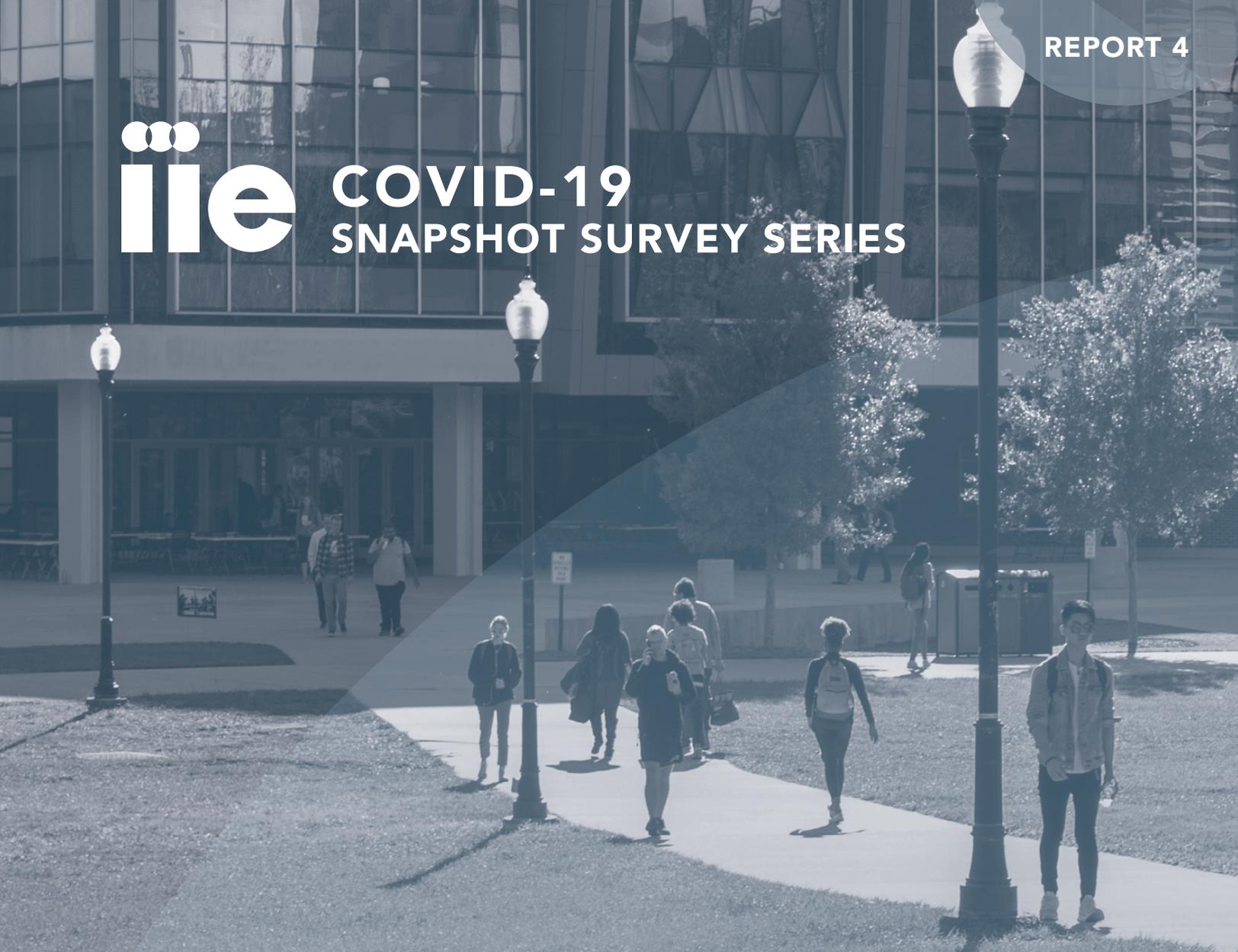




**COVID-19  
SNAPSHOT SURVEY SERIES**



**COVID-19 EFFECTS ON U.S.  
HIGHER EDUCATION CAMPUSES**

***Preparing for the Future: The Path Forward  
for International Educational Exchange***

**Mirka Martel, Ph.D. and Julie Baer  
June 2021**

# COVID-19 Effects on U.S. Higher Education Campuses

## *Preparing for the Future: The Path Forward for International Educational Exchange*

Mirka Martel, Ph.D. and Julie Baer

June 2021

### COVID-19 Snapshot Survey Series

The Institute of International Education (IIE) is studying the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on international educational exchange at U.S. higher education institutions. Our aim in this series is to provide more information about the effects that COVID-19 has had on international student mobility and the measures U.S. higher education institutions are taking to support international students and U.S. students planning to study abroad.

#### *Report 1: Academic Student Mobility to and from Mainland China*

The first report in the series focuses on the effects of COVID-19 on academic student mobility to and from China.

#### *Report 2: From Emergency Response to Planning for Future Student Mobility*

The second report takes a broader look at COVID-19 realities on U.S. campuses in spring 2020 and institutional adjustments to plan for student exchange in summer and fall 2020.

#### *Report 3: New Realities for Global Student Mobility in Summer and Fall 2020*

The third report analyzes institutional adjustments to instruction in summer 2020 and plans for fall 2020, affecting inbound and outbound options for student exchange.

#### *Report 4: Preparing for the Future: The Path Forward for International Educational Exchange*

The fourth report analyzes the international education field one year later and highlights how COVID-19 continues to affect international student enrollment and U.S. study abroad for the 2021/22 academic year.

To download these reports, visit IIE's COVID-19 page (<https://www.iie.org/Connect/COVID-19>).

## Introduction

Since February 2020, the Institute of International Education (IIE) has mapped the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on international educational exchange to and from the United States. We began this series with a report on student mobility to and from China in February 2020. However, as COVID-19 became a global pandemic, we expanded the series with two additional reports in June and August 2020 to map the effects of COVID-19 on international students studying at U.S. higher education institutions and U.S. students studying abroad. In addition, the *Open Doors® 2020 Report on International Education Exchange and Fall 2020 International Student Enrollment Snapshot* shed further light on the impact of the pandemic on academic mobility and exchange.<sup>i</sup>

We release this report more than a year later with a cautiously optimistic outlook on international educational exchange. With vaccination rates on the rise in the United States, we note concerted efforts by U.S. higher education institutions to reopen their campuses and encourage all students, including international students, to return to in-person study.<sup>ii</sup> At the same time, variable vaccination rates worldwide and the recent outbreaks in India, Latin America, and other locations remind us that institutions will continue to grapple with COVID-19 in promoting a return to in-person study for international students from those regions.<sup>iii</sup> While institutions are beginning to restart in-person study abroad opportunities for U.S. students, colleges and universities are taking a cautious approach given the uncertainties of global travel at this point in time.

The three sections of the report present data on U.S. higher education institutions and the effects of COVID-19 on (1) international students in spring and fall 2021, (2) recruitment of future international students, and (3) U.S. study abroad. In addition, we include a special section at the end of the report highlighting institutions' lessons learned during COVID-19 that will be retained moving forward to support international academic mobility.

## Survey Respondent Institutions

IIE administered the fourth survey to U.S. higher education institutions from April 15 to May 5, 2021. We sent the survey to the *IIE Network* (a membership-based community of over 1,300 higher education institutions and other organizations in the United States and abroad) and respondents of the *Open Doors 2020 Report on International Educational Exchange*.<sup>iv</sup> 414 institutions completed the survey. The majority of these colleges and universities (95%) also reported to the most recent *Open Doors* report. The institutions represent 44% of all international students at U.S. institutions in 2019/20 and U.S. study abroad students in 2018/19.

Figure 1. Institutional Sector

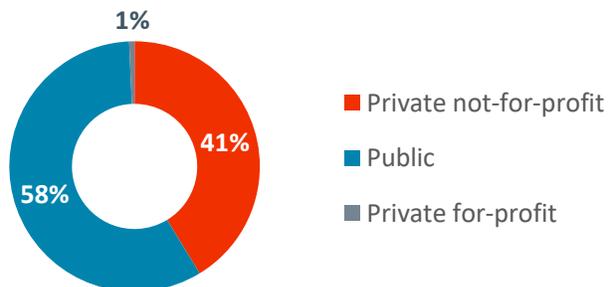
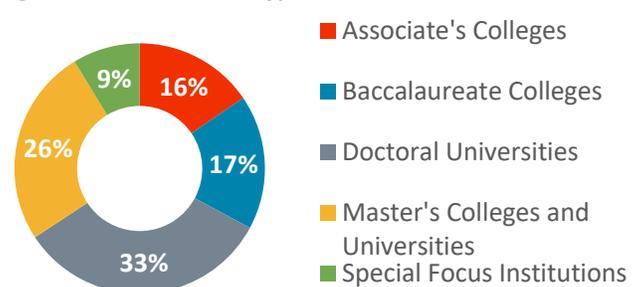


Figure 2. Institutional Type



Note: Percent distribution may not total 100.0 due to rounding

## Key Findings

### A Return to In-Person Learning for International Students

- *Spring 2021*: Over half of institutions (52%) noted that most of their international students attended classes in person at some point during the semester in spring 2021.
- *Fall 2021*: For all students on campus, the vast majority of institutions (86%) are planning some type of in-person study in fall 2021, and none of the reporting institutions intend to offer virtual instruction only. Mirroring this finding, 90% of institutions plan to offer in-person study to international students.

### International Student Applications are Up

- 43% of institutions report an increase in their international student applications for the 2021/22 academic year, almost double the increase reported by institutions a year ago.
- International student applications vary by institutional type. Many doctoral universities noted application increases (59%), while a majority of community colleges reported declines (58%).

### International Student Recruitment Remains a Priority

- Most U.S. higher education institutions (77%) reported funding outreach and recruitment of international students at the same levels or higher than previously.
- Priorities for outreach to international students continue, with institutions focusing on online recruitment events (73%), working with current international students (68%), and social media (65%).

### Vaccination Protocols are Still in Development

- More than half of institutions (64%) plan to *provide* COVID-19 vaccines to students, faculty, and staff on campus, including international students.
- Approximately 45% do not plan to *require* a vaccine before students arrive on campus. Only 14% of institutions have a requirement in place.
- Most colleges and universities (55%) are still deliberating whether to require COVID-19 vaccinations for students pursuing in-person study abroad.

### Optimism in Study Abroad

- Approximately 50% of institutions anticipate an increase or stabilization in study abroad numbers in the 2021/22 academic year. This is a significant improvement over last year when 97% of colleges and universities expected declines.

### In-Person Study Abroad Recovering

- Many institutions are taking a cautious approach and waiting to decide about future terms for study abroad due to the uncertainty of COVID-19 outbreaks (34% in fall 2021 and 43% in spring 2022). However, 49% of institutions, prioritizing safety, plan for in-person study abroad for fall 2021, which increases to 54% by spring 2022.

# I. International Students Studying at U.S. Institutions

52% of institutions indicated that the majority of their international students studied *in person* in spring 2021.

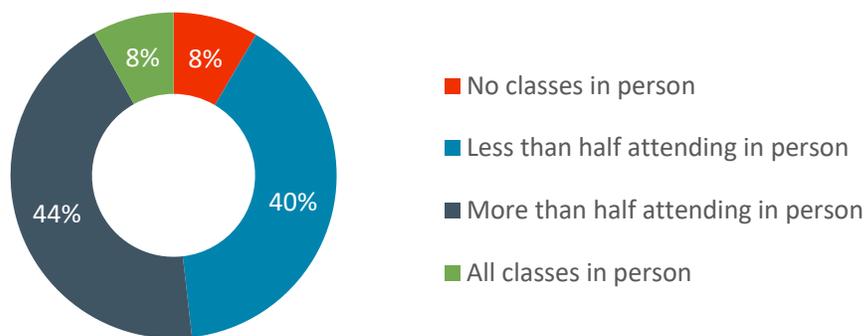
U.S. higher education institutions offered diverse options to international students in spring 2021, including in-person and online classes in the United States and abroad.

Looking ahead to fall, U.S. institutions are decidedly prioritizing an in-person approach, as 90% are planning to offer in person classes to new international students. This section analyzes the trends for international students enrolled in U.S. institutions in spring 2021 and institutional plans for fall 2021.

## International Students Attending Classes in Person in Spring 2021

Higher education institutions throughout the United States have continued to welcome international students to their campuses in the spring of 2021. More than half of all institutions noted that most of their international students (over 50%) attended classes in person at some point during the spring semester. However, within this group were notable differences by institutional type. For example, baccalaureate colleges were more likely to have the majority of students attending classes in person (64%), while only 37% of community colleges had most students enrolled in in-person coursework.

Figure 3. Enrolled International Students Attending Classes in Spring 2021



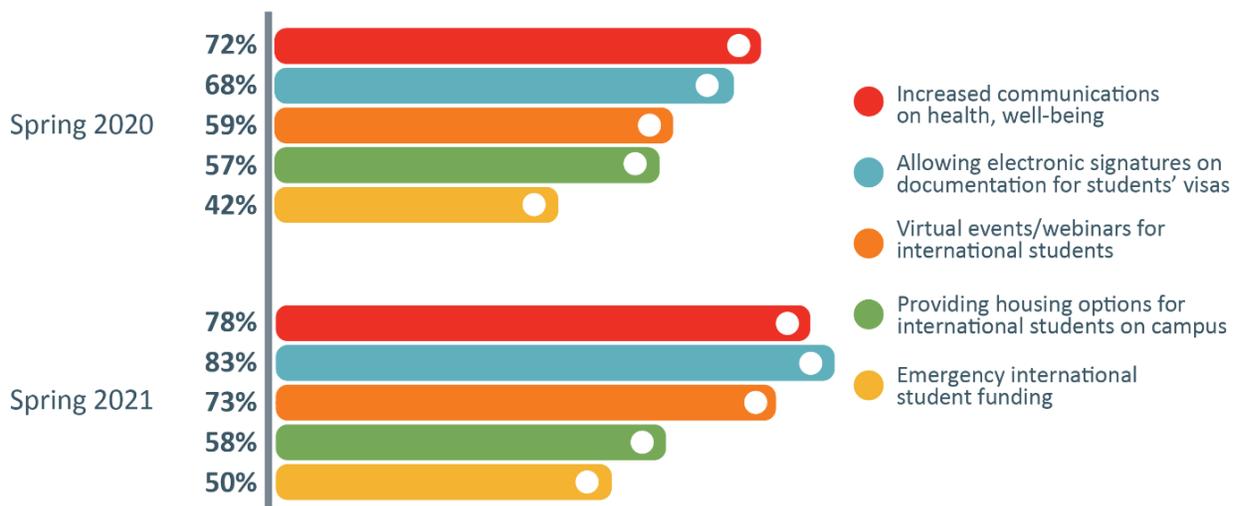
It is interesting to note that the vast majority of institutions (84%) reported international students enrolled in in-person and online classes, which indicates the flexibility that colleges and universities have provided to international students. Institutions that noted either all (8%) or no (8%) students attended classes in person were more likely to be smaller institutions with less than 1,000 students.

This finding largely reflects institutional decisions on the mode of study for all students, not just international students. While smaller institutions may make holistic decisions about solely virtual or online study, larger institutions are more likely to provide hybrid options to accommodate a larger student body spread across different locations.

## Institutional Support to International Students

U.S. institutions continued to provide a range of support to international students in spring 2021, with findings comparable to previous IIE COVID-19 Snapshot reports. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, IIE has been mapping institutional support to international students in the United States and abroad. That support is a testament to the unwavering commitment of U.S. institutions to international students throughout this time. A comparison of support provided in the past year shows that institutional support to international students not only continued this spring but expanded relative to last year. In fact, across every metric measured, the proportion of colleges and universities reporting supports increased.

Figure 4. Institutional Support to International Students in Spring 2020 and 2021

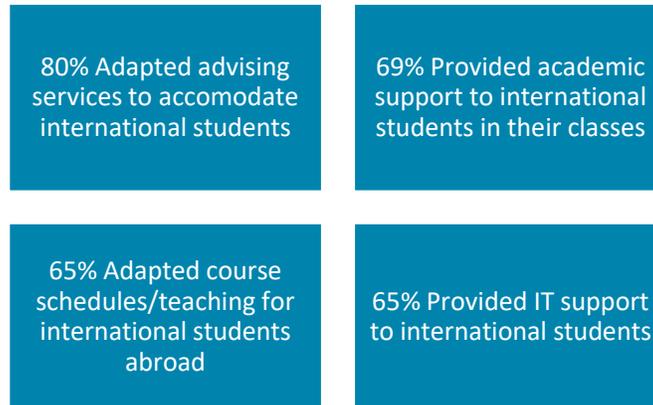


Over 70% of institutions have consistently reported that they increased communication to international students on health and well-being. Institutions reported using text messages, WhatsApp, and other social media to communicate with their international students. Some institutions noted a very individualized approach, regularly checking in on students to ensure their well-being. Institutions have also offered additional support for international students located in the United States. For example, one institution noted that it organized a free food drive-through for its international students. Financial support and advocacy for international students by institutions and organizations throughout the United States also continue. For example, IIE's Emergency Student Fund has provided funding to over 1,000 international students for their necessary expenses since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>v</sup>

Because 92% of institutions reported having international students enrolled online for at least one course, specific support for students studying virtually has been a priority. Online study can be challenging for students living abroad, who may have to attend classes during off-hours and learn in a remote environment, secluded from their peers and professors.<sup>vi</sup> As a result, institutions prioritized providing advising services and academic support to these students, such as providing IT support, adjusting course schedules, or offering asynchronous options for international students. For example, one institution noted offering specific lab hours for

international students to accommodate different international time zones. Another reported supporting students' IT needs, including options to access online learning for students living in China.

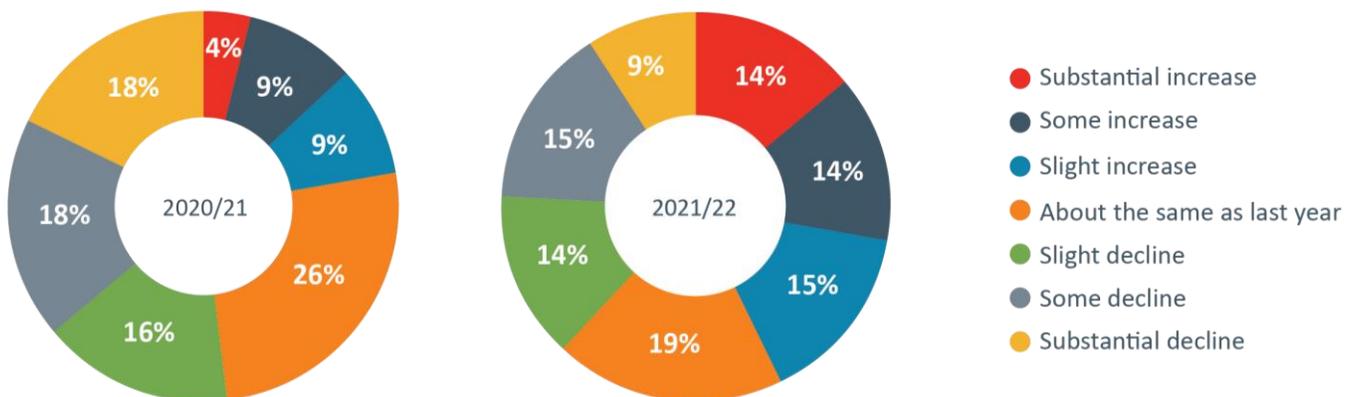
**Figure 5. Institutional Support to International Students Online**



### Applications and Enrollment of New International Students in Fall 2021

U.S. higher education institutions are motivated to reinvigorate student mobility after significant declines in 2020.<sup>vii</sup> Approximately 43% of responding institutions indicated an *increase* in their application numbers from 2020. This is in stark contrast to this time last year, when only 22% indicated growth. As of May 2020, over half (52%) of the reporting colleges and universities noted decreases in application numbers, whereas only 38% indicated a decline as of 2021. The remaining institutions noted similar numbers compared to last year. There were some differences by institutional type. For example, more than half of reporting doctoral universities (59%) noted an expected increase in applications. Conversely, most associate's colleges (58%) reported declining applications.

**Figure 6. International Student Applications — Academic Years 2020/21 – 2021/22**



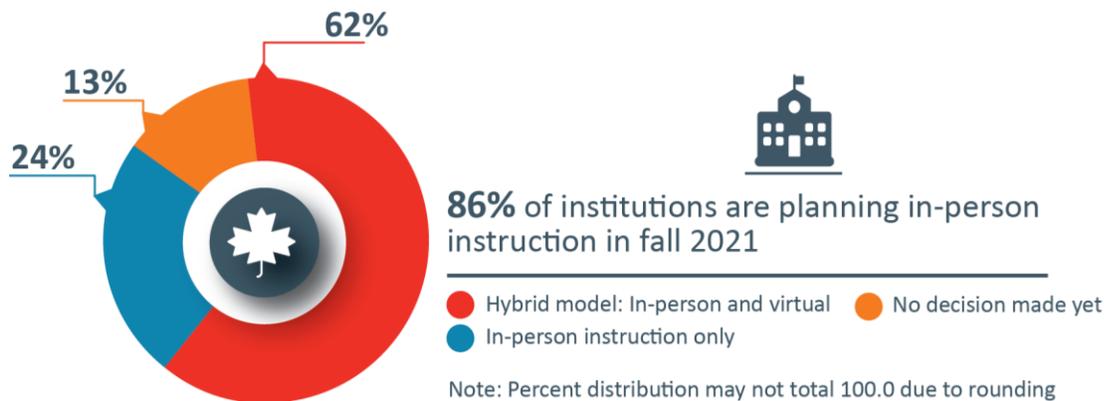
Note: Percent distribution may not total 100.0 due to rounding

With a swift rollout of vaccines in the United States and the ability for college-aged students to access vaccines, colleges and universities are looking ahead to increasing the number of international students, both on campus and participating in online study.

## Institutional Plans for Instruction in Fall 2021

For all students on campus, including both U.S. and international students, a majority of colleges and universities (86%) plan to offer in-person or hybrid instruction in fall 2021, with most institutions (62%) planning to offer hybrid instruction. Approximately one in four institutions (24%) have made the decision to offer in-person study only. Notably, *no reporting institutions* (0%) reported an intent to offer virtual instruction only. This marks a shift from fall 2020, when 88% of institutions offered a hybrid option of study, 11% had virtual instruction only, and only 2% had only in-person instruction.

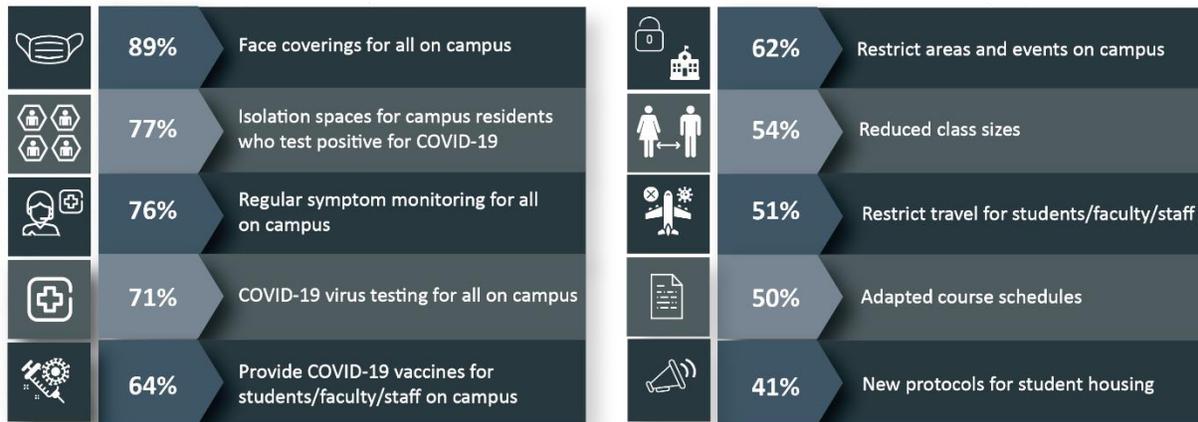
Figure 7. Mode of Instruction in Fall 2021



Many students and parents are wondering about vaccination requirements for fall 2021, especially because several prominent university systems have already noted their intent to offer or require student vaccinations.<sup>viii</sup> Our findings indicate that, at this time, approximately half of the institutions (45%) do not intend to require vaccinations for students, faculty, or staff before they come to campus for the semester. Those institutions that plan to resume in-person study were more likely to require vaccinations, though they were equally likely to have not made a final decision. Only 14% of institutions noted a current vaccine requirement. These findings are in line with the American Council on Education’s recent snapshot survey of college and university presidents that found approximately 12% of institutions will require the vaccine and 44% percent will not require the vaccine for students.<sup>ix</sup>

Although vaccines may not be a requirement, more than half (64%) of the reporting colleges and universities plan to offer COVID-19 vaccines for students, faculty, and staff on campus.

Figure 8. COVID-19 Safety Protocols on Campuses for Fall 2021



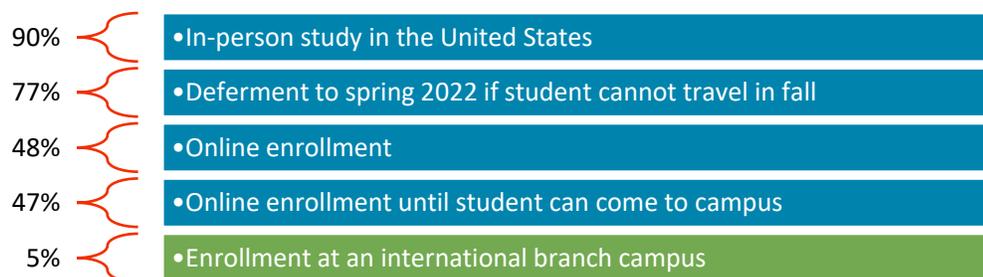
As most institutions plan to have some form of in-person instruction during the fall semester, colleges and universities are planning precautions to ensure the safety and well-being of everyone on campus.

### Options for Fall 2021 International Student Enrollment

Enrollment options for international students in fall 2021 show a decisive return to in-person study. Approximately 90% of institutions plan to offer international students in-person study in the United States. It is notable that the findings continue to mirror the overall trend for mode of study. The 90 percent of institutions that noted providing in-person study in the United States was comprised of 58 percent of colleges and universities indicating a hybrid option of in-person and online options, while 32 percent intend to provide only in-person options for international students.

For students who may not be able to travel to the United States due to visa delays or travel restrictions, colleges and universities continue to offer flexibility. Approximately 77% of institutions noted offering students deferment to spring 2022, and 47% noted that they would offer online enrollment to international students until they could come to campus in person. Very few colleges and universities (5%) noted options for international students to enroll in branch or partner campuses abroad for the fall 2021 term.

Figure 9. What will your institution offer to international students enrolled in fall 2021?



## II. Outreach and Recruitment of Future International Students

Over three quarters (77%) of institutions indicated the same or more financial support for outreach and recruitment of international students as in previous years.

U.S. institutions looking ahead to future semesters are considering how to reinvigorate international student mobility to their campuses. Although outreach and recruitment has been primarily virtual in the past year, the levels of activity have not slowed. This section outlines the various strategies that U.S. institutions employed to recruit international students to the United States. In looking at future prospects for recruitment, the section concludes with institutional perceptions about the long-term effects of COVID-19 on inbound student mobility.

### Institutions are Using Innovative and Diverse Resources to Recruit International Students

Most U.S. higher education institutions (77%) reported funding outreach and recruitment of international students at the same levels or higher than previously. This percentage is even higher than reported in the *Fall 2020 International Enrollment Snapshot*, indicating that commitment to recruit international students has strengthened since fall 2020. Furthermore, a smaller proportion of institutions (16%) reported that they were not actively recruiting international students than in fall 2020 (21%), another sign that recruitment efforts are increasing.

Institutions continue to use various resources for their recruitment needs, including hosting online recruitment events (73%), working with current international students in recruitment activities (68%), and leveraging social media (65%). Outreach to students through online events and social media has also allowed institutions to recruit globally and access student populations that traditionally are not included in recruitment travel. Current international students can often provide personal, authentic testimonials about how international students can succeed on their campus and in the United States. Furthermore, U.S. governmental resources are cited as valuable recruitment resources, with 55% of responding colleges and universities leveraging EducationUSA, the U.S. Department of State's network of over 430 international student advising centers in more than 175 countries and territories.<sup>x</sup>

Figure 10. Resources for Outreach and Recruitment of International Students



### III. U.S. Study Abroad

Although many summer 2021 study abroad programs were canceled, initial indicators point to a rebound of study abroad in the 2021/22 academic year, with nearly all institutions continuing to promote study abroad.

Study abroad offices have faced immense obstacles over the past year due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and global travel restrictions. However, there are reasons for optimism about the future of study abroad. This report showcases the resilience, adaptability, and innovation of study abroad offices and programs.

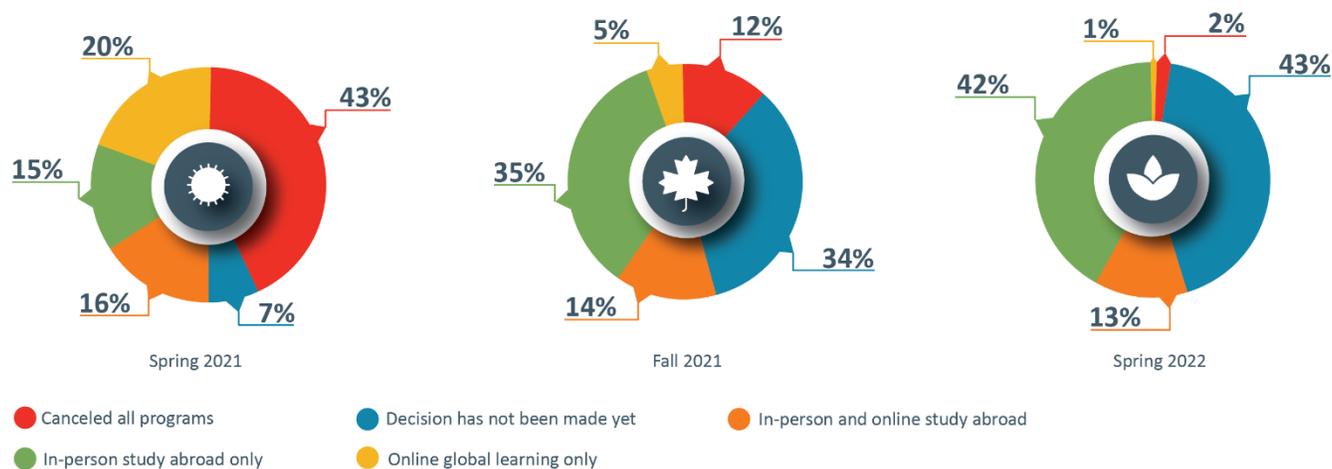
This section focuses on the study abroad programming anticipated for the 2021/22 academic year, the challenges of resuming study abroad, and how colleges and universities have adapted to the current landscape.

#### Looking Forward: The Return of In-person Study Abroad

While a large proportion of study abroad programs (43%) were canceled, just over half of the reporting institutions indicated offering some type of global education experience in summer 2021. Approximately 20% of institutions reported permitting just online global learning programs in summer 2021, and an additional 16% plan to offer both in-person and online study abroad programs.

Initial data indicates that in-person study abroad will resume during the forthcoming 2021/22 academic year, despite uncertainty due to the quickly changing policies and evolving COVID-19 outbreaks globally. Approximately 49% of institutions plan to allow in-person study abroad for fall 2021. This proportion increases to 54% for spring 2022. While some institutions are planning to offer both in-person and online global study abroad programs, it is notable that only 1% of institutions anticipated only offering online global learning programs by the spring of 2022. Furthermore, although 43% of institutions have yet to make a definitive decision about in-person study abroad for Spring 2021, only 2% have definitely canceled programming at this point in time.

Figure 11. Plans for Study Abroad Programs: Summer 2021 – Spring 2022



Note: Percent distribution may not total 100.0 due to rounding

## Overcoming Uncertainty and Ensuring Safety in Study Abroad

Institutions are weighing multiple complexities as they consider whether to offer study abroad programs in the 2021/22 academic year because colleges and universities want to ensure the safety and security of their students and faculty. Due to the evolving nature of the COVID-19 outbreak, colleges and universities have had to build robust risk management systems to navigate destination country COVID-19 outbreaks and travel restrictions. Additionally, many institutions are evaluating the feasibility for students to travel to destinations with long-established partnerships or the availability of programming from study abroad providers. As a result, when we look forward to the 2021/22 academic year, many institutions have not yet decided how study abroad will proceed in the fall of 2021 (34%) and spring of 2022 (43%).

As institutions formulate plans to resume in-person study abroad, many report taking into account a recent mid-April revision of the U.S. Department of State’s travel advisories to reflect a greater alignment to the risks of COVID-19 based on the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) assessments, with 80% of countries classified as Level 4: Do Not Travel at the time of this publication.<sup>xi</sup> In light of the travel advisory change, colleges and universities must weigh the risks and consider if travel should be permitted.

While some colleges and universities rely solely on the U.S. Department of State’s advisory ratings, other institutions are taking a case-by-case approach in offering programs for the 2021/22 academic year. For example, some institutions and study abroad organizations noted using multiple metrics to evaluate the safety of potential study abroad destinations, such as country vaccination rates, CDC advisories, U.S. Department of State advisories, World Health Organization data, Global Health Security Index assessment, Harvard Global Health Institute’s global risk assessments, Our World in Data daily positive test rates, and data from the Johns Hopkins Coronavirus Resource Center.<sup>xii</sup>

**Figure 12. Institutional Plans for COVID-19 Vaccinations for Study Abroad in Academic Year 2021/22**



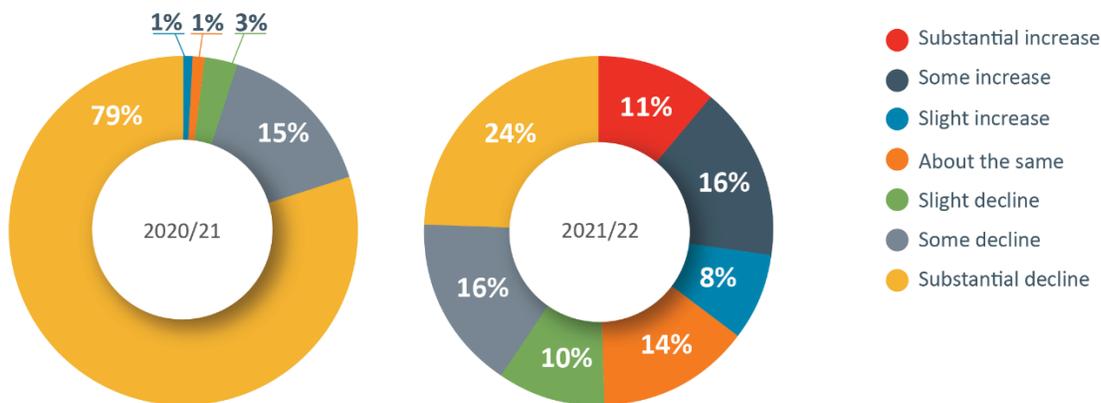
As colleges and universities prioritize making travel safe and secure, institutions are deliberating whether to require COVID-19 vaccinations for students pursuing in-person study abroad. To date, most colleges and universities (55%) noted that this measure is currently under consideration. However, as many institutions grapple with this policy for all students on campus, study abroad offices will likely not finalize a decision until an institutional policy is announced. Of the institutions that have made a decision, 18% indicated plans to require vaccinations for students participating in study abroad, and 27% noted that vaccination would not be a requirement. While there may be many approaches and differing institutional risk tolerances to offering study abroad in the 2021/22 academic year, colleges and universities remain committed to ensuring the health and safety of all individuals involved in study abroad.

## Study Abroad by the Numbers

As institutions assess plans to resume in-person study abroad, the level of student interest to participate in study abroad continues to be high. More than half of the responding colleges and universities (56%) noted that student interest in studying abroad increased or remained the same. This perceived level of increased student interest in study abroad was particularly high among the largest doctoral institutions.

In line with increasing student interest in study abroad, data from reporting institutions are beginning to note a rebound in study abroad from the prior year. Approximately 50% of institutions anticipated some level of increase or a stabilization in study abroad numbers in the 2021/22 academic year. This is a significant improvement over the prior year, when only 3% of colleges and universities expected numbers to increase or remain the same and 97% anticipated declines. This expected growth in study abroad participation was reported across all institutional types, sizes, and geographic regions.

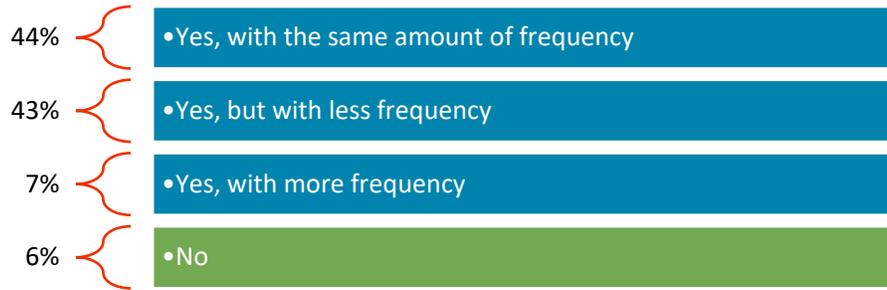
**Figure 13. Anticipated Study Abroad Numbers: Academic Years 2020/21 and 2021/22**



Note: Percent distribution may not total 100.0 due to rounding

As institutions look forward, colleges and universities have continued to promote study abroad. Nearly all responding institutions (94%) indicated they are currently promoting various study abroad opportunities to students. This represents an increase over the prior year, when 84% of institutional respondents indicated the continued promotion of future U.S. study abroad programs. The one exception is among community colleges, where only 63% were actively promoting study abroad for future terms.

Figure 14. Promoting Study Abroad for Future Semesters



## Study Abroad Destinations

One continuing discussion among institutions has been on how to diversify study abroad opportunities beyond traditional European destinations. Europe has long been the predominant destination for U.S. study abroad, with 56% of all study abroad for academic credit occurring in this one world region.<sup>xiii</sup> In recent years, institutions, sponsors of study abroad scholarships, and providers have made extensive efforts to diversify destinations and provide opportunities for students to have engaging learning experiences in other world regions.

However, when asked where colleges and universities intended to allow in-person study abroad in the 2021/22 academic year, the four most popular program destinations were the traditional European study abroad locations of the United Kingdom, Spain, Italy, and France. Among the top 15 program destinations listed, only five were outside of Europe: Japan, South Korea, Australia, Costa Rica, and New Zealand. Multiple factors influence the predominant destinations planned for study abroad in the 2021/22 academic year. For example, study abroad providers in less traditional destinations may have closed operations. In addition, destinations in less developed regions may not have robust health care facilities or high COVID-19 vaccination rates.<sup>xiv</sup> Moreover, the evolving nature of COVID-19 outbreaks globally may affect safety conditions in and travel restrictions on specific countries. For example, less than 10% of institutions noted plans to send students to India, likely due to the serious, ongoing COVID-19 outbreak.

## Expanding Study Abroad: Global Online Learning

While many higher education institutions throughout the United States have planned a return to in-person study abroad, an important shift is also occurring with the widespread adoption of global online learning. Like many other sectors, study abroad has adapted due to the COVID-19 pandemic, with institutions developing or expanding global online learning programs. More than half (57%) of the responding institutions indicated that they were in the process of expanding virtual or global online learning programs, and 37% indicated a plan to offer global online learning between summer 2020 and spring 2022.

Figure 16. Options for Global Online Learning



With the quick pivot to global online learning, colleges and universities took the opportunity to innovate and design new programs. Many indicated that they leveraged their network and existing partnerships by offering online programs or courses through study abroad providers (76%) or direct relationships with institutions (47%). In addition, a large proportion of institutions have also drawn upon collaborative project-based learning (46%), such as Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL).<sup>xv</sup>

Colleges and universities also facilitated opportunities for learning outside the classroom setting. This trend aligns with the in-person study abroad trend for institutions to offer non-credit opportunities for work, internships, and volunteer experiences. Approximately 71% of colleges and universities noted providing remote internships or group consulting projects for companies located abroad, and 28% indicated the development of community engagement or service-learning projects conducted online in collaboration with a community partner located outside the United States.

# What Have Institutions Learned?

The COVID-19 pandemic caused unprecedented change in international higher education, prompting U.S. institutions to rethink their processes and approaches. A positive outcome has been the lessons learned that institutions are leveraging moving forward to improve international educational exchange and prepare for future challenges.

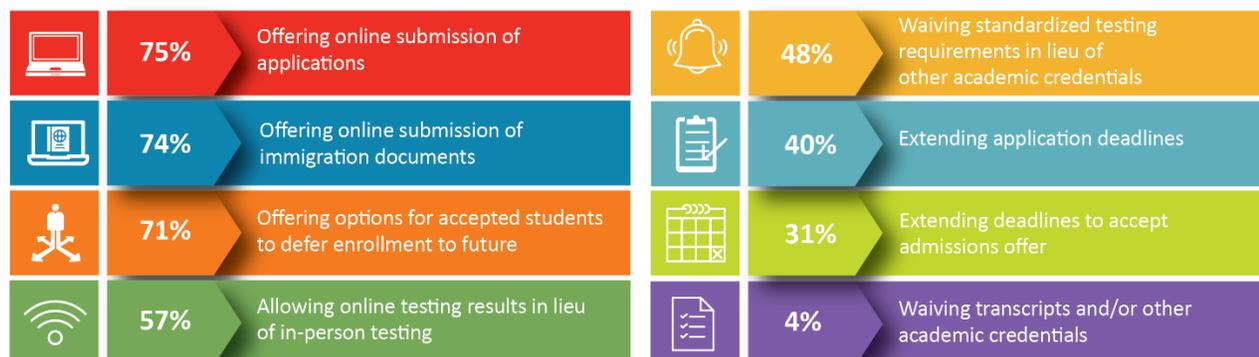
We asked institutions to reflect on the changes they experienced in the last year and to identify approaches, processes, or decisions that they will retain in their future work. Increasingly, we found that despite the challenges, the pandemic allowed for innovative change that will positively affect students' experiences.

## International Students

While the sections above have identified many ways that institutions supported international students in the pandemic, offering online learning and changing recruitment approaches, among others, many identified some of their greatest adaptations taking place within the admissions process for international students. The application and selection process was redefined during the COVID-19 pandemic, prompting institutions to innovate within many elements of the process. While some measures started out of necessity due to the pandemic, institutions noted that they will retain many of these adjustments moving forward. In some cases, the pandemic created an opportunity for institutions to develop a more streamlined approach, revise how they evaluate students, and increase communication with applicants.

- ❖ The majority of institutions indicated the development of updated processes for online submissions, both of applications (75%) and immigration documents (74%).
- ❖ More than half of institutions (57%) also noted allowing online testing instead of in-person testing moving forward.
- ❖ Finally, almost half of institutions (48%) reported waiving standardized testing requirements in place of other credentials. These findings were across institutional types. At the same time, there was a decidedly lower uptake of waving transcripts or other academic credentials.
- ❖ The need to offer deferrals to students in the selection process and extend both application deadlines and admissions offers has been great.

Figure 17. Flexibility in Application and Selection for International Students



It is too early to tell whether these changes will continue as we move into future academic years and as students are more readily able to travel. At the same time, these changes may indicate further changes to the application and selection timeline and process.

## Future of Managing Study Abroad

The past year brought tremendous challenges to study abroad offices and programs throughout the United States, with 40% of offices reporting staff reductions and 80% confirming budget cuts.<sup>xvi</sup> However, during this unprecedented year, many study abroad offices have taken the time to revisit policies and implement innovations that will have lasting impacts on the management of study abroad offices.

- ❖ Due to the emergency response that many institutions undertook to bring students home and reconfigure study abroad in 2020, many colleges and universities focused on updating documentation and policies to reflect lessons learned. As a result, approximately three-quarters of institutions developed or updated procedures for students related to study abroad (76%). This includes having documentation outlined for students regarding orientation, deadlines, withdrawal and refund guidelines, wellness screenings, and vaccination policies. Furthermore, just over half (52%) of reporting institutions noted providing students flexible cancellation policies or allowing students to defer study abroad acceptance to a future term.
- ❖ Institutions also reported taking this time to assess how their programs make U.S. students aware of study abroad opportunities. Approximately 68% of reporting colleges and universities increased their virtual outreach and promotion of study abroad, similar to trends in online outreach to international students.
- ❖ A critical area of focus within outreach has been to reach underrepresented students and increase their participation in study abroad. Nearly one-third of institutions reported working to expand the diversity of students who participate in study abroad programs. As colleges and universities resume study abroad, it is imperative that study abroad opportunities are accessible to all students.
- ❖ In addition to providing clear guidelines for students, colleges and universities updated their standard operating procedures related to evaluating the risks of study abroad. For example, most colleges and universities noted new or updated contingency plans with partners and providers, cancellation protocols, and the usage of risk management systems (73%) and policies for faculty-led programs (62%). Approximately 64% of institutions also reviewed the study abroad destinations offered in alignment with travel advisories or created simplified itineraries, and 22% took the opportunity to improve data collection and knowledge about their study abroad programs. As the field begins to reopen, resources and best practices, such as the newly updated *2021 Responsible Education Abroad: Best Practices for Health, Safety, and Security*, consider the lessons learned from this period.<sup>xvii</sup>

**Figure 18. Innovations for Study Abroad Management**



These lessons learned are only the beginning of the research needed to understand the long-term impacts of COVID-19 on international educational exchange in the United States. Will new priorities emerge for international education? How long will external factors related to COVID-19 persist and require further planning, consideration, and strategy? Will the advent of online learning during this time continue with students studying remotely? These outstanding questions are areas that U.S. institutions will continue to grapple with over the coming years as institutions learn, adapt, and plan for the future, and they are areas we will continue to research as the field adapts to a new normal during the continued COVID-19 pandemic and beyond. U.S. higher education institutions have been resilient and committed to internationalization throughout the COVID-19 pandemic and we remain optimistic as we continue on the path forward into the future.

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