

As we approach the return to campus after over a year of masks, quarantine, social distancing, and virtual classes, we need to prepare ourselves, our staff, and our students to navigate what is likely to be new – and in some cases, heightened – challenges. This Tip of the Week is the second tip in a three-part Tip of the Week series which focuses on how COVID-19 has shifted the educational landscape. [Part One](#) focused on the impact of COVID-19 on our students' academic and emotional well-being – primarily that COVID-19 has impacted students' ability to successfully participate in the learning environment and increased the presence of mental health issues and suicidality. In Part Two, we will discuss what administrators can expect given how COVID-19 has impacted our students and communities. If I can look into my crystal ball, I think we can expect the following:

- Increased requests for flexibility
- Increase in demand for support services
- Higher frequency of students experiencing financial, food, and housing insecurity

Students have spent the last year learning remotely, or at least in an adjusted in-person environment, all while managing increased demands at home among a worldwide pandemic. As a result, we have seen administrators and faculty adjust the learning environment in a way we haven't before. Courses that always had to be in person were suddenly offered virtually, deadlines that were firm suddenly became flexible, overly complicated processes requiring multiple signatures on forms suddenly became digital forms moved along for signatures by the administrators virtually. Administrators can anticipate that students will continue to expect some degree of flexibility as schools re-open and resume "normal" operations. Students will likely expect to continue to see flexibility in how they are able to attend classes virtually, even if it is for a one-time Zoom-in for a typically in person class.

As we discussed in Part One of this series, COVID has significantly impacted students' mental health. While this may have largely been a result of the stress and isolation of the pandemic, I think the limited access to mental health resources worsened the situation. Many students rely heavily on access to free counseling and other supports at their schools and the limited access to these resources likely worsened their emotional health during the pandemic. As our students return to campus, we can expect an increase in demand for support services and a rise in the number of students seeking counseling and other resources.

Given the number of students and their families who lost income during the pandemic, lost employment all together, couldn't live safely at home, we can expect a rise in students experiencing financial, food, and housing insecurity. Students are likely to return to school less financially stable with less available income for accessing safe housing and consistent food.

These challenges leave students and administrators wondering what our new normal will look like and how their campuses might be different as they anticipate a return to classes in the fall semester. Join us in Part Three of this series to explore how to prepare for the impact of COVID-19 as we navigate the return to campus.

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