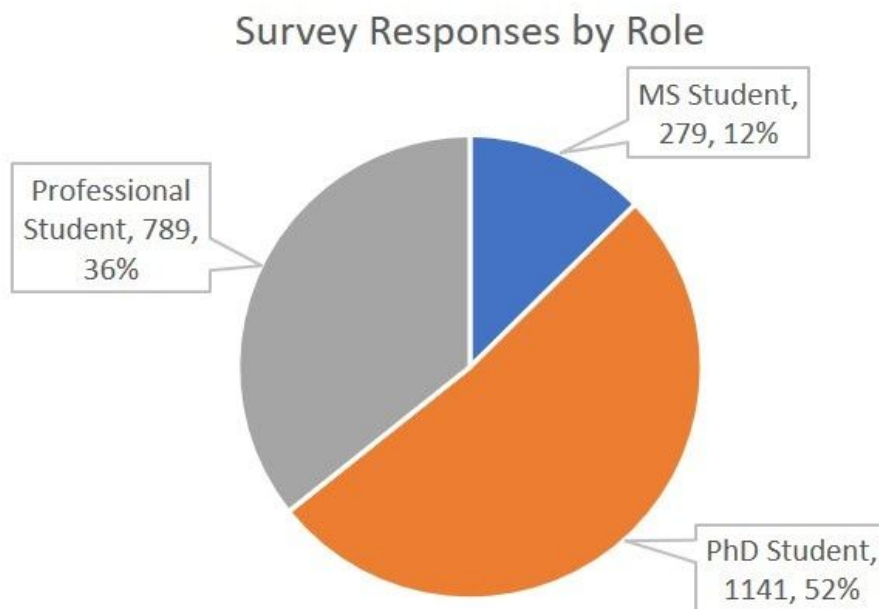## Cornell Graduate and Professional Student Reopening Survey Report

This survey was created and analyzed by a collective of graduate and professional students: Arielle Johnson, Becca Harrison, Jeff Pea, Kavya Krishnan, Martik Chatterjee, Alice Wolff, Tim Luttermoser, Stephanie Tepper, Cody Duell, Victoria Kasonde, Amy Zhang, Alison Bidjarano, Ryan Maloney, Ethan Call, Matthew Balch, and Mila Cantar. Jonathan Hughes assisted with qualitative analysis.
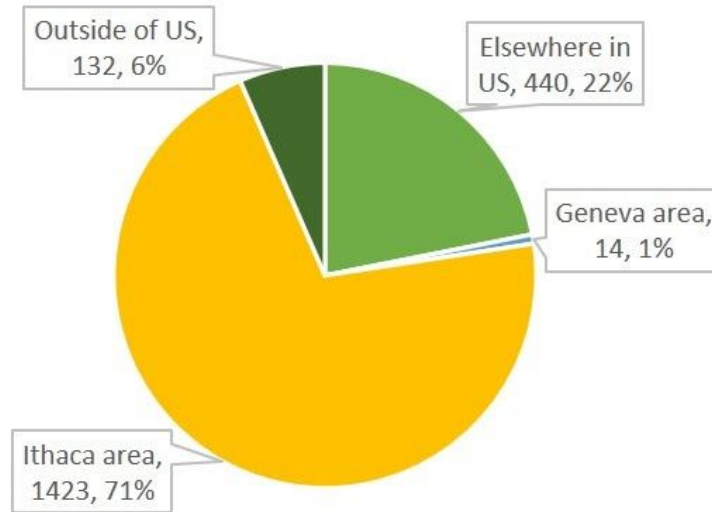
Introduction and Explanation of Process

This survey began on Tuesday, May 12th through the efforts of the three graduate student representatives on Cornell's Reopening Committees, who felt that there were few opportunities for graduate and professional students to provide input to Cornell's reopening process. After coming together, our team of 15 graduate and professional students formulated survey questions of interest to our respective disciplines through an iterative writing and feedback process. In collaboration with the Graduate and Professional Student Assembly (GPSA) Executive Board, we sent the survey to all current graduate students based at the Ithaca and Geneva campuses on Tuesday, May 26th, giving students four days to provide feedback. This survey report was completed on Tuesday, June 2nd.

2209 students responded to our survey out of a possible 7526 graduate and professional students currently enrolled at the Ithaca and Geneva campuses, a **response rate of 29%**.

Survey Responses by Role

MS Student, 279, 12%

Professional Student, 789, 36%

PhD Student, 1141, 52%

The majority of students surveyed are currently residing in the Ithaca area.

Survey Responses by Current Location

Outside of US, 132, 6%

Elsewhere in US, 440, 22%

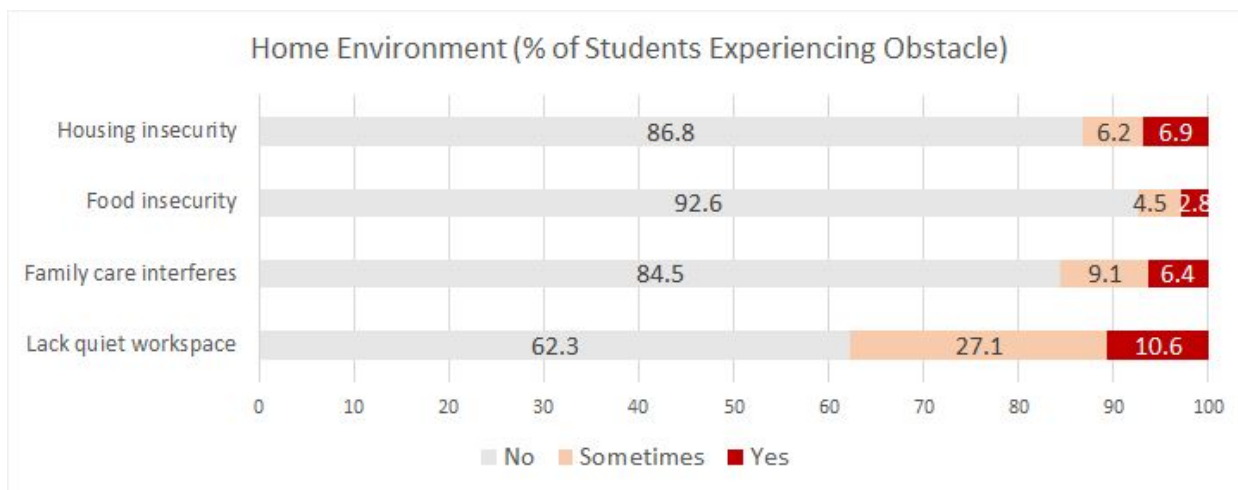Geneva area, 14, 1%

Ithaca area, 1423, 71%

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Please note that the students residing in the Ithaca area include many international students. Of the students surveyed, **54% of professional students, 68% of MS students, and 82% of PhD students are currently in the Ithaca area**.

Our survey covered the following primary topics: Health and Well-Being, Home Technology Needs, Research Progress and Needs, Spring 2020 TA Experience, Fall 2020 TA Needs, Returning to Campus, Degree Completion, and Student Life.

This document details key findings of the survey. Quantitative analysis was completed in R and Excel; qualitative analysis was completed through coding of free response data. At the end of each section of the report, we have included a list of Action Items that reflect our best judgement of concrete administrative steps that could be taken to improve the situation of graduate and professional students. Our views are our own and do not necessarily reflect the views of the University, the GPSA, or the Reopening Committees.

Student Well-Being

Cornell graduate and professional students are facing many obstacles to well-being and productivity during the pandemic. Some of these obstacles include housing insecurity (13.1% of respondents), food insecurity (7.3%), family care responsibilities (15.5%), and the lack of a quiet workspace (37.7%).

Home Environment (% of Students Experiencing Obstacle)

Students' challenges are often inextricably linked to their family situation. **663, or 30%, of graduate and professional students responded that the situation of a partner or family member might affect their plans for the Fall 2020 semester.** Of these students, hundreds reported that they would be in financial difficulty due to a partner or family member who was, or was likely to be, unemployed due to the pandemic. A dozen students reported needing to support parents and siblings. One student planned to support four family members next year using their graduate student stipend. Another student said, "My mother has lost her job and I am now using my student loans to maintain us both." Several students mentioned taking side jobs that interfered with their research and teaching duties in order to support either a family member or partner. Six students mentioned living with family members or partners who are essential workers. Some students may be unable to return in Fall 2020 at all due to family members' unemployment: "If my family member becomes unemployed, which is very likely to happen, I would need to end my master's program and get a job ASAP to support my family." Many students have international ties and are unsure when their partner will be able to come to the US, or when they will be able to see family members who live in another country. Frustration was expressed at the graduate school's policy that students cannot travel internationally without risking TA funding. Sharing working space and childcare duties with partners has also been difficult for students, many of whom have small apartments. The potential effects of these many factors on students' plans for the Fall 2020 semester may be extensive.

Overall, Cornell graduate and professional students are having a difficult time during the pandemic. One student commented, "Hopelessness is a common trait among many of us!" Of the students who expressed concerns about well-being, the majority expressed anxieties in multiple areas. Again, rent and other housing concerns are major issues for a lot of students. Law students in particular are struggling to find housing for August and September due to the delayed NY bar exam. Other housing concerns include the cost of Ithaca rents, paying double rent due to currently residing away from Ithaca, cramped accommodations that lead to a lack of workspace in the house, or in some cases isolation from living alone for months at a time. Comments also indicated that areas of concern in terms of students' well-being include: transportation, both in terms of commuting to campus in the event of reopening and in terms of currently finding it difficult to get around; food access; immigration; family obligations and concerns; and health concerns.

The Access Fund does seem to have provided some relief to students during the Spring 2020 semester. **7% of graduate and professional students reported having used the Access Fund for their expenses,** indicating a high level of awareness and usage of the fund.
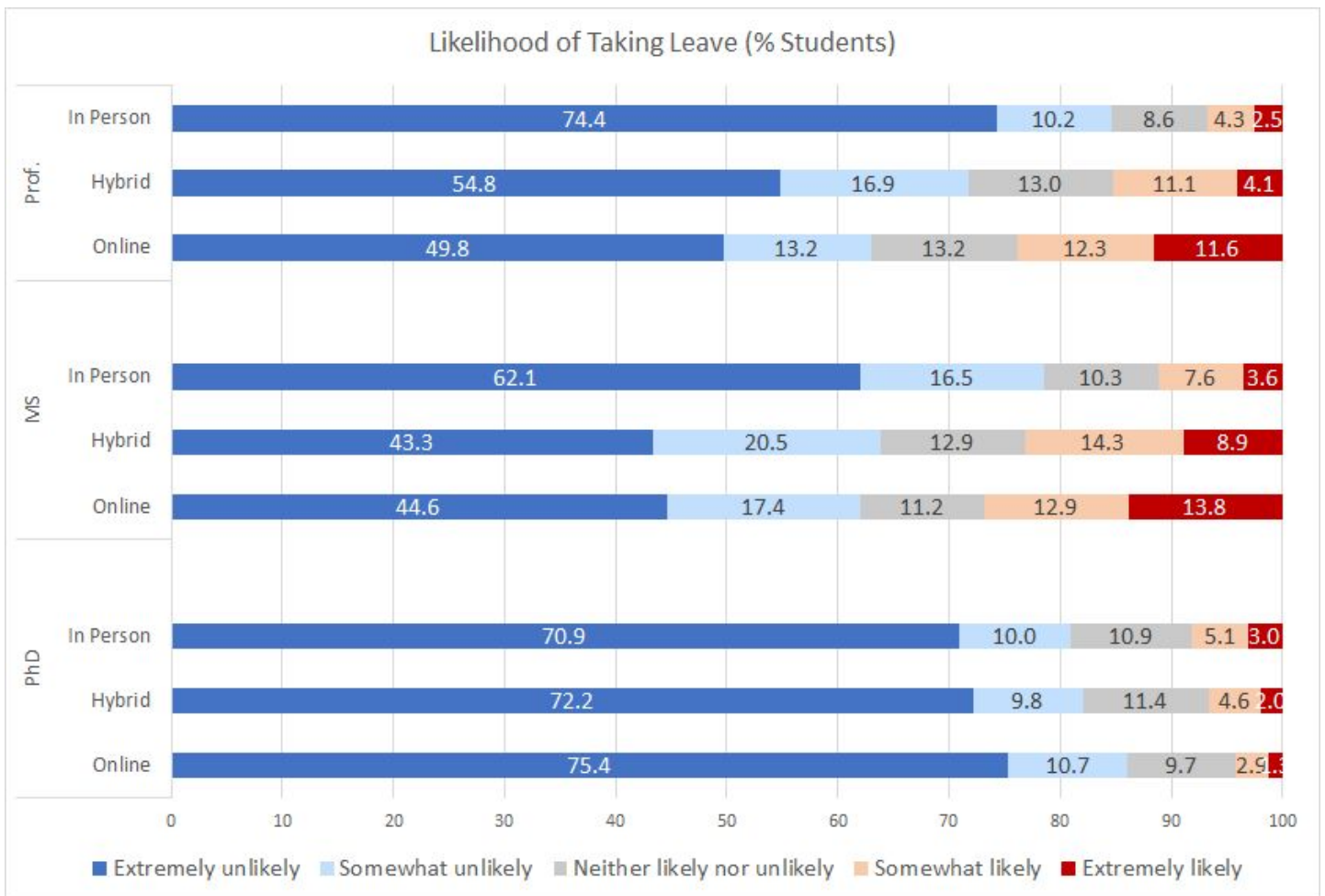
Action Items:
- Continue to actively solicit donations from alumni for the [Cornell Access Fund](#) and publicize it to students, and make exceptions for students facing dire food insecurity, homelessness, and other situations of extreme need to receive Access Fund assistance over the $500 cap

- Make another round of funding available through the [Cornell Student Childcare Grant Program COVID-19 Hardship Fund](#) in Fall 2020

- Maintain flexible requirements for the Student Childcare Grant Program in the fall (ie no requirement that partner/spouse is engaged in work outside the home)

- Continue to develop and advocate for creative solutions to allow internationally-located students to receive the full benefits of graduate assistantships

- For the remainder of Summer 2020, open a limited amount of on-campus Cornell housing at no or minimal cost to graduate and professional students currently facing homelessness

- Cornell should advocate at the state and federal level for legislation to relieve rent and mortgage burdens.

Teaching Modality Scenarios

One question of crucial importance to graduate and professional students is the teaching modality of the Fall 2020 semester; i.e., will courses be held entirely online, or will some courses be held in-person on campus in Fall 2020?
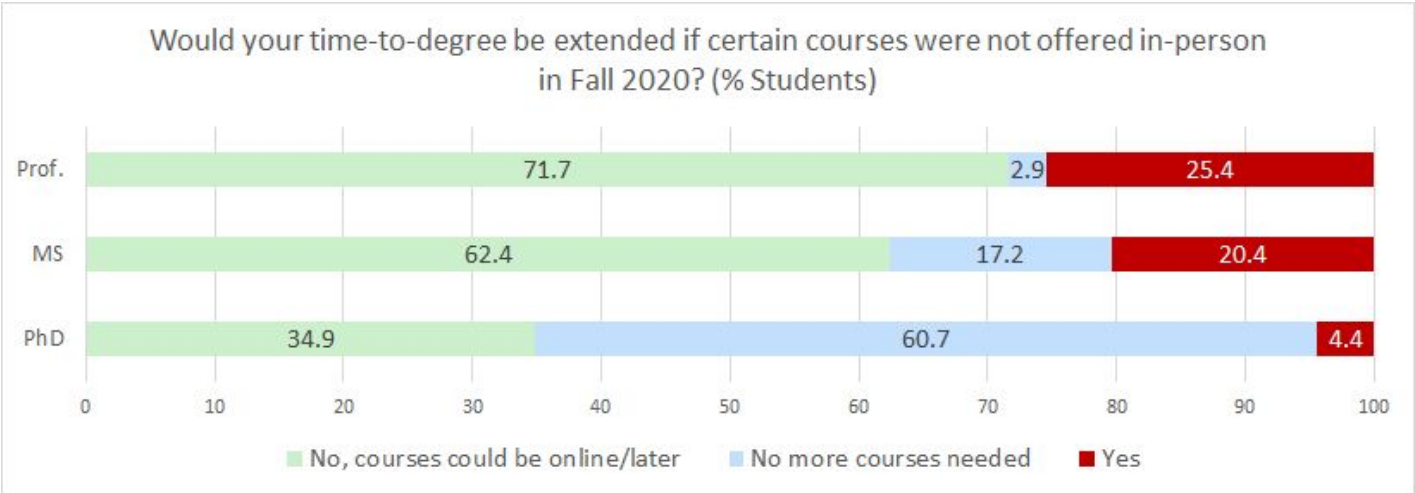
Some students will likely base decisions about taking a leave on the outcome of this question, reshaping the student community that will be present at Cornell under each scenario. In order to capture the range of possible decisions the graduate and professional students might make, we asked graduate and professional students to rate their likelihood of taking a gap semester/year of leave in Fall 2020 under three scenarios: "if all courses are held online", "if all/most courses are hybrid courses, meeting in person for small amounts of time each week with the rest of material online", and "if most courses are held in person, with an online option?"

Likelihood of Taking Leave (% Students)

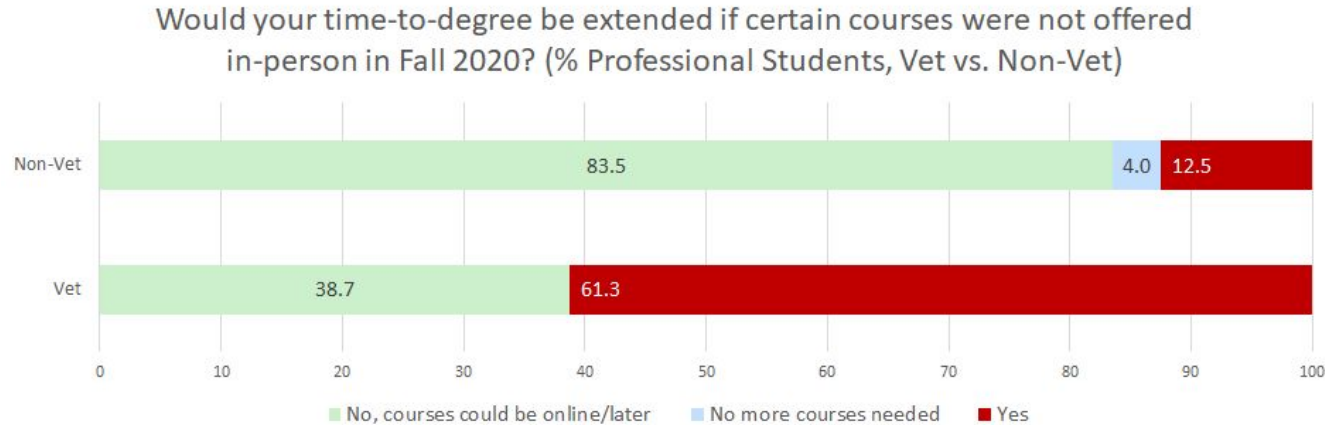|		Extremely unlikely	Somewhat unlikely	Neither likely nor unlikely	Somewhat likely	Extremely likely
Prof.	In Person	74.4	10.2	8.6	4.3	2.5
	Hybrid	54.8	16.9	13.0	11.1	4.1
	Online	49.8	13.2	13.2	12.3	11.6
MS	In Person	62.1	16.5	10.3	7.6	3.6
	Hybrid	43.3	20.5	12.9	14.3	8.9
	Online	44.6	17.4	11.2	12.9	13.8
PhD	In Person	70.9	10.0	10.9	5.1	3.0
	Hybrid	72.2	9.8	11.4	4.6	2.0
	Online	75.4	10.7	9.7	2.9	1.3

MS and Professional students were moderately more likely to take a leave if classes were held online as opposed to in-person. PhD students were the least likely to take a leave overall, with over 70% of graduate students ranking themselves as "Extremely Unlikely" in all scenarios. Interestingly, PhD students were slightly more likely to take a leave in the in-person case, potentially reflecting the perceived dangers of in-person instruction.

We also wanted to capture students' absolute need for in-person courses. Could students complete their degrees on time if courses were not offered in-person?

A strong majority of students would not have their time-to-degree extended if certain courses could not be held in-person in the fall; however, there are some critical exceptions. In general, professional students and MS students were more likely to say that their time-to-degree would be extended if certain courses could not be held in-person. This result potentially explains professional students' and MS students' higher likelihood of taking leave in the all-online scenario.

Would your time-to-degree be extended if certain courses were not offered in-person in Fall 2020? (% Students)

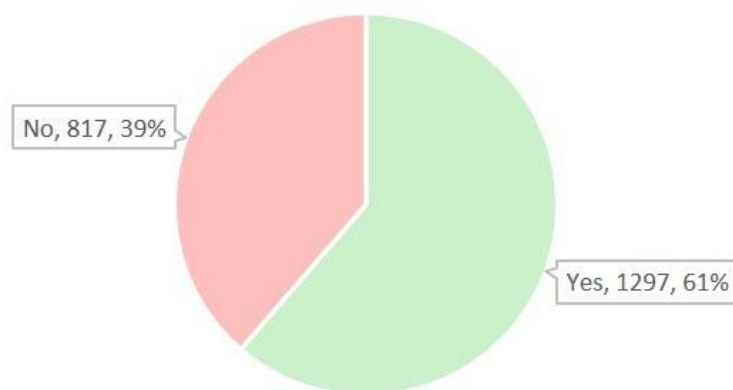|	No, courses could be online/later	No more courses needed	Yes
Prof.	71.7	2.9	25.4
MS	62.4	17.2	20.4
PhD	34.9	60.7	4.4

The trend in professional students needing more in-person classes is largely driven by vet (D.V.M.) students (architecture and other applied fields also contribute to the trend).

Would your time-to-degree be extended if certain courses were not offered in-person in Fall 2020? (% Professional Students, Vet vs. Non-Vet)

	No, courses could be online/later	No more courses needed	Yes
Non-Vet	83.5	4.0	12.5
Vet	38.7		61.3

In order to capture the types of courses that require in-person instruction, we asked students who said that their time-to-degree would be extended to list the class(es) or workshop(s) that would need to be held in-person in Fall 2020 in order for them to graduate on time. As expected, College of Veterinary Medicine D.V.M. students absolutely require in-person surgical labs and clinical rotations to complete their degree. Cornell Law School J.D. students' courses may need to be in-person depending on whether Cornell courses meet ABA distance learning requirements and whether clinic/practicum work can be performed online. Architecture students require in-person studio classes, and Master of Landscape Architecture students additionally require an in-person plant laboratory course. Some courses in applied engineering fields such as Electrical and Computer Engineering and Biological and Environmental Engineering need to be taken in-person. Many of these engineering classes are critical for M.Eng. (Master of Engineering) students. Johnson M.B.A. students have a core leadership class that would be difficult to run online, and M.I.L.R. (Master of Industrial and Labor Relations) students are concerned that some of their classes would not be effective online. Several students listed classes or independent studies involving specialized machinery or equipment.

In order to explore grading options in addition to modality options, we also asked students whether they would support mandatory pass/fail grading in Fall 2020.

Would you support mandatory pass/fail grading in Fall 2020?

No, 817, 39%

Yes, 1297, 61%

This result was fairly consistent across roles, with 63% of professional students, 56% of MS students, and 61% of PhD students supporting mandatory pass-fail grading in Fall 2020. 66% of Cornell Law JD students, who had mandatory pass-fail grading in Spring 2020, supported mandatory pass-fail for Fall 2020 (n=134). Many TAs lamented that a universal pass-fail option was not implemented in Spring 2020 (overall, 60% of students who were TAs in Spring 2020 support mandatory pass-fail grading in Fall 2020). Some professional students worried about their competitiveness, compared to students from other universities, in the job market if Cornell implemented a mandatory pass-fail next semester. However, many others felt that a mandatory, or at least modified, pass-fail option is crucial given the "undue hardship on students who don't have access to quiet places to study due to a lack of financial resources or family support". One student in support of a mandatory pass-fail pointed out that "While

Cornell has implemented a wise pass/fail system, the individual professors are not implementing that program in practice. Marginalized students are failing classes, this is an unnecessary burden to families with extra struggles".
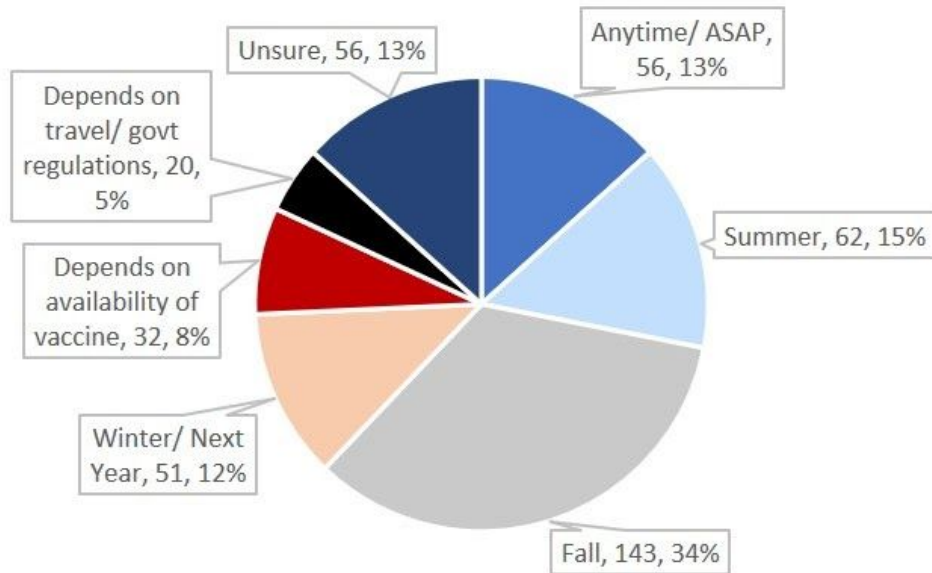
We also wanted to understand how different teaching modalities in Fall 2020 might affect students' location in order to assess the impacts of different modalities on the Ithaca community. **If all courses were taught online-only in Fall 2020, 43% of professional students, 47% of MS students, and 71% of PhD students would live in Ithaca**. This underscores the fact that many graduate and professional students are permanent residents and community members of the area.

Many teaching modalities have side consequences: there is the possibility that if courses were held in person during Fall 2020, students would be required to stay in town without leaving for the entire duration of the in-person semester. We asked students what effects that would have on their well-being. Many people are concerned about the inability to visit family and friends not only during within-semester breaks or weekends but also regularly or for emergency needs as caregivers. Students also feel that travel restrictions will limit research and career opportunities. There are strong concerns about compliance, both by people who would not comply but also by people who have mistrust in others complying. Lack of breaks or travel opportunities would have a severely negative impact on mental health, especially anxiety and depression. It would be recommended that mental health services at Cornell be expanded or made more accessible, especially emergency health services. Some students need to access specialized health care services not possible in the Ithaca region, requiring travel across the Northeast.

We asked students what factors might complicate their ability to be in town and on campus in the fall, and allowed the selection of multiple options. Of our 2209 respondents, **508 students have health concerns, 555 students have travel concerns, 348 may have visa issues**, and 102 students selected "other". Other concerns included housing and other financial issues, concerns about xenophobia and racism, situations of partners and family members, and childcare/eldercare responsibilities. These issues were often compounded for international students who felt a responsibility to family outside the US but were unable to leave the country due to threats of being defunded. As one student pointed out "I have already lost family members back at home and have others who are at risk. The Graduate School's announcement as of May 1st has effectively prevented me from returning home to help, as it now states in doing so I will not be paid for my Fall 2020 TAship."

If students were outside Ithaca or Geneva, we asked them when they would safely be able to return to town. The free response answers were then coded into categories. While many students were comfortable with returning to campus by the start of the Fall semester, around 8% of respondents were unwilling to return to campus until development of a vaccine.

When Students Can Safely Return To Town

Unsure, 56, 13%

Depends on travel/ govt regulations, 20, 5%

Depends on availability of vaccine, 32, 8%

Winter/ Next Year, 51, 12%

Anytime/ ASAP, 56, 13%

Summer, 62, 15%

Fall, 143, 34%

We asked students, "If courses were to be held in person on campus in Fall 2020, **would you have concerns about your personal health and safety as a student and member of the Cornell community?" 69% of PhD students, 57% of MS students, and 47% of professional students said yes.**

Students expressed a variety of safety and health concerns regarding return to campus. In general, many are concerned about the potential resurgence of COVID-19 once all Cornell students return to Ithaca and in the absence of adequate controls (i.e. testing, PPE, sanitation protocols). This concern is compounded by lack of confidence in the healthcare infrastructure both at Cornell Health and in Tompkins County to handle a potential spike in cases. Many students who teach and use campus facilities are worried about maintaining social distancing and proper sanitation guidelines when in close proximity to other students. **Most importantly, a large number of graduate and professional students are heavily concerned about continued negligence to social distancing and travel restriction guidelines from their peers and especially from undergraduate students.** As one student wrote, "undergraduates, in particular, but also many graduate [and professional] students I know are careless about safety regulations and are failing to socially distance. I will not risk my life or the lives of my family members because the university is worried about their bottom line or because my colleagues and students are careless about their own health."

Reopening under different teaching modalities brought up different issues of campus employment and dining services depending on the scenario. Many students were worried about the potential loss of their on-campus job, either because of an online semester or because of social distancing regulations during an in-person semester. One student stated that "if I were to return to campus for in person classes I would feel strongly that I would need to be able to return to work at my campus employments." While a

few students were worried about the potential health risks of opening dining services, most students indicated that the availability of dining services was extremely important to their ability to work and study on campus. Many respondents stressed that they depend on Cornell Dining for meals while on campus.

Action Items:
- Administrators should keep mandatory S/U and universal S/U as viable options on the table; these grading options could be employed on a program-by-program basis, or introduced later in the semester under particularly difficult circumstances (e.g. if there is a large outbreak of coronavirus at Cornell).

- If administrators are considering a semester in which only certain populations of students take courses in-person, special consideration should be given to Veterinary students who are in the clinical stage of their degree, to some architecture and MS students whose classes cannot be taught online, and to populations of graduate and professional students whose hands-on curriculum precludes an online replacement for the material.

- Administrators should integrate plans for expanded Cornell Dining hours and services into current efforts to bring student researchers back to campus, and into any potential plans for in-campus instruction in Fall 2020.

- Prior to Fall semester, Cornell should establish a comprehensive set of control systems to limit infection, including a robust, rapid testing system, adequate amount of PPE for all Cornell community members, effective sanitation guidelines for on-campus facilities and clear instructions on conducting social distancing in small classrooms

- Coordinate with Ithaca College, Tompkins County Community College and Tompkins County Health Department in establishing adequate health and care infrastructure in anticipation of potential spikes or "second wave" of infections.

- Establish clear guidelines for all students returning to Ithaca and Cornell, including mandatory training on COVID-19 health guidelines, mandatory testing upon arrival, logistical alternatives to move-in for undergraduates and housing alternatives for individuals with positive tests. Any potential mandatory waiting time/ quarantine period should be built into the academic calendar to ensure minimal disruption to summer plans. One idea would be a brief period of virtual learning even for classes that need to be held in-person.

- Explicitly address mental health issues that might either be introduced or compounded by the learning modality options and the uncertainties in the calendar. Engage with Cornell Health, The Skorton Center, and Counseling and Psychological Services experts early in the planning process, rather than as a response later.
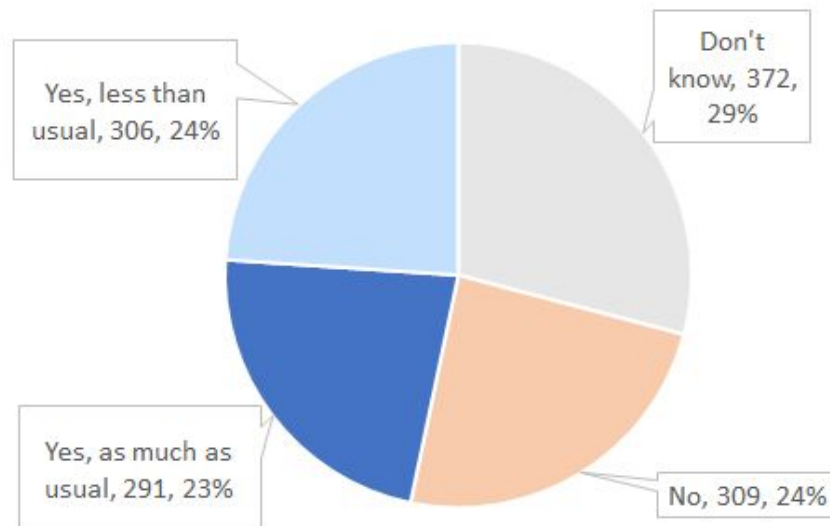
Housing and Transportation

Housing and transportation represent some of the largest living costs to graduate and professional students. Many students' housing and transportation costs increased due to the pandemic: 39% of students surveyed paid additional costs related to moving, storage, transit, or housing as a result of changes to the spring semester. Storage was a major issue for students - **19% of students who left town this semester and needed to store belongings were not able to find adequate storage.** Out-of-pocket costs related to moving, storage, transit, or housing would be a **major financial burden for 13% of students if we returned to campus in the fall**.

Students' biggest financial concern if we returned to campus in Fall 2020 would be housing: being stuck in a whole-year lease in Ithaca or elsewhere, being unable to find roommates, paying high premiums if they were forced to find a place to live on short notice. Students wondered whether campus housing would be available for graduate and professional students in the fall. Several students mentioned that they absolutely could not self-isolate in their current housing situation, and that finding a place to self-isolate if they were exposed to the coronavirus would be a major burden. A common concern was the current inability to plan for housing without knowing Cornell's Fall plans. The second major concern was travel costs and logistics, especially for international students: "Under the current travel restrictions between China and the U.S., the flight/travel costs are extremely high and as a student, I cannot afford reliable flight services to get back to Ithaca." Moving/shipping, storage, and childcare costs would also present major issues for some students. Several students mentioned that they would want to start driving to campus, and the parking pass or car insurance would present major costs for them.

5% of survey-takers indicated that they had confirmed on-campus housing for 2020-2021, and 71% indicated that they had confirmed off-campus housing for 2020-2021. **Of the students who had confirmed off-campus housing, a striking 53% said that breaking their off-campus housing lease would be a major financial burden for them if they did not return to town in the fall.**

On transportation, we asked students which modes of transportation they used to get to campus in normal circumstances, and allowed students to select multiple options. **162 students get to campus by bicycle, 776 by car, 1164 by walking, 1286 by TCAT, and 8 by motorcycle or scooter.** Students who usually take TCAT, the most popular option, are divided on whether they will continue to use it in the fall.

Will you still take the TCAT to campus in Fall 2020?

- Yes, less than usual, 306, 24%
- Don't know, 372, 29%
- Yes, as much as usual, 291, 23%
- No, 309, 24%

Of 1214 students who do not usually drive to campus, 149 said they would start driving to campus in Fall 2020 and would want a daytime parking pass, 90 said they would start driving to campus but only on nights and weekends, 149 don't know, and 826 would continue not driving. Our survey did not clarify the specific parking situation of students who do usually drive to campus at least some of the time--those students' situations may change in Fall 2020 as well.

Action Items:

- Cornell should implement cheap, flexible parking options, e.g. by having students pay a low rate for hourly parking through the ParkMobile app, offering free parking in specific parking lots, etc.

- Cornell should provide technical assistance for international students making travel arrangements back to Ithaca or Geneva, through the Concur system and/or administrative help. This will simplify a process that is currently nearly impossible for students and allow students to get Cornell's negotiated travel discounts.

- Cornell should provide hotel rooms throughout the semester for graduate and professional students who need to self-isolate away from housemates.

- Cornell should explicitly announce the ways in which it is collaborating with TCAT to help implement safe transit to campus.

- Cornell should allow students to use the Access Fund for assistance in breaking a housing lease, provide information on how to formally break a lease on the Off-Campus Living website, and offer legal assistance to students who are having trouble breaking their lease or having other housing difficulties

- For the remainder of Summer 2020, open a limited amount of on-campus Cornell housing at no or minimal cost to graduate and professional students currently facing homelessness

- Cornell should advocate at the state and federal level for legislation to relieve rent and mortgage burdens.

Student Health, Mental Health, and Healthcare Access

While most students understand the need for limitations on non-emergency healthcare in the short-term, several expressed concern regarding not knowing what services Cornell Health was or wasn't providing, the effects of missing preventative or chronic care in the long-term, and negative impacts of the pandemic on mental health. Students were also concerned that due to the pandemic's impact on their healthcare and/or mental health now, that they may continue to suffer in both research and teaching capability into the fall and further into the future.

21% of survey respondents reported not currently having access to physical health care, and 34% of respondents reported not currently having access to mental health care[1].

Many students who do currently have access to care during the pandemic are getting it somewhere besides Cornell Health: 462 students said they were currently using a non-Cornell provider for their physical health care and 408 students said they were using a non-Cornell provider for their mental health care. **22 students said they were currently paying completely out-of-pocket (i.e. they did not have insurance, or SHP/insurance did not apply) for physical health care from a non-Cornell provider, and 65 students said the same for mental health care.**

Many respondents were satisfied with the in-person experience provided by Cornell Health during the pandemic. However, many respondents remained frustrated with the lack of clarity in respect to appointments and open hours of the pharmacy and clinic.

After initial implementation difficulties, the majority of students have praised the accessibility of online mental and physical healthcare through Cornell Health telehealth, as well as services including the motivation workshops, and many are finding the level of care they can access incredibly beneficial. Some students have suggested that Cornell Health continue to offer telehealth services permanently. This was summarized well by a student who mentioned "Professional students have a rigid schedule, and I would often have to delay appointments or miss class due to academic conflicts. Telehealth would allow for more flexibility, so that students do not have to miss class or delay healthcare." The co-pay waiver has also been cited as a source of relief for several students. However, there is a sense that telehealth represents a stopgap measure and not a long term solution. For a third of the respondents the experience has been unpleasant and frustrating. While continued access to healthcare providers is

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[1] If the first question (access to care) in this series of mental health care and physical health care questions was answered "Yes", a second question on health providers appeared. Certain individuals who have never actually made appointments with providers may have considered the second question to be about utilization rather than general access. These individuals could then potentially go back and click "No" to the first question to avoid answering the second question. While this may likely affect a small percentage of responses, it could potentially inflate the "No" response. For context, 91 respondents (~4%) clicked "Yes" to the first mental health care question but left the second question blank (presumably because they do not ever use the services they have access to). When reaching out to respondents, most people who do not use health and mental health services seem to have interpreted the provider as the provider they would theoretically have access to, so our data is likely close to the truth, although not perfect. Eleven students did note in the free response section that they had not attempted to access healthcare and/or determine their healthcare situation. Six of those students pointed out the issue with our question, and one student noted that they had specifically answered "no" despite not being sure whether they had healthcare access or not. Thank you to everyone who has drawn our attention to the complications concerning this series of questions!

clearly appreciated, multiple students have found telehealth increases their feelings of isolation and note their home environments may not represent a safe place to discuss mental health concerns (particularly among students with children or those with unaware or unsympathetic family members). Further, the experiences of large numbers of students have been marred by technological difficulties, the limitations of diagnosing healthcare concerns over the phone, and feeling unheard or dismissed by their healthcare provider. Other concerns include long wait times for virtual appointments, dropped or unstable connections during appointments and delayed or cancelled appointments.

Many students cite issues with making an appointment. As one student notes - "It is unnecessarily complicated that to make an appointment, one must call Cornell Health, speak to the receptionist, be called back by a nurse, and then get a phone/video appointment with a doctor if deemed important enough. There is very little sense of continuity in care. I found I consistently had to stand up for myself to be taken seriously via phone and to get any sort of medical care at all." This process creates an additional barrier for international students currently residing outside the US as they must have the ability to make an international phone call to get an appointment with Cornell Health. Even for those students residing in the US the process can be frustrating. Another student points out - "As an ESL speaker, it's always more stressful to get things done over the phone. I'm worried about not understanding what the doctor says or being misunderstood. I just try to avoid using services this way as much as possible."

Many respondents note their uncertainty about what services are currently being provided by Cornell Health, as well as their reluctance to access said services for fear of overwhelming the system or exposing people to COVID-19. This has left students with ongoing or developing health concerns feeling forced to "wait it out," adding to the sense of anxiety around returning to a campus ill prepared to meet their medical needs. Students facing the greatest difficulties accessing healthcare appear to be those with chronic conditions that are impossible to adequately address through telehealth. The lack of regular access to healthcare risks normally routine or minor health concerns compounding and deteriorating, with several students already experiencing worsened health outcomes. While some have sought health care from providers outside of Cornell, respondents indicate feeling unequipped to do so, and international students in particular have voiced worries about what they can safely access away from Ithaca. With available healthcare facilities currently limited, there is a sense that the resources at Cornell are insufficient to support the needs of its student community. Respondents were concerned regarding the safety of reopening campus, particularly those who mentioned chronic health issues as well. One respondent noted "I have not been able to receive non-emergency healthcare from Cornell health and it is worrying that we are returning to work and still will not have that. Especially since many of us lab researchers work in inherently dangerous environments."

These observations are especially concerning given the preponderance of students describing challenges with their mental health, which are exacerbated by both the present state of the pandemic and anxieties around returning to campus. Of 263 students who responded to our open text question regarding health and healthcare, 37.6% mentioned mental health or an inability to focus in some way. Feelings of hopelessness, despair, anxiety, and loneliness are frequently cited. Responses highlight an intersection of concerns about both the current isolation students are experiencing, and fears for future attempts to graduate, conduct research, and safely exist on campus. Beyond Cornell and their lives as

students and researchers, the people responding frequently note worries for the health and safety of their friends and family who they cannot see and support, especially in the case of international students.

In terms of specific services, some students mentioned concern about dental and vision care, particularly in the case of having purchased dental and vision coverage from SHP in 2019-2020 and not being able to fully utilize it. Lack of access to physical therapy is also causing issues for some students. Several respondents discussed gym access and exercise, noting that while students understood the safety risks, lack of gym access has negatively impacted both physical and mental health. Several students also noted that the pandemic interrupted planned vaccine schedules, in many cases for vaccines which they had already begun.

It is also worth noting that several students took an open-ended question on health as an opportunity to discuss exploitation by faculty. One respondent noted "The ability of PIs to abuse their graduate students is higher now more than ever - this is currently occurring in more than one lab group by PIs who are: imposing long and unsafe work hours, increasing a graduate student's responsibilities without proper training, and threatening to pull funding due to a decrease in perceived productivity." Another expressed similar thoughts: "With the current policies in place, you are enabling advisors to further exploit their graduate workers. No federal labor standards apply to us; we have received no guarantee of funding; what is stopping advisors from requiring round the clock work and holding funding over their workers' heads? Nothing…" In addition to the obvious negative effects on mental health, it seems clear that some PIs are violating university policies and potentially increasing the risk of viral transmission.

Action Items:
- Cornell Health should allow for online scheduling of all/most types of appointments to ease issues with scheduling by phone, especially for students not residing in the US.

- Cornell Health should make students who are not located in Ithaca more aware of their options for local care providers. One simple idea would be to display a brief blurb about students' in-network options and a link to Aetna's DocFind directory on the Cornell Health Website home page for the duration of the pandemic. This is especially important for students not residing in the US who remain unaware of what services are still available to them via their SHP insurance. (This information is somewhat buried on the SHP website)

- CAPS should examine the feasibility of holding a virtual equivalent to its "Let's Talk" drop-in mental health consultation sessions; students found "Let's Talk" to be convenient and helpful and would appreciate a virtual version of drop-in mental health help if legally permissible. ("Let's Talk" is currently suspended due to the pandemic).

- Cornell SHP should continue to cover 100% of COVID-19 healthcare throughout the Fall semester, any changes in NY state regulations notwithstanding.

- Cornell SHP should examine the feasibility of extending dental and vision care for those who purchased it in 2019-2020 through the Fall semester.

- To the extent compatible with maintaining safety, Cornell should explore ways to encourage and coordinate organized outdoor physical fitness activities (This could potentially include

Cornell-led walking, hiking, or jogging groups designed to follow strict physical distancing guidelines)

- CAPS and the Skorton Center should work to create virtual mental health support groups and group therapy options for the fall. Ideally, students could choose between general groups and identity-specific groups.

- Create a handout of resources (posted on a prominent webpage) about how to recognize distress in students virtually, and where to send students for help in which situations. The creation of this handout should be supervised by Robin Hamlisch and other CAPS staff.

- Establish clear guidelines for how research and teaching assistantship supervisors should treat students, including the setting of reasonable expectations during the pandemic, both emailed to all faculty and supported through CTI or Skorton Center workshops. The Skorton Center has already hosted virtual faculty workshops on supportive mentorship of graduate students during the pandemic that could potentially be expanded to a wider faculty audience.

- Allow graduating students to call and email the Student Health Benefits office for guidance on purchasing affordable health plans post-graduation

Technology Needs

Adequate access to technology, including hardware, software, and a stable internet connection, is key to Cornell graduate and professional students' ability to conduct virtual coursework, research, and teaching. We surveyed students on whether they had access to the technology that they needed in order to work from home on a day-to-day basis.

9.5% of survey respondents said they did not have consistent access to reliable wireless internet (WiFi) in their home. Students reported a range of video quality during video calls, with a slight majority of students rating their video call connection as "somewhat good", and 9%, or 196 students, rating their connection as extremely bad or somewhat bad. (There is likely significant overlap between not having consistent access to reliable WiFi, and having poor video quality).

9% of students reported not having access to the basic hardware (laptop, monitor, keyboard, webcam) that they needed to work from home efficiently. 24% of students who needed specialized hardware to work from home did not currently have the hardware they needed, and 21% students who needed specialized software to work from home did not currently have the software they needed.

For students' home office needs relating to coursework, comments indicated the need for better home office setups, including updated technology and ergonomic office equipment. (Issues of ergonomics also appeared in students' comments on healthcare, with a few students mentioning increased pain and need for physical therapy due to poor ergonomics at home.) Several students commented on the need for a better/more stable VPN to allow people located in China to access the internet, and the need for better internet service more generally. Access to specialized equipment (e.g. sterile lab environments, proprietary software, physical manuscripts) was a consistent issue as well.

For home office issues relating to research work, the majority of comments were related to physical items like better laptops, secondary monitors, ergonomic office equipment, and just generally more space. Specific software/subscription requests included Adobe suite, statistical analysis programs (SPSS, Prism, SAS, Stata), GIS programs, and Bloomberg. Many students noted technical issues with the remote desktop access. Additionally, many students commented that there was no way for them to continue their research at home because they need access to specialized equipment such as a wet lab.
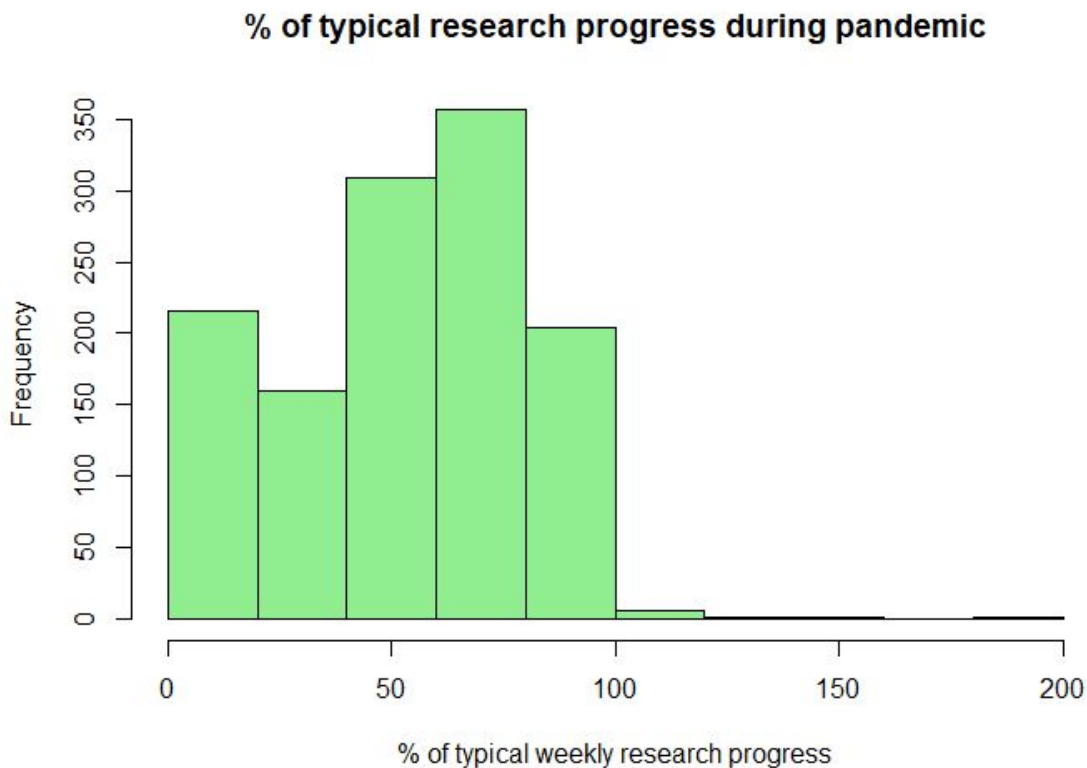
In terms of teaching needs, many students commented on the need for tablets and software to recreate the whiteboard experience. Other needs included better webcams, better computers, faster internet, access to scanners and printers, and ergonomic office setups.

Action Items:

- Cornell Information Technologies (CIT), the libraries, and/or other facilities that plan to lend hardware to students in Fall 2020 should begin procuring that hardware, including tablets with styluses to lend to teaching assistants.

- Cornell should use mobile WiFi hotspots, or upgrade student phone data plans where possible, to connect disadvantaged/remote students to reliable internet.

- CIT, the libraries, and/or other facilities that serve student technology needs should work jointly on a brief and well-publicized directory of where students can ask for help with procuring different types of technology for coursework, research, and teaching.

- The Effective Online Delivery subcommittee of C-POT should assist us in making our full Appendix 1: Full List of Student Technology Needs available to all facilities that procure technology for graduate students.

- Cornell should create a plan to allow students to return to campus to retrieve office items (extra monitors, ergonomic desk chairs, adaptive office equipment).

- Cornell should extend access to Adobe Suite.

Resources for Graduate Research

1409 students in our dataset said that they conduct research. Among students who conduct research, 1257 responded specifically to a question rating research productivity during the pandemic compared to typical research progress before the pandemic. Productivity varied widely, with the vast majority of students accomplishing less work than usual (mean 56.9% of typical progress, standard deviation 29.6%). Notably, about 1 in 5 respondents (244) reported accomplishing 25% or less of their typical weekly research progress.

% of typical research progress during pandemic

The pandemic was hugely disruptive to many of the processes involved in research work. 944 students, or 67% of students doing research, indicated that their plans to acquire materials or data were interrupted. 742 students, or 53% of students doing research, had their fieldwork or research-related travel plans interrupted. 515 students, or 37% of students doing research, had research plans involving another institution (e.g. internships and collaborations) that were interrupted[2].

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[2] For this "Resources for Graduate Research" section, percentages are being calculated out of the 1409 students who conduct research, whereas in the rest of this report respondents who skipped the question are eliminated from the total when calculating a percentage. The rationale behind calculating out of 1409 researchers in this case is that some students may have skipped a question if the method (e.g. fieldwork) did not relate to their research, rather than selecting the "Does not apply to my research" option. This report notes other exceptions to eliminating

In a non-pandemic semester, 400 of our surveyed students' research depends on physical access to Cornell library materials (e.g. manuscripts, archival materials, etc.). 244 of those students, or 61%, said that online digitization of those materials during the pandemic has not been sufficient to meet their needs.

In general, 77% of students who do research said that online library access to material was adequate to meet their research needs, or that they did not need any library access to perform their work.

However, when asked to share more about the factors impacting their research progress, several students indicated that access to library materials was currently not sufficient. Other factors impeding research progress included not being able to use in-person facilities, having a hard time concentrating or staying productive, not being able to attend conferences, and balancing childcare with research.

46% (591) of responding students who do research said that they could conduct all research from home in Fall 2020 and make satisfactory progress towards their degree. Note that this divide does not fall tidily along categories of research; e.g. there are humanities students who would not be able to make sufficient progress if conducting all research from home (for reasons previously mentioned).

Action Items:
- If possible, extend subscriptions and special access deals to ebook services added during the pandemic through the end of the Fall 2020 semester; even if the library reopens, individuals who are ill/quarantining or medically vulnerable will need access to material

- Look into no-contact pickup options for library materials

- Provide tech support for the library to develop a reliable way to notify users who requested material through the COVID-19 request form that their ebook has been purchased

- Allow graduate students to apply for the Graduate School Conference Travel Grant to fund registration fees for a virtual conference at which they are presenting a virtual paper, poster, or talk

- Establish clear guidelines for how research and teaching assistantship supervisors should treat students, including the setting of reasonable expectations during the pandemic, both emailed to all faculty and supported through CTI or Skorton Center workshops. The Skorton Center has already hosted virtual faculty workshops on supportive mentorship of graduate students during the pandemic that could potentially be expanded to a wider faculty audience.

- Ask faculty to promote flexible ideas of what 'research progress' looks like during a pandemic (e.g. writing up old work, conducting literature reviews, working on grant proposals)

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question-skippers in the text itself (e.g. there is a question later in the survey about students' concerns about racism and xenophobia where a percentage is reported out of total survey respondents).

Research Reactivation and Safety Concerns

As student researchers return to campus during Summer 2020 and Fall 2020, Cornell must ensure that they are safe and free from coercion.
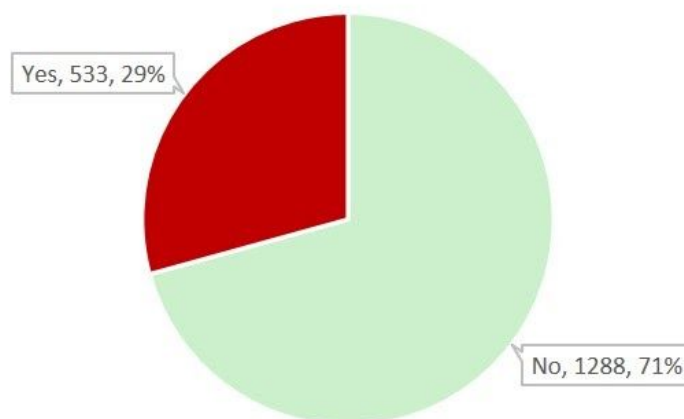
Surprisingly, **around 10% of all students surveyed who did not leave town - 142 out of 1434 - were currently working or studying on campus** in some capacity at the time of taking this survey during the week of May 25th-30th.

Of the 142 students currently working on campus, **20% (28 students) said that their working group had not clearly communicated the cleaning, disinfecting, and distancing procedures that they needed to follow while on campus. 15% (22 students) said that they did not feel safe working on campus.**

274 students in our data subset of students who do research stated that they were considered an essential worker in their lab. **Of students who are essential workers, 26% (71 students) have felt pressure to come into their research lab or office despite health concerns, compared with 14% of all students who do research.**
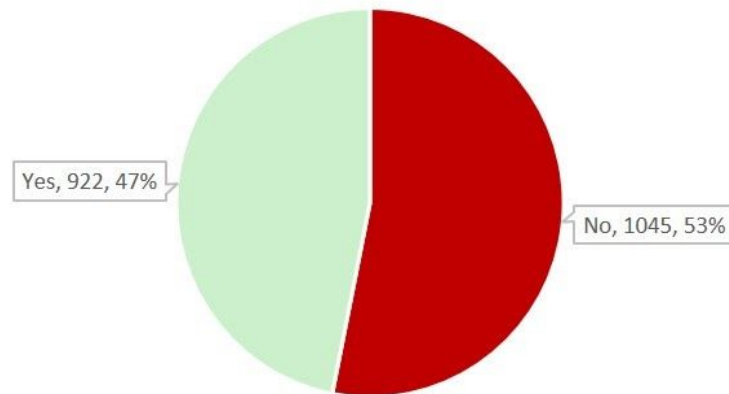
In order to anticipate the pressures that will be put on students this summer and fall, we asked all students who were not currently working on campus, "If you were uncomfortable returning to work or study on campus, do you expect that you would be encouraged and/or pressured to work on-campus regardless of these concerns?" Over a quarter of students felt that they would be:

Expect Pressure to Work on Campus

Yes, 533, 29%

No, 1288, 71%

We also asked students, **"If an adviser, mentor, or supervisor pressured you to work in an environment that you are uncomfortable in, do you know which people or offices you could speak to about the situation?" A majority of students answered no:**

Knowledge of How to Report Coercion

Yes, 922, 47%

No, 1045, 53%

While some Principal Investigators have been understanding of the ongoing challenges, many students are concerned that they may be pressured to return to campus despite feeling uncomfortable to do so. The general sentiment is that personal health is more important than delays in research progress and milestones. Concerns regarding public transportation and parking regulations on campus would limit individuals from returning to campus. People are also uncomfortable with returning to research in the Fall 2020 semester if all members of Cornell, especially undergraduate students, come back onto campus. Students are wary about returning to research without proper controls (i.e. PPE, sanitation, ventilation) and that people will not adhere to social distancing and phased reactivation guidelines. For example, one student wrote: "I don't trust other lab workers in keeping safety since they haven't done so in the past (pre-pandemic)". However, some do want to return to campus in order to utilize certain facilities, such as libraries and office space.

If given access to campus resources, 76% of students who do research and responded to the question, or 977 students, said they would return to working on campus in the Fall. Those students would do a median of 70% of their work on campus, and a median of 90% of that on-campus work could be easily conducted while maintaining social distancing precautions.
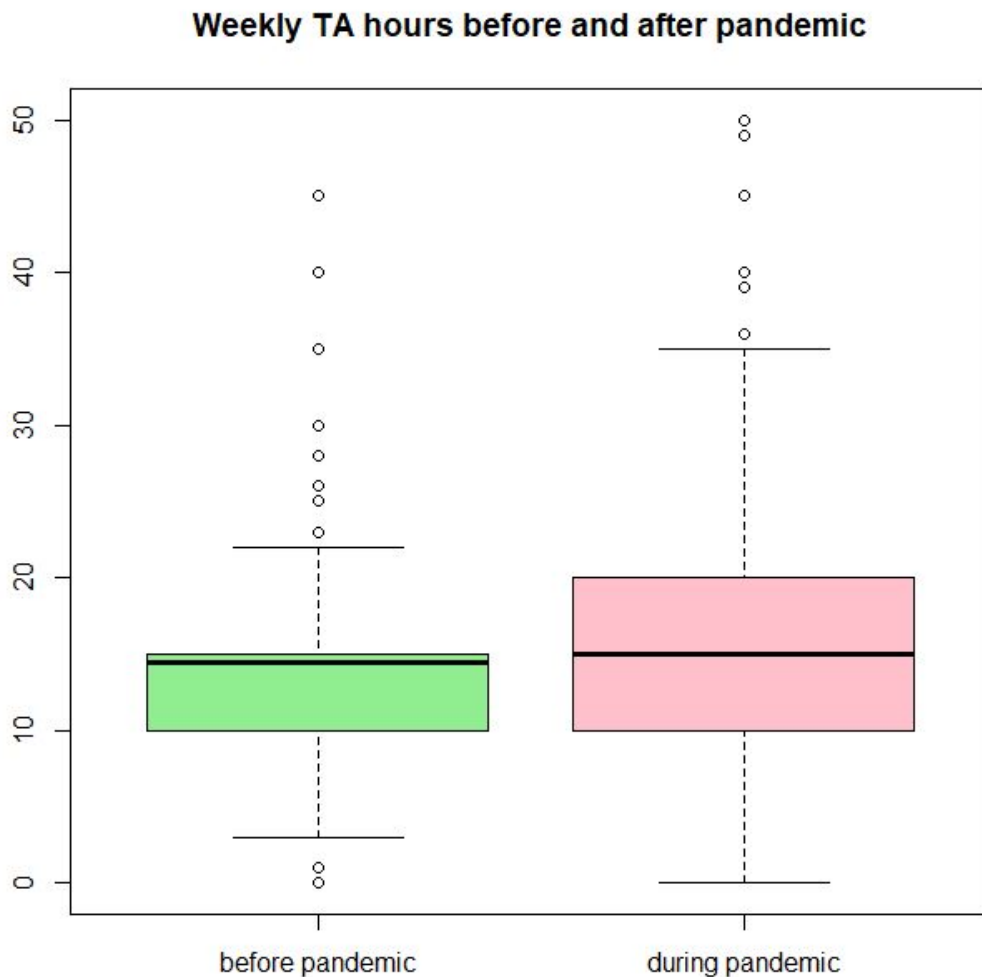
Action Items:
- Establish an accessible and transparent reporting process for addressing coercion, misconduct or lack of adherence to public health guidelines. Ensure strict enforcement on these matters and protect students from any and all retaliation.

- Provide adequate controls (i.e. rapid testing, PPE, sanitation procedures) to both lab-specific and shared research spaces prior to considerable reopening of campus facilities

- Clarify sanitation procedures for public transit and extend parking de-regulation across campus for returning researchers
- Provide clear, transparent and equitable approval process for research project reactivation
- Seek out feedback from students of color regarding discrimination concerns both within campus and when traveling to and from campus (e.g. Black people, outside of this study, have expressed concerns about racism when wearing masks[3]; several Asian respondents to this survey have personally experienced racist incidents when wearing masks, one student while traveling to campus on the TCAT)

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[3]https://aas.princeton.edu/news/black-skin-white-masks-racism-vulnerability-refuting-black-pathology
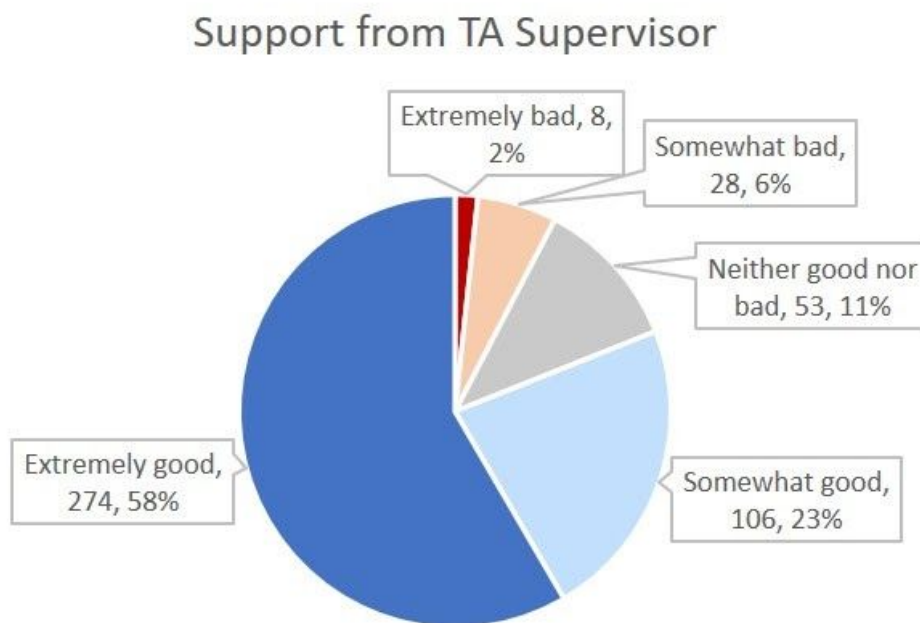
Teaching Assistant Labor

51% of Spring 2020 TAs who had been a TA before said that this semester was more work than usual, and 15% said that this semester was less work than usual. Notably, even *before* the pandemic 12.3% of respondents reported working 5 or more hours more than their assigned hours on average, and after the pandemic that number rose to 30%. The increased workload during the pandemic (statistically significant, paired Mann-Whitney U-Test), and the wider spread of TA workloads during the pandemic, is reflected in TAs' reported work hours:

Weekly TA hours before and after pandemic

The primary shift for most commenters seemed to be an increase in communication with students and other instructors as well as an increase in administrative work (organizing Canvas sites, uploading exams to an online format, etc.). Without the ability to answer questions in class, TAs spent more time answering the same question again and again individually rather than one time in person. Many comments also mentioned a shift to online content creation for their courses, even if they hadn't been acting in that role previously. Several comments specifically mentioned the difficulties associated with transitioning lab courses online. Other comments also mentioned the increased emotional work put on TAs this semester in the form of expectations around supporting students in difficult situations (regardless of the individual TA's situation).

One bright spot during the semester was the support that TAs received from their supervisors (e.g., accommodations for meeting grading deadlines, clear communication about expectations). We owe many thanks to the faculty and staff who helped make TA work easier during this hectic time.

Support from TA Supervisor

Extremely bad, 8, 2%

Somewhat bad, 28, 6%

Neither good nor bad, 53, 11%

Extremely good, 274, 58%

Somewhat good, 106, 23%

During Summer 2020, there will likely be a large increase in the amount of teaching labor that will need to be done at Cornell because courses will need to transition to fully online formats or to having an online option.

Of 161 respondents who have received their TA assignment for Fall 2020, 29 have already been asked to do work before August 21st, and 40 say they will likely be expected to do so, 48 are unsure, and only 44 know that their supervisor will not expect them to do early work for their fall TAship. Asking a student to do work for a TAship that does not currently provide their funding is a violation of

Cornell's caps on graduate student labor, and graduate students have other employment duties over the summer that will conflict with this added teaching work. For those unsure if they will be a TA in the Fall, the factors range from pending departmental assignments, health concerns and uncertainty regarding external funding sources. For international students, these concerns also include travel restrictions and the International Teaching Assistant Language Assessment.

It is worth noting that in general, Teaching Assistant assignment periods are scheduled to begin *later* this year, given previously adopted calendar changes. Given the assignment extension in Spring 2020, the Graduate School prorated additional funding; this was important, but still does little to acknowledge that the backbone of these courses, especially during uncertainty, is dependent on graduate student labor.

At the same time as Fall graduate student TAs are being asked to do uncompensated and early additional labor, many other graduate students are unemployed or underemployed this summer. **106 of the PhD students surveyed said they were not fully funded for the summer.** This number does not include the 3 PhD students in our sample who were awarded a $3000 Summer Emergency Grant from the graduate school.

Many of these unemployed and underemployed PhD students would welcome an opportunity to make extra money this summer. MS and professional students are hurting financially as well after having lost campus job opportunities, and would appreciate an extra source of income.

Action Items:
- Employ students who are unemployed/underemployed this summer as paid course preparation assistants and technology support help (e.g. through CTI)

- Employ additional TAs in the fall as needed to prevent teaching load from overburdening faculty and TAs

- Establish clear guidelines for how research and teaching assistantship supervisors should treat students, including the setting of reasonable expectations during the pandemic, both emailed to all faculty and supported through CTI or Skorton Center workshops. The Skorton Center has already hosted virtual faculty workshops on supportive mentorship of graduate students during the pandemic that could potentially be expanded to a wider faculty audience.

- Establish clear guidelines regarding course preparation - e.g. when are FWS instructors expected to do the bulk of their course preparation if they are not taking Writing 7100? Can TAs be asked to prepare for courses before the start of the Fall 2020 semester? If TAs can be asked to do this, how will they be compensated?

Training and Best Practices for Virtual Instruction

The events of Spring 2020 forced instruction at Cornell to move online in a short span of time. We asked both TAs and students about the practices that worked well, and the practices that worked poorly, in their Spring 2020 courses. While there were significant challenges, teaching online this Spring helped generate many innovations and best practices that will be useful to instructors this fall. We also asked about TAs' use of Cornell-provided training.

From the Spring 2020 TA perspective: There seems to be a consensus that having assignments submitted directly through Canvas, whether through Canvas quizzes that automatically record scores or through Gradescope with integrated Canvas grading, is efficient and fair. Many TAs mentioned that having a course Piazza site where they could publicly answer student questions saved them from having to write individual emails. iPads/tablets were useful for TAs in disciplines that typically require a chalkboard. Many TAs seem to have had success with online discussion boards, as well as very small synchronous discussion groups. Clear and frequent communications with students, incorporation of student feedback into course assignments, and flexibility on grading and deadlines improved student buy-in to courses. Frequent check-ins between members of a teaching team were also highly useful. TAs shared many unique and innovative ideas that worked well for their courses: turning students' final presentations into a public webinar, using Perusall so the entire class could annotate a reading together, making a course blog, and having short weekly oral assignments, to list just a few.

Things that Spring 2020 TAs said worked poorly: Large video discussion sections and cold-calling students on Zoom did not work. Some online discussion boards had low engagement from students. Other discussion boards had problems with content moderation: in another section of our survey a student noted that a student made a racist comment on their course's Piazza site and faced no consequences. There is a strong consensus that assigning extra work during the pandemic worked out poorly for both students and TAs, neither of whom had "extra time" to do or grade the extra work; undergraduate students also sometimes spent more than the amount of time that online assignments were "supposed" to take. Some instances of time-intensive efforts to provide more help to students (e.g. extra office hours, additional assignment feedback, high flexibility on assignment due dates) caused TA burnout - if implementing these solutions, supervisors should make sure that the intervention does not create extra hours of work for TAs beyond their official weekly work assignment. TAs were also very concerned with equity and accessibility issues, and wanted more information on how to implement inclusive teaching practices online. Several TAs reported that having students in different time zones was an issue for synchronous class activities.

199 students, or over 40% of TAs surveyed, reported utilizing Cornell's teaching resources during Spring 2020. Many TAs used the CTI Zoom tutorials and Canvas tutorials, and on the whole found them helpful for basic needs. TAs reported looking up solutions online (Google, YouTube) for more complicated needs that could not be addressed by the CTI tutorials. CTI's workshop for international students and workshop on online inclusive teaching practices received rave reviews. TAs also had excellent things to say about workshops offered by the Knight Institute and CAPS, and help

they received from CIRTL. Many departments and programs are holding their own online teaching workshops, which many TAs have found helpful, and some have found innovative solutions (e.g. a Slack page with shared resources).

A large proportion of graduate and professional students who may TA in Fall 2020 requested TA training to enhance their remote teaching capabilities. TAs will need continued Zoom and Canvas training at multiple levels of proficiency. Many students also specifically want training on online pedagogy and managing virtual courses that goes beyond tech proficiency. For example, one student said, "I have absolutely no idea how to write a syllabus for an online course. How do you get to know your students?...".

Concerns from graduate students who are instructors of record include health and wellbeing for instructors and students, student engagement in an online environment, lack of preparation and training for online teaching, and equitable assessment in the current situation.

69% of potential Fall 2020 TAs say that they currently feel prepared to teach online. Things that TAs feel unprepared about for online teaching that could be fixed with training included adapting classes to an online format, encouraging student engagement and community, holding productive class discussions over Zoom, making office hours accessible and useful for students, and providing emotional and logistical support to their students.

Action Items:
- FWS policies should be clarified (including student privacy considerations, e.g. with recording synchronous discussions), and FWS instructors should have freedom in how they run their discussions

- Make the Teaching Practices Quotes from Appendix 2 of this report widely available (e.g. post on CTI), and encourage instructors to make use of the best practices noted by many students (e.g. integrating assignments into the Canvas grading system to improve efficiency and fairness, allowing students to ask questions on discussion boards that can then be answered by TAs for the whole class)

- Have the full/comparable suite of CTI webinars, live help sessions, and other options that are available to faculty available to graduate instructors. Continue creating and hosting graduate-TA-specific workshops.

- For departments that have great workshops, CTI should consider asking if they can record them and have the video available to instructors in other departments through the CTI website.

- Create a handout of resources (posted on a prominent webpage) about how to recognize distress in students virtually, and where to send students for help in which situations. The creation of this handout should be supervised by Robin Hamlisch and other CAPS staff.

- Provide opportunities for graduate students to innovate new online teaching ideas (similar to Buttrick-Crippen Fellowship)

TA Safety Concerns

If classes were to be held in person on campus in Ithaca, 59% of potential Fall 2020 TAs say they would have concerns about their personal health and safety as a TA.

Of the TAs who say they would have concerns about their personal health and safety, **22 students explicitly mentioned underlying health conditions and/or immunocompromised status that would make it particularly dangerous for them to teach in person**, and most other respondents did not specify their personal health situation. Dozens of TAs said that they would not trust their undergraduate students to follow social distancing guidelines and/or remain in town on weekends: "I have stayed in Ithaca throughout the pandemic and have witnessed many undergraduates not adhering to social distancing guidelines." TAs also mentioned concerns about other instructors: **"I am concerned that some people would come to work despite feeling sick"**. Many TAs mentioned issues inherent to a particular discipline: lab courses and language courses would be particularly difficult to teach while maintaining social distancing, and many office hours are generally held in cramped rooms. Safety concerns mentioned by instructors of record echo concerns from lab TAs - small, densely populated rooms such as seminar rooms or labs make social distancing protocols difficult or impossible to follow. Many TAs were troubled by a lack of alternate options. A respondent mentions "I fear that if I am unwilling to be on campus and teach undergrads in a lecture setting I may have to choose between my health and my funding (if forfeit my TAship I will not have funding, which will put me in an uncomfortable economic situation)."

Many TAs stated that their ability to TA in the fall would be dependent on Cornell's provision of PPE, cleaning supplies, and a safely distanced working environment to instructors and students: "I won't feel safe if Cornell doesn't require all students to wear masks in class and provide health equipment to all instructors." For some TAs, however, PPE itself poses accessibility issues: "I am hard of hearing and rely on speech reading. Face coverings make this impossible." Students are also concerned about Ithaca's existing health infrastructure being unable to handle the number of infected patients if there is a "second wave" at Cornell in the fall. Several respondents mentioned concerns with needing to take the bus to campus.
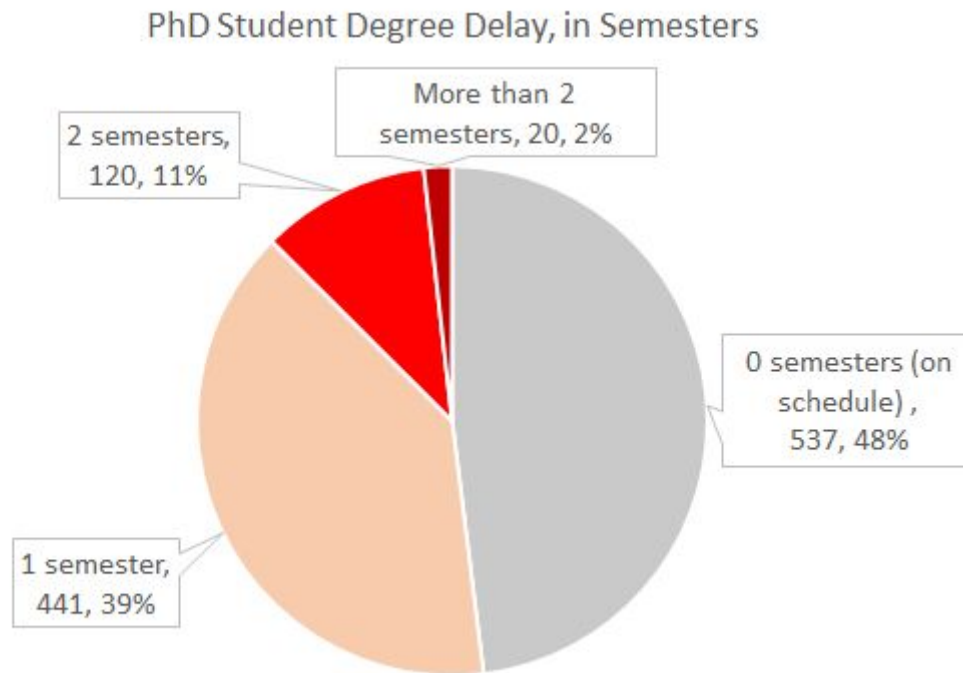
Action Items:
- The provosts should promptly and clearly communicate to grad students that they will not be forced to teach in person if they do not feel safe for any reason, including if they or a member of their household is vulnerable.

- Very clear, written guidelines for graduate student workers to "opt-out" of in-person activities without requiring medical documentation, and without fear of retribution. The same standards should apply to both graduate TAs and faculty members.

- All classes should, in their Fall 2020 syllabus, detail a plan for what would happen in the event of the unavailability of each instructor for two weeks. The contingency plan in the syllabus should not involve undue burden on another member of a teaching team.

- The Cornell Graduate School sent an email stating that graduate teaching assistants will not be dismissed if they are self-isolating due to coronavirus, a necessary step towards dealing with inevitable TA absence. In order to formalize these protections, and protect students who need mental health time off, the Graduate School should institute a formal sick day policy allowing graduate student assistants to take sick days for valid physical health and mental health reasons. Having an easier process to take a sick day would help disincentivize sick students from coming to campus[4]. Because the coronavirus often spreads before victims have severe symptoms requiring testing, students who feel "off" need a mechanism to be able to stay home, and have their job protected, whether or not they have tested positive yet.

- Graduate instructors of record should be given the option to hold their course completely online (if they choose to do so). Instructors of record have control over course content and can therefore readily adapt their classes to be online. This would free up classroom space and allow instructors of record to teach in a way that enables them to feel safe.

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[4] Policy 1.3 on Graduate Student Assistantships currently specifies that "A graduate student appointed on an assistantship who for personal reasons (e.g., religious observance, medical appointment, sickness, bereavement) needs time away from responsibilities in addition to the Cornell University holiday and vacation time provisions may arrange such time away with the approval of the special committee chair and faculty or staff member responsible for supervision of the assistantship duties", with no specification of what happens if the special committee chair and supervisor do not respond in time, or deny the student's request.

Student Funding and Degree Completion

Over half of PhD students surveyed said that the pandemic had delayed their time-to-degree by a semester or more.

PhD Student Degree Delay, in Semesters

2 semesters, 120, 11%

More than 2 semesters, 20, 2%

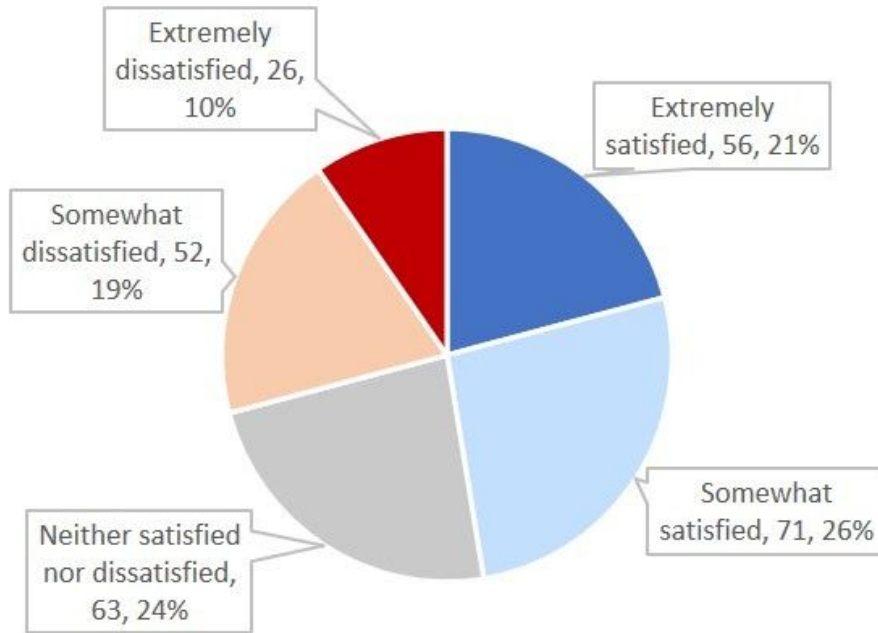0 semesters (on schedule), 537, 48%

1 semester, 441, 39%

78% of MS students are on schedule (19% are delayed for one semester), and 94% of professional students are on schedule.

In general, students reported uncertainty about programs' expectations. **71% of PhD students, 60% of MS students, and 49% of professional students said that their program/field had not yet communicated with them about degree completion expectations as they related to the pandemic.**
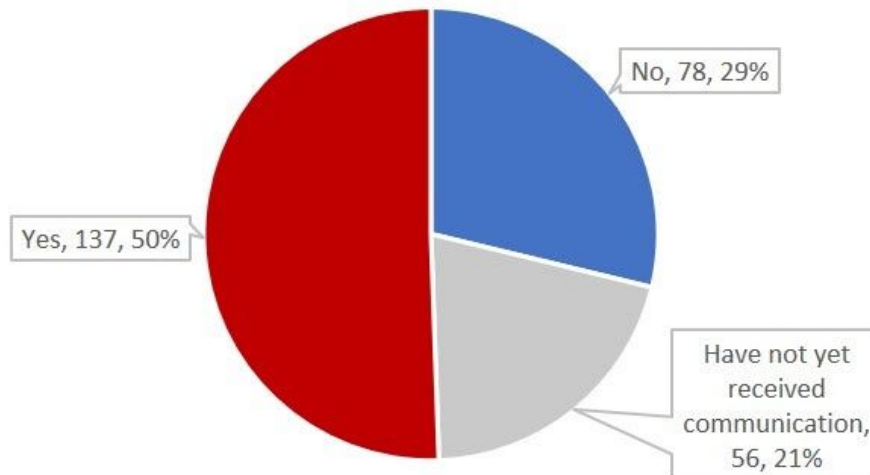
Students are experiencing various funding issues that complicate their degree completion. One major problem, especially for MS and professional students, has been the loss of on-campus jobs. 20% of MS students, 24% of professional students, and 7% of PhD students said they were, or were planning to be, employed in an on-campus job. Students' satisfaction with the communication they have received about on-campus jobs during the pandemic has been mixed.
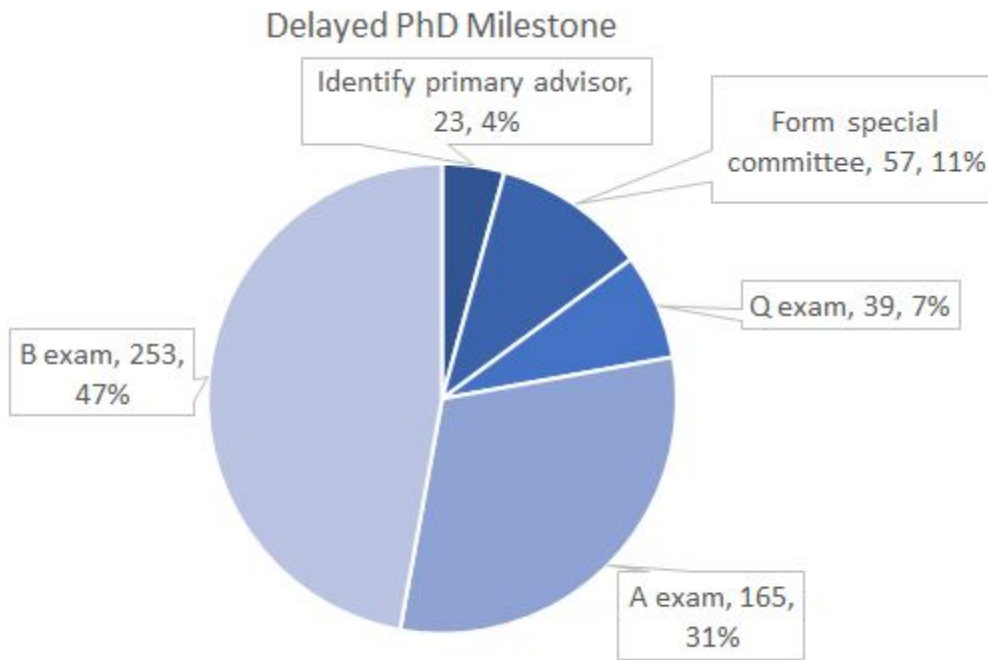
Satisfaction With Communication About Job

Extremely dissatisfied, 26, 10%

Extremely satisfied, 56, 21%

Somewhat dissatisfied, 52, 19%

Somewhat satisfied, 71, 26%

Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied, 63, 24%

Half of students with on-campus jobs say they've experienced a job being cancelled or their hours being reduced due to the pandemic.

Job Cancelled/Reduced due to Pandemic

No, 78, 29%

Yes, 137, 50%

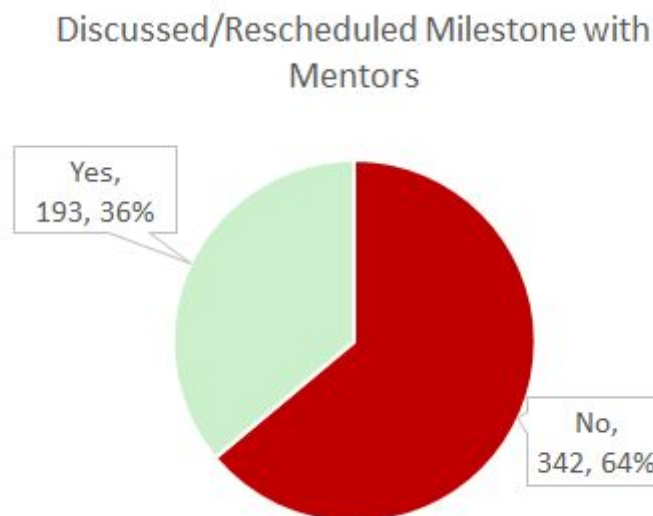Have not yet received communication, 56, 21%

81 students said that delayed decision making about their on-campus summer job prevented them from finding other work this summer.

Most PhD students rely on teaching and research assistantships to complete their education, and only have guaranteed funding for a set amount of time. 538 PhD students said that they would need extra time to reach the next major milestone in their degree - and of those students, many of them were far along in their PhD.

Delayed PhD Milestone

Identify primary advisor, 23, 4%

Form special committee, 57, 11%

Q exam, 39, 7%

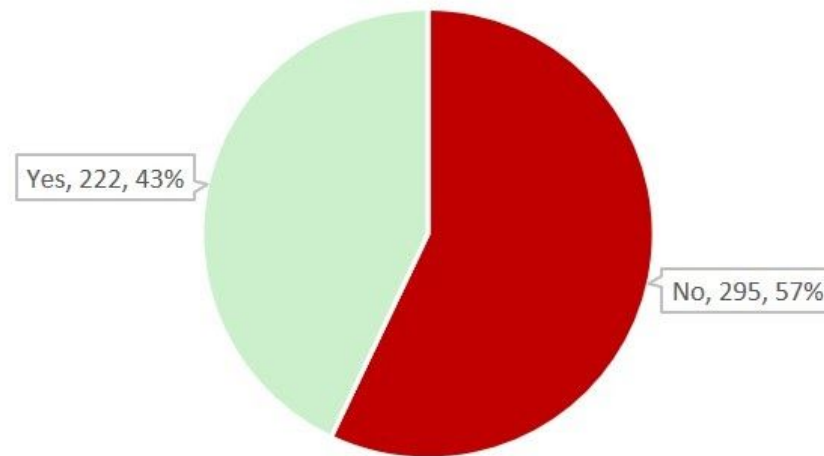B exam, 253, 47%

A exam, 165, 31%

A majority of PhD students who will need extra time to complete their next major milestone have <u>not</u> discussed and rescheduled the milestone with their advisors.

Discussed/Rescheduled Milestone with Mentors

Yes, 193, 36%

No, 342, 64%

And **for a majority of these PhD students, Cornell-guaranteed funding will not cover their extra time-to-degree.**

Will Guaranteed Funding Cover Extra Time?

Yes, 222, 43%

No, 295, 57%

PhD students are also facing other funding problems. These funding problems are extremely complex and varied. The most immediate issue is students who are lacking summer funding and are now potentially facing homelessness, including students who seem to have been unsuccessful with applying for the emergency summer fellowship. In terms of fall funding, one concern is from international students who are unsure whether or not they will be able to return to the US to take up a TA or RA position. Students who were relying on external fellowships for 2020-2021 funding which have now fallen through or been delayed are now facing a possible lack of TA positions to fall back on. The lack of a blanket policy for time-to-degree extensions has placed a great deal of pressure on later stage candidates who now feel they must rush to finish their dissertations only to face a nonexistent job market. Many responses indicate departments have not been in communication about time-to-degree and funding expectations, or that communication has been unclear. Mismatches between time-to-degree expectations and funding realities that already existed (i.e. programs that take 6 years to complete but only provide 5 years of funding) are becoming a much larger issue now that possible funding extensions are disappearing. With students needing an extra semester or two, labs that were previously fully funded by project grants are now facing a shortfall because students cannot graduate when planned. Additionally, several students report trouble with funding for research travel. The longer the ban on research travel lasts, the more students will face time-to-degree and associated funding issues.

Other issues are related to funding flexibility. Several students have funding, but are not able to use it effectively. For example, one student writes: "I saved my Cornell Fellowship to do research abroad. I

started using it this semester, but had to evacuate from my field site. I have therefore lost a semester of flexible funding that I had very intentionally saved to allow me to perform the work that I came to Cornell to do." Another student writes that funding they have been awarded to do research abroad will be rescinded if travel is approved by the funding body but not Cornell. Yet another student writes that they were awarded an NSF GRFP, but without lab access they will essentially be wasting the money. These students are falling behind in terms of research progress and it will be difficult to make up for lost time later after these fellowships have run out and they are relying on TA positions for funding, leading to more time-to-degree issues.
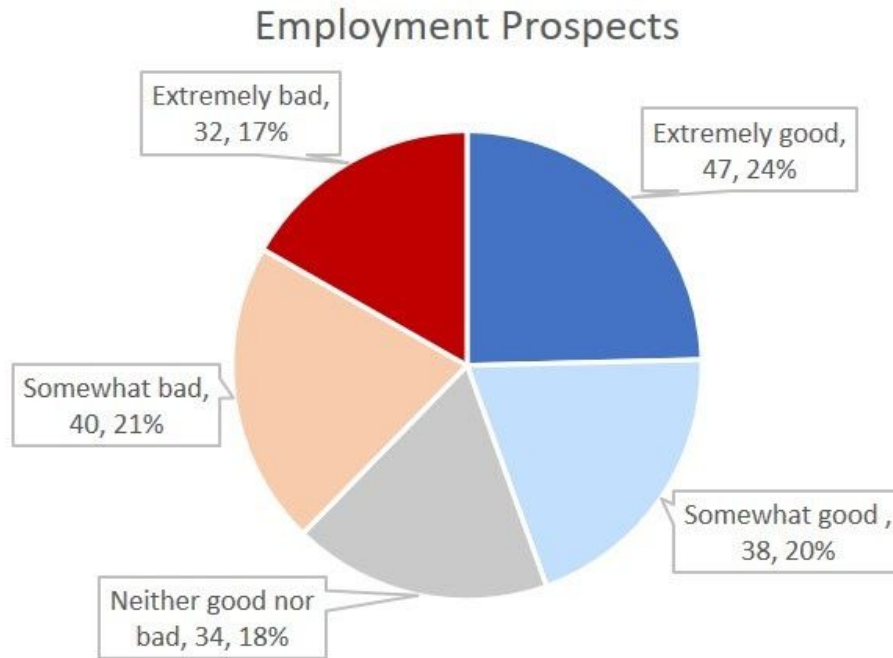
Action Items:

- Programs should communicate degree completion expectations to students more clearly

- Programs should also communicate funding limitations more clearly if possible

- Many peer institutions' graduate schools have offered graduate students clear mechanisms for funding extensions with broad eligibility for receiving those funds.[5] Cornell should institute a guarantee that any student that applies for additional funding due to the pandemic may receive up to 12 months of additional funding.[6] Additionally, the Graduate School should make sure that any and all processes for graduate funding extensions are clearly communicated and easily accessible by students regardless of their current geographic status.

- Many people have had an on-campus job cancelled or reduced. Cornell could better support them by employing these people as course preparation assistants, virtual activity coordinators, course preparation tech support, etc.

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[5] Harvard's "Lost-Time Funding" https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2020/5/1/gsas-emergency-support-initiative/
Yale's offer of up to 12 months of additional funding, including an automatic additional term for students on their University Dissertation Fellowship https://gsas.yale.edu/news/deans-message-about-funding-extensions-students
Brown has made all doctoral students eligible for an additional semester of stipend support
https://covid.brown.edu/news/2020-04-08/doctoral

[6] https://www.academicsolidaritystatement.com/

Transition to the Job Market

194 of our survey respondents said that they would be graduating before the Fall 2020 semester. We asked those students how they would rate their employment prospects:

Employment Prospects

Extremely bad, 32, 17%

Extremely good, 47, 24%

Somewhat bad, 40, 21%

Somewhat good, 38, 20%

Neither good nor bad, 34, 18%

Although we do not have a standard of comparison, the considerable number of students rating their prospects as "extremely bad" or "somewhat bad" is likely higher than the norm for Ivy League graduates with an advanced degree.

The most important concern for those graduating soon was the uncertain job market during the pandemic. Participants were worried they would not have the opportunities they expected. Frequent concerns were what networking events, including the Career Fair, would look like in the fall and how the Office of Career Services could better help them find job opportunities.
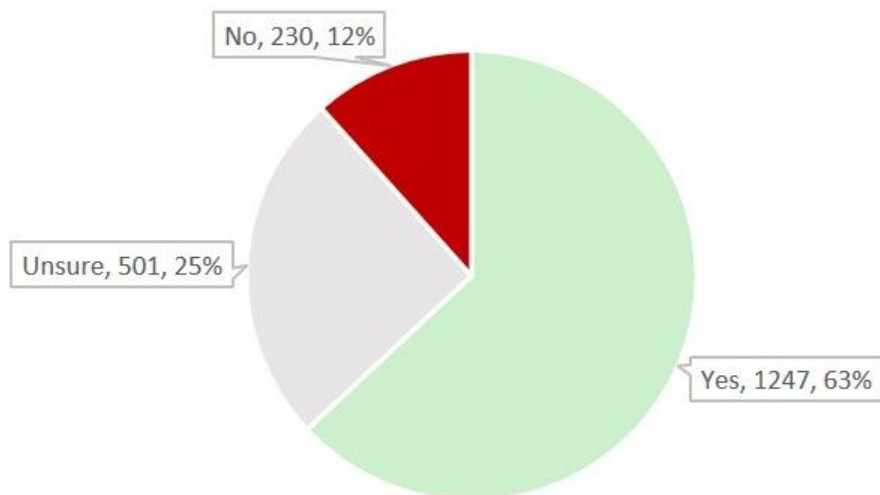
Action Items:
- Plan to hold the fall Career Fair virtually, and leverage the network of Cornell alumni to ensure high participation by potential employers

- Connect alumni with recent MS, PhD, and professional graduates through Cornell Handshake or another platform; remind both alumni and students of these services to encourage participation

- Allow graduating students to call and email the Student Health Benefits office for guidance on purchasing affordable health plans post-graduation

Ethics, Equity and Inclusion

We asked students to comment on a wide range of ethics and inclusion concerns, including the potential use of a contact-tracing app, the potential for xenophobia and racism on campus, and equity and accessibility.

A non-negligible number of students anticipate that they would not willingly consent to the use of a contact-tracing app adopted by the campus community if one were implemented.

Likely to Willingly Consent to Contact-Tracing App?

No, 230, 12%
Unsure, 501, 25%
Yes, 1247, 63%

The majority of students who would not consent to a contact tracing app likely believe it to be an invasion of privacy and security. Without current details about the potential app, many voiced concerns about its implementation, including potential "third party data collection", "surveillance" and "data storage." Some argued to make the contract tracing app voluntary and require information sharing from individuals, however this approach would limit the efficacy of the app. Even if the app was mandatory, students stressed that many in the community would likely not comply. As well, students understand that contract-tracing in absence of widespread testing and social distancing guidelines would not be effective in limiting infections.

396 students, or 18% of the total students who took the survey, stated that they are worried that they might personally experience xenophobia and/or racism related to the pandemic if they returned to Cornell's campus during Fall 2020. (256 students did not answer the question, a higher abstention rate than for many other questions on this survey).

Of the students who stated that they personally might be targets of racism and xenophobia when returning to campus (and chose to elaborate), almost all expressed concerns about anti-Chinese and anti-Asian sentiment. Many students acknowledged that this fear comes directly from the U.S. President's rhetoric in response to COVID-19. Several outlined specific racist incidents they witnessed or experienced during the Spring semester, including both on-campus and off-campus. These incidents often occurred when wearing masks. Several Black and Jewish students raised concerns of increased discrimination against themselves and other frequently targeted groups on campus.

We then asked all students about their equity and accessibility concerns. Students demonstrated a profound amount of self-awareness and collective reflection in raising concerns about equity and accessibility of the Fall 2020 reopening options—for both themselves and members of the broader community. It is clear there is no perfect option, but hopefully in addressing the gaps students already recognize, the University can do its best to anticipate and prepare. As one student writes: "I am concerned about equity in both scenarios (in-person and remote learning/working). For remote, there have been issues so far with differential access to internet and devices, and related to childcare. For in-person, I worry about people who are health-compromised or more at risk of COVID for whatever reason, and are pressured to return to campus for TA or research duties."

This comment captures the overall sentiment well. More specifically, common themes among equity and accessibility concerns regarding remote learning include, but are not limited to: added expenses related to childcare, Internet, air-conditioning, appropriate devices and technologies to continue work, and access to healthy food; attention to time zones and synchronous/asynchronous learning and research; thoughtful accommodations that take into account the challenges increased screen time poses for those with vision issues, histories of traumatic brain injury and concussions, as well as chronic migraines; students who are hard of hearing or deaf absolutely need access to captioned online materials and will not be able to read the lips of individuals wearing masks.

Concerns regarding the in-person Fall 2020 scenarios are similarly wide-reaching. There is overwhelming concern among graduate and professional students that teaching staff, including Graduate Workers, will be forced to interact with people with little control over their safety behaviors—whereas students would likely have the option to opt out of risky situations. As one student writes, "People with pre-existing conditions shouldn't have to tell their PI their medical details in order to be excused from potentially infecting themselves at work." For many students, the perhaps-invisible medical conditions that make them higher-risk are not necessarily those for which they already receive Student Disability Services accommodations, and that disclosure presents concerns over privacy. The same applies to often invisible aid graduate students might be giving at home to vulnerable individuals who might not be directly involved with Cornell. Other students suggest that "Requiring [physical] distancing of everyone would place an unfair burden on students with disabilities," citing likely limitations in access to restrooms and food services.

And finally, travel presents a significant accessibility concern for an in-person semester. Whether students are trying to get access to the (currently not-running) Geneva-Ithaca shuttle, or they are international students without an ability to return to Ithaca, travel issues introduce financial challenges and, in the case of hybrid learning opportunities, perhaps disadvantages in the classroom.

Action Items:

- Transparent, detailed guidelines on potential contact tracing app, including the app ownership, consent agreement for app use, the timeline and use of data collection, privacy and security measures of personal information, and restrictions to prevent incrimination, discrimination and surveillance of individuals

- Consider alternative models of contract tracing, including voluntary information sharing

- Incorporate Intergroup Dialogue Project materials into online reopening student on-boarding, with particular emphasis on the xenophobia related to COVID-19.

- Very clear, written guidelines for graduate student workers to "opt-out" of in-person activities without requiring medical documentation, and without fear of retribution.

- Involve Student Disability Services into course instruction design *now.*

- Provide clarity on transportation plans, such as the Geneva-Ithaca Shuttle and on-campus parking.

- Make another round of funding available through the [Cornell Student Childcare Grant Program COVID-19 Hardship Fund](#) in Fall 2020

- Maintain flexible requirements for the Student Child Care Grant Program in the fall (i.e. no requirement that partner/spouse is engaged in work outside the home)

Student Life

In general, graduate and professional students are having a hard time keeping in touch with each other. We inquired about students' participation in Cornell's virtual co-curricular offerings this spring. Some students stated that they did not have information about any events or did not have enough time to attend. For those who did participate in co-curricular offerings, a vast number of graduate students have used career services online during this pandemic. Specifically, some students mentioned that they attended the "Careers Beyond Academia" events. Some frustration was shown in minor comments suggesting that the career services were not helpful or that it was only aimed at STEM students. Some other students were satisfied by Career Services and planned to do more. One student stated that Cornell's Office of Inclusion and Student Engagement (OISE) is doing "a fantastic job" with virtual programming in general. Students have continued to use CAPS services; a student commented that their virtual sessions on productivity were enjoyable. Moreover, the survey shows significant attendance of online fitness classes, meditation, and yoga events through Cornell Fitness Centers (CFC), which one student called "amazing". To a lesser extent, students also attended leisure events such as the Big Red Barn's trivia night. Students have also frequented the LGBT Resource Center activities.

Lab meetings, departmental events such as virtual happy hours, and other academically-related events also continue to connect students to Cornell. However, many students expressed frustration that they were not able to maintain social connections at Cornell beyond a close circle of friends during the pandemic, and felt disconnected from any sort of student body.

Students were very interested in career workshops (including for alt-ac and the humanities), writing workshops, professional development workshops, and academic workshops on topics such as statistical analysis (CSCU) and library research methods. There was some interest in joining writing groups and other academic work groups so that students could keep each other accountable. A large number of students asked that the university and departments "host" invited speakers to give Zoom webinars. There was a high level of interest in socially-engaged programming: examples included anti-racism workshops, lectures on the historical context of epidemics and equity, and virtual volunteer opportunities (e.g. through Engaged Cornell). A substantial number of students requested expanded mental health programming, including mental health support groups.

In terms of recreational virtual events, students requested virtual concerts, more fitness classes, more virtual trivia at the Big Red Barn, and virtual cooking classes. Many students enjoyed the virtual escape room that was hosted by Campus Activities this spring and asked that a similar event be repeated in the fall! In general, students are interested in networking, game tournaments, and other opportunities to meet new Cornellians who they do not usually interact with.

Students also had many technologically innovative ideas for fall programming: a centralized repository where students could check out virtual board games and play with their friends; Cornell Cinema hosting live-stream watch parties; Big Red Barn video game tournaments via twitch. Virtual events in which

participants receive a "DIY" kit at home were also suggested as a possibility - according to one student, Johnson School clubs hosted virtual wine tasting and virtual painting that were a lot of fun.

Social media also seems to be a way to keep students connected to Cornell. One student suggested creating a tiktok community by using Cornell-specific hashtags so that students could see fun video content made by fellow Cornellians.

Action Items:
- Continue to fully fund OISE, CFC, identity resource centers, and other co-curricular programming that caters to graduate students, even if on-campus events are cancelled.

- Continue to allow the activity fee to fund student organizations through the GPSA. Work with the GPSA to change the GPSA Finance Commission rules to formally allow "DIY" event kits to be sent to individual students during the pandemic, and for the purchase of virtual gaming packages (e.g. Jackbox) by student groups. Encourage student groups to collaborate and pool funds to host virtual speakers and/or create programs that will help other graduate and professional students in need.

- Employ some graduate and professional students as virtual activity coordinators as a virtual "on-campus" job. These are technologically savvy, creative individuals who have a deep knowledge of their peers and would provide a lot of value per dollar compared to other interventions to improve graduate and professional student life.

- To the extent compatible with maintaining safety, Cornell should explore ways to encourage and coordinate organized outdoor physical fitness activities (This could potentially include Cornell-led walking, hiking, or jogging groups designed to follow strict physical distancing guidelines)

- CAPS and the Skorton Center should work to create virtual mental health support groups and group therapy options for the fall. Ideally, students could choose between general groups and identity-specific groups.

Special Concerns for Cornell AgriTech (Geneva)

28 respondents to our survey said that their degree program included work at the Geneva AgriTech Cornell Campus; these students included 4 MS students and 24 PhD students. 9 of these 28 students had been based at Geneva in Spring 2020; 11 students were planning to be based at Geneva in Fall 2020, and two students were planning to graduate before then. 14 students were currently residing in the Geneva area, five of whose degrees did not involve work at the Geneva AgriTech campus.

Geneva-located students generally had secure housing and none experienced food insecurity. However, family care duties sometimes interfered with work for three respondents, and those same three respondents reported sometimes or always lacking a quiet workspace in their home.

Most of the 11 students who are planning to be located in Geneva in the fall for research related to their degree are extremely unlikely to take a leave under all reopening scenarios; however one student, who is currently located outside the US, is likely to take a leave in the Fall semester, especially if many activities are likely to be held in person, due to health concerns and fears about returning to a predominantly white community during a time of increased xenophobia and racism. Research is a major concern for students who are planning to be located in Geneva in the fall-- 8 of the 11 students reported that their fieldwork plans had been disrupted due to the pandemic, and only three of the 11 students would be able to conduct all research from home in Fall 2020 and make satisfactory progress towards their degree, reflecting the hands-on nature of research work done at the Geneva campus.

Of the 7 respondents currently working on Geneva's campus, 6 are essential workers. Happily, none of these students reported feeling pressure to come into their research lab or office despite health concerns (although four students who sometimes do research at Geneva but are not located there now reported pressure to go to their Ithaca lab despite health concerns).

There are wide-ranging concerns about accessibility, equity, and inclusion on the Geneva-campus. Several students raise concerns about transportation access and affordability, such as the current suspension of the Geneva-Ithaca Shuttle. Other important equity concerns center around, for example, inclusion of the deaf Geneva community members, who are unable to communicate with others who are wearing masks. One student will need special accommodations for a service animal.

Action Items:
- Include the Geneva-Ithaca Shuttle in transportation updates.
- Ensure that other affordable transportation options are available for Geneva students who need to leave Geneva if the Geneva-Ithaca Shuttle is not running.

Appendix 1: Full List of Student Technology Needs

Subsections: Research, Teaching, Coursework

<u>Research Needs</u>
Please describe any equipment, software, and/or other interventions that could make your home office adequate for your day-to-day research work (if applicable).

- Software: Adobe, statistical software (Prism, SPSS, SAS, Stata, etc.), Bloomberg, GIS programs (arcGIS most commonly), Python, Mathematica, MS Office, Atlas T.I., Matlab, HOMER, Project 360, CoStar, ARGUS, COMSOL Multiphysics, ANSYS, NASTRAN, Solidworks, Autodesk Inventor, Thermal Desktop, Solidworks, AutoCAD, Pavlovia, Tableau, R, SAP 2000, BIM, Eagle, FlowJo, ImageJ, Snapgene, Nvivo, Origin

- Hardware: improved computers, laptops, second monitors, keyboards, computer mouse, webcams, document scanners, printers, tablets, 3D printer

- Other physical items: desks, chairs, laptop stands, air conditioning

- Internet: wifi access, improved internet speeds, stable VPN

- Some research cannot happen at home and no tech will change that

- Many issues with remote desktop

<u>Teaching Needs</u>
Please describe any equipment, software, and/or other interventions that could make your home office adequate for your day-to-day teaching work (if applicable).

- Software: Zoom, Adobe, Bloomberg, GIS, Slicer 3D, Rhinoceros, ArcPro, CAD programs, statistical programs, student access to Panopto

- Hardware: webcams, microphones, tablets, headphones, better computers, printers, scanners, monitors

- Other physical items: desks, chairs, whiteboards/blackboards, air conditioning, backdrops (for privacy, virtual greenscreens don't work on many computers or e.g. with curly hair)

- Internet: wifi access, better internet, stable VPN

- Other: better library access, discipline-specific training on digital tools

<u>Coursework Needs</u>
Please describe any equipment, software, and/or other interventions that could make your home office adequate for your day-to-day coursework (if applicable).

- Software: Adobe, Bloomberg, statistical programs (SPSS, etc.), GIS, Aperio, Python, BioHPC, Mathematica, Canvas, histological programs, Capital IQ, PAC imaging, ROS, Matlab, Solidworks, AutoCAD, R, CoStar, RCA, Rhino, SketchUP, ESRI ArcMap

- Hardware: better computers, tablets, webcams, microphones, headphones, monitors, printers

- Other physical items: desks, chairs, air conditioning

- Internet: stable VPN (especially for students in China), wifi, better internet

- Other: coursework that requires physical campus time (eg vet students), expanded library resources, more recorded lectures

Appendix 2: Full List of Teaching Practices Quotes

[Best Teaching Practices (Spring 2020 TA Perspective)](#)

["Worst Teaching Practices" (Spring 2020 TA Perspective)](#)

[TA Training Used by Spring 2020 TAs](#)

[Fall 2020 TA Training/Hardware Requests](#)