



Membership matters.

## Effects of COVID-19 on High School Students & College Choice

*Seven ways you can help students and your institution in the coming months*



# About the Research

**This research is designed to help institutions understand the immediate reaction students are having to the COVID-19 pandemic**

- National online survey sent to high school students
- Administered from March 27<sup>th</sup> - April 5<sup>th</sup>
- 7,117 college-bound high school students responded
- 93% respondents had been admitted to at least one college
- 7% still awaiting acceptance



# About the Sample

## Key demographics and segmentations

### Student Demographics

First Generation College	57%
less than \$50K	22%
\$50K - \$100K	36%
\$101K - \$150K	24%
> \$150K	18%
Non-White	47%
White	53%

### Likely Student Enrollment Choice

Community College/Vocational Technical	13%
In-State Public	44%
Out-of-State Public	11%
Private	33%

### SEVERITY OF COVID-19

Most Affected States	44%
Moderately Affected States	26%
Least Affected States	30%

### 2016 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION COUNTY VOTING

Lean Republican	26%
Balanced	52%
Lean Democratic	22%

Categorized at time of survey

- Most affected states: CA, FL, IL, LA, MA, MI, NJ, NY, PA, WA
- Moderately affected states: AK, CO, CT, GA, IN, MD, NC, OH, SD, TN, TX, WY
- Least affected states: AL, AR, AZ, DC, DE, HI, IA, ID, KS, KY, ME, MN, MO, MS, MT, ND, NE, NH, NM, NV, OK, OR, RI, SC, UT, VA, VT, WI, WV

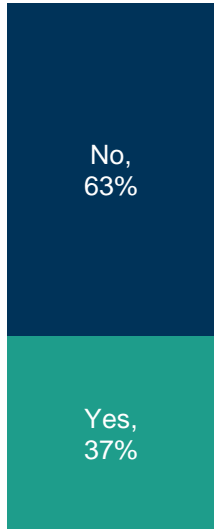
# Why is this Important Now?

- College-bound high school students are experiencing enormous disruption in their daily lives.
- Colleges must understand the current dynamics in order to best support decisions in this rapidly changing environment.
- What students tell us today is a bellwether of how they how they are feeling in the moment.
- The circumstances around the pandemic will change: may become more serious, or they may ease up.
- This information can help institution see the terrain in which they are operating and develop the right communication strategies for the communities of students they serve.

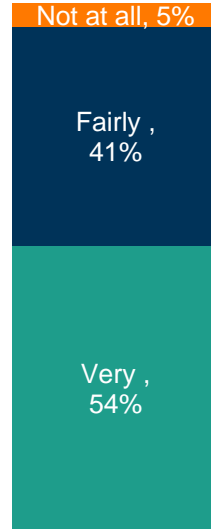
# 1. Concern is Evident, Be a Calming Voice for Families

**A barometer of the current climate shows that students are worried, but not necessarily panicking**

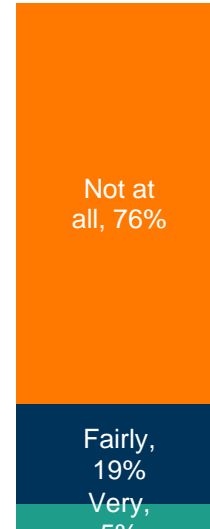
Has your likely college choice been influenced by the COVID-19 crisis?



How confident are you that [your choice] is the right choice for you?



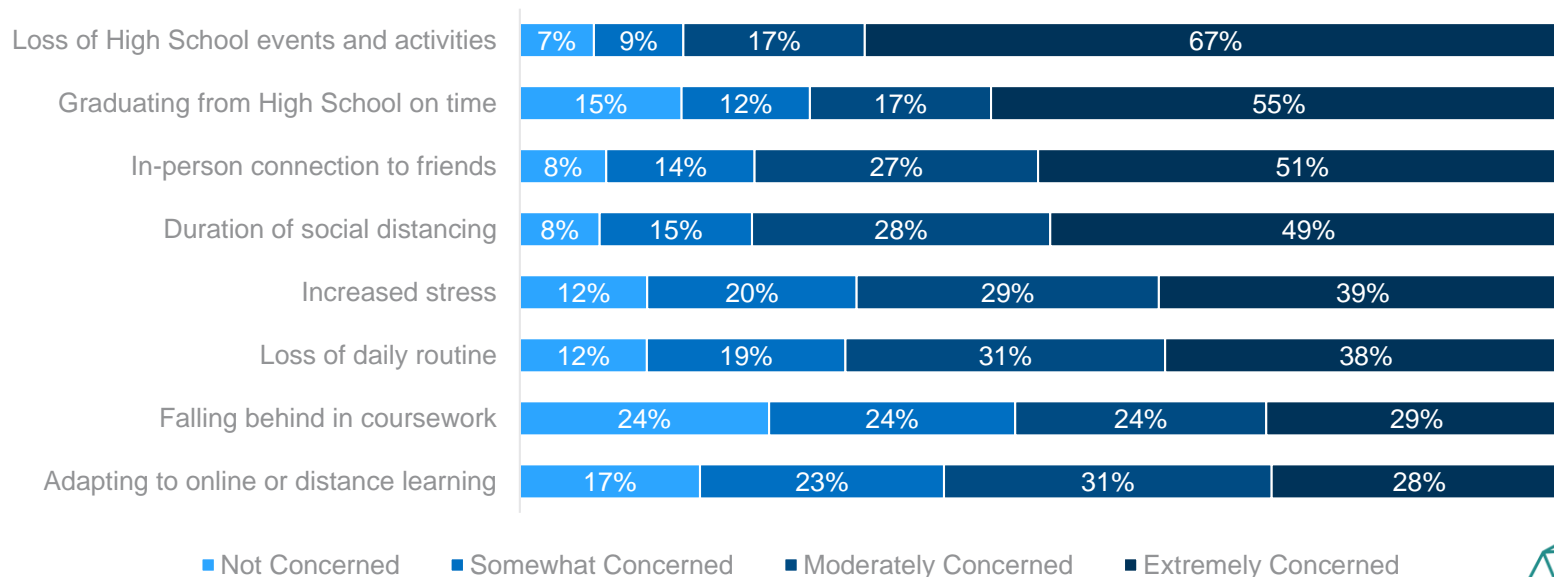
How likely are you to send a deposit to more than one school?



## 2. Put Students First

Students are enduring significant loss in their high school lives; college's must place themselves in this context

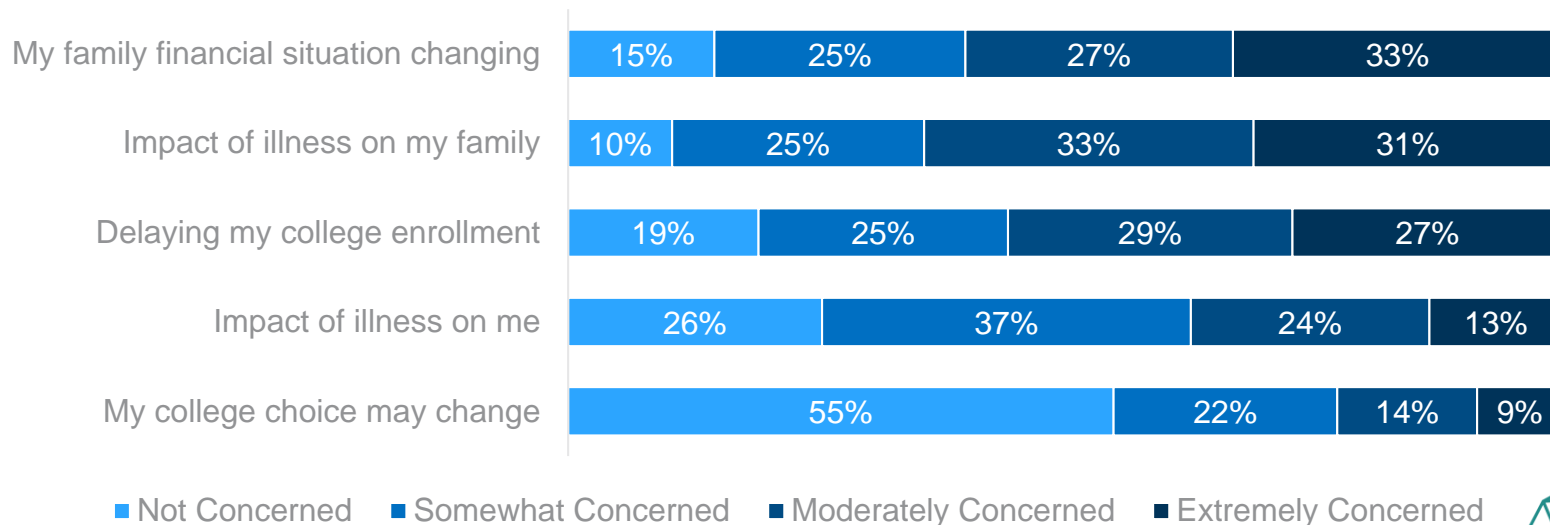
As you think about your current high school experience, what are you concerned about?



### 3. Stay the Course on Message

Students worry about paying for college, or delaying enrollment, but changing their choice is not in the cards for many

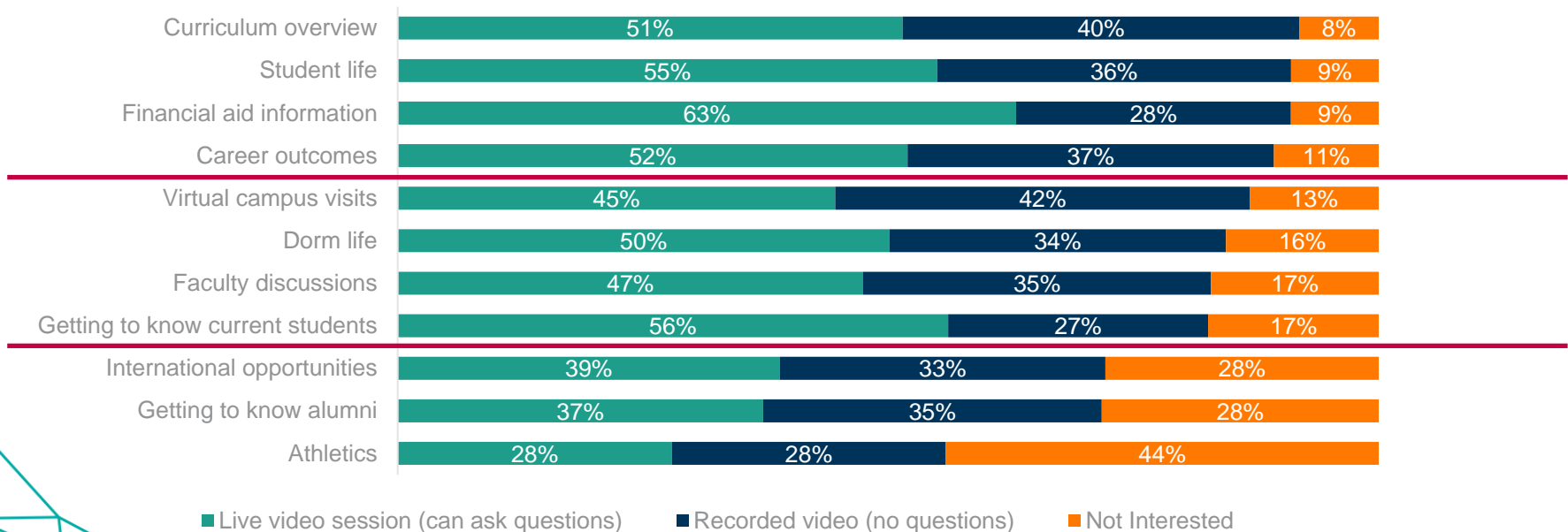
As you think about your college choice during this uncertain time, which of the following are you concerned about?



# 4. Be Virtual Far Beyond the Visit

## Prioritize your virtual opportunities for students to get to know your institution based on the information that students say is most valuable to them

In the absence of campus visit/in-person opportunities, how would you prefer to get to know whether a school is a good fit for you

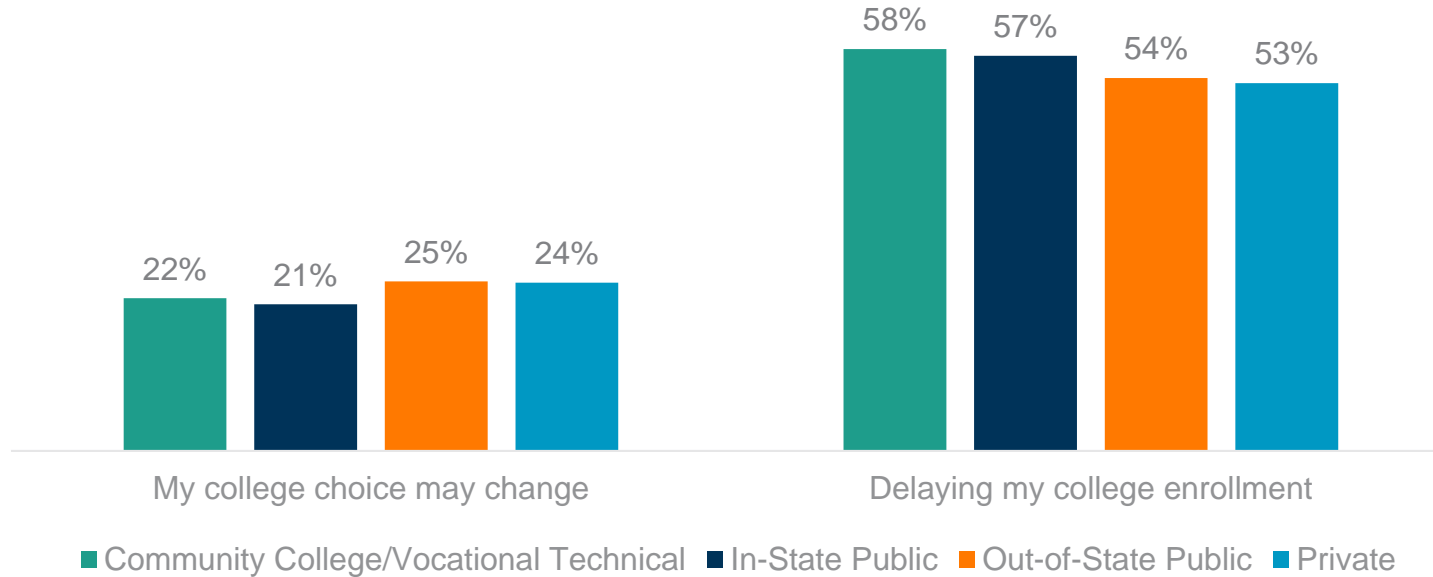




# 5. Supercharge Your Melt Strategies – Students Who Wouldn't Normally Melt Will

The risk of melt is from delayed enrollment more so than changing college choice, but this may change

As you think about your college choice during this uncertain time, which of the following are you concerned about? By Type of College Attending



\* Percent Very and Extremely Concerned

# 6. Strike the Right Tone – Communicate with Your Communities in Appropriate Ways

Reaction to COVID-19 involves a complex interplay of regional infection severity and socio-political affiliations

**Likelihood of COVID-19 Influencing College Choice by Affected Region and 2016 Presidential Election County Leaning\***

	Republican Leaning	Balanced	Democratic Leaning
Most Affected	33%	39%	45%
Moderately Affected	35%	39%	39%
Least Affected	31%	34%	36%

- Student region alone cannot account for the level of concern about COVID-19
- Much of the concern is associated by political leaning of the community in which the student is located
- Regional severity and political leaning together mark the ends of the spectrum of concern
- Concern may change as we move forward in time
- Important for institutions to understand their students and the communities they serve

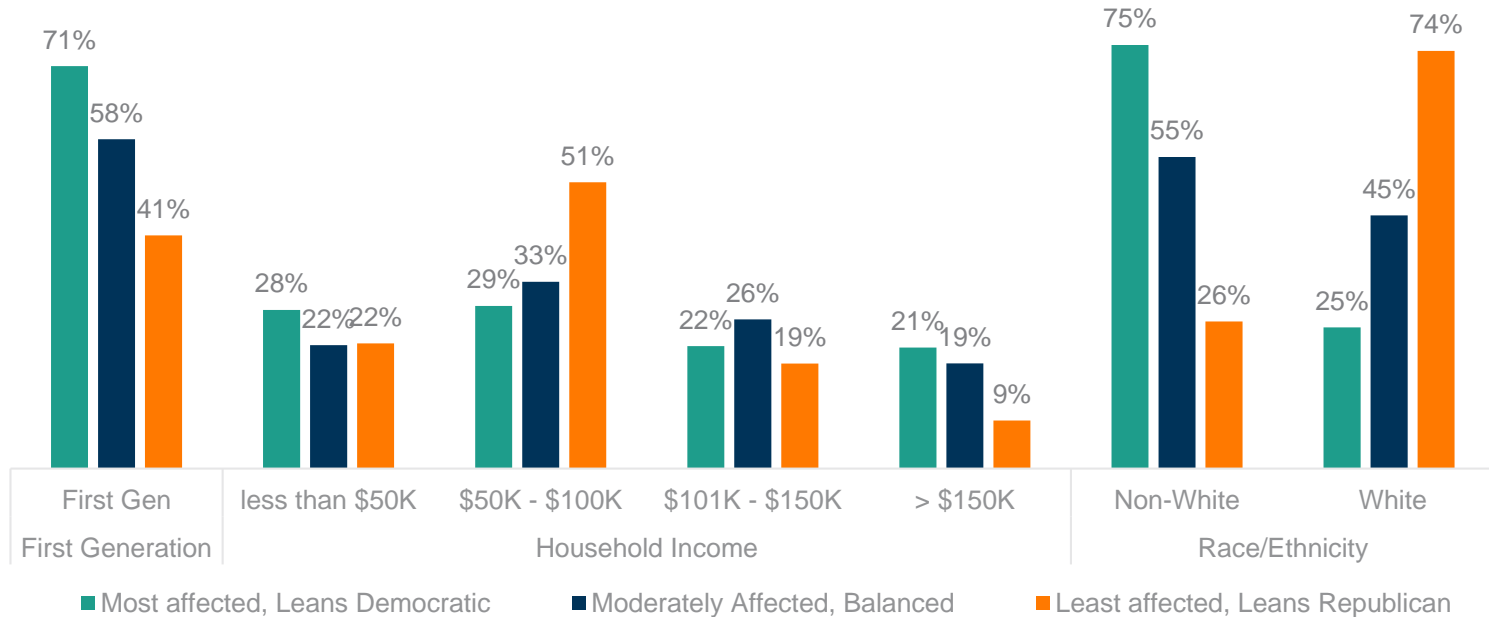
\*County-level voting percentage in the 2016 presidential election recoded to reflect whether the students community leans Republican, is relatively balanced, or leans Democratic.



# 6. Cont. – Knowing Who Your Students are Matters more than Ever

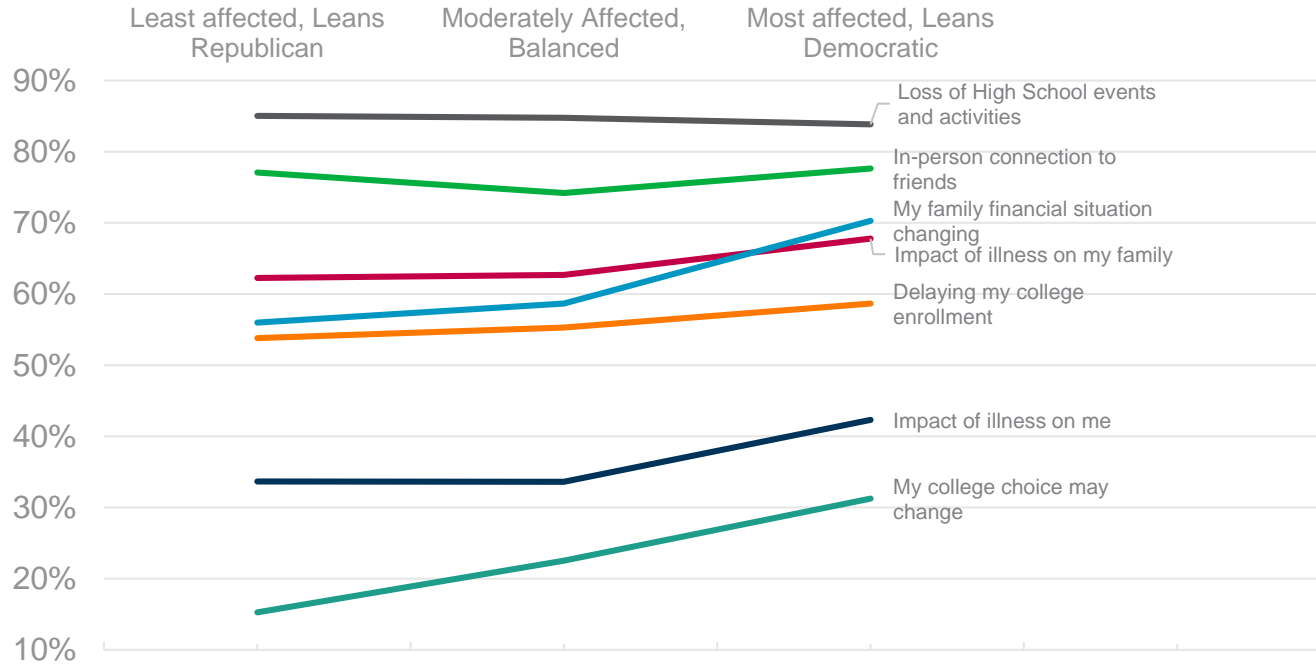
Across the geographic/socio-political spectrum, students demographics are quite different

Demographics across the COVID-19 Concern Spectrum



# 6. Cont. – High School Concerns Similar; Others Quite Different

**Worries about college choice, enrollment delays, finances, and the impact of the illness on family are highest among students in the most affected, democratic leaning counties**



\*Percent very and extremely concerned

## 7. Develop Financial Aid Strategies for Students who have Experienced Economic Loss

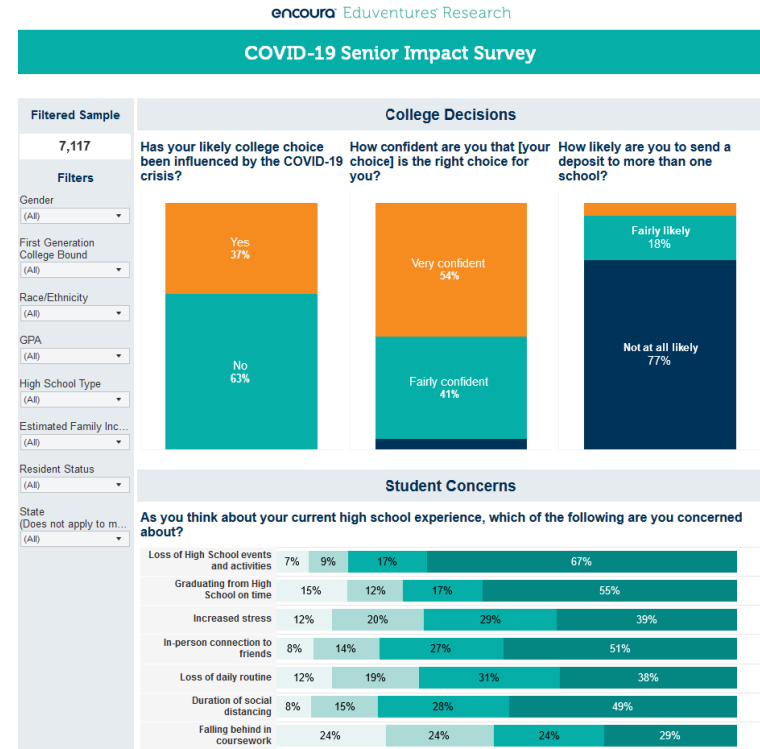
**Students who have already experienced job loss have a high expectation of delaying their college enrollment or changing their college choice**

- 34% of all respondents report some lost family income
- Among these students, 64% believe they may experience a delay in college enrollment
- Nearly a third are concerned they may change their choice (30%)
- If enrollment is delayed, they are largely (85%) unsure of how long the delay will be
- Income loss is a regional factor; 49% of students with lost income reside in heavily affected states
- These students are modestly more likely to be first-generation, low-income, and under-represented minority students

# Research will be available in Encoura Data Lab for Further Segmentation

## Great Outcomes Start with Data-Driven Decisions

- Gender
- Race/ethnicity
- First-generation status
- Estimated annual household income
- State
- Census division and region
- Regional severity of COVID-19
- High school GPA
- High school type
- Characteristics of college likely to attend



# Seven Ways You Can Help Students and Your Institution in the Coming Months

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Students who have already experienced job loss have a high expectation of delaying their college enrollment



# What will be Important Later?

- The COVID-19 crisis has no clear resolution in sight. Uncertainty remains high.
- The greatest certainty, however, is that families are experiencing, and will continue to experience, financial instability.
- The economic impact will likely last years and have as yet unknown effects on college enrollment.
- Institutions must be prepared for scenarios that include increased financial pressure on families.
- This means moving beyond the immediate communication and yield efforts into discussions of sustainable financial aid and pricing strategies that will assist families in the difficult time ahead.
- Our next opportunity to hear from students will be in our Admitted Student Research in June.
- We invite you to share your thoughts, questions, and concerns with us as we develop the research.

# Announcements



# ACT Free Resources



As a non-profit organization, ACT is committed to providing free digital learning and workforce resources to assist students, teachers, schools and workers impacted by COVID-19.

Whether you're a parent, educator, job-seeker, or higher education professional, we have the resources available to better support you during this difficult time.

Access here: [ACT Resources](#)

# Upcoming Webinar

encoura  
Eduventures<sup>®</sup> Research **Webinar**

## CHLOE 4: Navigating the Mainstream

April 23, 2020 | 2pm EST



### Presenters:

Richard Garrett,  
*Eduventures Chief Research Officer at ACT | NRCCUA*

Ronald Legon,  
*Executive Director Emeritus, Quality Matters*

In this presentation, we will discuss enrollment trends in an increasingly crowded market, the approach to online education by research universities and state flagships, and top priorities for Chief Online Officers over the next five years.



# Thank you.

**ANY QUESTIONS?**

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