

University Relations/Enrollment Management

4-2021

Type of Research: Parents and Fall 2021

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Parents and Fall 2021

April 2021

Background

WVU's Coronavirus Task Force is working on finalizing plans for fall 2021. However, before doing so they wanted input from students, faculty, employees and parents on proposed plans and scenarios, as well as the University's decision to encourage, rather than require the COVID-19 vaccine.

Methodology

Four separate online surveys were developed and posted in eNews and uNews. The survey elicited responses from over 2,000 students, over 300 faculty members, over 700 employees and more than 400 parents.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

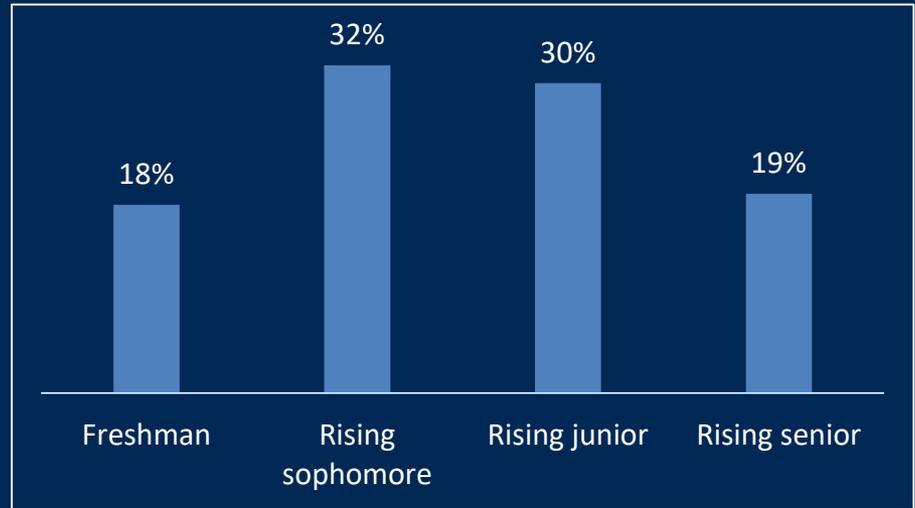
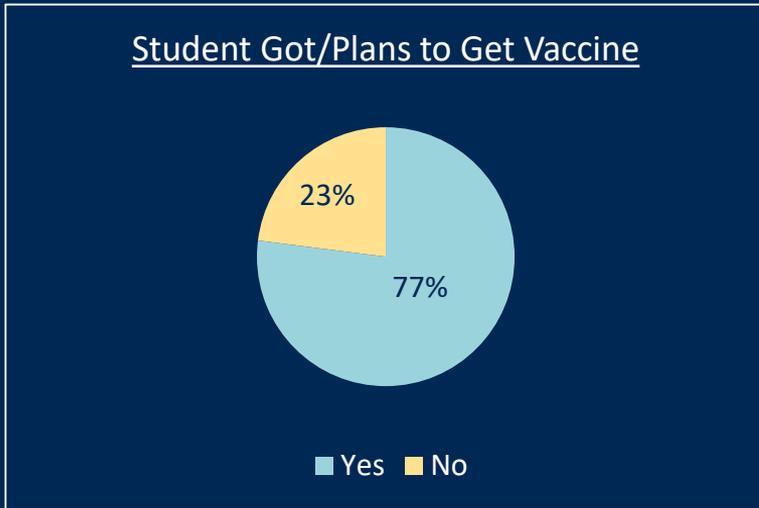
Parents want their students to get the full college experience so, in turn, they support WVU's decision to have in-person classes this fall. That said, some worry about the possible consequences of the University encouraging, rather than requiring that all faculty, students and staff get the COVID-19 vaccine, including the risk of the coronavirus spreading, the greater likelihood of variants and the University being less safe overall.

At this point, not all students have gotten or plan to get the vaccine before the start of the fall semester, and it may be a daunting task to get parents to encourage their student to do so. Parents who do not advocate for the vaccine feel that those students who do not get vaccinated should not be pressured or discriminated against. Reasons for concern about forcing students to vaccinate are that the long-term effects of the vaccine are unknown and that the decision to vaccinate is a personal one. Catholics also argue that it is against their morals.

Nonetheless, the vast majority of parents are comfortable with their student engaging in more "normal" activities this fall such as working out at the Rec Center, receiving in person advising and mental health counseling, eating in dining halls, taking transportation and attending events. While most agree that masks should continue to be worn in class and on campus, the minority in this survey are vocal in their opposition.

RESPONDENTS

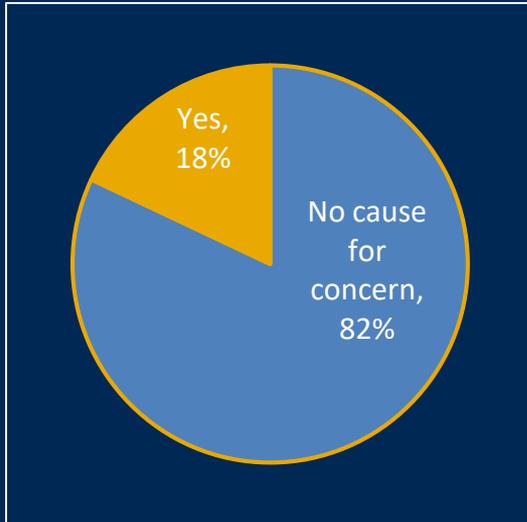
Parents of students from all classes responded to the survey. Most (77%) indicated their student got or plans to get the COVID-19 vaccine prior to the fall semester.



Q. Which of the following best describes your student? (The term "rising" means their class level when school resumes this fall). Q. Has your student gotten or is your student planning to get the COVID-19 vaccine before the start of the fall semester

OVERALL SENTIMENT

Less than two in 10 (18%) do not like the fact that the University is encouraging, rather than requiring all faculty, staff and students to get the COVID-19 vaccine.



Those who don't support the decision cite the following:

- Risk of future outbreaks
- Won't be able to reach herd immunity
- Other vaccines are required
- Fear that students who don't get the vaccine might be ostracized

Those who support WVU's decision cite these reasons:

- Unproven long-term effects
- It's a personal choice
- An immoral choice (for some)

Q. At this time, WVU will strongly encourage all faculty, staff and students to get the COVID-19 vaccine prior to the start of the fall semester, but it will not be required. Does this give you cause for concern?

THOUGHTS ON WVU'S DECISION

“COVID-19 is more deadly than the flu. If students and staff are not vaccinated, the virus will have more opportunities to mutate resulting in changes which can make the virus resistant to the vaccination. College students need social contact. My son was quarantined in the dorm room while the boys in the adjoining room were able to maintain social contact in person at the COVID dorm. This was very stressful and depressing for my son. All of the phone calls and packages sent can never calm the worry a parent feels in this situation. I don't ever want to relive that situation again.”

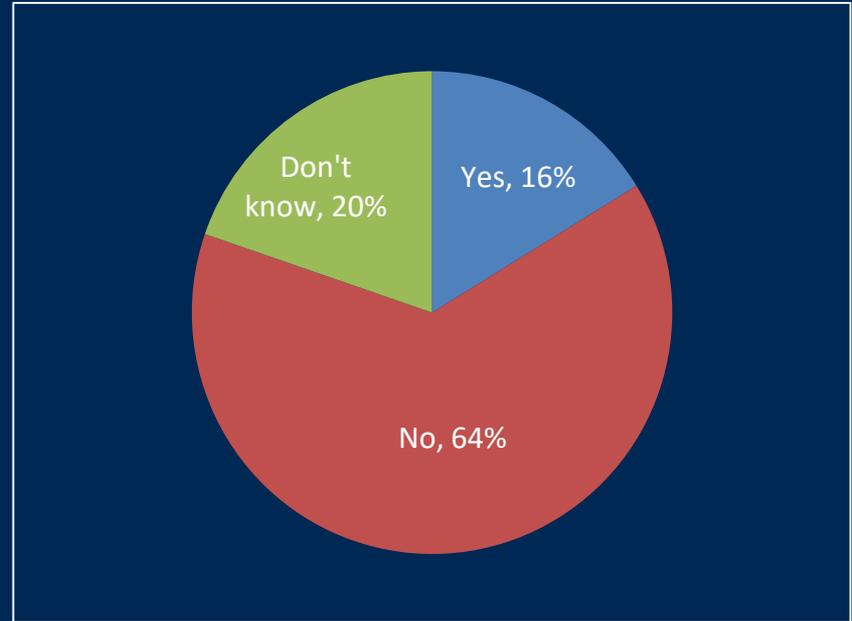
“With the amount of close contact students have during meals, transportation, classes, group work, and other social activities I would be much more comfortable if I knew that all students and employees had been vaccinated. My child has been vaccinated, I would hate for that to have been for nothing.”

“Whether COVID vaccines will be required or not, we feel that all classes should be in person this fall. My concern is for the people who are choosing not to get vaccinated. Is there anything WVU can do to educate them on why they should get the shot(s)? Ohio Governor, Mike DeWine, has done a great job of communicating facts vs myths. We hope such a campaign would make a difference at WVU too.”

“It is up to the individual to make a decision. Stop the bombardment of pushing an experimental vaccine and allow the students to be without masks. For those who received the vaccine, they are safe, right? WVU is pushing , stop with all of the messaging. The next question asks if student received or plans to get one. Well, my daughter did because she felt constant pressure from WVU to do the right thing. I am not a happy mother.”

EXCEPTIONS FOR STUDENTS

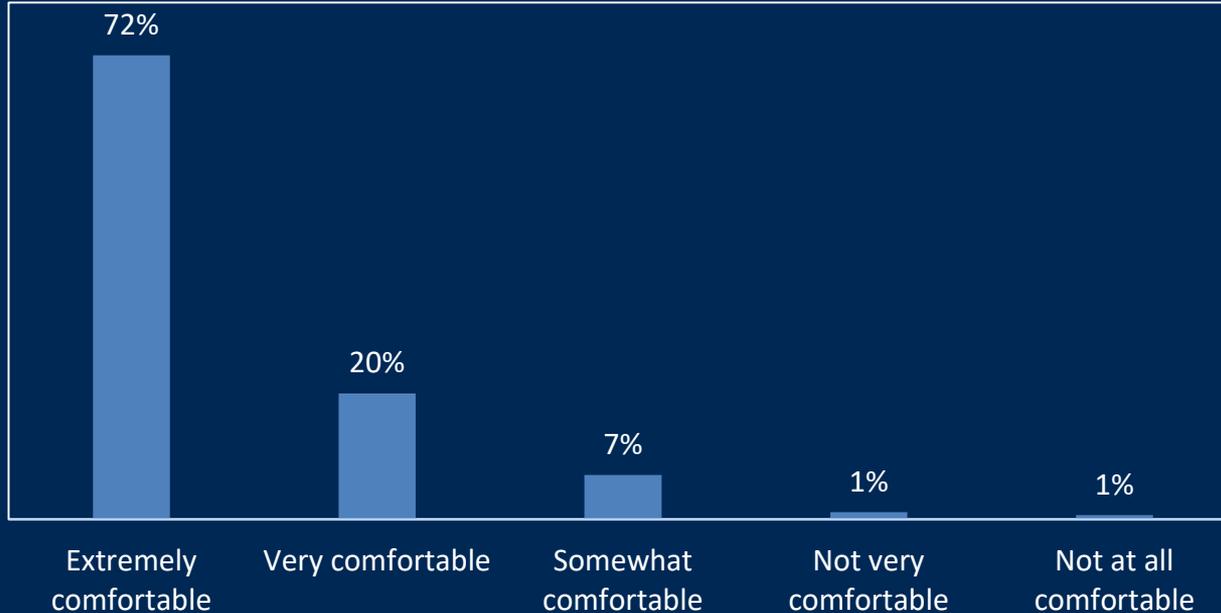
Knowing that students who are fully vaccinated ahead of the fall semester may not have to undergo surveillance testing and may not be required to quarantine after in-state or out-of-state travel may compel just 16% to encourage their student to become vaccinated. Two in 10 (20%) are unsure if that will change their opinion. Most (64%) are unphased by this proposed policy.



Q. Students who are fully vaccinated ahead of the fall semester may not have to undergo surveillance testing and may not be required to quarantine after in-state or out-of-state travel. Does knowing this make you more likely to encourage your student to get the COVID-19 vaccine?

IN-PERSON CLASSES

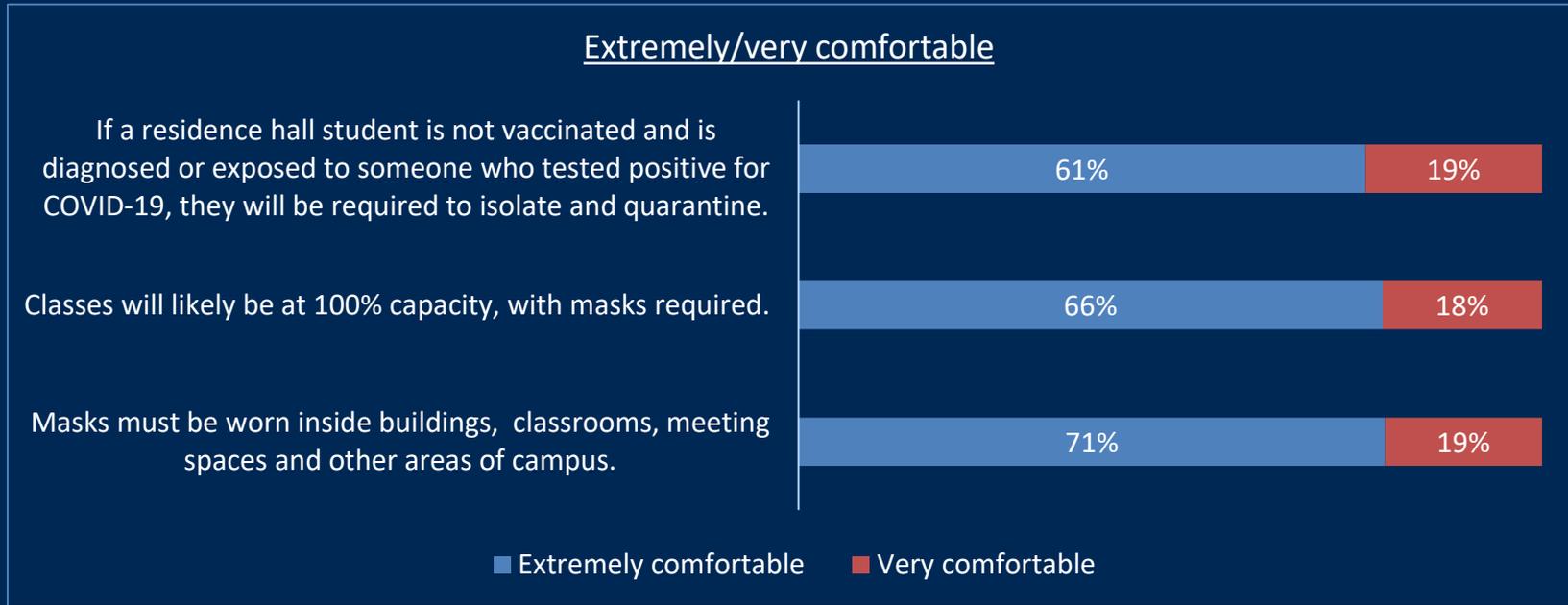
All but 8% of parents are extremely or very comfortable with WVU's decision to hold in-person classes this fall.



Q. Overall, how comfortable do you feel about WVU's decision to hold in-person classes this fall?

COMFORT LEVEL WITH PROTOCOLS

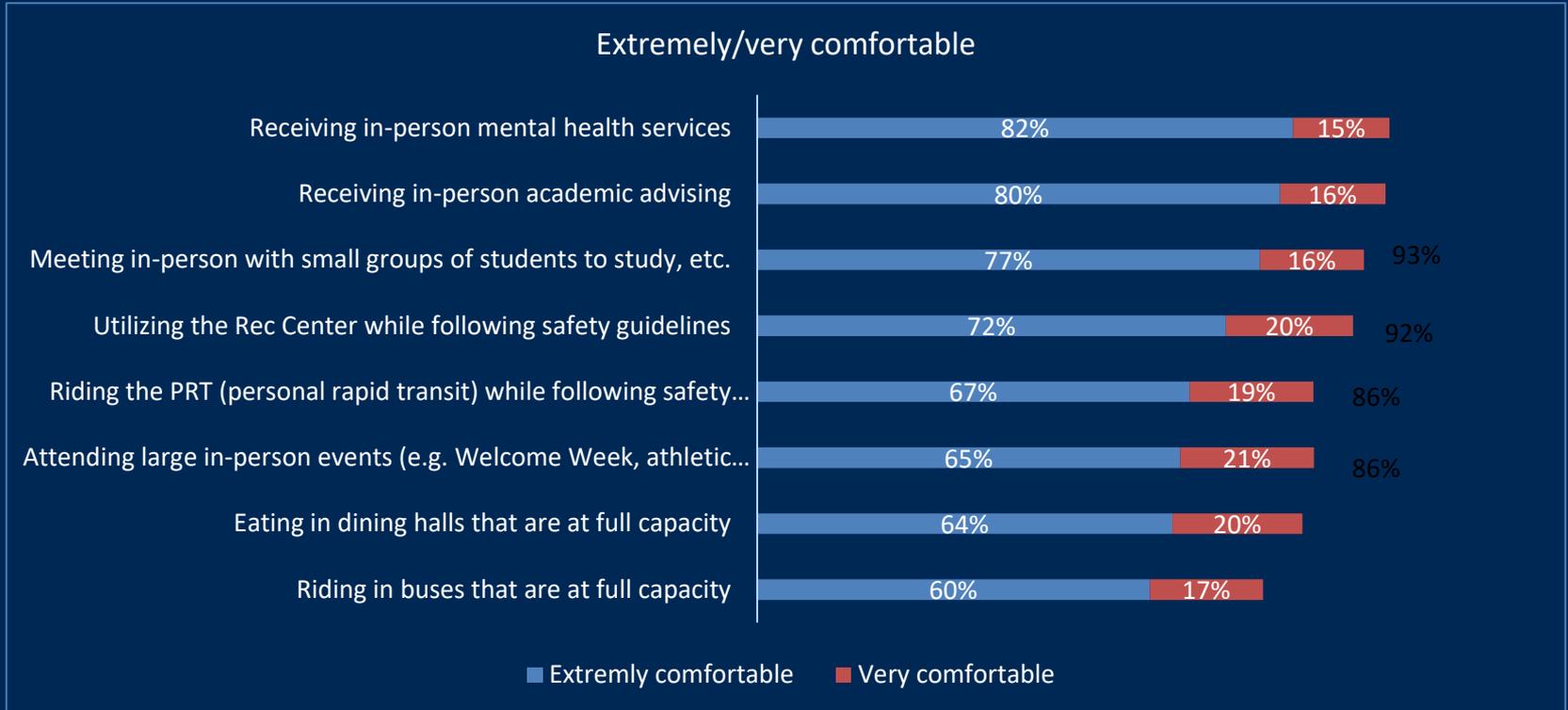
All but 10% of parents are extremely/very comfortable about the fact that masks will be required in various areas. Fewer (84%) have the same level of comfort with classes likely being at 100% capacity, with masks required. Slightly fewer (80%) are extremely/very comfortable knowing that some students will still be required to isolate and quarantine.



Q. We're finalizing health and safety protocols for the fall term. How comfortable do you feel about your student being on campus if the following protocols are in place?

COMFORT LEVEL WITH SCENARIOS

The vast majority of parents are extremely comfortable with eight scenarios that were presented. Most (97%) are comfortable with students receiving in-person mental health services and least comfortable (77%) with students riding in buses that are at full capacity.



CONCERNS ABOUT IN-PERSON/PROTOCOLS

When parents were asked about their concerns regarding in-person classes or the isolation/quarantine protocol, a few mentioned...

- Operating at full capacity if the vaccine is not required
- Requiring that masks still be worn, students who don't take the virus seriously
- Not social distancing at 100% classroom capacity
- Cleaning protocols
- Possible continued isolation

Regarding the isolation/quarantine issue, a few were concerned about...

- Sick students attending in-person classes
- Students having to quarantine multiple times
- Resources for students who have to quarantine

Just one parent mentioned wanting separate accommodations for both dorm and University apartment students.

Q. What are your biggest concerns regarding in-person classes or the isolation/quarantine protocol? If you don't have any, please type "NA" in the text box.

CONCERNS ABOUT IN-PERSON CLASSES/PROTOCOLS

“Biggest concern: Students following protocols placed there to keep all safe. As seen in the beginning, many continued to believe they had to party to be having a college experience. I am sending my student for an education- dorm life is part of the experience. Following guidelines set in place is a life skill many feel are optional (and have parents who may support this idea).”

“1. I feel that a very small percentage of WVU staff has gotten vaccinated would be perfectly fine staying online. I feel our children are getting robbed of a quality education due to this and we should not be paying the same for this format. And we are getting robbed in our pocketbooks as well.

2. Its time to move forward with life. How are we continuing with sports but not classes?

3. I don't like how WVU suddenly changed format of classes last semester after they received everyone's money.

4. I'm fine with masks being worn in classes if needed. Key point-get back in the classroom.

Our child was placed in one of the isolation apartments this spring. The food was terrible. Food service needs a big improvement for what we are paying.”

“I am all for in- person classes. I feel my daughter has struggled with her classes being online. I also knows she feels isolated from her friends. Get the students back in class. I am a RN and understand COVID but I feel with most students and faculty being vaccinated and proper mask wearing classes should be in-person. We are paying large amounts for an education that has been online. My daughter had O Chem this past spring online and had to drop because she was failing. OChem is not a class that is easily learned in person yet alone online. Her GPA after fall semester was over 3.70 cumulative and now has taken a hit!!”

CONCERNS ABOUT IN-PERSON CLASSES/PROTOCOLS

"I am concerned about full size classes going to in person instruction since you did not discuss moving to larger spaces to hold classes. Therefore you are negating social distancing. Many students have proven not to be responsible in this COVID world and not following social distancing protocols presents a threat to the entire community."

"I believe there should be separate accommodations for both dorm and university apartment students in a case of positive COVID test. Other colleges keep a dorm for this purpose and university apartment Students should be part of this safety measure."

"No masks. Get back to normal. No isolation based on suspicion of contagious. There should be enough data to Demonstrate that isolating a healthy and 2x in 4 day negative COVID test result yet still has to quarantine for 10 days due to classmate testing positive is bs. Missing events. Socialization. In person classes for this - 1 year post pandemic inception versus 1.5 years post inception is nuts. Enough. We don't pay for isolations, discrimination, police harassment for elected official edits. Let these kids live abundantly before there are more tragic events like suicides, drug addictions etc. Thank you for asking."

"My daughter quarantined 4 times due to exposure. She lost 64 days of her young life isolated in her room (achieved great grades though). She finally decided life is short and worth the risk of COVID, which she eventually caught, after 2 trips to Florida and 1 to Cancun. These young adults need to live. Be as open as you are able. Please!"

"If my student is in isolation, will he still be able to get meals from the dining hall, use the library, printers, etc. needed to complete assignments for classes? What will the grace period be for completion of assignments if those things will not be able to happen?"

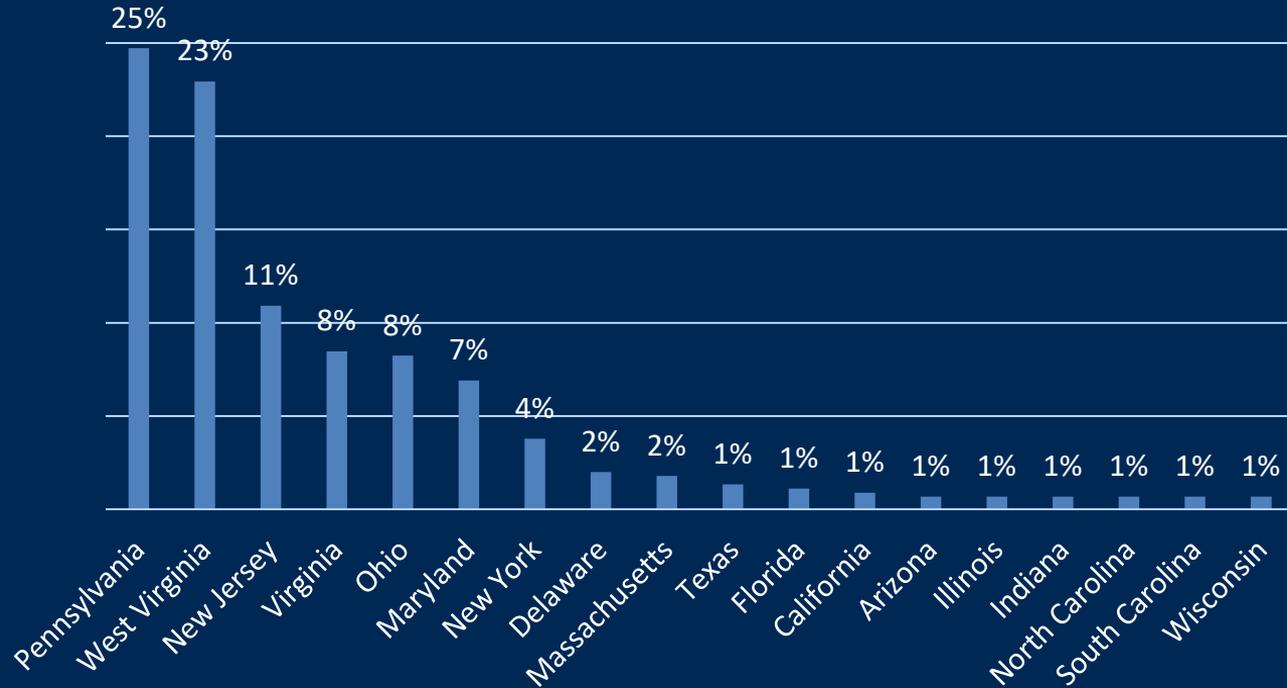
SUGGESTIONS FOR STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

Parents proposed the following in regards to how their students could have a more engaging experience this fall:

- Allow sophomores to experience fall events along with freshmen
- Provide contingencies for those students who need to attend class remotely
- Bring students back together and let them socialize
- Help bring back as much normalcy as possible and as soon as practical
- Frequently test non-vaccinated students and strictly apply masking, quarantine and isolations
- Have more mental health days; improve mental health center
- Don't discriminate against those who opt not to get vaccinated

Q. We welcome any ideas you have as to how your student could have a more engaging experience this fall. If you do not have any suggestions, please type "NA" in the text box.

Home State*



*Only those states with at least three respondents are noted on the chart.