

“What’d We Miss?”:

An Initial Analysis of Politics, Demographics, and COVID-19 Rates in Colleges’ Resumption of Instructional Operations for Fall 2020

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C2i Research and Policy Brief No. 1

Key Findings:

Generally, institutions who decided on an instructional mode of operation by June 15th remained steadfast in the decision on August 5th.

Schools in Republican-led States were more likely to postpone deciding and operate in-person, and less likely to be online:

- A Republican governor was correlated with a lower chance of choosing an online option by Aug 5th (-5pp) and a higher chance of being TBD (7pp) – a similar trend is found for institutions moving from TBD to online (-9pp) or staying TBD (8pp) from June 15th to Aug 5th.
- A Republican-controlled legislature was linked to a 9pp increase in being in-person and -6pp decrease of being TBD by Aug 5th.
- Private 4-year institutional decisions were 12pp more likely to be TBD with a Republican governor and 12pp more likely to be in-person with a Republican-controlled legislature.

State revenue loss was correlated to a lower chance of being TBD on June 15th or Aug 5th, but generally not consistently related with other decisions.

The data show no evidence that county case rates per capita were a strong piece of the decision-making process. State case rates were mostly not related to decisions (in fact, schools in states in the 2nd and 3rd quintile of cases were more likely to be in-person), except that schools were less likely to be in-person in the highest quintile of cases.

Institutions serving more White students were less likely to choose online instruction, and likely to decide quickly. For every 24%-point increase in the share of the student body who are White, the chance of an institution choosing as of August to be online (-14pp) or TBD (-19pp) decreased.

This brief should be treated as a preliminary analysis of the C2i mode of instruction data. Any questions or comments about the work should be directed to [c2i@davidson.edu](mailto:c2i@ davidson.edu).

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* Analysis and opinions expressed in this brief are that of the authors and do not necessarily express the views or opinions of their employer(s).



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About the Authors



Daniel A. Collier, Ph.D. Daniel A. Collier, Ph.D. earned his doctoral degree from the University of Illinois at Urbana/Champaign and is currently a Research Associate at the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research. Daniel conducts research on higher education policy and politics, how tuition-free policy may affect student behavior and persistence, and how student loan debt affects post-college beliefs and behaviors. Currently, Daniel is driving research on the Kalamazoo Promise and is helping the field understand who may be enrolled in Income-Driven Repayment. As the former Director of Research for Success at WMU, Daniel led the research agenda on Western Michigan University's largest campus-wide student success initiative. His research includes inferential and causal designs and his recent or upcoming works can be read in *Higher Education Research & Development*, *Journal of Student Financial Aid*, and *Research in Higher Education*. Daniel also serves as a Research Affiliate for the Student loan Law Initiative at UC Irvine and the College Crisis Initiative at Davidson College.



Dan Fitzpatrick, Ph.D. is a Research and Assessment Specialist at the University of Michigan (Ann Arbor), with a background in Educational Policy and program evaluation that he has applied in private, nonprofit, and academic settings. His research focuses on how heterogeneity in policy characteristics relates to how effective education policy reforms are, both overall and for disadvantaged students: he examines which version of a policy or program is more helpful to what students, in order to inform program design. His work has been published in outlets including *Research in Higher Education*, *Campbell Systematic Reviews*, *Higher Education Research & Development*, and *Middle Grades Research Journal*.



Sam Snideman, Ed.D. has spent the bulk of his career in public service and higher education. He spent three years with the Indiana Commission for Higher Education as a senior policy analyst and Director of Alignment and Readiness. He was part of the leadership team that guided the development of Indiana's College and Career Ready Standards for English/Language Arts and Mathematics. After leaving the Commission, he briefly worked as Assistant Director of the Indiana Regional Works Councils, helping provide guidance and support to the five Regional Works Councils in southern Indiana as they worked to align K-12, higher education, and workforce policies. Snideman has also served as contract faculty at Indiana State University and Ivy Tech Community College. Snideman recently completed his doctoral degree at Ball State University.



Christopher R. Marsicano is an Assistant Professor of the Practice of Higher Education in the Educational Studies Department and Founding Director of the College Crisis Initiative at Davidson College. His research interests include higher education policy and finance, politics and public opinion as related to equity in higher education, public management, and civic engagement. He examines higher education institutions as political actors and the outcomes associated with their attempts to impact the political process. Much of Marsicano's work focuses on higher education institution lobbyists and their activities in Washington, DC, but he is also interested in how state-level political decisions – like raising the minimum wage – impact higher education institutions. In addition to publications in peer-reviewed outlets like *Educational Researcher* and *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research*, Marsicano's research has been featured in many national and international media publications including *InsideHigherEd*, *Times Higher Education*, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times* and the *Wall Street Journal*.

About the College Crisis Initiative

The College Crisis Initiative (or C2i) is a research lab at Davidson College dedicated to examining how colleges and universities innovate in times of crisis. Born out of the COVID-19 pandemic, C2i tracks college and university reopening plans of 2,958 four-year and two-year, non-profit and public community colleges, colleges, and universities in the United States and 905 institutions abroad. With over 30 students and 20 research affiliates at major universities and think tanks, C2i conducts research on how colleges are handling the pandemic. People interested in understanding how colleges are planning to reopen can visit the C2i COVID-19 dashboard at www.collegecrisis.org/dashboard.

Funding Statement

The College Crisis Initiative receives generous support from the ECMC Foundation and Davidson College to collect and analyze data regarding the ways in which higher education institutions are innovating during the COVID-19 crisis. The C2i dataset analyzed in this brief made possible by that support.

About the Quality Control Process for this Brief

Research briefs at the College Crisis Initiative (C2i) undergo a basic quality-control process to ensure that the work meets standards of the profession. Authors of a C2i research brief select an external reviewer to read over their work and make comments prior to publication. Furthermore, the Director of the Initiative selects at least two research affiliates not associated with the work to review the brief as well. No brief is published without a recommendation to do so from the external reviewer and the two research affiliates that are not associated with the work. The external reviewer and research affiliate reviewers are known to the authors and vice versa. The process is not blind. Therefore, readers of this brief should understand that this process is not as robust as would be needed for publication in a peer-reviewed external academic journal, but that reviewers have read the work and made the recommendation to post online. After posting online, authors may choose to submit their briefs for consideration by a peer-reviewed academic journal. Should a research brief be accepted to a peer-reviewed journal, C2i will remove the pre-print posting and redirect any links to the brief to that journal's publication of the brief. Findings from the brief should, therefore, be considered a pre-peer review product. **The primary purpose of the C2i research brief series is to release policy-relevant papers for comment and discussion. Researchers who wish to cite C2i manuscripts in the research brief series should understand that they have not gone through rigorous peer-review, but have gone through the quality control process described above.**

For this research brief, the following people reviewed the paper:

Reviewers for this Work:

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Director's Note

This brief represents a big step in the growth of the College Crisis Initiative (C2i). What began as a group of three undergraduate research assistants and their professor is now a team consisting of over 30 students, four Davidson college faculty leaders, and a growing number of research affiliates at think tanks, universities, and firms on two continents. C2i has collected mode of instruction data for over 3,000 institutions in 92 countries. Given our growth and data collection efforts since May, made possible by a generous grant from the ECMC Foundation, we thought it was time for us to begin releasing brief reports that take a first look at the descriptive trends surrounding college campus reopening plans. This report will be the first of many. It asks an important question – “What’d we miss?”

The line comes from Thomas Jefferson’s first appearance in the musical¹ *Hamilton*². When Jefferson returns from ambassadorial duties in France, he asks his colleague James Madison the simple question, “What’d I miss?.” The inquiry is Jefferson’s acknowledgment that he has been too focused, perhaps myopically, on the French Revolution to have a comprehensive understanding of the state of affairs stateside. Madison’s answers include references to “government control” and “a political abyss.”

Like the song, this brief is a recognition that early analyses of college and university reopening plans focused heavily, perhaps myopically, on the capacity of institutions to handle public health challenges related to residential student populations. It seeks to provide a more comprehensive view of the political, demographic, and social dynamics of those choices. We ask the question, “what factors, in addition to COVID-19 case counts, are related to campus reopening decisions?” The answers aren’t terribly different from those given by Madison to Jefferson – “government control” and a “political abyss.”

Needless to say, I am thrilled with this paper and look forward to your comments and thoughts on the work.³ I am grateful for Daniel Collier’s leadership, Dan Fitzpatrick’s analytical mind, and Sam Snideman’s keen political instincts. I am also thankful to the four reviewers who took time to ensure quality control of the work. Mostly, I am exceptionally grateful for the 30+ students who collected the data between July 15th and August 5th to make this possible. Lastly, I hope that this brief will be the first of many. In the words of *Hamilton*’s Jefferson, they’re “already on [their] way.”

Most sincerely,



Christopher R. Marsicano, Ph.D.
Founding Director, C2i

¹ Thank you for indulging the liberal arts college professor as he connects a social science work to the arts and humanities. In my defense, referencing *Hamilton* in the title was the brain child of co-author Dan Fitzpatrick.

² Miranda, L., Lacamoire, A., & Chernow, R. (2016). *Hamilton: an American musical*. Vocal selections. [Los Angeles, California]: Warner/Chappell.

³ We welcome any comments and questions you may have about the work at [c2i@davidson.edu](mailto:c2i@ davidson.edu).

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The COVID-19 pandemic has forced many economic and social changes in the United States. The pandemic’s social, logistical, and epidemiological costs are often in tension with each other. Many employers have struggled with when, how fully, and for whom to operate in-person instead of remotely. During the summer, higher education institutions debated the relative merits of in-person, online, and hybrid models, particularly in the face of deeply uncertain 2020-21 finances.¹ These debates happened with a background of politicized decision-making in higher education (HE)² and worsening politicization of the pandemic itself.³ One sector that has long struggled with politicization is HE⁴ and, in the COVID-19 world, institutions have come under intense scrutiny by political actors and the public – all while facing a financially uncertain year.⁵ HE institutional leaders have chosen various modes of instruction – data which C2i have collected. This study examined which factors were related to institutions choosing to be primarily online, primarily in-person, hybrid/flex, or were to be determined (TBD) by June 15th and August 5th, 2020. Primarily, we asked the following questions:

1. **What did the instructional landscape of higher education “look” like on June 15th and how did this landscape change by August 5th?**
2. **Did state politics relate to mode of instruction decisions to be primarily online, in-person, hybrid/hyflex, or wait for a decision?**
3. **Are there correlations between mode of instruction decisions and losses in states’ revenue in from March 2020 to May 2020?**
4. **Are there links between county and state COVID rates and mode of instruction decisions?**
5. **Did the racial composition of enrolled students relate to mode of instruction decisions?**

We generated analyses based on institutional decisions by June 15th – right as the major spike in national cases was beginning – and August 5th, which is the day before Johns Hopkins University announced that they would no longer plan for an in-person semester and instead go online. As of the date of posting of this brief, 96 other institutions have made the same decision on or after August 5th. Nationally on June 15th the U.S. experienced 18,307 new COVID-19 cases and on August 5th 51,884 new cases. For this brief, we joined institutional data from IPEDS,⁶ State COVID-19 data from the New York Times,⁷ and county COVID-19 data from USA Facts⁸ to the existing C2i database housed at Davidson College.⁹

Observed Trends of Institutional Decisions

As **Figure 1** illustrates, 75% of institutions in the C2i database had not decided on the mode of Fall undergraduate instructional operations by June 15th. With the nation beginning to experience an uptick in national cases and with the Fall semester still roughly two months away, this pattern seems to suggest that administrators were predominantly engaging in a “wait and see” approach. Further, as illustrated, for the institutions that decided by June 15th, very few moved away from this early-identified mode of operation. Movement in approaches from June 15th to August 5th was primarily driven by institutions that had adopted the “wait and see” approach deciding. Almost two-thirds of TBD schools decided by August 5th. Of the 2202 institutions TBD on June 15th by August 5th, 27% moved online (primarily or fully), 22% moved in-person (primarily or fully), and 14% to a hybrid/flex approach - 35% were still TBD on August 5th (26% of the full sample).

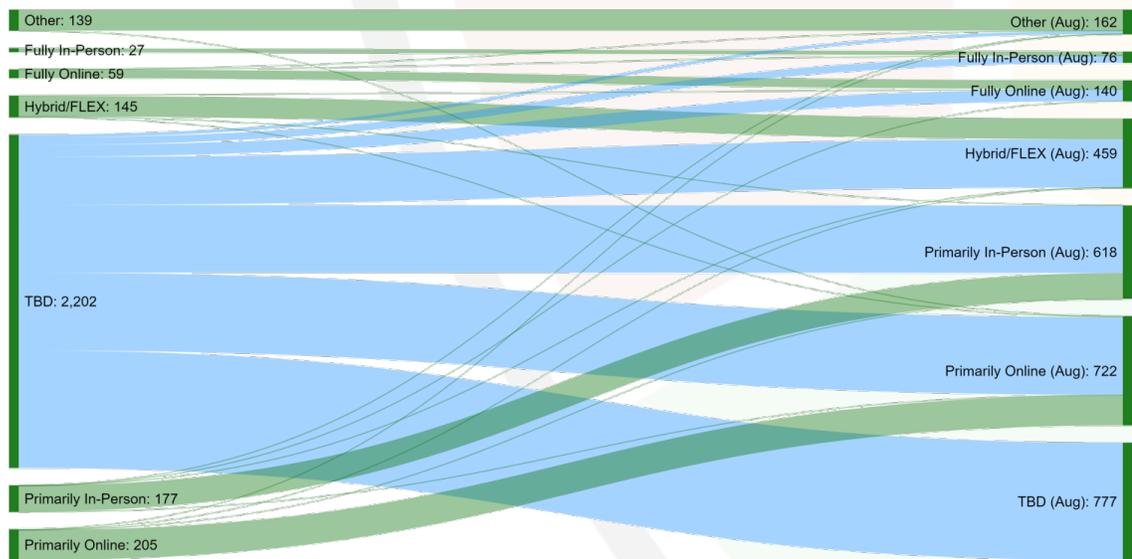


Figure 1 - Institutional Instructional Decision June 15th to August 5th

State Politics

Mode of instruction was less likely to be online and more likely to be in person in states with Republican leadership, but with differences by type of institution and by gubernatorial or legislative leadership. With the full sample pooled together, institutions in states with Republican governors were linked with a lower chance of choosing an online mode of instruction (-5pp) and a higher chance of being TBD (7pp) by August 5th – but no such trends were found for the June 15th decision marker. Next, a Republican-controlled legislature was correlated with a higher chance of being in-person (9pp) or choosing a flex (6pp) option – while being less likely to be TBD (-6pp).

Each institutional sector was subject to political pressures. As Figure 2 shows, for 4-year public institutions, a Republican governor was related to higher chance of being in-person (9pp) – whereas, a Republican-controlled legislature was linked with a 15pp greater chance of choosing a Flex option and lower likelihood of being TBD (-11pp). For 2-year public institutions, a Republican legislature related to increased chance of being in-person (9pp). Even 4-year private institutions’ decisions seem to respond to political features as choosing TBD (12pp) was positively correlated to a Republican governor and choosing to be in-person (12pp) related to a Republican-controlled legislature.

Finally, when examining institutions who were TBD on June 15th and the mode of instruction decisions made by August 5th, Republican governors were correlated with a -9pp chance of moving from TBD to online and an 8pp chance of remaining TBD – while a Republican-controlled legislature was linked to a higher chance of moving to in-person (10pp) instruction and lower chance of remaining TBD (-8pp).

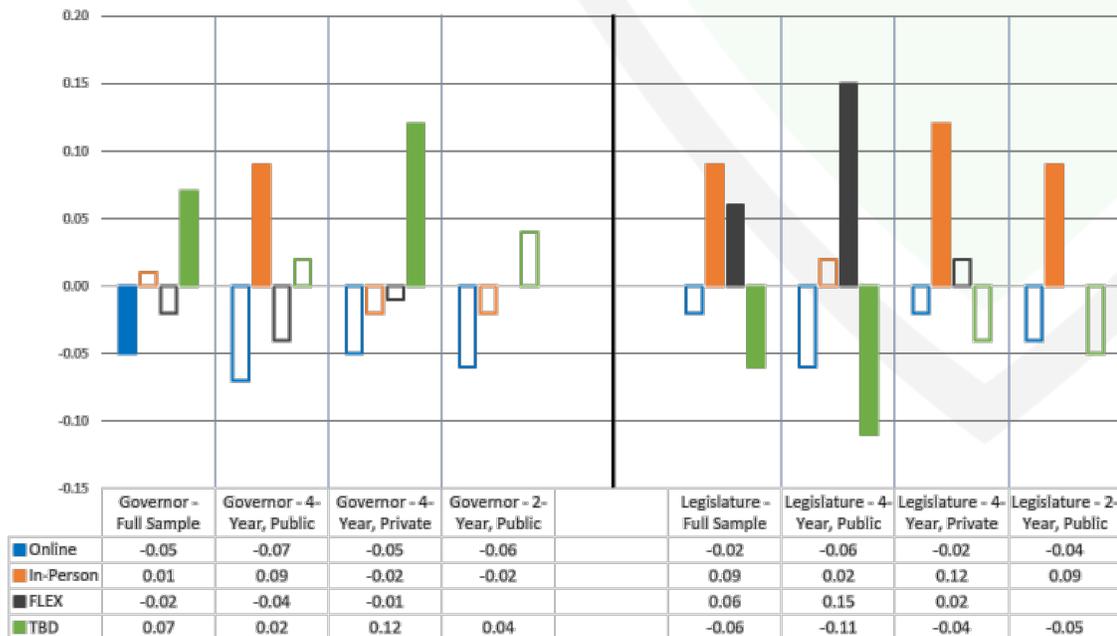


Figure 2 - Republican Governor and Republican Legislature Relationship with Instructional Outcomes by August 5th, 2020. *Bars filled with color denote significant findings.

Losses in State Revenue

As highlighted in **Figure 3**, the loss of state revenue was consistently related to institutions being less likely to be TBD as of August 5th (or even by June 15th) – meaning decreased state revenue encouraged institutions to make an operational decision sooner. For August 5th, larger losses of state revenue linked with a lower chance of being TBD at between -10pp and -11pp. In (the same) pooled analysis, being located in states with the highest revenue losses related to a 9pp increase in choosing the online option. This outcome seems driven by 4-year public institutions (24pp). The most extreme state revenue losses were also linked to 4-year private institutions’ decreased chance of choosing an in-person option (-18pp). Of note, the last quintile in loss of state revenue primarily consists of California’s nearly 700 schools and Oregon’s 87 schools – therefore, outcomes such as being more likely to be online (15pp) by June 15th or by August 5th (9pp) and less likely to be TBD (-11pp) on August 5th are likely representing the activity of California schools.



Figure 3 - Losses in State Revenue (by Percentage) Related to College Mode of Operation
**Bars filled with color denote significant findings.*

County and State COVID-19 Cases

For this brief we reported analyses that included cumulative per capita (per 100,000 persons) county and state cases at the date of the outcome. We assessed multiple alternative ways for incorporating case prevalence, and this approach produced the strongest models; please see the endnote for the other ways we tabulated COVID-19 cases and generated models.¹⁰ Our analyses did not reveal consistent relationships between county COVID-19 cases and decisions. There are some scattered statistically-significant findings, but no discernable pattern that allowed us to suggest these rates were an important part of the decision-making process.

State COVID-19 cases related to decisions in two dissimilar ways. As would make sense if administrators were responding to prevalence, institutions in the highest quintile were less likely to be in-person (-10pp). However, that is not true of the 4th quintile, and those in the 2nd and 3rd quintiles were more likely (at 9pp and 8pp respectively) to plan in-person instruction. Further, institutions in the 2nd and 3rd quintiles were also less likely to choose a FLEX option, at -7pp and -9pp respectively. More specifically, 4-year public institutions in the highest quintile of state cases were -23pp to be in-person and 17pp to be TBD – which seems to be driving the pooled analysis. Similarly, for 2-year public institutions, being located in a state in the highest categorization of cases was linked a lower chance of being in-person (-10pp).

We found some consistency in responding to the highest 20% of state-related COVID-19 cases. Institutions did not seem to respond cautiously to state COVID-19 case counts in the middle three quintiles. Overall, these findings indicate that when developing reopening plans, county or state COVID-19 cumulative case counts were simply not as important as state politics, budgetary concerns, or other institutional factors and characteristics.

Mode of Instruction Decisions and Percentage of Enrolled White Students

As **Figure 4** highlights, institutions enrolling a higher share of White undergraduate students made plans sooner and were less likely to select online instruction. For each 24-percentage point increase in the share of students that are white, institutions showed a lower chance of being primarily online (-14pp) and TBD (-19pp) by August 5th. Our analysis revealed a similar trend for decisions made by June 15th: online (-8pp), TBD (-20pp), and Flex (4pp).

Examinations by sector hinted that 4-year private and 2-year public institutions may be sensitive to this relationship. For 4-year private institutions increases in White undergraduate students resulted in a lower chance of choosing an online mode of instruction (-18pp) and TBD (-18pp); there were no comparable relationships at 4-year publics. As for 2-year public institutions, an increased percentage of White students was correlated with an increased chance of being in-person (16pp) and lower chance of being TBD (-24pp). Overall, these trends seem to suggest the existence of White identity pressures on institutional decisions.

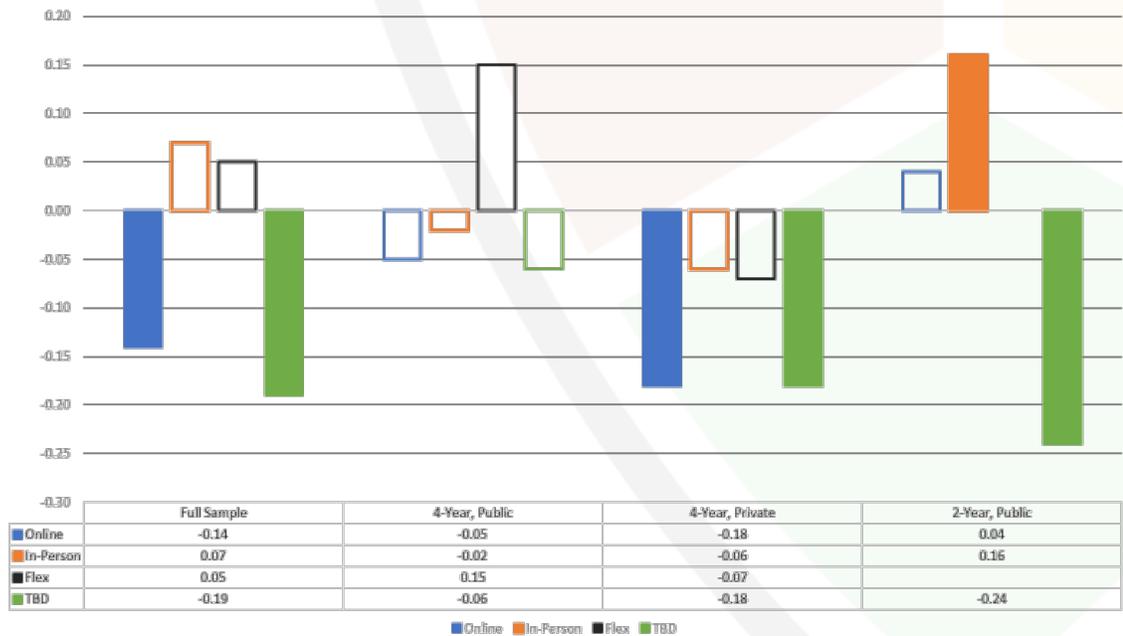


Figure 4 - Links Between Percentage of Enrolled White Students and Instructional Mode of Operation
 *Bars filled with color denote significant findings.

Collegiate Sports Conferences

A major topic of interest – both in public narratives and to some authors – was that collegiate sports (specifically football) might be driving institutional decisions and our models suggests a relationship may exist. We generated multiple models with sports conferences as separate categories (e.g. Division I, Division II; Power 5, Non-Power 5) and with a binary indicator of whether the institution was a member of the so-called “Power 5” conferences – the ACC, Big 10, Big 12, SEC, or Pac-12. In models denoting Power 5 versus not, we found that institutions who were Power 5 conference members were less likely to be TBD by June 15th (-15pp) and August 5th (-16pp), indicating that athletic or athletic-revenue pressures may have encouraged more rapid decision-making. However, being in the Power 5 was not related to moving from TBD to other options (or remaining TBD). More aligned with speculation, among 4-year public institutions (only), Power 5 schools were more likely to be in-person (15pp) by August 5th – however, we suggest caution with this finding as it is not robust as other findings we report (in this subsection and elsewhere).

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Implications

1. **Institutions that made operational decisions by June 15th generally stuck to those decisions, even as the U.S. experienced almost threefold increases in COVID-19 cases.** In this context, institutional rigidity does not suggest that leadership were taking into consideration new information regarding the pandemic and adapting to unfolding county or state conditions.
2. **Generally, institutions in a state with a Republican governor were less likely to choose online operations and more likely to be in-person or TBD and those with Republican-controlled legislatures were more likely to be in-person or flex.** Given that Republicans have been far less likely than Democrats to view COVID-19 as a threat to public health or individuals' personal health¹¹ - these findings suggest that it is possible that the politics of COVID-19 and state may have played a direct role in institutional decisions on mode of instruction.
 - a. **As time progressed, it is possible that the question of how to resume instruction became sensitive to politicization.** These political factors overall were not relevant predictors of operational outcomes in the June 15th analysis, but became so between then and August 5th.
 - b. **Higher education is often among the first state budget items to experience cuts in times of economic distress¹²** – and adhering to a governors' or legislatures' platform may be one way administrators believe they can minimize the severity of cuts or even gain other political protections.
 - c. **Further highlighting the politicization of both COVID-19 and higher education, the operational choice of 4-year private institutions to remain TBD on August 5th was also linked with governors' political party and in-person to legislative control.** We posit two possible explanations for this finding (which was robust to multiple specifications):

First, although politicians have more direct operational “control” over public institutional behavior – private institutions are also political entities that need state and political support for various reasons. For example, a private institution may need the state to certify its on-campus police as a law enforcement agency or that it is eligible for state-level financial aid programs. As such, this finding makes sense in that private institutions would probably choose a “wait and see” approach to align with governors' intentions or choose to be in-person should that be a clear legislative preference in order to maintain favorable political ties with power structures.

Second, these findings may simply reflect the responses of institutional leadership to Governors' policy prescriptions in action. Many of the states that moved to reopening phases early in the summer (take, for example Georgia, Texas, and Arizona) were led by Republican governors. Such states experienced spikes in

cases in mid-to-late July. The choice of institutions to still be waiting to make a decision by August may reflect a desire to wait out local spikes before making a final decision for the Fall. While our models control for overall case counts, they do not control for rapid rises in cases immediately prior to the decision dates. Our findings related to GOP Governors may reflect a reticence on the part of institutional leaders to make a decision following a spike of cases – a trend that, at the time, was related to Republican governors and state legislatures.

- d. **We caution against readers drawing causal inferences in these findings.** This brief uses observational, institutional data to examine the relationship between state politics and college reopening plans. It does not have within it a method for causal inference. In model after model, the relationship between GOP leadership and choice of mode of instruction holds. However, the above points are hypotheses as to possible reasons for that relationship, not a definitive statement on the causal relationship between modes of instruction and political factors. These findings should be examined by qualitative scholars through interviews and document analysis to determine whether institutions felt pressure from political influence.
3. **Consistently, larger losses in state revenue correlated with a lower chance of institutions being TBD by both June 15th and August 5th.** As such, the pattern suggested that increased economic pain encouraged institutions to (quickly) make an operational decision. It seems many opted for a FLEX option, except for those in states with the most extreme revenue loss which moved toward an online option. Losses in state revenue linked with public and private institutional decision-making, with consistency as related to a lower chance of being TBD by August 5th. We believe this phenomenon requires additional investigation as more data on budget gaps is collected and understood.
4. **State and county prevalence of COVID-19, measured as discussed in this brief or in a variety of other ways, appears to have had relatively little relationship to institutional decision-making.** County COVID-19 cases per capita showed no pattern of influencing instructional mode. State COVID-19 cases per capita were more relevant to outcomes, but not in a way that indicates that administrators were primarily basing operational decisions on pandemic conditions. We found no substantive, consistent pattern that leads us to believe infection rates were particularly important to outcomes – especially when placed in context of political and social pressures, budgetary concerns, and institutional characteristics. Finding that COVID-19 cases were less relevant than the aforementioned factors is aligned with emergent research.¹³
 - a. **A note about reporting cumulative cases per capita (100,000 persons) instead of other measurements: Generally speaking, these were the strongest models we could develop based on the included variables.** As noted in our endnotes, we tried multiple combinations (at least 16 permutations of ways to represent state-by-county data). Our main findings remain stable across these approaches, including the general pattern that county cases were usually not significant and state cases were sporadically statistically-significant without illustrating an intuitive relationship between infection prevalence and decision-making. Given that cases-to-date produced the strongest model statistics, we suggest that these measures

may be what stakeholders were most sensitive to when making operational decisions before the start of classes.¹⁴ In what could be considered a trauma-centric response, this total case per capita metric seems relevant to other policy decisions beyond higher education.¹⁵

5. **Findings also suggested that campuses that enrolled more White students were less likely to choose the online option or to adopt a “wait and see” approach (TBD) by August 5th.** Sector subgroup analyses showcased that increased enrollment of White students at 4-year private institutions were linked with these trends – as were 2-year public institutions. These findings track with wider trends, given that White Americans have been more divided than Black or Hispanic Americans on whether COVID-19 is a threat to public and individuals’ health, reopening the economy, returning to normalcy, and upon the topic of reopening traditional instructional operations in primary and secondary education.¹⁶ Altogether, this finding further illustrates the sociopolitical pressures that institutions have been under while making these operational decisions.
6. **Major college athletics may have played a role in institutions choosing not to adopt a “wait and see” approach – potentially to signal the intent to engage in the fall sports season.** Our models suggested that institutions in the Power 5 NCAA conference were consistently correlated with a lowered chance of being TBD early in the decision-making process but were generally not linked with any specific mode of operation beyond TBD. This finding suggests that Power 5 institutions wanted to have an instructional decision made early on and that
 - a. **One caveat exists - 4-year public institutions in the Power 5 were more likely to choose an in-person option.** As stated, we promote caution with this finding. Unlike with the patterns established to the TBD decision this finding did not usually stand to the various robustness checks we generated. Therefore, we believe it may be fair to say that for public 4-year institutions that being in a Power 5 conference *could have* led to a higher chance of being in-person, but other factors were more important to decision making.
7. **Other factors such as institutional locale, Barron’s classification, being a HBCU, and total on-campus living expenses were correlated with mode of instruction.** We do not discuss these connections as they were not part of our main questions, as such we have supplied our full models in the appendix for further examination. They do, however, serve as a reminder of the complex situations within which administrators were trying to make decisions about Fall operations.

Conclusions and Eying the Future

Overall, we found that institutional operational decisions in June and early August were not generally correlated with COVID-19 cases. Instead, these decisions were more consistently linked with state political power structures and institutional attributes, such as the percentage of enrolled White students. These trends have a basis in polling on attitudes and behaviors related to COVID-19; they also serve to highlight the various sociopolitical pressures that public and private institutions have been under while deciding on which instructional mode of operation to implement. In short, we found evidence that the politicization of COVID-19 may have permeated into the responses of both public and private higher education sectors.

This C2i research brief brings to light new information on which characteristics and contextual issues were linked to institutional mode of instruction decisions. While imperfect, this brief remains an important first step for understanding the institutional decision-making process and the pressures faced by institutional leaders. In the near future, we plan to build upon this research by examining the full C2i sample at the time of the institutions' instructional start date; for public institutions, we also plan to capture predicted budgetary gaps (instead of relying on the proxy of lost state revenue) to insert into these initial models. However, it will be some time until institutions' budget gaps are settled and made public. Furthermore, in future months we will have more information on states' budget declines, which could further strengthen our models. We plan on conducting additional checks on whether available endowment funds mattered for decision-making, by generating a dollar per student calculation – instead of denoting whether an institution had at-least a billion dollars in their endowment (see footnote).¹⁷ We suspect that projected budgetary gaps are strongly correlated with the outcomes examined here and the endowment returns are likely linked to instructional pivots from being in-person to online in recent weeks.

Leaders of higher education institutions have long seen themselves “above the fray” of politics. The COVID-19 pandemic, however, has made clear that the long transition from higher education institutions as apolitical actors to major recipients and antecedents of political action is all but complete. The results of this brief suggest that politics, social dynamics around race, and financial issues around athletics and state budgets may have played a role in institutional decision making. When even a college or university's decision whether to open its doors is related to politics, institutions are political actors. It is time for institutions to recognize this trend, and for researchers to examine higher education institutions as political actors.

Appendix A: Methodological Appendix

The C2i database consisted of the institutional IPEDS UnitID variable and several choices of institutional instructional operations. This study used the C2i short description which included each of the choices highlighted in the first graphic. For logistic regressions we condensed fully and primarily online to denote “online” and fully and primarily in-person to denote “in-person”. Using the UnitID joined C2i data with “final release” 2018 IPEDS data. Specifically, we joined the following IPEDS variables: FIPS, COUNTYCD, LOCALE, SECTOR, EFTOTLT (Grand total men and women enrolled for credit during the fall), EFWHITT (Total White Students), UPGRNTP (Percentage of Students Awarded Pell), GISTON2 (Number of Students Living on Campus), CHG5AY3 (On-Campus Room and Board), CHG6AY3 (Other On Campus Expenses), and an HBCU marker.¹⁸ We then used the EFTOTLT variable to generate the percentage of enrolled students who were White and Living on Campus. For the regressions, we also mean centered these variables. For the percentage of students receiving Pell, we generated tertiles as continuous outcomes produced unusual marginal effects and standard errors (the reference group was the middle tertile). We also combined the CHG5AY3 and CHG6AY3 totals generate an On-Campus Cost metric – and then split the outcomes in quintiles with the reference set at the 1st quintile.

Next, we used the *New York Times*’ (NYT) COVID-19 github page to download the raw counts of cases for each state and the USAFacts COVID-19 Recovery Hub to download county counts. We choose the USAFacts for county cases over the NYT data after realizing that NYT condensed the counties of the City of New York into one variable. We wanted to keep the counties separate given that they were likely uniquely affected by COVID-19. This report used a per capita (100,000 persons) total cases at the time of the decision outcomes we examined being June 15th and August 5th. We calculated the per capita cases by taking the raw cases and multiplying those by 100,000, then dividing this outcome by the appropriate county or state population. County populations were supplied by the USAFacts COVID-19 Recovery Hub and state populations via the Census Bureau.¹⁹ Next, we generated quintile for county and state cases per capita with the reference group being the first quintile (lowest cases per capita) – so we could identify changes in counties or states that were “worse” off.

C2i researchers had access to Barron’s institutional classification schema and we joined the classifier to using the UnitID. Once Barron’s was joined we trimmed the classifications by removing the “+” classification and made the reference group “Competitive” institutions.

Additionally, using data from IPEDS, we joined athletic conferences to institutions using the UnitID. We then created a binary Power-5, non-Power-5 categorization, including the ACC, Big 10, Big 12, SEC, and Pac-12 in the Power-5 categorization.

State revenue losses were captured from NPR’s reporting with data from the State and Local Finance Initiative.²⁰ In this report, data for state losses were tabulated from comparing revenues from March to May of 2020 to the same timeframe in 2019. We joined these state tabulations to the website.

Finally, to identify state legislative control we used the “State Partisan Composition” data from the National Conference of State Legislatures.²¹

For continuous variables where data were missing, we generated a missing statistic (usually -99) and another variable denoting a missing flag. For categorical variables we simply generated a missing category. Where logistic regression outcomes were reported, the outcomes were reported in Marginal Effects – meaning that the outcome is interpreted by percentage points and the results can be positive or negative as related to the measured outcome. We also checked the VIF and tolerance measurement for collinearity issues and found no issues in our reported models (or in our robustness check models).

Appendix B: Full Regression Tables

Appendix Table 1 - June 15th Decision
(Cumulative Cases per Capita at 100k persons)

	June 15 th Online		June 15 th In-person		June 15 th FLEX		June 15 th TBD	
	ME	SE	ME	SE	ME	SE	ME	SE
<i>State Political Attributes</i>								
Republican Governor REF: Democrat	-.01	.02	.01	.01	.00	.01	.01	.02
Republican Legislature REF: Democrat	-.01	.02	.03*	.01	.01	.01	-.02	.02
<i>State Revenue Changes</i>								
-19% to -25%	.03	.03	.03	.02	.02	.02	-.08*	.03
-26% to -28%	.01	.03	.01	.02	.02	.02	-.11***	.03
-29% to -37%	.06*	.03	.03	.02	.01	.02	-.16***	.03
-38% to -53%	.15**	.05	-.02	.04	.05	.03	-.29***	.09
REF: +8 to -18%								
<i>Cumulative County June 15th Cases Per 100k</i>								
139 to 279 Cases	-.00	.02	.01	.02	.01	.01	-.03	.03
280 to 531 Cases	.01	.02	-.02	.02	.01	.02	-.02	.03
532 to 1004 Cases	.02	.02	-.00	.02	-.00	.01	-.04	.03
1005 to 8104 Cases	.03	.02	.01	.02	-.01	.01	-.12***	.04
REF: 0 to 138 Cases								
<i>Cumulative State June 15th Cases Per 100K</i>								
357 to 407 Cases	.00	.02	.04	.01	-.01	.01	-.04	.03
408 to 545 Cases	.00	.02	.01	.02	.02	.02	-.06	.03
546 to 1036 Cases	.03	.03	.03	.02	.03	.02	-.07+	.04
1037 to 1998 Cases	-.03	.02	-.03	.02	-.02	.02	.03	.04
REF: 51 to 356 Cases								
<i>Percentage of Enrolled</i>								
White (Mean Centered)	-.08**	.03	.04	.03	.04*	.02	-.20***	.04
Living on Campus (Mean Centered)	-.04	.04	.03	.03	-.11***	.03	.03	.06
Pell: 0-33%	.02	.01	.00	.01	-.00	.01	-.03	.02
Pell: 44-100%	.00	.01	-.00	.01	-.02+	.01	-.04*	.02
REF: 24-43%								
<i>On-Campus Living Expenses</i>								
\$10,601 to \$12,403	.01	.03	.00	.02	.01	.02	.06*	.03
\$12,404 to \$13,988	-.04+	.02	.02	.02	.02	.02	.08**	.03
\$13,989 to \$15,864	-.02	.02	.00	.02	.05+	.03	.07**	.03
\$15,865 to \$26,627	-.02	.02	.00	.02	.08*	.03	.09***	.03
REF: \$2,500 to \$12,402								

Appendix Table 1 cont'd.

<i>Institutional Locale</i>								
Rural	-.03*	.01	.01	.02	.00	.01	.04	.03
Suburb	.01	.01	-.01	.01	.02+	.01	-.04+	.02
Town	.00	.02	.02	.02	-.01	.01	-.01	.02
REF: City								
<i>Institutional Sector</i>								
Public, 2-year	-.01	.02	-.00	.02	-.04***	.01	.10***	.03
Private, Non-Profit 2-Year	-.08***	.01	.02	.06	-.05***	.01	.12**	.04
Private, Non-Profit 4-year	-.09***	.01	-.03	.04	-.15+	.09	.09*	.04
REF: Public, 4-year								
<i>Barron's Classification</i>								
Most Competitive	.02	.05	-.05***	.01	-.01	.02	.12**	.04
Highly Competitive	.02	.04	-.01	.02	.02	.03	.04	.05
Very Competitive	.01	.03	-.01	.01	.02	.02	.01	.03
Less Competitive	.05	.03	.01	.02	-.02	.02	-.07+	.04
No Classification	-.00	.02	-.01	.02	.01	.01	-.10***	.02
REF: Competitive								
<i>Additional Institutional Characteristics</i>								
HBCU	-.09***	.01	-.01	.03	.06	.05	.06	.04
Power 5 Conference	.02	.04	.05	.04	.01	.03	-.15*	.07
N	2938		2938		2938		2938	
X ²	248.90		129.17		129.44		205.10	
McFadden R ²	0.14		0.09		0.11		0.06	

$p \leq .001$ ***, $p \leq .01$ **, $p \leq .05$ *, $p \leq .10$ +

**Appendix Table 2 - June 15th TBD to August 5th Decision, Full C2i Sample
(August 5th Cumulative Cases per Capita at 100k Persons)**

	June 15 th TBD to Aug 5 th Online		June 15 th TBD to Aug 5 th In-person		June 15 th TBD To August 5 th Hybrid		TBD on June 15 th and Aug 5 th	
	ME	SE	ME	SE	ME	SE	ME	SE
<i>State Political Attributes</i>								
Republican Governor REF: Democrat	-.09**	.03	-.02	.02	.01	.02	.08**	.03
Republican Legislature REF: Democrat	-.03	.03	.10***	.02	.02	.02	-.08**	.03
<i>State Revenue Changes</i>								
-19% to -25%	.00	.03	-.01	.02	-.01	.02	.01	.03
-26% to -28%	-.02	.03	.04	.03	.08*	.03	-.09**	.03
-29% to -37%	-.04	.03	.04	.03	.06**	.02	-.08**	.03
-38% to -53%	.04	.04	-.10*	.04	.10*	.05	-.06	.04
REF: +8 to -18%								
<i>County – Aug 5th Cumulative Cases Per 100k</i>								
538 to 939 Cases	-.02	.03	-.07**	.02	.06*	.03	.04	.03
940 to 1,460 Cases	.01	.03	-.04	.03	.02	.03	.00	.03
1,461 to 2,007 Cases	.06	.04	-.07*	.03	-.00	.03	.01	.04
2,008 to 9,108 Cases	-.02	.04	-.01	.02	.01	.04	.02	.03
REF: 38 to 537								
<i>State – Aug 5th Cumulative Cases Per 100k</i>								
942 to 1,234 Cases	-.02	.03	.05+	.03	-.03	.02	.02	.03
1,235 to 1,487 Cases	-.01	.04	.04	.04	-.08***	.02	.02	.04
1,488 to 1,854 Cases	-.02	.04	.03	.03	-.01	.03	-.00	.04
1,855 to 2,712 Cases	.04	.04	-.10***	.03	.03	.03	.04	.04
REF: 194 to 941 Cases								
<i>Percentage of Enrolled</i>								
White (Mean Centered)	-.00	.05	.08	.05	.07	.05	-.12*	.06
Living on Campus (Mean Centered)	-.03	.07	.00	.06	.09	.06	.00	.01
Pell: 0-33%	.00	.02	.03	.02	-.03	.02	-.02	.02
Pell: 44-100%	-.01	.02	-.02	.02	-.04	.02	.06*	.03
REF: 24-43%								
<i>On-Campus Living Expenses</i>								
\$10,601 to \$12,403	-.02	.04	.07+	.04	.04	.04	-.09*	.03
\$12,404 to \$13,988	-.03	.05	.04	.04	.08	.04	.08*	.04
\$13,989 to \$15,864	-.00	.05	.08*	.04	.05	.04	-.12**	.04
\$15,865 to \$26,627	.01	.05	.08+	.04	.05	.04	-.10*	.04
REF: \$2,500 to \$12,402								

Appendix Table 2 Cont'd.

<i>Institutional Locale</i>								
Rural	-.09***	.03	-.02	.03	-.02	.02	.12***	.03
Suburb	-.02	.02	.04	.02	.02	.02	-.02	.03
Town	-.11***	.03	.02	.03	-.01	.02	.09**	.03
REF: City								
<i>Institutional Sector</i>								
Public, 2-year	.05	.04	-.03	.04	-.06*	.03	.04	.03
Private, Non-Profit 2-Year	-.18***	.04	-.08	.07	-.12***	.02	.36***	.06
Private, Non-Profit 4-year	-.17***	.05	.04	.03	-.15**	.05	.20***	.04
REF: Public, 4-year								
<i>Barron's Classification</i>								
Most Competitive	.11*	.05	-.08*	.03	.11*	.05	-.22***	.05
Highly Competitive	.01	.06	-.09*	.04	.14*	.06	-.04	.08
Very Competitive	-.09	.04	.07*	.03	-.01	.03	-.08+	.04
Less Competitive	.00	.04	.01	.04	-.02	.03	.03	.04
No Classification	-.07*	.04	-.04	.03	.02	.03	.15***	.03
REF: Competitive								
<i>Additional Institutional Characteristics</i>								
HBCU	.00	.06	-.12**	.04	.12+	.06	.01	.06
Power 5 Conference	.04	.07	.07	.06	-.06	.04	-.17	.10
N	2187		2187		2187		2938	
X ²	239.16		328.39		177.24		358.17	
McFadden R ²	0.09		0.14		0.10		0.13	

$p \leq .001$ ***, $p \leq .01$ **, $p \leq .05$ *, $p \leq .10$ +

**Appendix Table 3 - August 5th Decision, Full C2i Sample
(August 5th Cumulative Cases per Capita at 100k Persons)**

	August 5th Online		August 5th In-person		August 5th FLEX		August 5th TBD	
	ME	SE	ME	SE	ME	SE	ME	SE
<i>State Political Attributes</i>								
Republican Governor REF: Democrat	-.05*	.02	.01	.02	-.02	.02	.07**	.02
Republican Legislature REF: Democrat	-.02	.02	.09***	.02	.06**	.02	-.06**	.02
<i>State Revenue Changes</i>								
-19% to -25%	.01	.03	-.02	.02	.00	.02	-.01	.02
-26% to -28%	-.02	.03	-.02	.03	.07**	.03	-.10***	.02
-29% to -37%	-.02	.03	.03	.02	.02	.02	-.10***	.02
-38% to -53%	.09*	.04	.03	.03	.07+	.04	-.11***	.03
REF: +8 to -18%								
<i>County – Aug 5th Cumulative Cases Per 100k</i>								
538 to 939 Cases	-.03	.03	-.04*	.02	.03	.02	.04	.03
940 to 1,460 Cases	.01	.03	-.02	.02	-.01	.02	-.00	.03
1,461 to 2,007 Cases	.02	.03	.05+	.03	.03	.02	-.04	.03
2,008 to 9,108 Cases	-.04	.03	.01	.03	-.04+	.03	-.03	.03
REF: 38 to 537								
<i>State – Aug 5th Cumulative Cases Per 100k</i>								
942 to 1,234 Cases	-.02	.03	.09***	.03	-.07***	.01	.00	.03
1,235 to 1,487 Cases	.01	.03	.08*	.04	-.09***	.02	.01	.03
1,488 to 1,854 Cases	-.03	.03	.03	.03	.03	.03	.01	.03
1,855 to 2,712 Cases	.02	.03	-.10***	.02	.02	.03	.03	.03
REF: 194 to 941 Cases								
<i>Percentage of Enrolled</i>								
White (Mean Centered)	-.14***	.04	.07	.04	.05	.04	-.19***	.04
Living on Campus (Mean Centered)	-.08	.06	.03	.05	-.04	.05	-.10	.07
Pell: 0-33%	.02	.02	.02	.02	-.03*	.02	-.03	.02
Pell: 44-100%	-.01	.02	-.03	.02	-.06***	.02	.02	.02
REF: 24-43%								
<i>On-Campus Living Expenses</i>								
\$10,601 to \$12,403	.01	.04	.07*	.03	.05	.03	-.03	.03
\$12,404 to \$13,988	-.02	.04	.06+	.03	.08*	.04	-.03	.03
\$13,989 to \$15,864	.03	.04	.08*	.03	.08*	.03	-.06+	.03
\$15,865 to \$26,627	.03	.04	.08*	.04	.11**	.04	-.03	.03
REF: \$2,500 to \$12,402								

Appendix Table 3 Cont'd.

<i>Institutional Locale</i>								
Rural	-.09***	.02	.01	.03	-.01	.02	.11***	.03
Suburb	-.02	.02	.02	.02	.02	.02	-.03	.02
Town	-.09***	.02	.05*	.02	-.01	.02	.08**	.03
REF: City								
<i>Institutional Sector</i>								
Public, 2-year	.07*	.03	.00	.03	-.08***	.02	.06+	.03
Private, Non-Profit 2-Year	-.21***	.03	.02	.08	-.13***	.02	.33***	.06
Private, Non-Profit 4-year	-.20***	.04	.02	.05	-.19***	.05	.17***	.04
REF: Public, 4-year								
<i>Barron's Classification</i>								
Most Competitive	.12*	.05	-.09**	.03	.10*	.05	-.17***	.04
Highly Competitive	.05	.05	-.10**	.03	.10*	.05	-.03	.07
Very Competitive	-.02	.03	.05	.03	.00	.02	-.07+	.04
Less Competitive	.02	.04	-.00	.03	-.03	.02	.01	.04
No Classification	-.08*	.03	-.07**	.02	-.02	.02	.07*	.03
REF: Competitive								
<i>Additional Institutional Characteristics</i>								
HBCU	-.09*	.05	-.08+	.05	.15*	.06	.02	.04
Power 5 Conference	-.02	.05	.08	.05	-.03	.03	-.16*	.07
N	2937		2937		2937		2937	
X ²	442.36		454.45		246.36		339.19	
McFadden R ²	0.13		0.14		0.10		0.10	

$p \leq .001$ ***, $p \leq .01$ ** , $p \leq .05$ * , $p \leq .10$ +

**Appendix Table 4 - August 5th Decision, Public Four-Year Institutions
(August 5th Cumulative Cases per Capita at 100k Persons)**

	August 5th Online		August 5th In-person		August 5th FLEX		August 5th TBD	
	ME	SE	ME	SE	ME	SE	ME	SE
<i>State Political Attributes</i>								
Republican Governor REF: Democrat	-.07	.05	.09*	.04	-.04	.04	.02	.04
Republican Legislature REF: Democrat	-.06	.05	.02	.04	.15***	.04	-.11*	.05
<i>State Revenue Changes</i>								
-19% to -25%	.03	.05	-.02	.04	.06	.05	-.04	.02
-26% to -28%	-.08+	.05	.09+	.05	.12*	.06	-.11***	.02
-29% to -37%	-.08	.05	.08	.05	.03	.05	-.08*	.02
-38% to -53%	.24*	.10	-.20**	.06	.10	.10	-.14***	.03
REF: +8 to -18%								
<i>County – Aug 5th Cumulative Cases Per 100k</i>								
538 to 939 Cases	-.00	.05	-.07	.04	.04	.05	.03	.04
940 to 1,460 Cases	.04	.06	-.03	.05	.03	.05	-.09*	.04
1,461 to 2,007 Cases	.04	.07	-.01	.06	-.08	.05	.00	.05
2,008 to 9,108 Cases	.05	.07	.08	.07	-.09+	.06	.04	.05
REF: 38 to 537								
<i>State – Aug 5th Cumulative Cases Per 100k</i>								
942 to 1,234 Cases	.04	.06	.06	.05	-.12**	.04	.08	.06
1,235 to 1,487 Cases	.06	.07	.09	.07	-.18***	.04	.06	.07
1,488 to 1,854 Cases	-.04	.06	-.03	.05	.06	.06	.06	.06
1,855 to 2,712 Cases	.06	.07	-.23***	.04	.10	.07	.17**	.07
REF: 194 to 941 Cases								
<i>Percentage of Enrolled</i>								
White (Mean Centered)	-.05	.12	-.02	.12	.15	.11	-.06	.08
Living on Campus (Mean Centered)	.03	.09	.19*	.08	.09	.09	-.28***	.08
Pell: 0-33%	.01	.04	.02	.04	-.02	.04	-.02	.04
Pell: 44-100%	.07	.05	.05	.04	-.08+	.04	-.03	.03
REF: 24-43%								
<i>On-Campus Living Expenses</i>								
\$10,601 to \$12,403	-.04	.07	.08	.07	.06	.07	-.09*	.04
\$12,404 to \$13,988	-.09	.07	.09	.07	.02	.07	-.03	.05
\$13,989 to \$15,864	-.03	.08	.07	.07	.04	.07	-.09+	.05
\$15,865 to \$26,627	-.09	.07	.04	.08	.10	.09	-.05	.05
REF: \$2,500 to \$12,402								

Appendix Table 4 Cont'd.

<i>Institutional Locale</i>								
Rural	-.08	.06	-.04	.07	-.07	.05	.19**	.07
Suburb	-.01	.04	-.09*	.04	.09*	.04	.03	.04
Town	-.10*	.04	.05	.04	.02	.04	.07	.04
REF: City								
<i>Barron's Classification</i>								
Most Competitive	.16	.14	-.14	.09	.03	.14	-.18***	.01
Highly Competitive	.03	.09	-.05	.07	-.09	.07	.12	.11
Very Competitive	-.03	.06	.01	.05	.00	.06	-.00	.05
Less Competitive	-.01	.06	.04	.05	-.01	.06	-.05	.04
No Classification	-.09+	.05	.02	.05	.09+	.05	-.02	.04
REF: Competitive								
<i>Additional Institutional Characteristics</i>								
HBCU	-.25***	.05	-.09	.07	.21*	.10	.21*	.10
Power 5 Conference	-.03	.07	.15*	.07	-.02	.06	-.19***	.01
N	718		718		718		718	
χ^2	114.42		107.21		81.40		97.92	
McFadden R ²	0.13		0.13		0.11		0.16	

$p \leq .001$ ***, $p \leq .01$ ** , $p \leq .05$ * , $p \leq .10$ +

**Appendix Table 5 - August 5th Decision, Private Four-Year Institutions
(August 5th Cumulative Cases per Capita at 100k Persons)**

	August 5th Online		August 5th In-person		August 5th FLEX		August 5th TBD	
	ME	SE	ME	SE	ME	SE	ME	SE
<i>State Political Attributes</i>								
Republican Governor REF: Democrat	-.05	.03	-.02	.03	-.01	.03	.12***	.03
Republican Legislature REF: Democrat	-.02	.03	.12***	.03	.02	.03	-.04	.04
<i>State Revenue Changes</i>								
-19% to -25%	.00	.04	-.05	.04	-.02	.03	.01	.03
-26% to -28%	-.03	.04	.01	.05	.09+	.05	-.08*	.04
-29% to -37%	-.02	.04	-.03	.04	.06+	.03	-.09*	.03
-38% to -53%	-.01	.04	-.18***	.05	.10	.06	.02	.06
REF: +8 to -18%								
<i>County – Aug 5th Cumulative Cases Per 100k</i>								
538 to 939 Cases	-.00	.04	-.06	.04	.06	.04	.01	.04
940 to 1,460 Cases	.10+	.05	-.05	.04	-.03	.04	-.00	.05
1,461 to 2,007 Cases	.09+	.05	.11**	.04	-.02	.04	-.01	.05
2,008 to 9,108 Cases	.06	.06	-.08	.04	-.03	.04	-.07	.05
REF: 38 to 537								
<i>State – Aug 5th Cumulative Cases Per 100k</i>								
942 to 1,234 Cases	-.08**	.03	.15***	.04	-.08**	.03	.03	.04
1,235 to 1,487 Cases	-.05	.04	.13*	.05	-.09**	.03	.02	.05
1,488 to 1,854 Cases	-.08*	.04	.08+	.05	.02	.04	.05	.05
1,855 to 2,712 Cases	-.07+	.04	.02	.05	-.04	.04	.01	.05
REF: 194 to 941 Cases								
<i>Percentage of Enrolled</i>								
White (Mean Centered)	-.18**	.03	-.06	.07	-.07	.06	-.18**	.06
Pell: 0-33%	-.03	.06	.01	.03	-.01	.03	-.02	.03
Pell: 44-100%	-.02	.06	-.07*	.03	-.06	.03	.03	.03
REF: 24-43%								
<i>On-Campus Living Expenses</i>								
\$10,601 to \$12,403	.05	.06	.10+	.05	-.02	.04	.01	.04
\$12,404 to \$13,988	.03	.06	.05	.05	.08	.05	-.02	.04
\$13,989 to \$15,864	.05	.05	.10*	.02	.07	.05	-.06	.04
\$15,865 to \$26,627	.08	.06	.13*	.05	.05	.05	-.04	.05
REF: \$2,500 to \$12,402								

Appendix Table 5 Cont'd.

<i>Institutional Locale</i>								
Rural	-.04	.05	.05	.05	-.09**	.03	.06	.05
Suburb	-.03	.02	.07*	.03	.01	.02	-.05+	.03
Town	-.03	.03	.04	.04	-.04	.03	.03	.04
REF: City								
<i>Barron's Classification</i>								
Most Competitive	.14*	.06	-.12**	.04	.04	.04	-.16***	.04
Highly Competitive	.13+	.08	-.16***	.05	.15*	.07	-.12*	.06
Very Competitive	.03	.04	.05	.04	-.03	.03	-.09	.04
Less Competitive	.02	.04	-.05	.05	-.05	.03	.07	.05
No Classification	-.03	.04	-.10**	.03	-.08**	.03	.09*	.03
REF: Competitive								
<i>Additional Institutional Characteristics</i>								
HBCU	.03	.08	-.20***	.06	.12	.09	-.05	.05
Power 5 Conference	.04	.09	.01	.12	-.07	.06	.13	.16
N	1273		1273		1273		1273	
χ^2	85.40		220.12		141.35		192.43	
McFadden R ²	0.07		0.14		0.12		0.14	

$p \leq .001$ ***, $p \leq .01$ ** , $p \leq .05$ * , $p \leq .10$ +

**Appendix Table 6 - August 5th Decision, Public Two-Year Institutions
(August 5th Cumulative Cases per Capita at 100k Persons)**

	August 5 th Online		August 5 th In-person		August 5 th TBD	
	ME	SE	ME	SE	ME	SE
<i>State Political Attributes</i>						
Republican Governor REF: Democrat	-.06	.06	-.02	.04	.04	.05
Republican Legislature REF: Democrat	-.04	.05	.09**	.03	-.05	.04
<i>State Revenue Changes</i>						
-19% to -25%	.00	.06	.02	.04	.01	.05
-26% to -28%	.07	.06	.02	.05	-.10*	.05
-29% to -37%	.03	.05	.09+	.05	-.12*	.05
-38% to -53%	.15+	.08	.06	.09	-.19**	.06
REF: +8 to -18%						
<i>County – Aug 5th Cumulative Cases Per 100k</i>						
538 to 939 Cases	-.07	.05	-.01	.03	.08	.05
940 to 1460 Cases	-.05	.05	-.01	.03	.05	.06
1461 to 2007 Cases	.01	.06	-.01	.04	-.00	.06
2008 to 9108 Cases REF: 38 to 537	-.10	.06	.06	.05	.05	.06
<i>State – Aug 5th Cumulative Cases Per 100k</i>						
942 to 1234 Cases	.02	.06	.05	.04	-.06	.05
1235 to 1487 Cases	.05	.07	.02	.06	-.05	.07
1488 to 1854 Cases	.05	.07	.02	.05	-.08	.06
1855 to 2712 Cases REF: 194 to 941 Cases	.10	.07	-.10**	.03	.04	.07
<i>Percentage of Enrolled</i>						
White (Mean Centered)	.04	.09	.16*	.07	-.24**	.09
Living on Campus	-.30	.18	-.04	.09	.26	.16
Pell: 0-33%	.08*	.04	-.03	.02	.00	.04
Pell: 44-100%	-.05	.04	-.01	.03	.06	.04
<i>Institutional Locale</i>						
Rural	-.14**	.04	-.02	.03	.13**	.05
Suburb	.01	.04	.01	.04	-.02	.05
Town REF: City	-.15**	.05	.01	.03	.15**	.05
N	864		864		864	
X ²	139.32		86.24		72.48	
McFadden R ²	0.12		0.13		0.07	

p<.001***, p<.01**, p<.05*, p<.10+

Endnotes with References

- ¹ Yuen, V. (2020, June 11th). *Mounting peril for public higher education during the coronavirus pandemic*. Center for American Progress: Washington, DC. <https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education-postsecondary/reports/2020/06/11/485963/mounting-peril-public-higher-education-coronavirus-pandemic/>
- ² Parker, K. (2019). *The growing partisan divide in views of higher education*. Pew Research Center: Washington, DC. <https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/essay/the-growing-partisan-divide-in-views-of-higher-education/>
- ³ Green, J., Edgerton, J., Naftel, D., Shoub, K., & Cranmer, S.K. (2020). Elusive consensus: Polarization in elite communication on the COVID-19 pandemic. *Science Advances*, 6(28). doi:10.1126/sciadv.abc2717; Hart, P.S., Chinn, S., Soroka, S. (2020). Politicization and polarization in COVID-19 news coverage. *Science Communication*, Online FIRST. doi:10.1177/1075547020950735
- ⁴ Parker, K. (2019, Aug 19th). *The growing partisan divide in view of higher education*. Pew Research Center: Washington, DC. <https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/essay/the-growing-partisan-divide-in-views-of-higher-education/>
- ⁵ Murakami, K. (2020, May 15th). *State cuts grow deeper*. Inside Higher Ed. <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/2020/05/15/size-state-budget-cuts-becomes-clearer>; Symons, M. (2020, Aug 30th). *NJ community colleges face 31% cut in state operating aid*. New Jersey 101.5 <https://nj1015.com/nj-community-colleges-face-31-cut-in-state-operating-aid/>;
- ⁶ National Center for Education Statistics. (2020). *IPEDS: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System*. Washington, DC. <https://nces.ed.gov/ipeds/datacenter/DataFiles.aspx?goToReportId=7>
- ⁷ New York Times. (2020). *COVID-19 data*. <https://github.com/nytimes/covid-19-data>
- ⁸ USA Facts. (2020). *U.S. Coronavirus cases and deaths*. <https://usafacts.org/visualizations/coronavirus-covid-19-spread-map/>
- ⁹ The College Crisis Initiative. (2020). Davidson College. <https://collegecrisis.org/>
- ¹⁰ Public statements by decision-makers emphasized the importance of infection rates, and case rates can be appraised multiple ways; as a result, we assessed how a variety of county/state case rate measures related to HE institutions' instructional plans. We also generated models using a per capita change in total cases from June to August and a corresponding ratio, we developed a 14-day average of cases per day for June 15th and August 5th – as well as a change measurement and corresponding ratio. Models were run using various combinations of these variables within. We found that no matter the specification of these variables the trends remained generally static and signaled that county COVID-19 cases were usually not linked to outcomes whereas state cases seemed more a part of the decision process – and that outcomes related to our main questions remained robust. Further when we reference per capita changes, we always mean by 100k persons.
- ¹¹ Tyson, A. (2020, July 22nd). *Republicans remain far less likely than Democrats to view COVID-19 as a major threat to public health*. Pew Research Center: Washington, DC. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/07/22/republicans-remain-far-less-likely-than-democrats-to-view-covid-19-as-a-major-threat-to-public-health/>
- ¹² Delaney, J.A., & Doyle, W.R. (2011). State spending on higher education: Testing the balance wheel over time. *Journal of Education Finance*, 36(4), 343-368. doi:10.2307/23018116
- ¹³ Holman, M.R., Farris, M., Sumner, J.L. (2020). *Local political institutions and first-mover policy responses to COVID-19* (Working Paper). <https://www.dropbox.com/s/8vk25vu6ixsel32/Holman%20et%20al%20COVID.pdf?dl=0>
- ¹⁴ In a non-scientific manner, the lead author has reached out to several administrators to gauge which type of COVID-19 measurement may be more appropriate to report. These conversations have led the team to believe that there was



no exact measurement of COVID cases that were “the most” important to decisions and that a lot of information was consistently provided to decision makers as debate on reopening occurred. Although we reported the strongest models we could develop, likely a strategically employed mixed methods or qualitative inquiry will help us better understand which COVID measurements administrators were most sensitive to and why. We feel the need to be clear that we are confident in our findings and can defend why we reported the strongest models but also note that the use of COVID measurements in decision making seems more messy than what our models have been able to capture.

¹⁵ Bote, J. (2020, June 30th). At least 22 states pause reopening or take new steps to limit the spread of COVID-19. *USA Today*. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/nation/2020/06/30/covid-cases-states-pausing-reopening-plans-list/3284513001/>; Dietz, L. (2020, August 4th). *Fall campus update from President Dietz*. Retrieved from <https://news.illinoisstate.edu/2020/08/fall-campus-update-from-president-dietz-8-4-2020/>; McCartney, K. (2020, August 5th). *Announcing a change to our Fall 2020 plan, August 5, 2020*. Retrieved from <https://www.smith.edu/president-kathleen-mccartney/letters/2019-20/change-to-fall-2020-plan-august-5-2020>; Sylvers, E., & Stancati, M. (2020, Sept. 22nd). As COVID-19 fatigue fuels infections in Europe, Italy resists second wave. *Wall Street Journal*. https://www.wsj.com/articles/as-covid-fatigue-fuels-infections-in-europe-italy-resists-the-second-wave-11600772400?mod=hp_lead_pos6

¹⁶ Cox, D. (2020, June 16th). *Hardship, anxiety, and optimism: Racial and partisan disparities in American’s response to COVID-19*. American Enterprise Institute: Washington, DC. <https://www.aei.org/research-products/report/hardship-anxiety-and-optimism-racial-and-partisan-disparities-in-americans-response-to-covid-19/>; Gecewicz, C. (2020, August 7th). *Amid pandemic, Black and Hispanic worshippers more concerned about safety of in-person religious services*. Pew Research Center: Washington, DC. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/08/07/amid-pandemic-black-and-hispanic-worshippers-more-concerned-about-safety-of-in-person-religious-services/>; Horowitz, J.M. (2020, August 5th). *Republican, Democrats differ over factors K-12 schools should consider in deciding whether to open*. Pell Research Center: Washington, DC. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/08/05/republicans-democrats-differ-over-factors-k-12-schools-should-consider-in-deciding-whether-to-reopen/>; Tyson, A. (2020, July 22nd). *Republicans remain far less likely than Democrats to view COVID-19 as a major threat to public health*. Pew Research Center: Washington, DC. <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/07/22/republicans-remain-far-less-likely-than-democrats-to-view-covid-19-as-a-major-threat-to-public-health/>

¹⁷ Some scholars and advocates have contended that schools with large endowments were better positioned to choose online instruction (and forego, e.g., room and board payments). We conducted an initial test of this possibility in an adjusted version of the models in Table 2-3 with an indicator variable for model institutions that had a billion dollars or more in endowment funds by the end of the 2018 fiscal year. In short, schools with large endowments showed no systematic difference in mode selected; including the measure weakened our models based on the McFadden R² and Chi-Square statistics.

¹⁸ These are not the exhaustive list of variables joined into the database from IPEDS, they are the list of variables relevant to this analysis. We also ran models with selectivity rates, percentage of enrolled students who were female, Carnegie classifications, endowment funds, and others. The presented models were generally the strongest.

¹⁹ U.S. Census Bureau. (2020). *Population and housing unit estimates datasets*. Retrieved from <https://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/popest/data/data-sets.html>

²⁰ NPR Staff. (2020). *States are broke and many are eyeing massive cuts. Here’s how yours is doing*. Retrieved from <https://www.npr.org/2020/08/03/893190275/states-are-broke-and-many-are-eyeing-massive-cuts-heres-how-yours-is-doing>

²¹ National Conference of State Legislatures (2020). *State partisan composition*. Retrieved from <https://www.ncsl.org/research/about-state-legislatures/partisan-composition.aspx#>

