







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

Latest Trends and 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"> Notre Dame pushes back the start of spring classes by three weeks and cancels spring break. Beloit College (WI) sees low rates of infection on campus after having its students write the COVID-19 safety protocols for campus. The University of Wisconsin-Madison will resume in-person classes after a two-week hiatus caused by a spike in COVID-19 infections. All Power 5 conferences will play football this fall as the Pac-12 reverses its earlier decision to postpone sports until January. |
|  <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"> A new report from the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center shows a 2.5% dip among undergraduate enrollments. HBCUs are reporting lower COVID-19 infection rates than other universities and are seeing high compliance with social distancing. |
|  <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"> Brown University creates a five-step plan to combat a budget shortfall that could reach as high as \$165 million. The state of Virginia announces a plan to refinance bonds to provide debt service payment relief to higher education. The Ohio State University athletics department's plan to address its \$109 million deficit will affect virtually every employee through salary reductions, layoffs, or furloughs. |
|  <p>Research Impact</p> | Universities continue to ramp-up research activities, including activities directly related to COVID-19 research. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> North Carolina State University moves to Phase III-B in mid-September, increasing research workspace density and allotted personnel. University of Alabama will assist Johnson & Johnson to begin phase 3 of their COVID-19 vaccination trial that will recruit volunteers in the US and abroad. |
|  <p>Potential Transformation to Higher Ed</p> | The pandemic's economic and social impact could accelerate transformational change in higher education. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No update for today's newsletter. |
|  <p>Other Emerging Trends</p> | Universities continue to address emerging trends while operating through the pandemic. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The University of Connecticut creates virtual intern abroad program for students seeking internships in London and plans to add additional cities for the spring semester. |

Today's Article Summaries

A. Re-Opening Operations

- [Notre Dame Pushes Back Its Spring Semester Start Date Until February](#)
 - Notre Dame announced it will postpone the start of its spring semester by three weeks and reopen the campus for in-person classes on February 3rd.
 - As the fall semester ends before Thanksgiving, the break between semesters will be 10 weeks long.
 - During the extended recess, the university will offer student internships, group projects, virtual language tables, online courses, and other career development opportunities.
 - Father Jenkins, Notre Dame's president, pushed the semester start back as the winter months do not allow use of the outdoor spaces previously utilized to promote social distancing during the fall semester.
 - Notre Dame recently saw surges of COVID-19 cases, which caused a two-week suspension of in-person classes and the postponement of its next football game due to having 13 players in isolation.
- [Beloit College Sees Success with Students Planning COVID-19 Safety Protocols](#)
 - As Wisconsin Governor Tony Evers declared a new public health emergency due to recent upticks in cases in Wisconsin, Beloit has fared well in keeping the virus contained.
 - Beloit College enlisted 20 students to formulate guidelines for navigating life on campus during the pandemic.
 - The guidelines outline expectations for behavior in various situations such as hanging out in the dorms, attending a party, or going to class.
 - Beloit currently has 39 students in isolation or quarantine and only one new faculty or staff case in the last two weeks.
- [UW-Madison Lifts Quarantine and Prepares to Resume between 200 and 300 Courses In-Person](#)
 - After seeing cases rise over 2,000, UW-Madison issued a two-week suspension of campus activity that Chancellor Rebecca Blank says helped drive down the university's transmission rate.
 - After the suspension, the number of new daily positive cases dropped from a high of 385 in early September to just 32 on Wednesday.
 - Although UW-Madison will resume some in-person classes, the university is also encouraging students who do not need to live in the dorms to consider moving off campus. Since September 1st, the university has received 550 requests to cancel housing contracts.
 - University officials said that although most students are following safety protocols, 550 students and 11 student organizations are under investigation for public health violations, including 20 students under review for emergency suspension.
 - Dane County, UW-Madison's locale, claims that the increase in on-campus cases has led to a threefold increase in the local community. The county has called on the university to move all classes online.
- [Pac-12 Resumes Football, Basketball, and Winter Sports Seasons](#)
 - Based on Pac-12 COVID-19 Medical Advisory Committee recommendations, the conference has decided to resume football, basketball, and other winter sports in the coming weeks.
 - A 7-game football season will begin for teams that have local health approvals on November 6th, while men's and women's basketball will resume activities on November 25th, the official NCAA start date.
 - Fans will not be permitted to attend sporting events at least through December.
 - The conference has reached an agreement with Quidel Corporation to provide FDA-approved daily antigen testing in addition to PCR testing at least once per week.
 - The Pac-12 is the last Power 5 conference to resume athletics following the Big Ten's decision last week.

B. Student & Enrollment Impact

- [A First Look at Fall Enrollment Shows a 2.5 Percent Dip Among Undergraduates](#)
 - Undergraduate enrollment across all institutions has declined compared to last fall while graduate enrollment is up nearly 4 percent, with the largest growth in post-baccalaureate certificate programs.

- Community colleges have declined 7.5 percent, the largest decline by institution type.
- Though all demographic groups showed declines, the largest decline was among international students.
- Some large public institutions have actually reported enrollment growth, such as Louisiana State University which saw a 9% increase in its freshmen class.
- [HBCUs See Student Adherence to Safety Protocols and Are Reporting Lower Infection Rates](#)
 - Unlike many institutions, no HBCUs have been forced to close their campuses during the fall semester. Additionally, many HBCUs have experienced enrollment increases.
 - Total COVID-19 infections eclipsed 1,000 at several public North Carolina colleges last week even as some HBCUs in the state were still reporting numbers in the double digits.
 - Administrators believe the national environment has prompted students to want to return to a close-knit community and are motivated to take precautions to remain open. 80% of HBCU students surveyed indicated they preferred to return to campus for in-person instruction this fall.

C. Financial Impact

- [Brown's Current Year Fiscal Deficit Could Reach \\$165 million](#)
 - Senior leadership at Brown announced that the university's financial losses for the current fiscal year are estimated to fall between \$100 million and \$165 million due to increased costs and lost revenue related to COVID-19.
 - To combat the financial challenges, Brown will institute a five-pronged plan that includes:
 1. Reducing retirement fund contributions for non-unionized employees for estimated savings of \$20 million;
 2. Hiring freezes and early retirement programs, voluntary salary reductions, and staff reassignments for estimated savings of \$15 to \$20 million;
 3. A one-time withdrawal of \$15 to \$20 million from the endowment fund;
 4. Taking on debt with \$30 to \$40 million of the proceeds used to cover operating costs; and
 5. Reducing non-personnel operating expenses such as travel, events, and supplies for estimated savings of \$15 to \$20 million.
 - The university has continued to pay all employees whether they can work or not and hopes to avoid layoffs as the year progresses.
 - The increases in costs are mainly due to preventative measures related to COVID-19, while the lower revenues are a result of decreased tuition and housing revenues.
- [Virginia Governor Offers Relief to Public Colleges and Universities through Debt Refinancing Plan](#)
 - Virginia Governor Ralph Northam released a refinancing plan this week that is estimated to save Virginia public institutions more than \$300 million over the next two years.
 - Northam's plan refinances bonds issued by the Treasury Board of Virginia and the Virginia College Building Authority, which the institutions utilize for capital projects.
 - The plan, which would allow institutions to defer principal payments for two years, takes advantages of the state's AAA bond rating and current low interest rates.
 - Specifically, the governor's office estimates that the refinancing plan will save \$58 million at George Mason University, \$44 million at James Madison University, \$40 million at Virginia Tech, \$13 million at Virginia State, and \$344 thousand at the University of Virginia.
 - The plan has been well received, but university leaders say it is only one step on the road to recovery and will not fill all budget gaps.
- [Ohio State Athletic Department Announces Plan to Mitigate Projected \\$107 Million Deficit](#)
 - The most major reductions to the budget include \$6.1 million in cuts from sports operating budgets, \$4.0 million in administrative support expenses, \$3.4 in football game day expenses, and \$3.0 million each for non-conference game guarantees and facility operations.
 - Ohio State also plans to save \$7.0 million in personnel costs through furloughs, reductions in force, and salary reductions, which are expected to affect nearly every employee.
 - 25 positions will be eliminated, 47 staff will take salary reductions, and over 300 employees will be furloughed for as little as five or as many as 60 days.

- The Ohio State athletics department is one of very few departments nationwide that is 100 percent self-sufficient and does not rely on university funds, tax dollars, or student fees.

D. Research Impact

- [North Carolina State University: COVID-19 Research Continuity](#)
 - North Carolina State University started Phase III-B on September 14th.
 - Research workspaces can increase density from a minimum of 200 square feet to 150 square feet per occupant, with a maximum of 15 personnel in the workspace.
 - Phase III-B requires all research activities be approved by the university leadership.
- [Fourth large-scale COVID-19 vaccine trial begins in the United States](#)
 - The University of Alabama will help lead Johnson & Johnson's [phase 3 clinical trial](#) to evaluate a COVID-19 vaccine.
 - The trial will be funded by Janssen, National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, National Institutes of Health, the Biomedical Advanced Research and Development Authority, and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.
 - [The COVID-19 Prevention Network](#) has sites across the U.S. and abroad that will participate in the trial.
 - Scientists developed the vaccine utilizing the virus that causes the common cold, adenovirus, as a vector to induce neutralizing antibody responses.

E. Potential Transformation to Higher Education

- No updates for today's newsletter

F. Other Emerging Trends

- [The University of Connecticut Offers Study Abroad Virtual Internships in London](#)
 - This fall, UConn is offering students the opportunity to earn up to four course credits by interning abroad in London through a new study abroad virtual internship program.
 - The program, which is offered in both the fall and the spring, offers a 12-week internship for students of most majors to gain practical experience.
 - Students will work 20 hours per week on average during the course of the internship, but working hours are flexible to fit around classes and time zone differences.
 - The program will cost \$2,695 and is offered to non-UConn students as well pending approval from the student's home institution.

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