

# UC Berkeley

## SERU Consortium Reports

### Title

Graduate and Professional Students' Fall 2020 Re-Enrollment Plans: Evidence from the gradSERU COVID-19 Survey

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gradSERU  
COVID-19  
SURVEY

## **Graduate and Professional Students' Fall 2020 Re-Enrollment Plans: Evidence from the gradSERU COVID-19 Survey**

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Krista M. Soria

Approximately 95% of graduate and professional students plan to re-enroll for the fall 2020 semester, according to a recent survey of 7,690 graduate and professional students enrolled at five large, public research universities. Data from the Graduate Student Experience in the Research University (gradSERU) COVID-19 survey suggests that less than 1% of graduate and professional students do not plan to re-enroll while 4% are still undecided about re-enrolling for the fall 2020 semester.

Among the graduate and professional students who are not planning to re-enroll, 51% indicated that financial constraints are their primary reason for not re-enrolling, while 29% are concerned that all of their classes would continue to be held online and 24% were not re-enrolling because they needed to work to support their families or themselves (Figure 1).

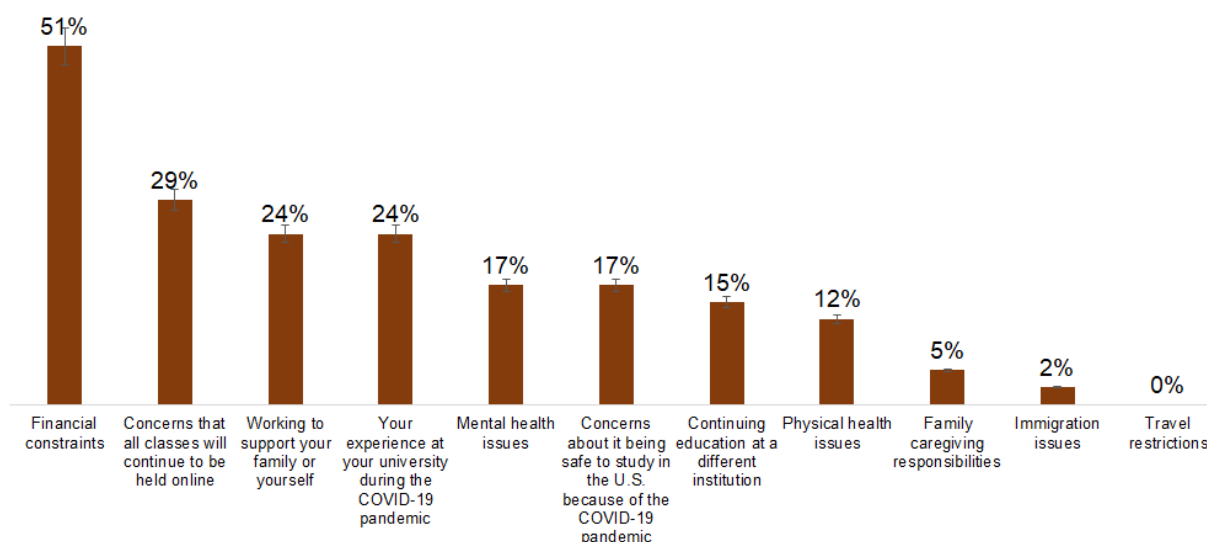


Figure 1. Graduate and professional students' reasons for not re-enrolling in fall 2020.

The students who were unsure about re-enrolling had similar concerns, with 54% indicating that financial constraints were a major factor in their uncertainty, 44% expressing concerns that all of their classes will be held online, and 34% noting that their experiences at their universities during the pandemic contributed to their indecision to re-enroll (Figure 2).

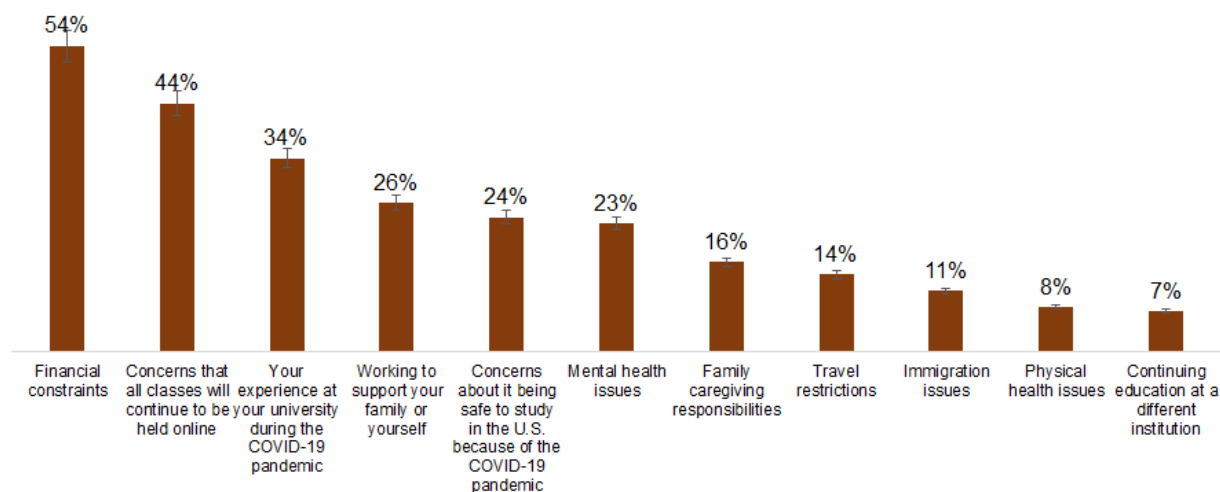


Figure 2. Graduate and professional students' reasons for uncertainty about re-enrolling in fall 2020.

Students also provided qualitative comments about the factors contributing to their uncertainty about re-enrolling during the fall 2020 semester. Students expressed concerns that they may be unemployed and they also expressed apprehension about their health and safety (and their families' health and safety) if campuses reopen too soon.

The data overall suggest that graduate and professional students are primarily concerned about their financial situation in the upcoming fall 2020 semester, so institutional leaders, faculty, and advisors who are concerned about students' re-enrollment may want to work with students to access institutional funding (e.g., research or teaching assistant positions); locate external sources of funding for research (e.g., through dissertation grants); provide assistance locating employment for students' partners, spouses, or family members; or access emergency grant funding or resources.

## About the gradSERU COVID-19 Survey

The Student Experience in the Research University (SERU) Consortium is currently administering a special survey on the impact of COVID-19 on student experience at 10 U.S. public research universities. The gradSERU COVID-19 Survey assesses five areas to better understand undergraduates, graduates, and professional students' experiences during the global pandemic: 1) students' transition to remote instruction, 2) the financial impact of COVID-19 for students, 3) students' health and wellbeing during the pandemic, 4) students' belonging and engagement, and 5) students' future plans.

## Sample

The survey was a census survey administered to graduate and professional students at five large, public research universities. The data collection started in May and is still ongoing at most universities. The report uses data from 7,690 graduate and professional students who completed the survey as of June 11, 2020. The response rate as of June 11, 2020 was 9-22% at the respective institutions.

## About the SERU Consortium

The Student Experience in the Research University (SERU) Consortium is an academic and policy research collaboration based at Center for Studies in Higher Education at the University of California – Berkeley (CSHE) working in partnership with the University of Minnesota and partner institutions. More information about the gradSERU survey is available at [www.gradseru.org](http://www.gradseru.org).

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