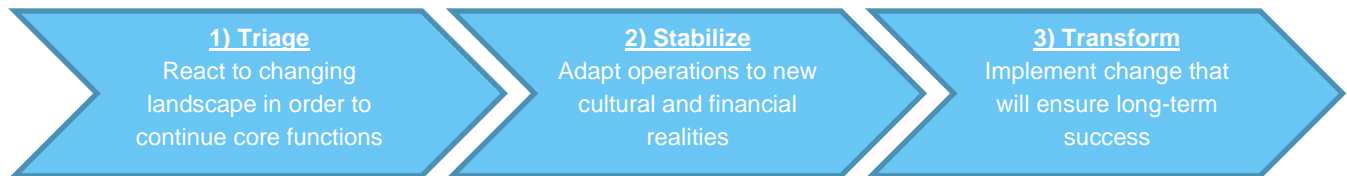


# Higher Ed COVID-19 Tracker

Findings Update – Wednesday, April 1st

Huron continues to aggregate and track industry trends and the “actions” taken by universities. Today’s *Tracker* includes:

## Latest Trends and Articles of Interest Links



<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Latest Trends</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Activity cancellations</b> continue to push further into the calendar year, including graduation ceremonies, in-person summer courses, and international programs.</li> <li>▪ As cancellations push into summer, some universities are beginning to <b>brace for further cancellations</b> and a reality where continued social distancing impacts fall instruction.</li> <li>▪ Some university <b>research labs</b> have converted into coronavirus test processing sites as other research initiatives have been put on pause.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Universities are announcing <b>refund decisions</b> for pre-paid room and board and <b>payroll management actions</b> such as hiring freezes.</li> <li>▪ <b>Budget deadlines</b> loom at many universities while any funding predictability is held up in a holding pattern. Universities are considering cost reduction strategies to balance budgets.</li> <li>▪ Universities are also considering widening their <b>admissions</b> standards and admit targets in the face of funding uncertainty, particularly as high school student testing and credential development becomes compromised.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Between ability to afford and other logistical uncertainties, student <b>enrollment</b> decisions could change in a drastic way. Students may elect cheaper alternatives, alternatives closer to home, or to defer college for a period of time.</li> <li>▪ As <b>online learning</b> becomes conflated with emergency remote instruction, the perception of online learning will likely require repair.</li> </ul>
<p style="writing-mode: vertical-rl; transform: rotate(180deg);">Articles of Interest</p>	<p>A. <a href="#">'Zoombombing'</a> attacks disrupt class and lead some universities to consider remote instruction alternatives.</p> <p>B. Medical Schools, including <a href="#">NYU</a>, <a href="#">Harvard</a>, <a href="#">Massachusetts</a>, and <a href="#">Duke</a>, prepare students to provide relief to healthcare system.</p>	<p>C. <a href="#">U. of Wisconsin-Madison</a> prepares for \$100M loss because of COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>D. Universities announce <a href="#">hiring freezes</a> for upcoming year.</p> <p>E. <a href="#">U. of North Carolina System</a> will change admissions requirements after coronavirus cancels SAT and ACT.</p>	<p>F. <a href="#">Stimulus payments</a> omit college students who can be claimed as someone else’s dependent.</p> <p>G. The <a href="#">backlash against remote learning</a> will take time to recover from but can lead to revised strategic thinking that improves the application of technology to online learning.</p>



## Articles of Interest Summaries

### TRIAGE: React to changing landscape in order to continue core activities

- A. ['Zoombombing' attacks disrupt class lead some universities to consider remote instruction alternatives.](#)
- Many universities have reported disruptions in remote instruction due to distractions generated by students, which have ranged from intentional to unintentional as well as from amusing to disturbing.
  - Professors must consider whether to continue traditional pedagogical methods with the set up – and potential misuse – of communication platforms or adapt to different modes of instruction.
- B. **Medical Schools, [NYU](#), [Harvard](#), [Massachusetts](#), and [Duke](#), prepare students to provide relief to healthcare system.**
- Some universities are fast-tracking the graduation of medical students and providing expedited licenses in order to provide relief to the healthcare system; however, appropriate oversight environments must be created for these students to contribute successfully.
  - The primary goal for using students is to relieve pressure from frontline health providers. Tasks include fielding regular, scheduled telephone calls with patients, translating vital information about the new coronavirus from English into other languages, and screening low-risk patients arriving at hospitals for routine, but necessary, procedures.

### STABILIZE: Respond and adapt to new cultural and financial realities

- C. [U. of Wisconsin-Madison prepares for \\$100M loss because of COVID-19 pandemic.](#)
- Chancellor Rebecca Blank said the \$100 million estimate represents how much the university will lose if life largely returns to normal by June, a timeline that is up in the air as scientific models continue to shift depending on the public's compliance with social distancing.
  - The figure represents about 3.2% of UW-Madison's \$3.1 billion budget. It's the equivalent of a 22% cut in state money for a single year.
  - The \$100 million estimate does not include reimbursement of tuition and fees — something Blank said Monday that the university will not offer despite some students calling on UW-Madison to do so.
- D. [Universities announce hiring freezes for upcoming year.](#)
- Brown and U. of Minnesota are among universities to announce hiring freezes and other measures to manage payroll costs.
  - Institutional leaders are trying to tap whatever levers they control as funding impact remains uncertain, including actions such as hiring freezes, suspension of bonuses, "one-off" pay changes and job reclassifications.
- E. [U. of North Carolina System will change admissions requirements after coronavirus cancels SAT and ACT.](#)
- For the next three years, universities are authorized to admit students on GPA alone; SAT or ACT testing will still be required but can be disregarded in the admissions process.
  - The system defended the measures by arguing that test cancellations can impact admissions for multiple years and may disproportionately impact low socioeconomic status students.

**Transform: Implement change that will ensure long-term success**

**F. Stimulus payments omit college students who can be claimed as someone else's dependent.**

- The economic-relief law signed by President Trump on Friday, March 30 provides \$1,200 to most adults and \$500 for children under age 17. The benefit phases out for individuals with income above \$75,000 and married couples with income above \$150,000. Young adults over the age of who are dependents of their parents – including many college students – will not receive stimulus funds.
- Lawmakers based this week's bill on similar payments made in 2008, which also excluded the same group of non-child dependents. The law gives people who have been claimed as dependents in the past an incentive to file their own separate tax returns to get \$1,200 if they are in fact independent.

**G. The backlash against remote learning will take time to recover from but can lead to revised strategic thinking about online learning (by Peter Stokes and Mark Johnson).**

- While some expected the broad move to remote instruction would be a catalyst for rapid online transformation in higher education, the authors predict the opposite – a backlash – to ensue due to lack of engagement in web conferencing platforms being used.
- Peter and Mark liken the current online experiment to early-gen versions of innovation, like the early automobile that resembled existing horse-drawn carriages. This represents applying current methodologies with new technology, or a “present-forward” thinking.
- For online learning to take hold, a “future-back” strategy – one that adapts methodologies to harness the full potential of technology – must be employed, and backlash to remote instruction may persist until this is realized.

## University Communication Tactics

Huron's COVID-19 Tracking Initiative has been monitoring announcements from over 150 universities in response to the COVID-19 crisis. While there are many similarities in the communication tactics and strategies employed, some universities have been able to communicate more quickly and through more diverse array of media to reach their constituents.

### Dedicated Websites

Universities have largely been communicating public announcements about the COVID-19 pandemic through written memos and postings on their websites. Most universities have created dedicated websites to post announcements, FAQs, and guidance to the community. While most of these websites focus on organizing the most recent announcements chronologically, some – like [UVA's COVID-19 website](#) – include sections for students, faculty, and staff to check for the up-to-date status of facilities and services. The [University of Wisconsin-Madison's COVID-19 website](#) organizes a cumulative list of relevant actions for each audience (e.g., undergraduate students, graduate students, faculty, staff) alongside the news releases. UW-Madison also illustrates how seriously it is taking the situation by suggesting individuals with questions email the Chancellor's office directly.

### Outreach Platforms

Most if not all universities communicate with their students and employees over email before public announcements are posted to their COVID-19 response websites. Some universities have leveraged social media platforms to communicate with their constituencies – primarily Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter – though messages on those platforms often point back to the universities' COVID-19 response websites and do not contain unique or new information.

### Videos

Several universities have leveraged live and recorded videos of leaders addressing their constituencies through platforms like YouTube, Facebook Live, and Instagram. Many of these messages have been well received by the community – especially those like the [message by the President of Creighton University](#) early in the crisis acknowledging and thanking the faculty and staff for adjusting to the university's COVID-19 response requirements, and the [message by the President of the University of Maryland, Baltimore County](#) thanking the community for their support and addressing student concerns head-on. The video of a [dance performed by the Dean of NYU's Tisch School of the Arts](#) in response to students' demands for tuition refunds was highlighted in the press and across social media for being tone deaf to students' situations and protests.

Less frequent, but arguably more effective, have been the long-form town halls that some university leaders have hosted to answer student questions. These town halls have typically lasted 50 – 60 minutes, and source questions from students in advance or live during the events. One example of a [successful event was held by the President of Cleveland State University](#) last week that directly addressed questions from students, applicants, faculty, and staff, and incorporated other leaders from across the University. While the President largely reinforced messages that were previously announced on the University's website, this town hall received 4,500 views (roughly one-quarter of the student body) and positive feedback from students and employees in the online message boards.

The universities that have been most successful at producing multimedia content in response to the COVID-19 crisis generally have longer histories of producing content in these forums. The President of Cleveland State University, for example, has hosted several town halls and addresses on the University's Facebook website over the past few years. It is clear that universities with established communication plans and strategies have been able to react to and communicate about this crisis more nimbly and aggressively. The President of Creighton University's message thanking faculty and staff for their support and flexibility was published three weeks ago – before some universities had even started announcing the telecommuting plans on their websites.

The following table includes a list of notable videos produced by university leaders over the past few weeks, including two main formats – brief messages of support, often by presidents or chancellors, and town halls, often led by a diverse panel of university leaders.

University	Speaker	Length	Date	Topic
<a href="#">Georgia Tech</a>	President	3:15	3/30	Message of gratitude and optimism for the campus and community
<a href="#">Clark University</a>	President	3:41	3/27	Positive messaging to students beginning classes online
<a href="#">Seton Hall University</a>	President	3:02	3/26	A message to students and parents aiming to lift up the community
<a href="#">Mississippi State University</a>	President	3:17	3/26	Message of support and gratitude, encouraging students
<a href="#">UT-Austin</a>	Commencement Speaker, Pres.	6:37	3/25	Announcing the postponement of the commencement with the speaker
<a href="#">University of South Florida</a>	No Speaker	1:50	3/25	A message of gratitude for the facilities and maintenance staff
<a href="#">UT-Knoxville</a>	Dean, Vice Provost	3:18	3/23	Message providing tips for first day of remote courses
<a href="#">New York University</a>	Dean	2:16	3/23	Dances to “Losing my Religion” in response to student demands for refunds
<a href="#">East Carolina University</a>	Interim Chancellor	3:36	3/21	Message to students to prevail and stay resilient through this pandemic
<a href="#">UM, Baltimore County</a>	President	6:08	3/19	Message to the community expressing gratitude and addressing concerns
<a href="#">Wesleyan University</a>	President	5:10	3/16	Message to students closing campus and transitioning to remote courses
<a href="#">Creighton University</a>	President	2:34	3/14	Thanks the faculty and staff for their commitment and support
<a href="#">Virginia Tech University</a>	VP for Student Affairs	1:58	3/13	Update to students regarding housing, dining, and transition to online classes
<b>Virtual Town Halls</b>				
<a href="#">Williams College</a>	President, other leaders	10:45	3/16	Answers student questions on financial aid, work study, and COVID-19
<a href="#">Washington State University</a>	President, other leaders	1:04:38	3/27	Answers student questions live on courses, refunds, and COVID-19
<a href="#">Cleveland State University</a>	President	51:09	3/26	Answers student questions on Facebook and thanks the faculty/staff
<a href="#">Coast Guard Academy</a>	Superintendent, other leaders	58:08	4/1	Hosted third leadership panel to respond to students’ questions
<a href="#">University of Connecticut</a>	President, other leaders	56:31	3/18	Discusses university updates on the COVID-19 situation