Barnes & Noble College conducts 40+ studies annually, reaching 6 million students, parents, and alumni. Published research can be found on our website at bncollege.com/college-insights.

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