



Fall 2021 Member Survey

Educator Preparation Responds to COVID-19





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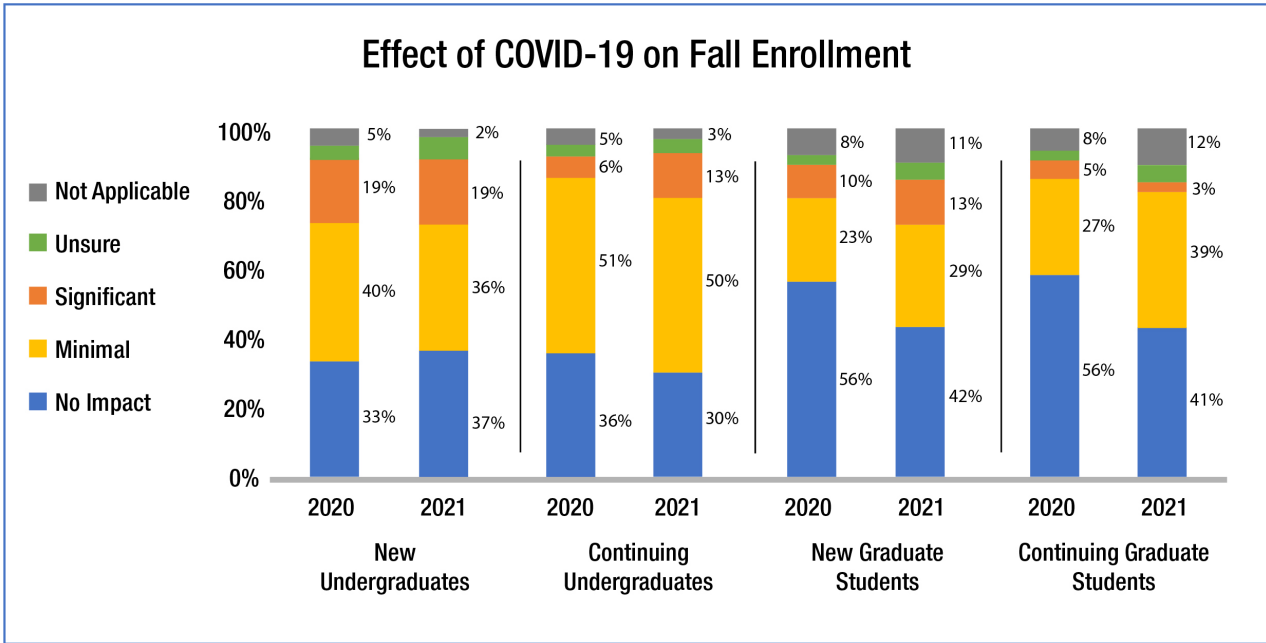
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Since spring 2020, when schools and colleges around the country switched to online instruction due to COVID-19, AACTE has periodically surveyed its members on the impact of the pandemic on educator preparation. This report updates that series with information collected in fall 2021.

AACTE conducted surveys in April 2020, October 2020, and September 2021, asking members about the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on their educator preparation programs. All three surveys were representative of AACTE's membership. This report describes how conditions have changed since 2020, highlighting the lasting effects of the pandemic.

Enrollment, Budget, Staffing, and Programs

In both fall 2020 and 2021, the majority of educator preparation programs reported the pandemic had either no impact or a minimal impact on enrollment (defined as a decline of less than 10%). However, for a sizable minority of institutions, COVID-19 continues to have a significant effect on undergraduate enrollment in educator preparation programs. In both fall 2020 and fall 2021, 20% of institutions reported that the pandemic resulted in a decline in new undergraduate enrollment of 11% or more. The impact on graduate student enrollment is somewhat less dramatic, with 13% of fall 2021 respondents reporting significant declines in the number of new graduate students due to the pandemic.

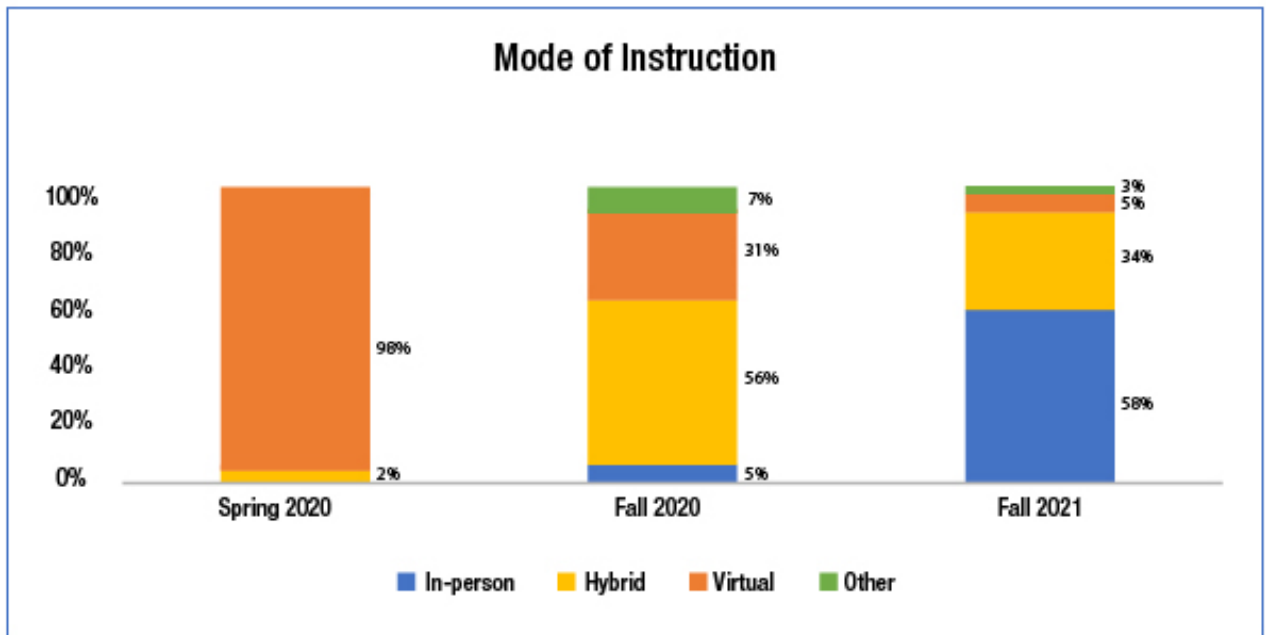


The impact of COVID-19 on program budgets has been even more severe. In fall 2020, 45% of respondents had experienced budget cuts of 1 to 10%, and 38% saw their budgets decline by 11% or more. By fall 2021, the situation had improved somewhat; 35% of respondents reported that their budget was unchanged or increased for 2021-22 and 13% reported budget cuts exceeding 10%.

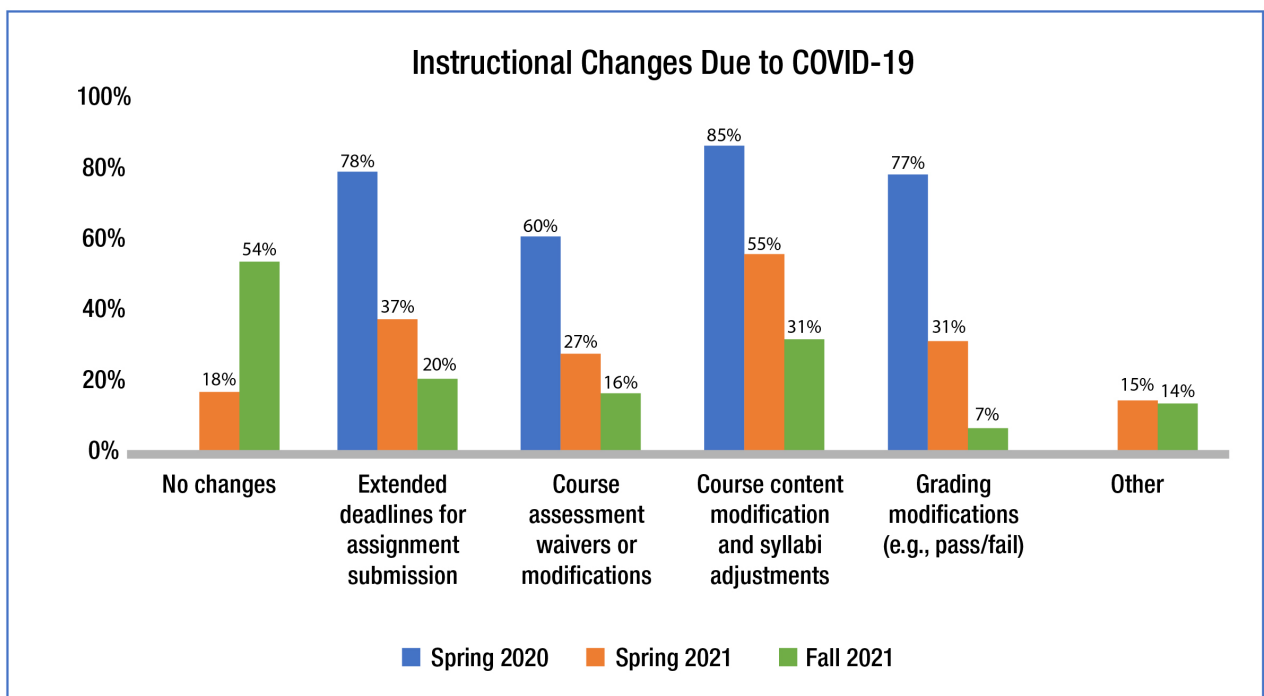
Reflecting the improved financial picture, the share of respondents reporting staffing reductions declined from 49% in 2020 to 32% in 2021. Nonetheless, it is concerning that one-third of educator preparation programs continue to cut staff. Despite staff reductions, most respondents in fall 2021 (87%) have not eliminated programs.

Instruction

When AACTE first surveyed its members in spring 2020, virtually all respondents had transitioned to completely virtual instruction. By fall 2020, the majority of respondents (56%) were operating under a hybrid model that combined in-person and virtual coursework and a substantial minority (31%) were still holding classes completely or primarily online. This fall, 58% are holding classes completely or primarily in-person and 34% are operating under a hybrid model.



In spring 2020, most institutions made course modifications such as pass/fail grading, extended deadlines for submitting assignments, waived or modified course assessments, and changes in course content. Since then, the share of institutions making such changes has declined steadily. In fall 2021, 54% of respondents reported no changes to instruction due to the pandemic, up from only 18% in fall 2020. The most common types of modifications were to course content (31%). Few respondents continue to waive or modify assessments (16%) or to modify grading practices (7%).

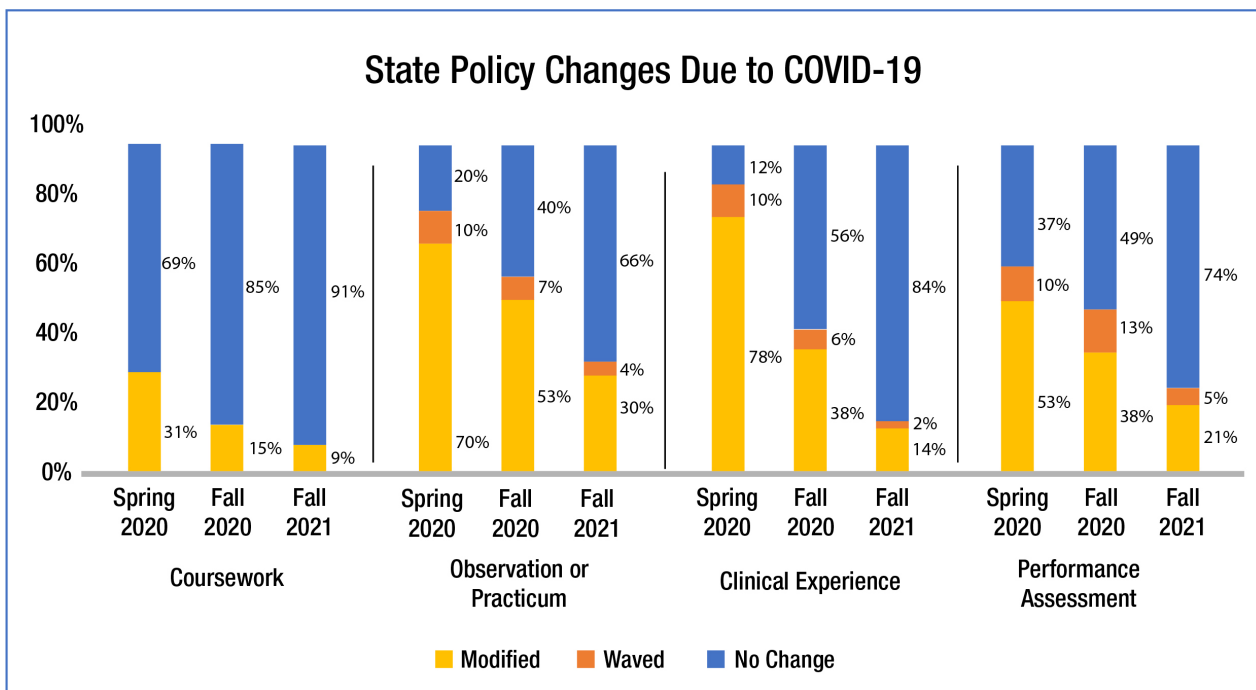


State Policy

When respondents to the fall 2020 survey were asked to name the most significant challenge related to COVID-19, clinical practice was the third most commonly named topic after declining enrollment and budget cuts. A significant source of that challenge was the shifting of state requirements. AACTE addressed these challenges by developing a [State Policy Tracking Map](#) and the *Teaching in The Time of COVID-19: State Recommendations for Educator Preparation Programs and New Teachers* report. In spring 2020, most members reported that state requirements for student observation or practicum, student teaching or clinical field experience, and performance assessment were either modified or waived due to COVID-19. By fall 2020, far fewer members reported such changes to state policies. Most notably, in spring 2020, 88% of members reported that their state had modified or, far less frequently, waived clinical field experience requirements. By fall 2020, that percentage had dropped by half, with 44% of members reporting state modification or waiver of clinical field experience.

In fall 2021, most respondents (84%) report that their states have reverted to pre-COVID teacher licensing requirements. A sizable minority continue to operate under modifications or, far less frequently, waivers of observation/practicum (34%) and performance assessment (26%) requirements, but pre-COVID requirements for coursework and clinical experience have been restored for almost all AACTE member institutions.

While most states have reimposed pre-COVID licensing requirements, some also have established new policies to address teacher shortages that circumvent these requirements. These policies vary but they often allow prospective teachers to bypass typical licensing requirements, at least initially, to teach in schools, grades, or subject areas that are experiencing shortages. Such policies erode professional standards for teachers and can result in further reductions in educator preparation program enrollment. An alternate approach that does not affect teacher qualifications is to reduce barriers to entering educator preparation programs. In [Mississippi](#), for example, testing requirements for admission into educator preparation programs continue to be waived until December 31, 2021.



Clinical Placements

As PK-12 schools around the county suspended in-person instruction and states adjusted their policies for teacher candidates in spring 2020, nearly all clinical placements occurred virtually and 44% of members reported that at least some of their PK-12 partners had suspended placements entirely. By fall 2020, the situation had stabilized; 81% of members reported at least some face-to-face placements and only 4% reported no clinical practice for candidates. This fall, all reporting members have resumed clinical placements and 80% report that it is occurring face-to-face. The remaining members are primarily using a hybrid configuration (13%), offering candidates the opportunity to teach through residencies, as paraprofessionals, and/or as substitute teachers (3%) or making other arrangements (4%). No members reported that clinical practice is occurring primarily online.

Because circumstances in PK-12 schools may change if the coronavirus conditions worsen, 87% of respondents report that they have made contingency plans in case candidates are unable to continue in-person placements. These plans include alternate placements in another school or district (60%), virtual clinical experiences via simulation (57%), and supplementary projects or assessments (51%). To sustain robust clinical placements for candidates, 33% of fall 2021 survey respondents reported having created new partnerships, with public/charter schools or districts as the most common new partners (69%), followed by virtual (44%) and private (41%) schools.

Conclusion

This report contains a lot of good news regarding the resumption of in-person instruction and field experience and the easing of enrollment and budget reductions. Nonetheless, the effects of COVID-19 linger for many institutions, with a sizable minority of respondents reporting significant enrollment losses, budget cuts, and staffing reductions. State licensing requirements have been reinstated, but some states are creating opportunities for prospective teachers to circumvent those rules, which may negatively affect enrollment in educator preparation programs and exacerbate the current shortage of profession-ready educators in the workforce.

To assist its members, AACTE provides essential information through its [COVID-19 Resource Hub](#), including ideas, tools, and opportunities to interact. This survey series is just one of those efforts; as events warrant, AACTE will continue to periodically survey its members and to track how they are responding to these unique and challenging times.