

Higher Ed COVID-19 Tracking Initiative

Findings Update – Monday, March 30th

As we begin our third week of COVID updates, Huron continues to identify the triage measures taken by universities in immediate response to the novel coronavirus pandemic and continues to track and discuss what the long-term implications will be for higher education.

Today's *Tracker* includes:

Updates and New Findings

Huron's findings are aligned to the three-phase framework laid out on Huron's COVID-19 Resource Center ([HERE](#)).



- A. [University Grad Students Step Up To Fill U.S. Coronavirus Testing Void](#)
- B. [Rutgers medical students will graduate early to fight coronavirus, university says](#)
- C. [Maine's public universities, community colleges sign deal to help in coronavirus response](#)
- D. [University of Pennsylvania researchers help develop rapid at-home COVID-19 test](#)
- E. [U of C to aid South Side amid outbreak](#)
- F. [N.J. college temporarily slashes tuition costs amid coronavirus outbreak](#)
- G. [Empty Benches at Empty Lab Tables](#)
- H. [Dartmouth releases statement regarding economic impact of COVID-19 on University finances](#)
- I. [UNC system changes admissions requirements due to outbreak](#)
- J. [Colleges extend decision deadline due to coronavirus as new students reconsider](#)
- K. [Will They Return?](#)

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

A. University Grad Students Step Up To Fill U.S. Coronavirus Testing Void

- [Academic science labs around the U.S. are rapidly gearing up to run coronavirus tests for patients in need](#). They're drawing resources from across campus: technology, chemicals and a formidable workforce — graduate students.
- Early efforts by the University of Washington were crucial in expanding patient testing in the Seattle area.
- Getting government approvals has been a lengthy task with federal and state requirements changing rapidly. The effort is relying on donations and other university funding to buy equipment and materials.

B. Rutgers medical students will graduate early to fight coronavirus, university says

- [Nearly 200 final-year Rutgers New Jersey Medical School students will graduate early](#) and be eligible to begin their residencies to help out state hospitals that are rapidly filling up as they treat patients afflicted with coronavirus.
- The students were matched to their residency locations March 20 and most of them will begin on July 1, school officials said. It will be up to the residency locations to determine if the students can begin early.
- The university announced earlier this week that it would issue refunds toward a portion of what students spent on room and board for the spring 2020 semester.

C. Maine's public universities, community colleges sign deal to help in coronavirus response

- [Both the University of Maine System and the Maine Community College System last week signed a memorandum of understanding with the Maine Emergency Management Agency \(MEMA\)](#). MEMA has been coordinating with these institutions on how to shift university and college resources to hospitals and communities as needs arise.
- Maine's higher learning institutions have masks, gloves and gowns it can give to healthcare providers that are facing shortages. They also can make university buildings available for quarantining patients or for use as overflow hospital rooms and can research how to manufacture materials like hand sanitizer and face masks that are in scarce supply worldwide.

D. University of Pennsylvania researchers help develop rapid at-home COVID-19 test

- [Researchers at the University of Pennsylvania are helping develop an at-home test](#) that would detect COVID-19 in less than an hour, without any special equipment.
- This test, called a nucleic acid test, detects the virus directly through its genetic material, and its developers say the results should be ready to interpret within an hour.
- The advantage of this technique is that it is designed to detect the virus as soon as it is moving through the body. By contrast, antibody tests take a few days, since they are measuring the immune system's response to the virus, not the virus itself.

E. The University of Chicago to aid South Side amid outbreak

- [Starting March 30, the university will put \\$1 million in direct funding and support toward feeding South Side residents](#) using its dining facilities to prepare meals and working with the Greater Chicago Food Depository to provide 225,000 meals over 10 weeks through June 12.

- The university is directing another \$1 million toward businesses and nonprofits in the neighborhoods. Specifically, it's making grants up to \$7,500 available to independently owned and operated businesses. In addition, businesses that have leases with the university will also be eligible for rent relief. The school's Polsky Exchange startup hub will also offer workshops and other services to small businesses.

F. New Jersey college temporarily slashes tuition costs amid coronavirus outbreak

- [Thomas Edison State University, a school of 17,200 students in Trenton, has slashed the cost per credit](#) by \$145 for in-state residents, while out-of-state students will see a \$35 reduction. These cuts are effective for the May, June and July terms.
- "We don't want students to lose their higher education momentum during this crisis," President Merodie A. Hancock said in a statement.

STABILIZE: Respond and adapt to new cultural and financial realities

G. Empty Benches at Empty Lab Tables

- [Many major research universities have halted all but essential research](#) in what amounts to an unprecedented stoppage of academic science in modern memory. Among the universities that have shut down all nonessential research operations are Harvard, Johns Hopkins and Yale Universities, as well as the Universities of Michigan and Pennsylvania, among others.
- The National Institutes of Health has said it will allow recipients of grants to charge for costs related to payment of salaries and benefits during periods in which research is not performed due to COVID-19 as long as the grantee's institution allows such payments.
- The National Science Foundation similarly announced this week that recipients of grants "are authorized to continue to charge salaries, stipends, and benefits to currently active NSF awards consistent with the recipients' policy of paying salaries (under unexpected or extraordinary circumstances) from all funding sources, Federal and non-Federal."
- However, the funding agency noted, "Recipients must not assume that supplemental funding will be available should the charging of such costs or other fees result in a shortage of funds to eventually carry out the project."
- The stimulus bill, which was signed by President Trump on Friday, included additional funding for COVID-19 related research, but did not include money associations had requested to help with costs related to shutting down and restarting labs.

H. Dartmouth releases statement regarding economic impact of COVID-19 on University finances

- [The statement](#) predicts an impact to Dartmouth's institution-wide finances with both immediate and long-term consequences.
 - It is expected that demand for financial aid will increase significantly over the next few months.
 - Declines in some key revenue streams are expected, including more than \$15 million in lost undergraduate room and board revenue for the spring term.
 - A decline in philanthropy is anticipated as donors face personal financial challenges and prepare for an uncertain future.
 - The impact to institutional investments has been significant with market losses of approximately 25% from the beginning of the fiscal year impacting immediate and long-term financial considerations.
- Further comments suggest reason for optimism indicating that Dartmouth is well-prepared to meet financial

challenges associated with the crisis and suggesting that “Our liquidity is strong, we have built up reserve funds to cushion the immediate impacts of a recession, and we have introduced greater rigor and discipline in our budgeting practices.”

- Despite steps taken to prepare for financial hardship, it was suggested that additional measures would be necessary. The statement indicated that “the magnitude of the financial shock will require us to take additional steps to meet the immediate financial challenges we are facing.”

TRANSFORM: Implement change that will ensure long-term success

I. UNC system changes admissions requirements due to outbreak

- [The University of North Carolina System is changing its admissions requirements](#) for the incoming freshman class because SAT and ACT tests have been halted by the coronavirus outbreak.
- Each of the 17 schools in the system can now choose to admit students with a minimum 2.5 weighted high school GPA or a combined SAT score of 1010 or an ACT score of 19.
- The proposed policy was scheduled to take effect in 2021 if approved, but the UNC Board of Governors voted by phone during a special meeting on Monday to expedite the process.

J. Colleges extend decision deadline due to coronavirus as new students reconsider

- [Up until now, National College Decision Day, the deadline for high school seniors to choose which college they will attend, has always been May 1](#). This year, however, the global coronavirus pandemic and extreme economic uncertainty have pushed many schools to extend the deadline until June 1.
- Heightened by fears of a sharp economic slowdown, more students and families are now more likely to choose local and less-expensive public schools rather than private universities far from home.
- The majority, or 70%, of all students will stay within 180 miles, or roughly three hours, of their family’s home to attend college, according to The Princeton Review; others may even defer admission until 2021.
- Additional considerations include the decision to attend school in a densely populated area and whether or not to live in dormitories as opposed to off-campus housing.
- School budgets are dependent on fall enrollments and pushing back decision day makes them more vulnerable to fluctuations in tuition revenue.
- With enrollment of international students expected to decline, as endowments are negatively impacted by market declines, and as state appropriations have declined over the past decade, institutions may increasingly shift their focus to domestic students as a source of tuition revenue. This may impact the ability for institutions to offer financial aid to students, a critical factor in the choice to attend a particular institution.

K. Will They Return?

- [Survey data suggests that enrollment yields are uncertain for many institutions across the country](#) as students and parents weigh decisions regarding admissions.
- The ability to visit a campus in person was indicated to be a major factor impacting the decision process by 90 percent of respondents in a survey of nearly 7,000 students and parents by Maguire Associates, with 16 percent of respondents indicating that they were considering options closer to home and 12 percent indicating that they were

delaying enrollment by a year or more (until spring or fall of 2021).

- The survey by Maguire Associates found that 20 percent strongly or somewhat agree that "College done online can be just as fulfilling and effective as on campus" and 44 percent of respondents sought a virtual tour of campus, suggesting a potential opportunity for institutions to increase the use of virtual instruction and to virtualize services typically performed in person.