



UNC GREENSBORO

Student Affairs

Introduction

In Spring 2021, the Division of Student Affairs conducted an assessment of students' perceptions of how they were feeling and performing related to the COVID-19 pandemic. The survey, in partnership with units across campus, was administered as two components.

One component represented a section of a Housing & Residence Life survey that typically is distributed every other year. The COVID-19 module of the survey contained a section on the socio-emotional impact and academic impact of the pandemic.

For commuter/online students, the survey had the same socio-emotional and academic impact questions with additional questions regarding financial impacts of the pandemic. In total, 28 questions were asked regarding COVID-19 impact as well as demographic questions. The question structure for the socio-emotional, academic impact, and financial questions mirrored existing surveys (NSSE, CECE, Healthy Minds, NCHA) to provide opportunities for data comparison.

The commuter/online survey was distributed on February 24 and remained open until March 9, with one reminder message sent to students. The survey was distributed to 14,822 undergraduate and graduate students with a 10% response rate. The residential survey was distributed on March 1 and closed on March 13. It was distributed to 3,517 students with a response rate of 29%.

The report is structured into the following sections: key findings, open-ended analysis, summary data tables, tables based on graduate/undergraduate status, residential/off campus, gender, and race. Additional data requests or presentation requests can be made to the Division of Student Affairs saf@uncg.edu.

Survey Demographics

Race Demographics

	Frequency	Percent
Native American, Alaskan Native, and Pacific Islander	14	0.6
Asian and Asian American	101	4.5
Black and African American	500	22.1
Latino/Latina/Latinx	160	7.1
Middle Eastern and Northern African	13	0.6
Multiracial	41	1.8
White	1236	54.6
Multiple Responses	97	4.3
Self-Describe	18	0.8
No Response	82	3.6
Total	2262	100

Gender Demographics

	Frequency	Percent
Cisgender Female	1613	72.5
Cisgender Male	426	19.1
Transgender	19	0.9
Other Gender Identity	111	5
I prefer not to respond	57	2.6
Total	2226	100

Classification

	Frequency	Percent
	21	0.9
First Year	438	19.4
Second Year	332	14.7
Third Year	461	20.4
Fourth Year	467	20.6
Graduate Student	543	24
Total	2262	100

Age

Age	Frequency	Percent
18-24	723	51.2
25-30	278	19.7
31-40	229	16.2
41+	182	12.9
Total	1412	100

Key Findings

- **Students are experiencing elevated levels of stress, anxiety, depression, and loneliness.**
 - 71.3% of respondents reported their stress/anxiety was higher now than before the pandemic.
 - 53.3% of respondents reported their current depression was higher than before the pandemic.
 - 56.1% of respondents report they were lonelier now compared to before the pandemic.
 - Graduate students when compared to undergraduates were more likely to report elevated levels of stress, anxiety, depression, and loneliness.**
 - 80.6% of respondents reported worrying about the health of loved ones as a result of the pandemic.
 - Graduate students when compared to undergraduates were also more likely to be concerned about loved ones.**
- **Student sense of belonging is lower than before the pandemic.**
 - 56.7% of respondents reported their sense of connection to UNCG had decreased.
 - 59.7% of respondents reported they felt like they belonged (strongly/agreed), compared to 71% of students in the Spring 2019 CECE Survey.
 - In this survey administration, men were less likely than the other gender identity groups to report they felt like they belong.**
- **Academic effects as a result of the pandemic.**
 - 59.3% of respondents reported the pandemic had affected their ability to concentrate.
 - 52.2% of respondents reported (strongly/agree) that they were able to maintain/make connections to support their academic and personal success.
 - 49.8% of respondents reported the pandemic had a negative impact on their academic performance.
 - Undergraduate students were significantly more likely than their graduate peers to report the impact of the pandemic on their academics.**

- 56.8% of respondents are concerned (strongly/agree) about their grades this semester.
 - Undergraduates compared to graduates and non-binary gender (transgender/other identities) identities compared to cisgender identities were more likely to be concerned about their grades.**
- 76.1% of respondents reported (strongly/agree) that faculty and staff were committed to their success. ‘
 - Graduate students were more likely than their undergraduate peers to report that faculty were committed to their success.**
- 56.2% of students reported a faculty or staff has checked in on them during the pandemic.
- **Financial impact as result of pandemic.**
 - 31.1% of respondents reported a parent/guardian experienced a job loss and 21.3% of respondents reported a significant other experienced a job loss as a result of the pandemic.
 - 51.1% of respondents reported (strongly/agree) that they have unmet financial needs.
 - 12% of respondents reported they had (strongly/agree) to skip meals because of lack of funds in this academic year.
 - 27.3% of commuting/online respondents experienced a change in housing plans.
 - 39.5% of respondents reported they received CARES Act funds.
 - Respondents in the survey who identified as white when compared to other racial categories were the least likely to report unmet financial needs.**
 - Undergraduates compared to graduate students and non-binary gender identities compared to cisgender identities were most likely to report they had unmet financial needs.**

** Statistical Significance .000 level

Open-Ended Question Analysis:

1. Survey participants were asked to describe how they used the Cares Act funding. The following represent the top 20 responses related to their use of these funds.



2. Students were also asked about how being a parent had impacted their ability to be a student. Almost exclusively, the discussions centered around time and the extra expectations of online/distance learning had on them. Parents expressed concern about the time it took to help their own children learn and that it impacted their own time to devote to their classes. A few examples for this type of response:
 - a. “Being a caregiver during this time is hard, due to the fact that I am helping my child learn (remote learning), while I am trying to work and attend school (plus the adding pressure of isolation and stress of COVID sickness in our house... 3 out of 4 of us have been sick).”
 - b. “Last semester was very challenging with my son being home the entire time. It was a struggle for him as well. He is back in person right now and does so much better with in person socialization and learning. It is also easier to not have to juggle his school while also taking care of an infant. My infant is still at home and creates some challenges, but my mom is helping with him.”
 - c. “Aside from working a full-time job, I have to come home and help my children with their remote learning before I can even think about mine.”

3. The final survey questions asked students to describe anything not captured in the survey that they would like for us to know. The responses to this question really captured the difficulties many students have experienced through the pandemic. 25% of respondents took the time to provide additional information about their context. A few themes emerged through these responses.

First, students articulated concerns that the current course structure did not appear to be responsive to their needs due to the pandemic. Respondents who expressed this concern stated there was a lack of flexibility and support for their socio-emotional health during the pandemic. This type of concern was more frequent than the next related concern about the amount of work (21% of open-ended responses).

- a. “There are adult students who are experiencing many losses during this period, and I have found that not all professors want to help. Even when I have shared my personal situation with my professor, it seems that she does not want to help, or to even offer suggestions for help. We are dealing with foreclosure, loss of personal space, loss of income, etc. To further complicate the already dire circumstances in which we find ourselves, we are not eligible for a stimulus check because of the fact that we are students. UNCG has not offered, or provided any help. I had to borrow the money to pay for my class because I am no longer eligible for financial aid. Please keep in mind that there are students who may not fit the "traditional" student mold.”
- b. “There is a lack of consideration for the students that work during this time to provide the money that is needed to attend this school. From a student's perspective it's gruesome how we are being treated as if nothing has changed but in fact everything has.”
- c. “The professors do not care what we are going through during this pandemic. I had a family member die and I reached out to one professor and he didn't care. This same professor is insisting on making groups meet during this time too. That is crazy!!!”

Related to concerns about responsiveness to the pandemic, students reported concerns about the amount of work given by professors (12% of open-ended responses). The concerns typically fit within two categories: concerns about the amount of work given during the pandemic or concerns that their courses were lower in quality compared to in-person courses.

- a. “Professors assign more work (especially more busy work) online compared to in person, even in graduate school. my in-person classes were much easier than keeping track of online work. most professors gave up on teaching altogether and uploaded just plain powerpoints for us to teach ourselves with discussion posts. i had a family member die of covid and was told i couldn't take any time off of my externship and when i did was guilt tripped about it and called on my personal phone to say i should make up the 3 days i missed while i was also taking care of my mom who has MS. i am a <redacted> graduate student and was shocked at the

way my professors reacted to the switch in may, summer classes, and spring. there was no empathy or adjustment for students (beyond increasing the work load).”

- b. “Zoom live class sessions are not productive or engaging. In my opinion, these classes should be asynchronous. One class lasts 2/ 3 hrs and another class is 1.5 hr. (same day, after the live sessions usually, I have to complete assignments for those classes) often little break time in between, I have to sit in front of my laptop from 8 am until 3 pm. Then again 8 pm to 10 to complete the asynchronous assignments. It would be more beneficial If the classes are self-paced and had a choice if I want to attend the live session. Most professors drop one letter grade if we don't attend. This really doesn't help me to learn.”

The most frequent concern was about personal stress and anxiety related in the last year. Students elaborated on their personal impact the pandemic has had on them. This theme was the most prevalent concern raised in the open-ended responses (34% of all responses).

- a. “Online/ hybrid learning during a national emergency is not effective. I am an A and B student and have remained so during the pandemic. However, my stress levels to maintain have also increased. So much has been expected of students during this crisis and it isn't fair to those who have suffered far worse than I have (academically and otherwise). Students shouldn't have to go through a condensed, QUICKER version of a semester with no breaks. That doesn't make any sense and only makes things worse on the student and the learning experience.”
- b. “Since the pandemic my work hours have increased and its been hard for me to keep up with school work, I'm unable to maintain my grades like i used to and i feel like the professors don't care that life is hard right now. I'm doing the best that I can taking online classes and working close to 50 hours a week right now but my grades are suffering. Professors are giving work that takes hours to complete and expecting it to be done by 11:59 pm on a certain night and sometimes its expected to be done that exact day.”
- c. “Suffer from emotional impacts of COVID after being out of work 10 weeks due to COVID complications.”
- d. “My stress and depression levels have made it extremely difficult to keep up with the fast paced online classes due to COVID.”

Graduate students also provided some unique concerns related to the pandemic. These centered around completing research and dissertations as well as financial stress. This responses theme represented 35% of the open-ended responses from graduate students.

- a. “I've completed all my course work and was barred from being in my lab space to complete my dissertation work during 2020. Please do better to support the 3600 graduate students doing incredible work and making UNCG look good.”
- b. “You might want to ask graduate students separate questions about the difficulty of losing networking opportunities, which is a major part of being a grad student.”
- c. “The cumulative stress of the pandemic along with existing stress resulted in my inability to complete my comprehensive exams last spring and taking incompletes

in two of my courses. As a result of that, I am now behind schedule in relation to graduation. That coupled with the financial reductions and associated inability to get substantive summer work, created an even larger financial barrier for me. I am extremely stressed day-to-day worrying about paying bills, more than a 1/4 of my monthly stipend is being taken out to cover my fees (I have a tuition waiver) and the remainder allows me to pay two bills. I am so beyond stressed because I don't have many opportunities for extra income and to stay on task with my academic work. Staying on task is hard enough with ADHD and my meds are expensive...and thus, it becomes a cycle of worry.”

Additionally, there was a theme where students expressed appreciation for the actions UNCG has taken in response to the pandemic. This theme in the open-ended data represented 5% of all responses.

- a. “The past year has been difficult but it has also been positive. It has revealed that there are people who care about their fellow Americans, who mobilized to help others. I am very grateful for all of the support and assistance I have received. I wished I could have done more to help others.”
- b. “The ability of teachers to transition to more online has been great.”
- c. “Thank you to the professors who have much more gracious, flexible and understanding as we all navigate these times.”
- d. “Oddly, I have felt a stronger connection to my program and UNCG as a whole since the pandemic started. This last year has helped me realize that I am in the right place, and I am so proud to be a Spartan.”

Conclusion:

The survey results provided valuable information regarding the impact of the pandemic on students at UNCG. Respondents to this survey provided more detailed information about the scope of its impact on their lives. It was no surprise that it has profoundly affected them in their personal and academic journeys.

Central to this impact was an increase in stress/anxiety and depression. In prior national surveys, UNCG students experience elevated moderate and significant levels (CCAPS-34) of depression and anxiety compared to our national peers. When asked about how their current depression/anxiety compared to pre-pandemic, over half reported an increase compared to before COVID.

In addition to the stress and anxiety, students reported that they were struggling making and/or maintaining relationships due to social isolation as a result of the pandemic. The stories told in open-ended responses provided a UNCG context for accounts shared through various forms of national media. Almost 90% of students reported a reduction in interactions with others in the past year.

Students provided additional context about their academic experiences in the pandemic. Many reported about the challenges they faced trying to manage online learning while dealing with other personal stressors. In open-ended comments, students provided details about how the pandemic has impacted their ability to be successful academically, and their stress was very present in the stories they told.

There were mixed responses about the students' perceptions of the adjustments to online/distance education. Students voiced either appreciation for their faculty/advisors or frustration about the lack of adaptation based on how much the pandemic affected their ability to engage in "normal" coursework.

The central themes of the survey results provide detailed information about the experiences of students. Moving forward, the university community will experience continued challenges related to the pandemic and its socio-emotional and academic impacts on students. It has fundamentally altered the college experience for many of our students.

Data Tables:

(Additional Demographic Tables Available in Excel Attachment)

Compared to before the pandemic, I would consider my current stress/anxiety:				
	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std. Deviation
Much less than before the pandemic	109	4.8	3.92	1.09
Less than before the pandemic	135	6		
About the same as before the pandemic	366	16.2		
Higher than before the pandemic	833	36.8		
Much higher than before the pandemic	780	34.5		
Subtotal	2223	98.3		
No Response	39	1.7		
Total	2262			

Compared to before the pandemic, I would consider my current depression:				
	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std. Deviation
Much less than before the pandemic	86	3.8	3.72	1.05
Less than before the pandemic	136	6		
About the same as before the pandemic	460	20.3		
Higher than before the pandemic	750	33.2		
Much higher than before the pandemic	454	20.1		
Subtotal	1886	83.4		
No Response	376	16.6		
Total	2262			

Compared to before the pandemic, I would consider my current loneliness				
	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std. Deviation
Much less than before the pandemic	101	4.5	3.73	1.09
Less than before the pandemic	150	6.6		
About the same as before the pandemic	515	22.8		
Higher than before the pandemic	697	30.8		
Much higher than before the pandemic	572	25.3		
Subtotal	2035	90		
No Response	227	10		
Total	2262			

Compared to before the pandemic, my current ability to concentrate is:				
	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std. Deviation
Much less than before the pandemic	598	26.4	2.3	1.1
Less than before the pandemic	745	32.9		
About the same as before the pandemic	628	27.8		
Higher than before the pandemic	210	9.3		
Much higher than before the pandemic	76	3.4		
Subtotal	2257	99.8		
No Response	5	0.2		
Total	2262			

Compared to before the pandemic, my current ability to sleep is:				
	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std. Deviation
Much less than before the pandemic	374	16.5	2.57	0.98
Less than before the pandemic	583	25.8		
About the same as before the pandemic	1010	44.7		
Higher than before the pandemic	217	9.6		
Much higher than before the pandemic	74	3.3		
Subtotal	2258	99.8		
No Response	4	0.2		
Total	2262			

I am worried about my health and/or the health of loved ones				
	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std. Deviation
Strongly Disagree	76	3.4	4.19	1.01
Somewhat Disagree	86	3.8		
Neither Agree nor disagree	274	12.1		
Somewhat agree	710	31.4		
Strongly Agree	1113	49.2		
Subtotal	2259	99.9		
No Response	3	0.1		
Total	2262			

I have experienced a decrease in social interactions as a result of the pandemic.				
	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std. Deviation
Strongly Disagree	63	2.8	4.49	0.94
Somewhat Disagree	66	2.9		
Neither Agree nor disagree	137	6.1		
Somewhat agree	438	19.4		
Strongly Agree	1553	68.7		
Subtotal	2257	99.8		
No Response	5	0.2		

Total	2262	
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Compared to before the pandemic, my sense of connection to UCG is:				
	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std. Deviation
Much less than before the pandemic	677	29.9	2.22	0.99
Less than before the pandemic	607	26.8		
About the same as before the pandemic	810	35.8		
Higher than before the pandemic	120	5.3		
Much higher than before the pandemic	38	1.7		
Subtotal	2252	99.6		
No Response	10	0.4		
Total	2262			

I have made and/or maintained connections with peers to help support my academic and personal success this academic year.				
	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std. Deviation
Strongly Disagree	284	12.6	3.26	1.24
Somewhat Disagree	357	15.8		
Neither Agree nor disagree	437	19.3		
Somewhat agree	854	37.8		
Strongly Agree	325	14.4		
Subtotal	2257	99.8		
No Response	5	0.2		
Total	2262			

I feel like I belong at UNCG.				
	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std. Deviation
Strongly Disagree	136	6	3.68	1.16
Somewhat Disagree	205	9.1		
Neither Agree nor disagree	564	24.9		
Somewhat agree	679	30		
Strongly Agree	671	29.7		
Subtotal	2255	99.7		
No Response	7	0.3		
Total	2262			

The shift to remote learning has negatively impacted my academic performance.				
	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std. Deviation
Strongly Disagree	341	15.1	3.32	1.35
Somewhat Disagree	250	11.1		
Neither Agree nor disagree	540	23.9		
Somewhat agree	587	26		
Strongly Agree	538	23.8		
Subtotal	2256	99.7		
No Response	6	0.3		
Total	2262			

I am taking classes:				
	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std. Deviation
In person	61	2.7	2.61	0.54
Mixed	759	33.6		
Online	1423	62.9		
Subtotal	2243	99.2		
No Response	19	0.8		
Total	2262			

I was able to complete at least 12 credit hours toward my degree in Fall 2020.				
	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std. Deviation
Unsure	189	8.4	2.64	0.63
No	430	19		
Yes	1630	72.1		
Subtotal	2249	99.4		
No Response	13	0.6		
Total	2262			

I feel like faculty and staff at UNCG are committed to my success.				
	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std. Deviation
Strongly Disagree	68	3	4.03	2.44
Somewhat Disagree	186	8.2		
Neither Agree nor disagree	282	12.5		
Somewhat agree	802	35.5		
Strongly Agree	918	40.6		
Subtotal	2256	99.7		
No Response	6	0.3		
Total	2262			

Faculty or staff have checked in on me during the pandemic.				
	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std. Deviation
Unsure	288	12.7	2.44	0.71
No	692	30.6		
Yes	1272	56.2		
Subtotal	2252	99.6		
No Response	10	0.4		
Total	2262			

I am concerned about my grades this semester.				
	Frequency	Percent	Mean	Std. Deviation
Strongly Disagree	306	13.5	3.45	1.36
Somewhat Disagree	271	12		
Neither Agree nor disagree	391	17.3		
Somewhat agree	685	30.3		
Strongly Agree	602	26.6		
Subtotal	2255	99.7		
No Response	7	0.3		
Total	2262			

About how many hours per week do you work (please include hours worked for paid jobs, internships, and assistantships)?		
	Frequency	Percent
0	285	12.6
1-5	60	2.7
6-10	91	4
11-15	87	3.8
16-20	199	8.8
21-25	138	6.1
26-30	107	4.7
Over 30	435	19.2
Subtotal	1402	62
No Response	860	38
Total	2262	

Since Fall 2020, did any of the following experience a job loss or reduction in hours? - Self		
	Frequency	Percent
No	546	24.1
Yes	269	11.9
Subtotal	815	36
No Response	1447	64
Total	2262	

Since Fall 2020, did any of the following experience a job loss or reduction in hours? - Parent/Guardian		
	Frequency	Percent
No Response	73	3.2
No	1486	65.7
Yes	703	31.1
Total	2262	

Since Fall 2020, did any of the following experience a job loss or reduction in hours? - Significant other		
	Frequency	Percent
No	1587	70.2
Yes	429	29.0
Subtotal	2016	89.2
No Response	246	10.9
Total	2262	

I have unmet financial needs.		
	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	325	14.4
Somewhat Disagree	224	9.9
Neither Agree nor disagree	542	24.0
Somewhat agree	632	27.9
Strongly Agree	509	22.5
Subtotal	2232	98.7
No Response	30	1.3
Total	2262	

I have had to skip meals because of lack of funds in this academic year.		
	Frequency	Percent
Strongly Disagree	1123	49.6
Somewhat Disagree	282	12.5
Neither Agree nor disagree	342	15.1
Somewhat agree	286	12.6
Strongly Agree	223	9.9
Subtotal	2256	99.7
No Response	6	0.3
Total	2262	

Did your housing plans change as a result of the pandemic?		
	Frequency	Percent
No	1036	45.8
Yes	390	17.2
Subtotal	1426	63.0
No Response	836	37.0
Total	2262	

Did you receive CARES Act funds?		
	Frequency	Percent
Unsure	214	9.5
No	647	28.6
Yes	562	24.8
Subtotal	1423	62.9
No Response	839	37.1
Total	2262	

Are you a parent or caregiver?		
	Frequency	Percent
No	1097	48.5

Yes	324	14.3
Subtotal	1421	62.8
No Response	841	37.2
Total	2262	