Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Student Experience at Bakersfield College

Three student surveys were conducted in the first half of 2020 to help the BC community better understand the effects of the pandemic on the student experience, including the transition to online learning and challenges ranging from technology to basic needs and mental health.

Areas of Focus
- Challenges
  - Technological
  - Learning and Educational
  - Access to online support services
- Perception of BC’s response to the pandemic
- Financial hardships
- Food, housing and basic needs insecurity
- Mental health and emotional well-being
- Plans for Fall 2020

When the College moved to online instruction and services in Spring 2020, not everyone was ready to engage remotely.

- 36% No prior online experience prior to March 2020
- 36% No quiet place to study
- 32% No idea who to contact with technical issues
- 28% No printer
- 22% No webcam
“Not everyone has access to a stable internet speed. I live in a remote area where I do not have a fixed phone line. My wireless connection is good but sometimes drops signal. My worry is when I need to take a test. I typically take my test during my work hours on my lunch break” (March, 2020)

What is your experience like in the class(es) that have shifted to an online format?

- I am able to learn better than in the on-campus classroom format. March 2020: 8%, April 2020: 9%
- I am able to learn about the same as in the on-campus classroom format. March 2020: 33%, April 2020: 33%
- I am not able to learn as well as in the on-campus classroom format. March 2020: 59%, April 2020: 58%

Is your off-campus internet access adequate to fully participate in online classes?

- Definitely or probably yes: March 2020: 74%, April 2020: 73%
- Might or might not be: March 2020: 13%, April 2020: 13%
- Definitely or probably no: March 2020: 13%, April 2020: 14%

22% lack access to reliable internet

Type of Device

- Desktop: March 2020: 8%, April 2020: 11%
- Laptop: March 2020: 43%, April 2020: 51%
- Tablet/iPad: March 2020: 2%, April 2020: 4%
- Phone: March 2020: 14%, April 2020: 14%
- No response: March 2020: 19%, April 2020: 33%

16% no laptop
13% lack access to a reliable digital device
What Challenges do you face right now?

- Have to take care of family members while going to school: 49%
- Cannot concentrate on school: 48%
- Do not have a functional laptop: 16%
- Do not have time for school: 16%
- Do not have sufficient internet access: 10%

Instructor’s discomfort or unfamiliarity with technology was indicated as the No.1 technical challenge since the transition to online learning.

- Instructor's unfamiliarity with required technology: 36%
- Inadequate digital alternatives for face-to-face collaboration: 28%
- My lack of access to library resources: 26%
- Unclear instructor required technology/software: 25%
- My lack of access to reliable internet service: 22%
- My lack of access to specialized software: 21%
- My unfamiliarity with required technology: 19%
- My lack of access to reliable communication tools: 14%
- Instructor's lack of access to reliable internet, connection, devices & technology: 14%
- My lack of access to a reliable digital device: 13%

Home environment was the top issue that has challenged students in learning virtually, followed by difficulty focusing on online learning.

- Home environment harder to learn in: 59%
- Difficulty focusing on online instruction: 57%
- Personal preference for face-to-face learning: 54%
- Difficulty learning online: 48%
- Unclear expectations around course requirements: 44%
- Feeling isolated in an online learning environment: 41%
- Lack of personal motivation to complete coursework: 41%
- Lack of interaction with other students: 40%
- Personal conflicts with scheduled online classes: 39%
- Course activities that haven't translated online well: 34%
My access to BC’s services is not as good as before.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>March 2020</th>
<th>April 2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>36%</td>
<td>29%</td>
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</table>

% reporting a challenge in accessing the following student services (June 2020).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service Type</th>
<th>March 2020</th>
<th>April 2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Academic Counseling</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Financial Aid</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Library</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tutoring/Writing</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Health Services</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Specific programs</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Specific programs include EOPS/CARE, Veterans, Foster Youth, MESA, Learning Communities, Umoja, Puente, etc.)

The obstacles in accessing online support services are more social than technical. Students report difficulty concentrating in the home environment and scheduling conflicts as well as feeling isolated and lacking connections with classmates.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Obstacle Description</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Difficulty maintaining focus on online services</td>
<td>48%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal preference for face-to-face interaction</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home environment makes it harder to communicate</td>
<td>46%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeling isolated in an online environment</td>
<td>33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of interaction/connection with other students</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal conflicts with scheduled online services</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Services that cannot be fully delivered online</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal motivation/desire to access support online</td>
<td>29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclear how to access</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student support staff availability/responiveness</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

“I believe the lack of face to face interaction creates a disconnect and in general, it is more difficult to reach out for a counselor for a specific appointment. Having it be over the phone just complicates things.” (March 2020)
While students have experienced significant challenges during the transition to online instruction and services, they also rate positively the College’s handling of the pandemic and social distancing measures.

As of Spring 2020, 86% of the respondents say BC has adjusted well.

Overall, how well has BC adjusted to the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting need for social distancing?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>March 2020</th>
<th>April 2020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Not well at all</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Slightly well</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very well</td>
<td>35%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely well</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderately well</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

86% of students who agreed or strongly agreed with the following (June 2020):

- **81%**: My college has shown they care about me when making decisions in implementing change
- **85%**: My instructors have shown care and concern for me as they transition their courses online
- **78%**: My college has supported me in the transition to taking my classes online
- **81%**: My college has communicated information effectively to me regarding changes due to the pandemic

“For the spring semester I had really awesome teachers that made it comfortable and that they wanted us to succeed”

“I interact with more of my fellow students and got to see how well the president of my college transitioned so unexpectedly”

“BC has transitioned very smoothly and I think everyone should be proud of the staff, I'm very proud to have been at BC at this time as a student. Thank you!”

“When one of my professors had a hard time transitioning to online, students chimed in to help him and it made the class better”
“I am scared of the financial issues I am already facing as this develops. I am out of work, with no pay, no food and failing my classes”

“.being able to afford or attain food or necessities and being able to find them in stores, worried about how we can afford rent and bills because my fiancé’s work close down..”

We learned that many community college students statewide and across the nation are dealing with a lack of basic needs.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>BC</th>
<th>Central Valley</th>
<th>Statewide</th>
<th>National</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Survey period</td>
<td>June 2020</td>
<td>Fall 2018</td>
<td>Fall 2018</td>
<td>March 2020</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td># Institutions</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>57 CCs</td>
<td>36 CCs in 26 States</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Food Insecure</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>53%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Housing Insecure</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>60%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Homeless</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>18%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% Basic Needs Insecure</td>
<td>61%</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>58%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
One in five students applied for unemployment insurance or SNAP. 53% did not know about the emergency aid fund at BC or do not know how to apply for it.
How are students feeling?

“In the last week, how often have you been bothered by the following problems?”

% experiencing issue either “several days” or “over half of the days”

- 79% Feeling nervous, anxious or on edge
- 72% Not being able to stop or control worrying
- 80% Worrying too much about different things
- 77% Trouble relaxing
- 63% Being so restless that it is hard to sit still
- 78% Becoming easily annoyed or irritable
- 65% Feeling afraid as if something awful might happen

Despite their recent experience with online learning, most students planned to continue their studies with 75% definitely planning to enroll in more classes at BC with another 15% saying they might enroll at BC.

If courses remain online in fall 2020, how would you prefer they be offered?

Top 3 reasons for not re-enrolling in Fall 2020:

- 41% don’t want online classes
- 28% worry about getting COVID-19
- 26% cite family responsibilities

Given my current understanding of how safe it is, I am most likely to re-enroll at the college if: