

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

COVID -19 Response Student Survey

In response to the Spring 2020 COVID-19 pandemic and Howard University's subsequent transition to online delivery, the Office of Institutional Research and Assessment partnered with student, faculty, and staff to assess the student transition experience. Questions from the survey were organized into eight sections: health and safety, communication, learning environment, support, housing, mental health, general, and future plans.

After staying open for two weeks, 1,976 responses were recorded. This represented a 21.9% response rate. Of the respondents, 1,571 (83.88%) identified as undergraduates and 170 (9.08%) and 132 (7.05%) identified as graduate students and professional students, respectively. While all 13 colleges and schools were represented, 44.50% of respondents were from the College of Arts and Sciences.

Health and Safety

Students were given a series of statements that identified potential worries during this time. While over half of respondents claimed to worry often or very often about doing well in college, the health and well-being of their family and immediate community, and paying bills, most students never or almost never worried about having a safe and secure place to sleep or enough food to eat. Students reported having regular access to a reliable computer (90.65%), reliable Wi-Fi (80.98%), a reliable smartphone (95.77%), and regular access to their Bison email (95.03%).

Communication

Students reported receiving communication from the University most often through their Bison email and Twitter. Students also received information from GroupMe and word of mouth. Fifty-eight percent of students reported that the University kept them apprised of the timeliest information.

Learning Environment

Students were provided a series of statements related to learning during this transition. They were asked to rate their level of agreement along a seven-point Likert scale. According to students, 58.02% did not agree that they have been able to keep learning, 71.63% did not agree that the transition had been easy for them, 76.50% did not find online learning to be compatible with their learning style, and 74.86% reported that the online transition increased their workload. The things that most affected them while transitioning to online instruction were lack of instructor-teacher interaction and distractions at home. Time difference and challenges with technology were not highly reported impediments.

Almost 30% of students reported that their professor did not reach out by March 23, 2020 with instructions on how class would continue through the transition. Of these, only one quarter of reporting students (25.23%) reached out to their dean or department chair.

More than half of students found lectures (63.11%), class participation (61.32%), group work (67.28%), and student presentations (59.55%) to be very difficult or difficult in the new online



environment. Only 47% of students reported that exams were very difficult or difficult in the online environment; however, 36.56% of students reported that exams were neither difficult nor easy in the transitioned environment.

Regarding teaching tools, 32.70% of students reported that their instructors used Zoom meetings to engage with students. Another 19.53% used discussion boards and 20.65% used recorded lectures. Other methods included group work outside of class (12.75%), group work during class time (7.88%), and blog (2.5%). Over 40% of students suggested that these platforms were moderately reliable; however, reported reliability was skewed to “not reliable at all” (11.68%) and “slightly reliable” (26.58%).

When asked about instructor activities, 42.22% of students said that their instructor did something creative or exceptionally helpful during the transition. Students reported that 54.67% of their instructors did not accommodate students during this transition time. Students reported that for many of their classes there was no change in the momentum of the class, technology, engagement with students, response to emails, grading and giving feedback (37.95%), but 43.94% of students reported that it became worse or much worse. Only 18.12% reported that it became better or much better. Over 70% of students reported being concerned that the transition would negatively affect their grades.

Support

During the transition, 80% of students reported reaching out to their academic advisor. Almost 74% of them reported that they found their academic advisor helpful. Of the students who attended virtual tutoring or academic success workshops (11.42%) and the Career Center (9.23%), 57% and 54% of students found them helpful, respectively.

A quarter of students reached out to the Office of Financial Aid (24.35%), the Office of the Bursar (24.27%), and the Office of the Registrar (27.40%) during the transition. Asked about their helpfulness, students responded that all three were not helpful: the Office of Financial Aid (60.49%), the Office of the Registrar (52.15%), and the Office of the Bursar (54.85%). Students also found Veterans Services unhelpful (55.56%) though only 9 students reported using them. Counseling Services (66.39%), Disability Testing Services (61.90%), and University Libraries (82.35%) were reported as being helpful though far fewer students reported using them than did the three Enrollment Management units.

When asked about their experience communicating with staff, faculty advisers, faculty, department chairs, associate and assistant deans, and deans, students were largely neutral/average in response; staff was skewed negatively while all other university community members were skewed positively.

Housing

Of the 919 (68.12%) students who reported living on campus before March 1, 2020, almost half of them (48.09%) reported that they needed to return to campus to retrieve personal belongings. The majority (62.74%) reported that they would need 1-2 days to complete the round-trip travel, retrieve their belongings, return their keys, and officially check out of their hall assignment. Many students reported being very dissatisfied (33.11%) or dissatisfied (31.23%) with the



support they received from the Office of Residence Life and the University regarding their physical relocation off campus. Almost 30% were neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, and a small percentage of students were satisfied (5.98%) or very satisfied (0.78%). Twenty-five students (2.75%) were relocated somewhere in the area by the University, and over half of them reported being satisfied (44%) or very satisfied (8%) with their current living situation.

Off-campus students (n=429) largely (71.79%) remained at the same address they were at on March 1, 2020. Over 80% of those who did not stay at their address returned to their permanent address or hometown. The off-campus students (n=311) reported needing information on early lease termination (23.85%), eviction moratorium (11.35%), rental assistance programs (33.22%), and ways to address food insecurity (23.85%)

Mental Health

When asked about students' level of concern about the potential consequence of the spread of COVID-19, almost half (47.51%) reported being extremely concerned and another 34% reported being moderately concerned. Students reported managing their mental and emotional health through self-managing (39.48%), reliance on their network of friends and family (31.69%), and religious or spiritual counsel (16.77%).

General

Students (n=1332) were given the opportunity to rate the overall performance of the University in addressing their personal needs during this transition. While the majority of students rated the University's response as average (42.12%), the results were more negative than positive as 39.42% rated their response as terrible or poor and 18.47% rated their response as good or excellent. Three out of every four students who responded reported that Howard could have done things differently to prepare students for the transition.

Students remained negative in their assessment of Howard University's work to keep them safe during this transition as 42.61% of students reported that Howard University was not effective at all or only slightly effective in their work to keep students safe. Just under 20% of students reported that Howard University was very effective or extremely effective at this same task.

Future Plans

The majority of students who responded disagreed (19.11%) or strongly disagreed (33.66%) with the prospect of having more opportunities to engage in online learning in future semesters. Those who agreed that more opportunities should be available (23.27%) suggested that they should be available for both major and elective courses (80.59%). When asked if students would take an online class offered over the summer, 43.52% selected "definitely yes" or "probably yes," and 28.13% selected "definitely no" or "probably no."

Of the students who were not graduating, 73.49% reported that they would definitely return in the fall semester. Another 16.64% reported that they would probably return. If Howard University were fully online in the fall semester, 35.80% of reported that they would definitely return and 26.73% reported that they would probably return. Other students were unsure (18.34%) or not returning (19.12%) with only an online option.