




Huron produces regular **Findings Updates** summarizing relevant trends and headlines related to the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on higher education.


Featured Story

[A Slap in the Face: The Pandemic Disrupts Young Oil Careers](#)

- The oil and gas industry has attracted thousands of college graduates in recent years as shale drilling has boomed making the United States the world's largest producer of oil.
- Impacted severely by the pandemic, oil companies have laid off more than 100,000 employees and some have closed refineries and sought bankruptcy protection.
- The oil and gas industry employs about two million people compared to the combined 370,000 working in the growing wind and solar industries.
- *The New York Times* shares the stories of several students from universities in Texas with oil and gas career aspirations that fear their career paths may be upended by COVID-19.
- The most optimistic of students feel that the job industry will soon bounce back but recognize the applicant pool will only become more saturated with highly qualified professionals as the pandemic continues.
- The more pessimistic students have either switched career fields entirely or assume that job prospects will only dwindle as renewable energy erodes the oil and gas industry's market share and the world becomes more intent on solving global climate change.
- The article ultimately underscores the indirect impact that the COVID-19 pandemic is having on students due to headwinds within broader industries, which could have a ripple effect for higher education institutions and programs of study.

Latest Headlines

Trend Category	Trend Summary	Today's Headlines
 <p>Re-Opening Operations</p>	Universities continue to announce, revise, and execute operating plans that were disrupted by the pandemic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Appalachian State University and UNC-Charlotte have both delayed the start of in-person classes as COVID-19 cases in North Carolina rise. ▪ University of Alabama football fans flooded the streets after winning the National Championship, causing concern as classes are set to begin. ▪ The State of New York declared that in-person college instructors are now eligible for the COVID-19 vaccine.
 <p>Student & Enrollment Impact</p>	The pandemic has created unprecedented challenges for students, and in turn, enrollment risks for many institutions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ After a weekend concert, officials are investigating whether a bar and hundreds of Clemson University students who attended violated COVID-19 guidelines. ▪ Medical school applications rose this year as students are showing more interest in health-related fields in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.
 <p>Financial Impact</p>	Universities continue to use cuts, spending freezes, and other means to address funding gaps created by the pandemic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Over 75 percent of institutions in a recent survey noted that COVID-19 related expenses for the fall exceeded projected estimates. ▪ The State of Oregon will receive an estimated \$224 million in funds from the Higher Education Emergency Relief fund, but officials say it is not enough to fix the looming budget concerns of the state's institutions.

 <p>Research Impact</p>	<p>Universities continue to conduct research activities, including activities directly related to COVID-19 research.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Binghamton University received funding for three projects including telemental interventions for vulnerable families, a LED disinfection system to neutralize airborne SARS-CoV-2 particles, and a sensor to detect the virus on surfaces. ▪ A team at the University of Washington discovered that the spike protein of SARS-CoV-2 can cross the blood-barrier in the brain, which may explain the cognitive side effects of the virus.
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Today's Article Summaries

A. Re-Opening Operations

- [More North Carolina Universities Delay Spring Reopenings](#)
 - After UNC-Chapel Hill delayed the start of the spring semester earlier this month, Appalachian State University and UNC-Charlotte have also pushed back the start of in-person classes.
 - University leaders cited the growing number of cases in western North Carolina that will likely peak in 1-2 weeks and the strain on local hospitals as the cause for the late start.
 - In addition, Appalachian State pushed back its move-in date for on-campus students and UNC-Charlotte moved its spring break from late March to early February.
 - All UNC System schools will require a negative test for COVID-19 before students are permitted to return to campus housing.
- [Despite COVID-19 Warnings, Thousands of Alabama Fans Pack Streets after National Championship Win](#)
 - Prior to the National Championship game, both Tuscaloosa Mayor Walt Maddox and Police Chief Brent Blankley urged fans to adhere to state COVID-19 guidelines.
 - Despite the warnings, fans packed bars prior to the game and thousands of fans, many without masks, flooded the streets following the win.
 - This year's celebration was the largest following Alabama's championships in recent years despite Tuscaloosa County being among the counties with the highest number of positive cases in the state.
 - The United Campus Workers of Alabama fear the celebration may turn into a super-spreader event and are asking for hazardous-duty pay for workers in close contact with students, evidence of virus testing, and a two-week suspension of in-person classes.
 - As a result, the university will offer the option for faculty to teach remotely for two weeks and for students to attend in-person activities remotely.
- [In-person College Instructors Now Eligible for COVID-19 Vaccine in New York State](#)
 - As of January 11, New York entered Phase 1b of its COVID-19 vaccine rollout.
 - In-person college instructors are now among those eligible to receive the vaccine in the new phase.
 - Other educators are also included, such as P-12 faculty, staff, and contractors.

B. Student & Enrollment Impact

- [Weekend Concert at Clemson Bar Spurs Legal Action from City](#)
 - Hundreds of Clemson students, most of whom were unmasked, attended a concert inside at a popular college bar this past weekend.
 - Clemson Police Chief Jorge Campos said the "unlawful gathering" is under investigation, but no citations or tickets were issued on January 8.
 - The events came on the heels of Clemson's first week back to class, where the school is conducting 30 percent of classes in-person while another 20 percent have some form of in-person meetings.
 - University testing revealed 556 COVID-19 cases among students and employees between December 27 and January 9, according to the school's dashboard.
- [Applications Rise As Students Show More Interest in Health-related Education in the Wake of COVID-19.](#)

- According to a recent statement by the Association of American Medical Colleges, applications are up 18 percent this year compared to the average annual increase for total applications to medical schools of about 2.5 percent over the past two decades.
- Some colleges of medicine have seen increases above the national average, including Johns Hopkins (26 percent), Howard (30 percent), all four medical schools in the State University of New York system (at least 8.5 percent), and the University of Buffalo (40 percent).
- While some refer to the increase as the “Fauci effect,” after Dr. Anthony Fauci, others consider that the lack of gap year opportunities, which 60 percent of medical school matriculants take on average, has led prospective students to apply for the upcoming cohort.
- Applying to medical school is also less expensive this year as most interviews are virtual, meaning students do not have to miss work or travel.

C. Financial Impact

- [Pandemic's Fall Financial Toll Adds Up](#)
 - A survey conducted by the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities shows that 75 percent of respondents spent more money on COVID-19 related expenses this fall than planned.
 - Technology and related trainings were the most frequently mentioned additional COVID-19 expenses and 25 percent of respondents cited technology and training as their largest expenses.
 - A similar survey conducted by the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities demonstrates the wide disparity between COVID-19 related costs among institutions with some spending as much as \$52 million on testing while others spent as little as \$50,000.
 - In terms of lost revenue, the ALPU survey shows that auxiliary services were the most impacted with half of respondents losing between \$5 million and \$35 million and one institution losing as much as \$335 million compared to the prior year.
- [Oregon's Colleges and Universities Expect to Receive \\$224 Million in Relief Funding](#)
 - Oregon's Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC) estimates that through the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund, the state will receive \$224 million in funding comprised of \$102 million to public universities, \$97 million for community colleges, and \$25 million to private institutions.
 - Although the funds provide a boost, the HECC suggested that they will not cover all revenue losses as nearly all of the state's schools have seen declines in enrollment in addition to lost auxiliary revenues.
 - Revenues lost from the state's public universities alone are estimated to be north of \$320 million on top of \$82 million in additional COVID-19 related expenses.

D. Research Impact

- [Binghamton University awarded SUNY Prepare Innovation Grants to pursue COVID-19 research](#)
 - Three teams at Binghamton University received grant awards from the State University of New York to pursue COVID-19 research projects.
 - The first team is creating and assessing evidence-based intervention telemental health services for vulnerable children and families.
 - Another team is exploring the use of LED disinfection technology to neutralize airborne SARS-CoV-2 in closed spaces.
 - The final team is developing a rapid, low-cost, and versatile sensor to monitor SARS-CoV-2 on surfaces.
- [COVID-19 virus enters the brain, research strongly suggests](#)
 - Scientists from the University of Washington discovered the spike protein of SARS-CoV-2 (often depicted as the red arms of the virus) can cross the blood-brain barrier in mice.
 - The spike protein may cause inflammation that could correlate with COVID-19 cognitive symptoms such as brain fog and fatigue.
 - The team's experiments show the spike protein was transported faster in males than females, which could indicate that men have increased susceptibility to COVID-19.

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