



COUNCIL ON SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

Fall 2020 CSWE Member Pulse Survey Results

IMPACT ON SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION FOR FALL 2020

As the COVID-19 pandemic continued to force higher education institutions in the United States to quickly make adjustments and alter the way they operate as we enter fall 2020, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) conducted a “pulse” survey of members to gain understanding about how social work education programs in the United States were being affected. The survey was conducted from September 9, 2020, to September 16, 2020, through the Qualtrics online survey platform. Respondents were asked to answer the questions on the survey with information accurate as of September 9, 2020, capturing the situation at a moment of time during the rapidly changing pandemic situation. E-mail invitations were sent to program representatives from all CSWE accredited baccalaureate and master’s social work programs, as well as to primary contacts for the practice doctorate and research doctorate programs sections for the CSWE Annual Survey of Social Work Programs.

Respondents were 254 unique institutions representing 214 baccalaureate programs, 131 master’s programs, nine practice doctorate programs, and 22 research doctorate programs (institutions could respond regarding more than one program level). The percentage of invited respondents submitting data is found in Table 1.

TABLE 1. Survey respondents by program level.

	Baccalaureate	Master’s	Practice doctorate	Research doctorate
Responses received	214	131	9	22
Percentage of invited programs responding	40.2	45.5	52.9	27.8

Quick Takes

Among all program levels, **18.6%** of respondents kept traditionally in-person programs in-person for fall 2020, whereas **45.2%** moved traditionally in-person programs to a hybrid format (with at least 50% of course time administered remotely), and **37.8%** moved traditionally in-person programs entirely online. Some programs reported multiple changes, including some that kept programs in-person, moved them to hybrid, moved them entirely online, and allowed students to choose how they wanted to attend. More baccalaureate programs (**25.2%**) remained in-person than master’s (**11.5%**), practice doctorate (**11.1%**), or research doctorate (**0.0%**) programs.

Almost two-thirds of programs reported that no newly accepted students deferred their enrollment (**63.9%**). Among baccalaureate programs, **74.5%** reported seeing no deferrals, whereas only **45.0%** of master’s programs reported no deferrals. **80.4%** of programs that reported deferrals across all program levels saw fewer than 10% of accepted students defer their enrollment.

Course administration in fall 2020

Respondents were asked to describe how their programs were being administered in the fall 2020 semester and whether this was different from the way they traditionally administered the program. Data was collected by program level and is presented in Chart 1, along with the compiled percentage of all responding programs. The survey asked programs to identify all the ways that programs had changed this semester, which results in the sum of the percentages being more than 100%.

To better understand how some programs were able to select multiple options, follow-up e-mails were sent to a small group of institutions whose responses indicated that traditionally in-person programs remained in-person, moved to a hybrid format, and moved to a fully online format. The answer is best demonstrated by a small baccalaureate program in the South Central Region that is allowing students to make their own choice as to how they want to attend classes this semester: 100% virtual experience, hybrid/blended instruction, or traditional in-person instruction. Faculty members at the institution must accommodate the personal choice of each student regarding the method of class attendance. Other responses to open-ended questions in the survey showed that some faculty members were required to provide options for students to videoconference for in-person classes, especially when students were immunocompromised or were required to self-isolate due to COVID-19.

Notable items in the data were that a third of master's programs and more than half of all practice doctorate programs indicated that they already had online programs before the pandemic and that those programs remained online with no change. Removing the online programs from the equation, we find that more than a quarter of baccalaureate programs said that their in-person programs had remained in-person this semester (26.9%), whereas only 17.4% of in-person master's programs remained in-person. No research doctorate programs reported that they had kept their in-person program in-person this semester.

Differences were also seen when the data were broken down by CSWE geographic region, Carnegie classification, Minority Serving Institution (MSI) status, and auspice. At the baccalaureate level, 40.0% of programs

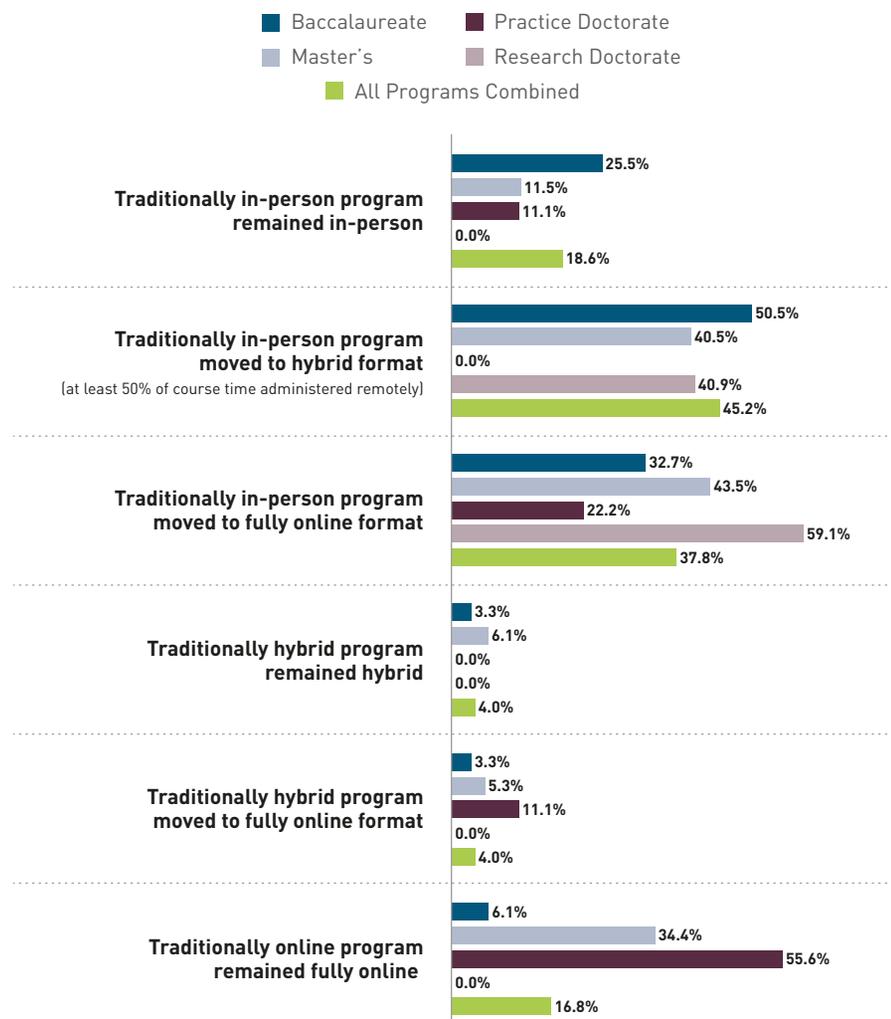
A majority of programs at each level reported that fall 2020 total enrollment remained flat or increased compared to fall 2019 total enrollment (**73.0%**), with **43.4%** reporting an increase in enrollment. Enrollment increased by more than 10% for **13.0%** of all programs and for **22.5%** of master's programs. Among programs reporting a decline in enrollment, **70.7%** said that enrollment decreased by 10% or less.

Most programs reported that it was a challenge to find appropriate field placements for their students for fall 2020 (**77.3%**), primarily due to field sites cancelling or modifying placements for students (**54.9%**). Programs reported that they were offering increased remote field placement settings or activities (**77.0%**), modifying the number of field hours students were completing (**56.5%**), and substituting field hours with simulations (**29.7%**).

Almost two-thirds of respondents indicated that their programs' budgets had newly been reduced going into fall 2020 (**65.9%**). Of the programs experiencing a budget cut, **54.2%** indicated that the cut was by 10% or less. Exactly a third of programs (**33.3%**) reported no change to their budgets, whereas **0.8%** reported budget increases.

The majority of the 257 programs that responded to the question indicated that no changes had been made to their staffing levels for fall 2020 (**59.1%**). The number of full-time faculty members decreased in **13.6%** of programs, whereas **12.8%** reported reductions in part-time faculty members, and **12.8%** reported reductions in the number of staff members. The number of full-time faculty members on campus increased for **8.9%** of programs. Hiring freezes were in place for **64.8%** of respondents.

CHART 1. Program format changes for fall 2020 by program level; percentage of responding institutions identifying each choice.



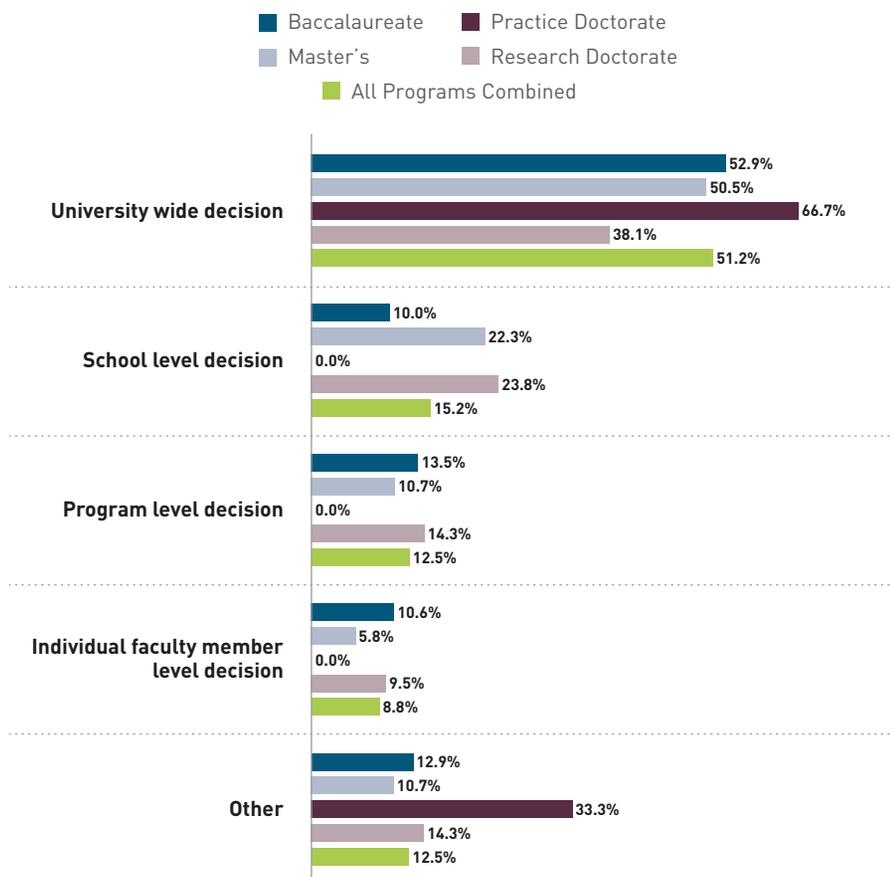
in the New England Region (CT, ME, MA, NH, RI, VT) and 40.0% of programs in the North Central Region (CO, MT, ND, SD, UT, WY) indicated that their in-person programs remained in-person, compared to 26.9% of programs overall. Of programs in the West (AZ, CA, NV, HI), 83.3% moved in-person programs entirely online, compared to 34.8% overall. Similarly, by Carnegie classification, 45.5% of Master's Colleges and Universities–Smaller programs (M3) institutions kept their programs in-person, but only 17.4% of Doctoral Universities–Very high research activity (R1) and 10.0% of Doctoral Universities–High research activity (R2) did the same. Among R1 institutions, 56.5% moved an in-person program entirely online. More private institutions kept in-person programs in-person (36.9%) versus public institutions (17.1%). More MSIs moved an in-person baccalaureate program entirely online, with 52.9% of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) and 57.9% of Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI) doing so, compared to 32.7% of baccalaureate programs overall.

At the master's level, 43.5% of programs indicated they moved in-person programs to a fully online format, whereas 40.5% moved an in-person program to a hybrid format. Of note, more programs in the New England Region (40.0%) and South Central (AR, NM, OK, TX) Region (26.7%) remained in-person, compared to 11.5% of programs overall, but zero in-person programs in the West Region remained in-person. Also, 69.2% of Mid-Central (IA, KS, MO, NE) in-person programs moved to a hybrid format, and 77.8% of West in-person programs moved entirely online. At HSI institutions, 71.4% of in-person programs moved entirely online, as did 50.0% at HBCU programs.

Decision makers for program delivery changes

At most program levels, the decision to alter the course delivery method was made at the university level, as seen in Chart 2. Some notable data points are that at the baccalaureate level, 73.3% of HBCUs had the decision made at the university level, as did 64.6% of private institutions, versus 52.9% overall. A higher percentage of R1 institutions put the decision in the hands of individual faculty members, 19.0% versus 10.6% overall. Of the respondents choosing “other,” many stated that the decision was made at the university system level, at the state government level, or at the county level.

CHART 2. For programs that have altered course delivery method, decision maker for the change by program level.



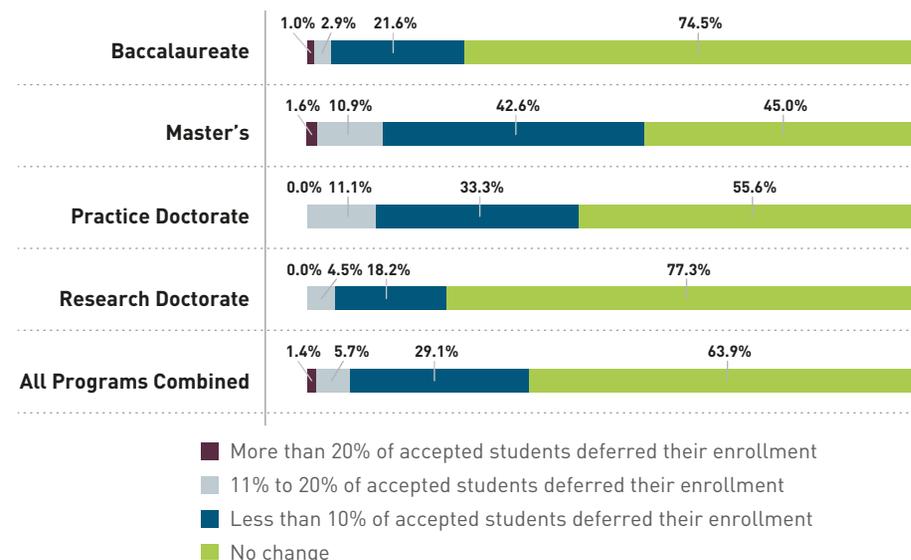
New student enrollment deferrals

Programs were asked whether they had noticed new students deferring their enrollment for the fall 2020 semester. Chart 3 shows that baccalaureate and research doctorate programs experienced the smallest percentage of students deferring enrollment, with 25.5% of baccalaureate programs and 22.7% of research doctorate programs reporting deferrals.

Of the institutions that experienced deferrals, most saw under 10% of accepted students deferring their enrollment. At the master's level, however, 55.0% of respondents indicated that they had seen students deferring their enrollment, with 42.6% of institutions seeing less than 10% of accepted students deferring and 10.9% seeing between 11% and 20% of accepted students deferring their enrollment.

Data points of note are that a higher percentage of baccalaureate level HBCUs and HSIs report that students deferred enrollment, 41.8% and 38.1%, respectively, versus 25.5% overall. A smaller percentage of R1 and Doctoral/Professional Universities (DPU) saw deferrals, 13.6% and 15.8%, respectively, whereas only 8.3% of Baccalaureate/Diverse Field institutions saw deferrals. At the master's level, fewer DPU and Master's Colleges and Universities – Larger programs (M1) institutions experienced deferrals, with 35.7% of DPU and 37.8% of M1 institutions seeing deferrals compared to 55.0% of master's programs overall. Regionally, 67.9% master's programs in the Great Lakes Region (IL, IN, MI, MN, OH, WI) reported that students deferred enrollment, whereas 63.6% of programs in the Southeast Region (AL, FL, GA, KY, MS, NC, SC, TN) saw new student deferrals.

CHART 3. Percentage of institutions indicating new students deferring their enrollment for fall 2020 by program level.



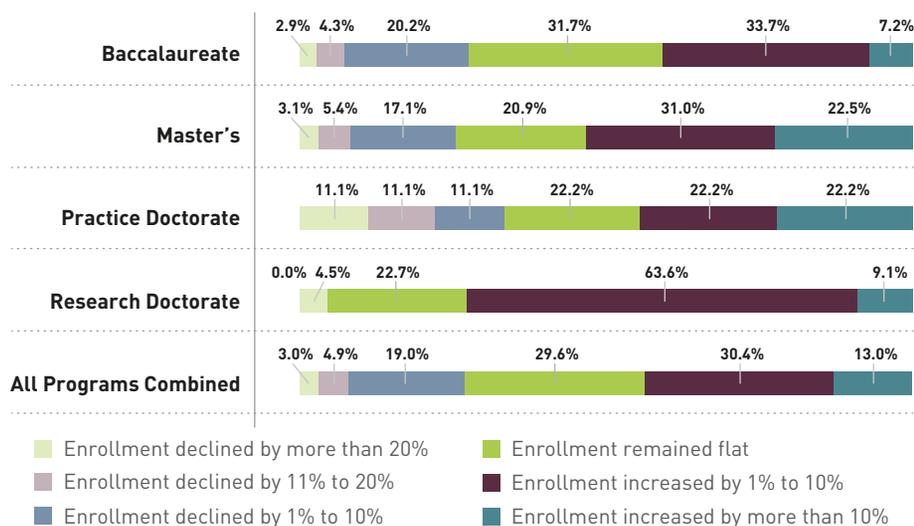
Enrollment changes

A majority of programs at each level reported that fall 2020 total enrollment remained flat or increased compared to fall 2019 total enrollment, as seen in Chart 4. At the baccalaureate level, 40.9% of programs reported increased enrollment, whereas 53.5% of master’s programs and 44.4% of practice doctorate programs reported that enrollment went up. At the baccalaureate and master’s levels, more than 20% of programs reported enrollment increases of more than 10%. At the research doctorate level, 63.3% of programs saw their enrollment stay flat.

Of all programs responding, 26.9% saw a decrease in enrollment. At the baccalaureate, master’s, and research doctorate levels, most of the institutions reporting declines in enrollment experienced decreases of less than 10%. Combined, only 29 total programs across the country reported that enrollment declined by more than 10%.

Data points of note include 52.9% of HBCUs at the baccalaureate level reporting declines in enrollment, including 11.8% seeing a decrease of more than 20%. Geographically, only 14.2% of Mid-Central Region and 14.2% of Northeast Region (NJ, NY, PR, VI) baccalaureate programs reported declines in enrollment.

CHART 4. Percentage of institutions reporting changes in enrollment for fall 2020 compared to fall 2019, by program level.



Modifications to campus operations due to COVID-19

TABLE 2. Percentage of respondents indicating that a type of modification to operations is currently occurring due to COVID-19.

Modified operation due to COVID-19	% of respondents indicating
Cancelling in-person events	83.3
Cancelling all student conference attendance	65.6
Cancelling some student domestic travel (i.e., only cancelling travel to certain states)	22.8
Cancelling all student domestic travel	56.2
Cancelling all student international travel	74.3
Cancelling some faculty/staff domestic travel (i.e., only cancelling travel to certain states)	25.4
Cancelling all faculty/staff domestic travel	62.3
Cancelling all faculty/staff international travel	75.7
Allowing some faculty/staff members to work fully remotely	58.7
Allowing all faculty/staff members to work fully remotely	31.5
Requiring some faculty/staff members to work fully remotely	14.5
Requiring all faculty/staff members to work fully remotely	9.8
Requiring face covering be worn at all times on campus	77.5
Requiring face coverings be worn only in indoor spaces on campus	24.3
Practicing social distancing in the classroom/office	91.3
Modifying faculty/staff in-person hours to allow for social distancing in the office	65.9
Flexible attendance policy	54.3
Flexible grading policy	24.6
Providing resources to ensure online platforms are accessible to all students—laptops/computer devices for those who do not have them	59.8
Providing resources to ensure online platforms are accessible to all students—data plans for those who do not have them	32.6

Respondents at all program levels were asked to indicate how their institutions were modifying operations due to COVID-19 (see Table 2). The cancellation of in-person events on campus (83.3% of respondents), cancellation of student and faculty/staff international travel (74.3% and 75.7%, respectively), practicing social distancing in the classroom and office (91.3%), and the wearing of face coverings at all times on campus (77.5%) were some of the most frequent responses. Modifications selected least frequently were primarily related to requiring faculty/staff members to work remotely, with only 9.8% of respondents requiring all faculty/staff members to work fully remotely and 14.5% indicating that their campus was requiring some faculty/staff members to work fully remotely. Only 31.5% of respondents said that their campus currently allowed all faculty/staff members to work fully remotely. However, 58.7% of respondents indicated that their campuses allowed some faculty/staff members to work fully remotely and 65.9% that their campuses were modifying faculty/staff member in-person hours to allow for social distancing in the office.

Some data points to note include the following:

- In the West Region, 58.7% of respondents indicated that all faculty/staff members are required to work fully remotely, whereas no respondents from New England were doing the same. However, 78.6% of New England respondents did indicate that their campuses were allowing some faculty/staff members to work remotely.
- A high percentage of R1 institutions required face coverings to be worn at all times on campus (86.5%), but only 54.2% of Baccalaureate: Diverse Field institutions did. More HSI institutions also required face coverings at all times (88.9%) compared to the average of 77.5%.
- Flexible grading policies were found more frequently at HBCUs (38.9%), DPU (48.3%), and Private-Other institutions (50.0%), compared to the average (24.6%).
- More HBCU (72.2%), R1 (75.5%), Baccalaureate: Arts & Sciences (83.3%), and Private-Other (76.9%) institutions gave laptops/computers to students who did not have them, compared to the average (59.8%).

Field Placements

Respondents were asked to identify which ways, if any, their schools or departments were modifying field placements for students. Table 3 shows the percentage of responding programs that indicated that their campuses were making the modifications. The most popular response was that programs were offering increased remote field placement settings or activities (77.0%), including a high number of institutions in the Northeast (86.2%) and Southeast (84.4%) Regions, whereas 56.5% of respondents indicated that their departments were modifying the number of field hours that students were completing. A number of programs added in the open-ended question in this section that their modified number of hours was in line with the CSWE Commission on Accreditation updated guidelines.

TABLE 3. Percentage of respondents indicating that a type of modification to field placements is occurring due to COVID-19.

Modifications to field placements due to COVID-19	% of respondents indicating
Allowing students in some placement settings to modify their field placement work	41.3
Allowing students in all placement settings to modify their field placement work	46.7
Requiring students in some placement settings to modify their field placement work	10.5
Requiring students in all placement settings to modify their field placement settings	8.3
Offering increased remote field placement settings or activities	77.0
Modifying the number of field hours students are completing	56.5
Substituting the number of field hours with simulations	29.7
Cancelling/suspending some field placements	15.6
Cancelling/suspending all field placements	1.4
No changes are currently being made to field placements	4.7

A small number of programs cancelled all their field placements (1.4%), whereas 15.6% cancelled some field placements. Almost a third of respondents substituted simulations for some of the required field hours for students (29.7%).

The 235 programs that had modified, suspended, or cancelled field placements were asked to identify who had made the decision. Overwhelmingly, respondents identified that the field placement location or the institution as well as the site had made the decision.

CHART 5. Decision maker for cancellation, suspension, or modification of field placements for fall 2020.

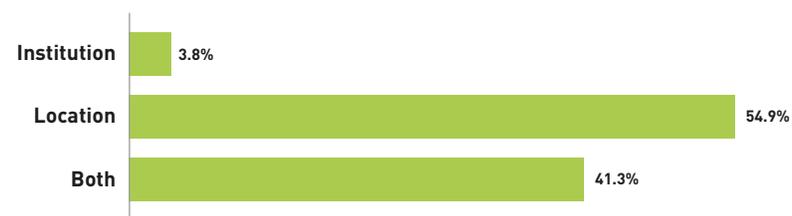
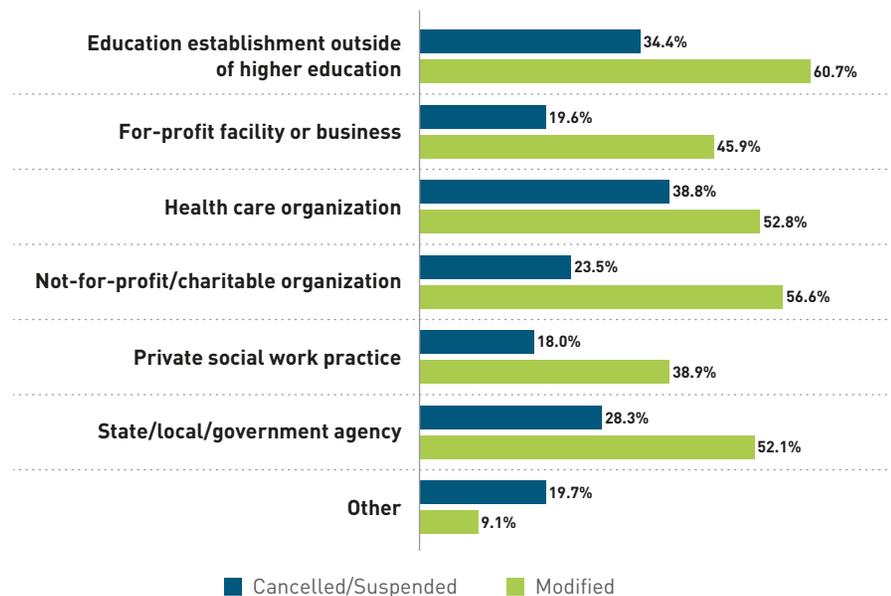


CHART 6. Approximate percentage of field placements cancelled/suspended or modified by type of setting for fall 2020.



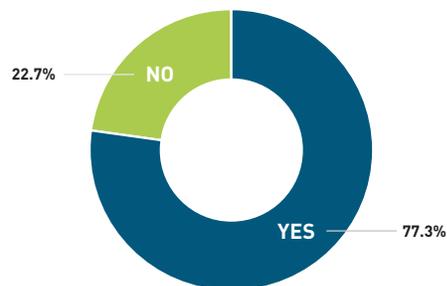
Programs were also asked to identify approximately what percentage of field placements in different types of settings had been cancelled/suspended or modified by either the institution or the field placement location. Of note, respondents indicated that student field placements in education establishments outside of higher education, such as elementary schools, were particularly affected with modifications (60.7%) and cancellations (34.4%), as were placements with health-care organizations (52.8% modified, 38.8% cancelled/suspended). In general, far more programs saw field placements modified as opposed to cancelled.

An analysis of the open-ended responses about field placements found that some agencies were not accepting students for field placements in fall 2020. School, hospital, and nursing home settings were identified as locations declining to accept field placement students, which is consistent with the data from Chart 6. Responses also indicated that agencies were declining to accept students due to their heavy workload and their inability to properly supervise a field placement student:

“Due to space available and ‘social distancing’ requirements many agencies are either limiting the number of students they accept for placement or did not accept students for field placements in the fall semester. Several settings did not accept students due to the volatility of their setting i.e. School Social work and settings providing services to elderly populations.”

“Agencies are refusing to take field students due to the changes caused by the pandemic: Health and safety liabilities/concerns, lack of space due to social distancing, increased costs and decreased revenues, are all issues faced by the agencies.”

CHART 7. Percentage of programs having challenges securing appropriate field placements for students due to COVID-19 in fall 2020.



More than three-quarters of programs said they were having a harder time than normal securing appropriate field placements for students this semester due to the pandemic. This was particularly true for respondents in the Great Lakes (86.2%) and Northeast (88.9%) Regions but less so for those in the Northwest (42.9%) and West (58.3%). Qualitative responses shared this view, with one respondent succinctly stating, “It simply took a lot more time this year to secure appropriate field placements.”

Concerns were also raised in open-ended responses about the risk of students contracting COVID-19 through their field placements; what to do if field placement locations close in the middle of the fall semester before students complete their required field placement hours; and ensuring that students are adequately prepared to work as social workers postgraduation, particularly that graduates are prepared to work face-to-face with clients in the future. There were also a few comments about challenges related to students learning telehealth; finding safe placements for students who are immunocompromised; and staff members at field placement sites not following health and safety guidelines, such as requiring that patients and staff wear masks or providing appropriate personal protective equipment for students. Most respondents (87.2%) indicated that they did have a continuity plan to use if students were unable to attend their field placements.

The qualitative data identified innovative ways that programs were providing quality field education opportunities for students. For example, faculty members supervised students working on special projects. One

respondent said, “We have developed a set of placements directly in our program using faculty as primary field instructor. I.e. we have several students who will be a student response team for students on campus and potentially at large within our community.” The time commitment for faculty members supervising students in these projects was identified as a challenge. Other respondents had used remote placements with various offices on their campuses, including the dean of students’ office and the Wellness Center. Simulations were another innovative way that programs were supplementing for lost field placement hours.

Budget and Staffing

Almost two-thirds of respondents indicated that their programs’ budgets had newly been reduced for fall 2020 (65.9%). Of the programs experiencing a budget cut, 54.2% indicated that the cut was by 10% or less. Of note, 83.3% of HBCUs reported a budget reduction, as did 80.0% of HSIs. A higher percentage of public institutions reported new budget cuts (73.5%), compared to only 59.1% of private institutions experiencing a fresh cut. More doctoral universities had also experienced budget reductions, with 84.8% of R1, 85.4% of R2, and 89.4% of DPU institutions reporting newly implemented cuts.

CHART 8. Percentage of respondents indicating new changes to program budgets for fall 2020.

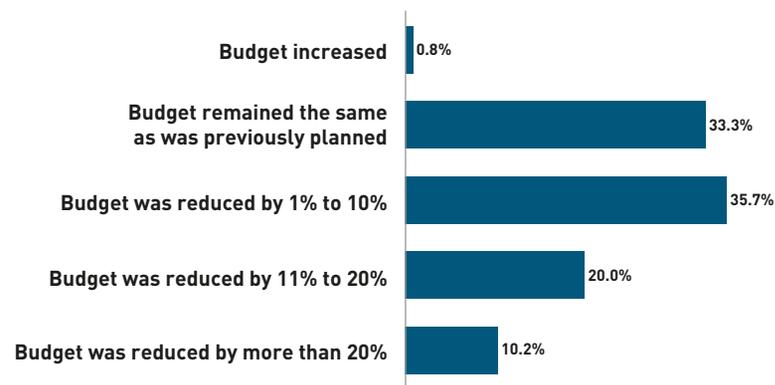
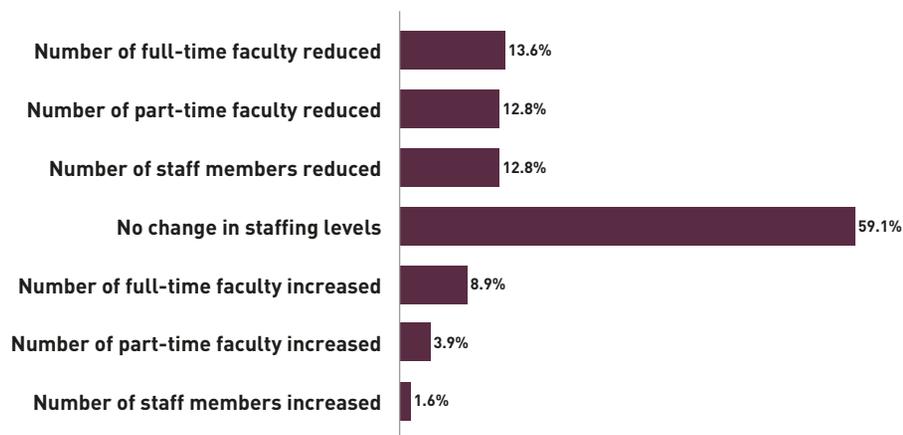


CHART 9. Percentage of respondents indicating changes to number of faculty/staff members for fall 2020 semester (respondents could select all that applied).



The majority of the 257 programs that responded to the question indicated that no changes had been made to their staffing levels for fall 2020 (59.1%). Of the programs that indicated a reduction in full-time faculty, part-time faculty, or staff members, most indicated a reduction of only one category of employee (e.g., only the number of full-time faculty members was reduced). Of note, more programs at doctoral universities reduced the number of full-time faculty members, with 21.2% of R1s, 22.5% of R2s, and 26.7% of DPUs reporting reductions compared to 13.6% overall. However, 20.0% of programs at R2s also indicated increasing the number of full-time faculty members. In programs at public institutions, 18.2% of reduced the number of full-time faculty members.

Respondents were also asked whether their campuses had hiring freezes in place, and 64.8% indicated that there was one in place. Notably, 75.5% of public institutions reported having a hiring freeze versus only 52.9% of private institutions.

What’s keeping program/department heads up at night?

Lastly, respondents were asked to identify in an open-ended format the number one issue currently keeping them up at night. A qualitative analysis

of the 242 responses identified the emerging themes listed in order of prevalence below.

- **Health and safety.** By far the most prevalent theme identified was that program/department heads were concerned about the health and safety of their students, faculty members, and staff members who came to campus and went to in-person field placements. Examples of responses include “keeping students safe as they attempt to serve clients and communities” and “students, faculty, and staff becoming infected with COVID-19.”
- **Field placements.** Field placements for students are a concern for program/department leaders. “Securing enough quality placements for our students” was a common theme.
- **Continuing quality education.** “Providing appropriate education online that results in competent graduates.” Respondents made it clear they were not only concerned with providing education, but also wanted to ensure that their students were still receiving a high-quality education in new formats that prepared them to be successful social workers after graduation.
- **Enrollment, recruitment, and budget.** As one respondent noted, enrollment, recruitment, and budget are all related: “The budget, which is dependent on enrollment.” A handful of respondents also spoke of the sustainability of their programs or institutions if enrollment becomes a larger issue at their campuses.
- **Mental health.** “Anxiety about managing both student and faculty anxiety about current circumstances.” The theme included student, faculty/staff members, and the respondents’ own mental health, and how best to support all of these individuals during the pandemic.
- **Virtual pedagogy/student engagement.** “Keeping our students engaged in a virtual classroom setting.” Respondents spoke of challenges created by delivering course content online and how to keep students engaged in a fully virtual setting.
- **Staffing levels/faculty burnout.** “Faculty burnout—our teaching loads have increased, as has the number of students in most sections of courses. In addition, we are likely facing furloughs, and most faculty are changing the mode of instruction from face-to-face to hybrid or 100% online.”

Additional themes mentioned less often included social justice issues on campus and in the community, programs completing their accreditation requirements, child/elder care challenges for students and staff members, morale of faculty and staff members, the upcoming election, and as one respondent simply stated, “the future.”