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This chapter describes why resilience and mental health deserve more attention in efforts to increase student retention. The chapter offers practical suggestions for campus administrators and others.

Promoting Resilience, Retention, and Mental Health

Daniel Eisenberg, Sarah Ketchen Lipson, Julie Posselt

Access to college has increased in recent decades, but completion rates have not (Bound, Lovenheim, & Turner, 2010; Bowen, Chingos, & McPherson, 2009). The national 6-year bachelor's graduation rate remained less than 60% in 2013 (Kena et al., 2014), and these rates are significantly lower among Black, Latinx, and low-income students (Bound et al., 2010; Snyder & Dillow, 2013). Although policymakers and researchers have made considerable efforts to address barriers to degree completion, one important factor has not been fully considered in the national dialogue: student mental health.

The prevalence of mental health problems among college students has increased steadily (Twenge et al., 2010; see also Chapter 2 in this volume). Roughly one third of undergraduates have clinically significant symptoms of mental health problems such as depression and anxiety (Eisenberg, Hunt, & Speer, 2013). Increased access to effective mental health care during childhood and adolescence has created new opportunities for young people with preexisting mental health conditions to enroll in college. Lack of resilience is also cited as contributing to what some refer to as the "campus mental health crisis" (Eiser, 2011; Gabriel, 2010; Schwartz & Kay, 2009). Resilience refers to the ability of people to achieve "good outcomes in spite of serious threats to adaptation or development" (Masten, 2001, p. 228).

Thus, a potential strategy to increase retention and completion is to focus on students' resilience and mental health. This chapter considers how college health providers and student affairs professionals can address the relationship between low rates of persistence and high rates of mental health problems to improve students' well-being and academic success. This chapter describes the connection between resilience, mental health, and retention and provides practical implications for campus professionals.

The Bigger Picture of Retention Efforts

Increasing retention and graduation rates has been a major focus in higher education for decades. Research and policy have emphasized a wide variety of factors, but rarely mental health. Tinto's (1975) classic theory of retention emphasized academic and social integration into institutional communities. Revisions of this framework (Braxton, Hirschy, & McClendon, 2011; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Kuh, Cruce, Shoup, Kinzie, & Gonyea, 2008) and complementary theories (Bean & Eaton, 2000) emphasize factors such as engagement on campus (Kuh et al., 2008), academic preparation (Adelman, 1999; Tierney, Colyar, & Corwin, 2003), and tuition pricing and financial aid (Chen & DesJardins, 2010; Heller, 2003; John, Paulsen, & Starkey, 1996).

Many of today's retention strategies promote objectives related to these frameworks: (a) providing support for the academic and social transition to college, (b) integrating academic support within daily learning, (c) assessing and monitoring academic risk factors, and (d) engaging students in communities that foster intellectual and social connection (Tinto, 2004). In each of these objectives, faculty and other academic personnel play essential roles as advisors and instructors (Light, 2004). In some cases, students may be persisting because of how they are facing and working through challenges related to their mental health. The connection between resilience and mental health may be an implicit pathway by which programs exert their beneficial effects on retention, but these pathways are rarely an explicit part of the dialogue.

Why Resilience and Mental Health Matter for Retention

Resilience is not merely a natural ability; a person can develop new or stronger resilience skills (Masten, 2001). Factors that enhance resilience include social support, physical health, self-regulation, cognitive flexibility, and optimism (Howard, Dryden, & Johnson, 1999). The ability of students to cope with the inevitable challenges of college life has significant implications for both well-being and academic success. Resilience has benefits that relate to persistence and to the ability of a student to recover from challenges related to mental health. Students who are resilient depend on this strength as a central determinant of mental health. Resilience allows people to maintain or recover good mental health in the face of adversity. Resilience is also an important determinant of academic performance (Leary & DeRosier, 2012); it allows students to persist through and bounce back from academic challenges, such as failing an exam.

Decreasing resilience appears to be contributing factor to a steady decline in mental health in college populations (Eagan, Lozano, Hurtado, & Case, 2013). This trend is not limited to recent years. Depression and anxiety have been rising steadily for many decades, according to a meta-analysis

of studies using the Minnesota Multiphasic Personality Inventory (Twenge et al., 2010). This study notes that an increasing focus among young people on extrinsic motivations, such as status, grades, and money, along with impossibly high expectations for these goals, are probably contributing to the negative trends in resilience and mental health. In other words, young people are in a constant state of vulnerability if they are fixated on objectives that are largely outside their own control. These high external expectations can decrease their motivation and ability to overcome barriers.

To summarize our basic conceptual framework. First, we theorize that resilience can directly affect academic outcomes such as retention by influencing how students handle academic challenges and setbacks. Second, we posit that resilience can positively or negatively influence retention indirectly depending on how the student works through and faces mental health challenges. How a student copes with mental health challenges could affect retention by detracting from students' ability and motivation to complete schoolwork, making it less likely they will obtain good grades and persist to graduation. Specifically, poor mental health could decrease students' energy and concentration in school, which may reduce accrual of both real skills and outward signals (such as high grades) that increase expected job opportunities and productivity. Also, conditions such as depression can make students pessimistic about their futures, reducing their motivation to make long-term investments like schooling. Depression is associated with gaps in enrollment of a semester or more (referred to as discontinuous enrollment) (Arria et al., 2013) and a twofold increase in risk of departure from college without graduating (Eisenberg, Golberstein, & Hunt, 2009). There is mounting evidence that how a student uses resilience to cope with mental health is an important determinant of retention and academic performance (Hartley, 2011).

Promising Programs and Initiatives

In recognition of the importance of the relationship between resilience and mental health in college populations, a growing number of programs target these issues and therefore have potential to boost retention. In addition, there are some integrated programs that explicitly address the intersection of resilience, mental health, and academic success. These approaches typically involve collaboration across campus units, including health, academic, and other support services, and they represent a move toward a proactive model that promotes health and well-being as part of the institutional culture and routine. In this section, we describe several such programs. As a way of organizing this discussion, we follow a public health framework, moving from the tertiary level (programs targeting students already experiencing significant mental health and/or academic problems), to the secondary level (programs targeting students with risk factors or emerging risk), to the primary level (programs reaching entire populations).

Tertiary Level.   Many new programs are reaching students online, in recognition of the fact that students with mental health struggles do not necessarily access traditional mental health services. For example, the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention's Interactive Screening Program (ISP) uses a web-based screen to identify students with elevated mental health risk and connect them with information and resources (www.afsp .org/our-work/the-interactive-screening-program). The ISP has been implemented on hundreds of campuses across the country. Another online screening-linkage program, *e*Bridge (electronic bridge to mental health), is currently conducting a multisite randomized trial, funded by the National Institutes of Health, in which academic and mental health outcomes are being assessed. *e*Bridge demonstrated promising results in a pilot study; students randomized to online motivational interviewing were more likely to access mental health services (King et al., 2015).

From Intention to Action (FITA) is an integrated program with the explicit goal of addressing both mental health and retention (carleton.ca/fita). This intensive counseling program developed at Carleton University (Ottawa, Canada) targets students who are at risk for academic failure and may be experiencing mental health problems. The program involves 12 weekly meetings with a FITA coordinator, focusing on bolstering well-being and academic performance. Students who began FITA with poor mental health have had improvements in both mental health and course grades, allowing them to avoid academic suspension (Meissner & Konecki, 2015).

Peer-based programs have also increased in popularity as an approach to support distressed students. Since 2007, the Student Support Network at Worcester Polytechnic Institute has trained hundreds of students to help peers in crisis (www.wpi.edu/offices/sdcc/student-network.html).

Secondary Level.   A widely implemented model for students at risk for dropping out is the Student Support Services (SSS) Program. This U.S. Department of Education initiative serves two highly vulnerable populations: low-income, first-generation students and students with disabilities who demonstrate academic need (www2.ed.gov/programs/ triostudsupp/index.html). Institutions apply for federal funding to administer an SSS program, which provides participants with academic tutoring, close advising, and holistic personal, career, and financial counseling. With their holistic approach, SSS programs could naturally extend to promoting mental health and resilience more explicitly.

The Penn Resiliency Program, at the University of Pennsylvania, focuses specifically on mental health. Their curriculum and programming have developed over 25 years and use principles and practices of cognitive behavioral therapy to support students who may be vulnerable to stress-related mental illness. Their program model has had wide impact, estimated at more than 30,000 individuals, by both providing direct services to students and by training people to teach resilience-related skills (https://ppc.sas.upenn.edu/services/penn-resilience-training).

Primary Level.   On a primary/universal level, curriculum-based approaches can reach entire cohorts of students at an institution during certain key periods. Many campuses have designed first-year experience (FYE) programs to foster holistic student development and a healthy college transition. FYE programs include a wide range of initiatives, such as summer orientations, first-year seminars, peer- or faculty-led support groups, and targeted advising. Although there are some mixed findings regarding the impact of FYE programs (Robbins, Oh, Le, & Button, 2009), in general these programs are considered a "high-impact educational practice" according to the Association of American Colleges and Universities (Kuh, 2008), and participation is associated in many studies with successful outcomes (Pascarella & Terenzini, 2005). Programs commonly focus on practical and academic (e.g., course scheduling) aspects of college life (Hunter, 2006; Padgett & Keup, 2011), with minimal emphasis on stress, coping, and resilience (Leary & DeRosier, 2012), however.

A promising first-year seminar with a focus on resilience and mental health has begun through a research study at University of Nevada-Reno. Students were randomized to an online program based on Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT) or to a waitlist control. The program, ACT on College Life (ACT-CL), targeted cognitive flexibility to prevent a range of mental health problems. ACT-CL decreased depression and anxiety among students with at least minimal baseline distress (Levin, Pistorello, Seeley, & Hayes, 2014). Another notable curriculum-based initiative is SCoRE (Student Curriculum on Resilience Education), a program designed to help students cope with personal, social, and academic challenges (www.scoreforcollege.org). Incorporating online self-reflections, activities, and personalized reports, SCoRE aims to strengthen resilience so that students can adjust to and persist in the face of adversity.

Another way of thinking about primary approaches is to consider the underlying campus culture and its impact on student well-being, resilience, and retention. In some cases, teaching pedagogies and grading policies may need to be reexamined. Practices such as grading on a curve can engender competition and stifle opportunities for collaborative learning (Fines, 1996; Hurtado et al., 2011). Likewise, certain instructional contexts, such as large lectures, lack opportunities for the substantive student–faculty interaction which is vital to student engagement (Baldwin, 2009). Several promising programs have been designed to counter these trends and create a more supportive academic climate. For example, the Expert Electronic Coaching (ECoach) program at University of Michigan uses open-source software to provide individualized feedback and advising messages to undergraduates in large, introductory lectures (http://ai.umich.edu/portfolio/e-coach/). Such programs can provide guidance about productively facing challenges and setbacks, and could be enhanced to address resilience and well-being.

Colleges can also help to normalize "failure" as part of the learning process. An interesting example of this is Harvard University's "Reflections on Rejections" (successfailureproject.bsc.harvard.edu/reflections-rejections), a collection of video- and text-based accounts of rejection as experienced by Harvard deans, faculty, students, and alumni. Related to this, mindset interventions developed by social psychologists have potential benefits for resilience, mental health, and retention. The mindsets that students adopt toward ability (Dweck, 2006) and stress (Crum, Salovey, & Achor, 2013) are associated with academic and mental health outcomes in college populations. Finally, peer-based approaches also have potential to be helpful at a primary level. For example, the Wolverine Support Network at University of Michigan organizes weekly discussion groups facilitated by trained peer leaders to address well-being (csg.umich.edu/student-resources/wolverine-support-network).

Strategies and Recommendations

There are exciting opportunities to increase retention rates through greater attention to intentionally nurturing resilience and mental health, as highlighted by the examples described in this chapter. These opportunities are consistent with the general movement toward a more integrated, holistic approach to student wellness and success. In the coming years, we anticipate a wave of new programs and evidence regarding how to increase retention through programs that address the relationship between resilience and mental health. In the meantime, based on our review of current programs and evidence, we recommend that student affairs practitioners and leaders consider adopting, or enhancing, programs that promote student resilience and mental health through a variety of settings beyond the important work already done in counseling and health centers. By implementing these programs at multiple levels, campuses can foster a culture that recognizes the connections between resilience, mental health, and retention. Strategies may include:

- Academic advising is an ideal setting in which to bolster students' resilience skills. Advisors can help students adopt more constructive mindsets about their academic skills and growth, and can also proactively refer students to counseling and other resources that might enhance their coping skills before they reach a point of academic or emotional crisis.
- FYE seminars and other courses can potentially increase resilience on a campuswide level. There is emerging evidence of effectiveness for these types of programs and their beneficial impacts on student retention. Student affairs leaders can actively monitor new developments in this area, and can promote the adoption of courses that build resilience skills.
- Peer support groups can offer an important complement to the services provided by campus professionals. Student affairs leaders should foster

the growth and development of these groups and help them implement evidence-based methods for teaching resilience skills.

- Online programs can reach large numbers of students at very low cost. Online screening and referral programs can help struggling students, as described previously, and information promoting resilience for coping with challenges through information shared via e-mail, websites, and social media can help all types of students.
- Student data analytics are increasingly sophisticated in higher education, and have great potential to address resilience, mental health, and retention. A rich variety of sources—such as admissions data, course data, and measures collected from surveys and mobile devices—could provide a full picture of students' academic and overall well-being and offer them real-time resources that fit their needs.
- The provision of comprehensive campus mental health services, as described in Chapter 2, is also essential to fostering student success. Given the connection between mental health, retention, and resilience, it is necessary to have a campus counseling center offering the broad range of prevention and intervention services.

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The Future of Gen Z

How Covid-19 Will Shape Students and Higher Education for the Next Decade

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About the Author

Jeffrey J. Selingo has written about higher education for more than two decades and is a *New York Times* bestselling author of three books. His latest book, *Who Gets In and Why: A Year Inside College Admissions*, was published in September 2020 and was named among the 100 Notable Books of the year by *The New York Times*. A former editor of *The Chronicle*, Jeff is a regular contributor to *The Atlantic* and *The Washington Post*, and is a special adviser for innovation and professor of practice at Arizona State University.

Cover photo by Getty Images

By JEFFREY J. SELINGO

Mention the "demographic cliff" in higher education, and it seems everyone knows what you're talking about. In 2026, when the children born during the Great Recession reach college-going age, the number of high-school graduates in the United States will begin a rapid and steady decline.

What's much less discussed is how students in middle and high school right now as well as those making their way through college and in their early 20s — the cohort collectively known as Generation Z — were on track to be the most well-educated generation ever. Born starting around 1995, the members of Gen Z were enrolling in college at a significantly higher rate than their predecessors, the millennials, did at a comparable age, according to the Pew Research Center.

That meant that a greater proportion of high-school graduates going to college might have partly made up for the drop in their overall numbers — at least until the global coronavirus pandemic hit in the winter of 2020 and cut deeply into college enrollment. Never before had colleges experienced a one-year decline in enrollment as steep as the one they witnessed between the high-school graduating classes of 2019 and 2020. In that one-year period, the number of students enrolling directly in college from high school dropped by some 700,000 students, or nearly 7 percent.

Higher education has experienced demographic droughts and global calamities before, including wars, recessions, and terrorist attacks. But rarely have both occurred at the same time. Moreover, new sources of students often eased the demographic downturns — rising immigration,

> **There's no doubt that, at least in the near term, the pandemic is prompting a great reassessment about higher education among students and their families.**

international students, and of course, higher college-going rates among domestic teenagers like those we were beginning to see with Gen Z at the end of the last decade.

The question now is whether the disruption caused by the pandemic is a one-time blip for enrollment or whether that and the broader changes ushered in during the coronavirus outbreak — stress and depression, the coinciding racial-justice movement, online education — portend a new normal for the latter half of Gen Z, those graduating from high school over the next decade.

There's no doubt that, at least in the near term, the pandemic is prompting a great reassessment about higher education among students and their families. It's happening on several different levels. At the most basic level, as we heard in focus groups of high-school students convened for this report, they are worried about their safety and well-being, and hesitant about paying for a residential experience that's even partly virtual.

There is also growing evidence — both anecdotal and in surveys — that the pandemic has had a dramatic psychological effect among Gen Zers on the path to college. They fell behind academically during remote learning. The lack of social connections in school and in extracurricular activities affected their mental health. And a year of protests sparked by the killing of George Floyd has only intensified the expectations of a generation already highly

attuned to issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion about how they want colleges to live up to those ideals.

Defining a generation by a significant event or painting a picture of developing adolescents with broad strokes is an exercise sometimes fraught with misinterpretations. All generations are shaped by outside events. Three years after millennials started college, for instance, the September 11 terrorist attacks occurred; later that decade came the Great Recession. While significant, those events didn't have the direct impact on teenagers in the way the pandemic quickly shifted high schools into online education and canceled athletics and extracurricular activities for more than a year.

"One of the main storylines of the pandemic was not only health-related but it was about school and the disruption to the lives of students," says Jean M. Twenge, a psychology professor at San Diego State University and the author of *iGen*, a name she conceived for Gen Z, given its members' proclivity for digital devices from an early age. Twenge found in her research that smartphones radically changed every aspect of how Gen Zers live, making them more likely to stay home and less likely to socialize in person.

The pandemic "only accelerated the trends we were seeing with iGen," Twenge says. "It didn't stop them." Colleges and universities, she advises, will need to

> **This report looks at how the demographic challenges already facing higher education pre-pandemic only deepened during the crisis.**

employ new approaches to engaging students inside the classroom and assimilating them into campus life since a year of their adolescence — a key stage in their development — was essentially lost to the coronavirus. "We're all going to need to exercise our social skills again," Twenge says, "since so many of us haven't interacted with people for a year — and that's especially true for iGen."

Because of Covid-19, we may come to view Gen Z over time as two distinct segments. The first is the one that entered college starting around 2013, and by the time the pandemic hit in 2020, had already graduated or were partway through their undergraduate career. That's pre-Covid Gen Z. The second segment were college freshmen in 2020 and students still in middle and high school. It's a group — post-Covid Gen Z — that spans 11 years and is a larger group than the leading edge of the generation.

In 2018, I wrote a report about Gen Z for *The Chronicle* titled "The New Generation of Students." This brief expands on that report by helping campus leaders understand how Covid-19 is likely to shape the preferences of college students in the decade ahead and how institutions will need to respond to the expectations and needs of the post-Covid Gen Z. It looks at how the demographic challenges already facing higher education pre-pandemic only deepened during the crisis. It examines learning loss and mental-health challenges amid school closures and economic hardships and explores key areas in which colleges will need to make changes to improve the Gen Z student experience.

A Focus on the Student Experience

A s THE PRICE of college has skyrocketed over the last 40 years, so too have the demands of consumers — students and parents. Every generation searches for the right fit on a campus, with an eye toward meeting their preferences. Meanwhile, college officials are constantly on the lookout for ways to differentiate their campuses in a competitive market by better fulfilling the shifting needs of students.

At the beginning of this century, colleges were awash in prospective undergraduates. The children of baby boomers — the millennials — had arrived on campus expecting a vast array of amenities, from suite-style residence halls to swanky rec centers.

Between 2004 and 2006, colleges and universities collectively built some 90 million square feet of space, one-third of it focused on residential life and student activities, according to Sightlines, a higher-education-construction consulting firm. To put that number in perspective: That's the floor space in about 33 Empire State Buildings combined. The building boom began to ebb as millennials started to give way to the arrival of Gen Z on campuses around 2012. In 2016, colleges built just a third of the square footage they constructed 10 years earlier.

> ## "My belief is that whatever gets me on a campus in person, I'm going to do."
>
> — Male, junior, Colorado

If the first decade of this century was about student amenities, then the second decade was about student services — academic, career, and mental health. The pressure was on for colleges to raise graduation rates, improve retention, and deepen engagement with students.

As a result, institutions centralized academic advising by shifting duties from faculty to professional advisers, hired student-success specialists, and added technology for so-called intrusive advising that alerted officials when students were struggling. Campuses also scaled up their mental-health services to accommodate a 30-percent increase in the number of visitors to their counseling centers in the first half of the decade, according to the Center for Collegiate Mental Health. And they prioritized career support for students. Among other things, they elevated the titles of career-service leaders, the National Association of Colleges and Employers has reported. Some one in five institutions moved the function from student affairs to the provost, making it more central to the academic mission of the institution.

Now, as we enter the third decade of this millennium, colleges must focus on combining the amenities of the first decade and the services of the second into a seamless student experience.

That's particularly the case after the pandemic. Overall, Gen Z found their college experience during the crisis largely inadequate and lacking the community they were promised in those glossy brochures and slick websites when they were prospective students. With Gen Zers learning from their childhood bedrooms and tuition-paying parents witnessing the remote experience in real time, families questioned the value of paying in-person prices for what was often described as "glorified Skype."

"I hated online learning so much," one student noted in *The Chronicle*'s focus group. "I struggled through it, so I'm looking for a smaller college because I don't want to go to an institution that is primarily online."

In a survey of more than 3,000 students in the United States and Canada by Top Hat, an education-technology company, nearly 80 percent of respondents said their online courses lacked the engagement of in-person classes. Even tuition discounts extended by some institutions didn't satisfy families. In most cases, the tuition reductions of 5 or 10 percent put an even bigger focus on the quality of the remote-classroom experience. Small price cuts signaled that colleges believed that

> ## I wasn't as motivated during online school, and now it's a little stressful trying to differentiate yourself in admissions."
>
> — Female, sophomore, Oregon

STUDENT VOICES SOURCE: Two focus groups totaling 13 junior and senior high-school students conducted in May 2021.

the bulk of their value is tied up in classroom instruction — and not in the residential experience that so many advertise.

As campuses reopen and the virus subsides, Gen Z students and their parents will expect more from campuses, both inside and outside the classroom, akin to the experience they have in every other part of their lives. In an age of instantaneous communication and feedback, surrounded by Amazon 1-Click, Netflix preferences, Instagram likes, and Google answers, college campuses remain stuck with an amalgamation of processes, paper, and people sitting in various departments. Think about the student who visits the bursar's office, the registrar, and the financial-aid office to clear up a single billing issue or the undergraduate who sees a professor, an academic adviser, and career services to receive credit for their summer internship.

Outside of higher education, this customer experience encompasses every aspect of a company's offering — from packaging to ease of use to reliability. Historically, those things were often thought of as separate functions within companies. It's only in recent years that corporations brought them under a senior executive charged with the "customer experience." Now, consumer expectations are spilling over to higher education. According to a survey of more than half a million current college students done in 2020 by the consulting firm Ruffalo Noel Levitz, only about half of those at four-year colleges say they're satisfied with the overall experience.

Gen Z "students and parents want campuses with fewer redundancies and less friction in every interaction," says Tom Ellett, Quinnipiac University's "chief experience officer."

The chief experience officer at Quinnipiac, perhaps one of the first of their kind in higher education, oversees all "student-facing functions" that are traditionally split between vice presidents and offices such as enrollment management, student affairs, the registrar, the bursar, and career services. Rethinking the student experience, Ellett advises, "is a deliberate process that identifies the silos that get in the way of students thriving" — and ultimately provides the return on investment that post-Covid Gen Zers are seeking.

> ## "I'm considering a gap year, possibly to give an extra year buffer to figure out what I want. Also, who knows what the Covid situation will be."
>
> — Female, junior, Connecticut

> ## "I just met with my guidance counselor today, and I feel like they're kind of just as confused as we are about the state of college admissions."
>
> — Female, junior, Connecticut

STUDENT VOICES

"Something that has changed for me since Covid is I'd like to live somewhere other than the U.S., because I think that Covid showed me that you can work collaboratively with people from anywhere."

— Female, senior, Oregon

"For me, my plan has always been to go to college. My dream was to go to New York City, but Covid might put the price of that out of reach."

— Male, junior, North Carolina

"The stress level definitely has gone up, because you keep reading about how all these schools got record numbers of applications, now that so many are test-optional. At least for me, that put more pressure on test scores because since such a large number of people aren't choosing to submit scores, you need to have good scores to really help."

— Female, junior, Texas

SOURCE: Two focus groups totaling 13 junior and senior high-school students conducted in May 2021.

"Covid definitely has brought a lot of political issues to light. If there's a school you're looking at and they're doing some questionable things, whether it's something that you would align yourself with or not, it changes your opinion on the school and the type of people that run it."

— Male, junior, Colorado

"I think it's really hard to know what you want, because you can't go visit and really get the feel of a school. "

— Female, junior, Texas

"I feel like the grades that we got when we were all remote were a big lie. Some teachers were really strict with grading, while others were lenient, especially in taking late work. Now what's going to happen at these colleges when they look at these grades in admissions?"

— Female, junior, Connecticut

"I've never really been into party schools in general. But especially after everything happened with the pandemic, I want to look particularly at smaller colleges, because I think that would be safer."

— Female, junior, South Carolina

"My parents have been pushing me to look for safe locations."

— Female, junior, Connecticut

"I definitely think that how schools handled Covid – they made you wear a mask or they strongly recommended that you get the vaccine – that shows like they're actually concerned about the safety of their students. I would consider a school that did that versus a school that said, 'Oh, you don't have to wear a mask. Covid is fake.'"

— Female, junior, Texas

SOURCE: Two focus groups totaling 13 junior and senior high-school students conducted in May 2021.

ABOUT OUR FOCUS GROUPS

n May 2021, *The Chronicle* conducted two synchronous, virtual focus groups, each with six or seven high-school students, all juniors or seniors. The purpose was to collect data on how Covid-19 had affected high-school students' attitudes about college.

The literature on online focus groups recommends that they remain relatively small, so our ideal was five to seven students per group. While a focus group is not a statistically significant sample like a survey, the responses show how some students are thinking and talking about college.

We conducted an open call for students through college counselors in a diverse set of high schools. John Pryor, a former managing director of the Higher Education Research Institute at the University of California at Los Angeles, and a former senior research scientist with Gallup, led the design of the questions and protocols for the focus groups and facilitated the conversations.

Quotes from the focus-group sessions appear throughout this report. Key takeaways:

▶ PLANS FOR COLLEGE HAVE CHANGED.

Everyone in the focus groups had planned to attend a four-year college before the coronavirus outbreak disrupted their high-school education. Now a few students were considering community college. Others were seriously thinking about taking a gap year, to give the coronavirus time to "calm down," or because alternate plans are now considered more mainstream. In general, a broader range of possibilities are now being examined by post-Covid Gen Zers.

▶ PHYSICAL AND MENTAL HEALTH HAVE BEEN AFFECTED.

Almost every student talked about being stressed during the past year. Emotional health and well-being were frequent topics. When looking at colleges, the students sought information about how each institution supported the emotional health of students during the pandemic; not doing so was seen as a reason to look elsewhere. Physical health was also a concern. If colleges didn't take the health concerns of their students seriously, such as appropriate quarantine measures or vaccination requirements, the teenagers scratched those colleges from their college list.

▶ ADMISSIONS IS MORE CONFUSING THAN EVER.

On top of the usual stress over getting into college, post-Covid Gen Zers feel they are getting mixed messages from institutions about ever-changing admissions policies. For one, they don't know whether colleges that have made the SAT/ACT optional in admissions *really* mean the colleges don't want test scores submitted with applications. The students are less sure than their predecessors about where they want to go to college since they have not been able to visit campuses. They like virtual tours, but they reported that such tours' quality and availability are spotty from college to college.

SECTION 2

GETTY IMAGES

What's New After the Pandemic

BY THE TIME the coronavirus emerged in early 2020, some seven years of Gen Zers had cycled through college campuses, giving officials a good sense of the trends and attitudinal shifts that were already defining this generation. There are several changes driven by Gen Z outlined in *The Chronicle*'s 2018 report that will remain true even after the pandemic:

- **They see technology as an extension of themselves.** Although Gen Zers don't believe technology has unlimited potential in the academic setting, this generation still expects a high-tech educational and campus experience. That's one reason why they gave such bad marks to professors inexperienced with teaching with technology when they made the quick pivot to remote education early in the pandemic. Given that Gen Zers were already experienced with shopping online, liking photos on Instagram, and navigating Reddit, when the college search moved online, they moved with it. Indeed, 55 percent of high-school juniors in 2020-21 said they preferred the online college search, according to a survey by the website Niche, which rates schools and colleges.

- **They mainly go to college for one thing: a job.** Gen Z puts great stock in the job after graduation — a departure from past generations. A long-running national survey of freshmen by the University of California at Los Angeles has found that since 2008 the No. 1 reason students attended college was to get a better job. As a result, Gen Z favors educational experiences that blend online and face-to-face instruction with liberal arts and professional-skills training — all with immersive elements and an experiential bent. And if students don't think a college will do enough for them to get hired after graduation, they will look elsewhere.

- **They focus on value over frills.** Family incomes among Gen Zers' parents have stagnated even as the price of higher education has shot up. In roughly half the states, more than 50 percent of K-12 students come from families making less than $40,000 annually, which typically makes them eligible for the federal Pell Grant, according to the Southern Education Foundation. Gen Z is wary of taking on debt and is interested in practical subjects with clear paths to degrees as well as transparent pricing and tuition discounts. The Niche survey of high-school juniors during the pandemic found students automatically eliminating colleges from their search based solely on sticker price: Almost a third of students said that $30,000 would be too much to consider.
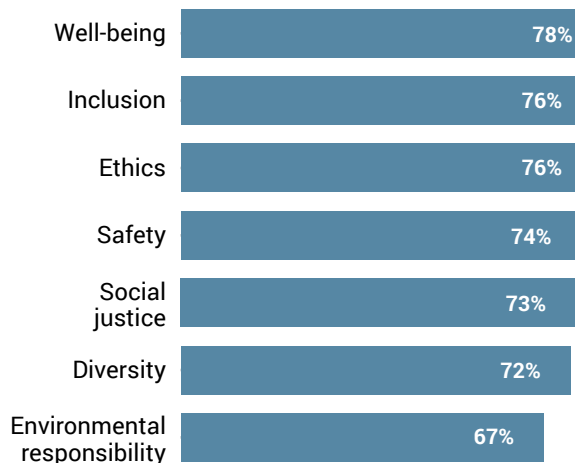
Now, as the nation emerges from the pandemic, what's driving demand for an improved student experience for post-Covid Gen Zers are three simultaneous forces. These pressures were either brought on by the virus's disruption to students' lives or already existed before the crisis, which only further exposed their risks for higher education.

Gen Z is not the end of the demographic drought for colleges. Higher education has faced enrollment downturns in the past,

Brand and Enrollment

What do colleges need to emphasize to meet the socially conscious expectations of Gen Z?

"Moderately" or "very" important when deciding which college to attend

Category	Percentage
Well-being	78%
Inclusion	76%
Ethics	76%
Safety	74%
Social justice	73%
Diversity	72%
Environmental responsibility	67%

82% Safety, well-being, and inclusion are as important as academic rigor.

72% Colleges/universities need to be doing more for the well-being of their students.

>40% It is "somewhat to very hard" to find info about campus safety, wellbeing, and inclusion efforts.

Source: Everfi K-12 course data.

WELL-BEING POST-COVID FOR GEN-Z

The inability of Gen Zers to see friends, participate in sports, and go out during Covid-19 led to an increased sense of loneliness and isolation. While adults also experienced similar feelings, for those in Gen Z it was a much more significant loss since they are in a developmental period where friendships are key, socializing is essential to their identity, and milestones, such as proms and spring break, are important markers, says Nance Roy, chief clinical officer at the Jed Foundation, which promotes emotional health among college students.

As post-Covid Gen Zers arrive on campus in the decade ahead, Roy has this advice for how institutions can support them.

▶ MAKE RELATIONSHIPS CENTRAL TO THE STUDENT EXPERIENCE.

Relationships between students and mentorships between faculty members and students are often random. Post-pandemic, it will be more important than ever before, Roy says, for colleges to provide students with opportunities for meaningful connections. Colleges should carve out more space and time for students and faculty members to interact, professors should dedicate more time to class discussions for students to connect with each other, and more project-based learning should be introduced to allow students to work together.

▶ CREATE AND PROMOTE MORE SOCIAL EVENTS.

Gen Zers will be looking for opportunities to meet up face to face after the pandemic. Students will create their own social networks if colleges don't provide a more robust slate of formal events than before Covid-19 or encourage and provide space for organic gatherings.

▶ ENCOURAGE EVERYONE TO PROVIDE SUPPORT TO STUDENTS.

While campuses are likely to see higher numbers of students seeking clinical services for mental health, others will benefit from increased support from faculty and staff members even if they don't engage in formal counseling. "A warm hand, outreach from a faculty member, coach, academic adviser, or dining-hall staff can go a long way to fostering a much-needed sense of belonging and cultivating a culture of caring and compassion on campus," Roy says. "The emotional well-being of students is a campuswide responsibility."

Did You Know?

MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLNESS

Only 3 percent of college students said they are most likely to talk to a counselor if they were experiencing mental-health challenges, while 45 percent would most likely turn to a friend for help and support.

SEXUAL AND RELATIONSHIP VIOLENCE

Eighty-eight percent of students said they would refrain from sexual activity if the other person was incapacitated, but only 42 percent felt their peers would do the same.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION

While 82 percent of students said a focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion is important, only 51 percent have been provided with prior training on these topics.

ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUGS

The number of incoming non-drinkers or abstainers has increased significantly over the past 15-plus years, yet the overall high-risk drinking rate among college students has remained unchanged.

Source: Everfi

most notably in the early 1980s and early 1990s. Those were the result of dips in Gen X, which was a relatively small generation of students sandwiched between two huge ones, the baby boomers and millennials.

What was well-known to higher-education leaders before the pandemic was that the number of high-school graduates in the United States was projected to peak at 3.93 million in 2025. Still, there was cause for some optimism. For one, the high-school dropout rate for the leading edge of Gen Z was significantly lower than that of the

first of the millennials in the early 2000s. Second, among Gen Zers who were no longer in high school in 2017, 59 percent were enrolled in college — higher than the enrollment rate for millennials in 2002 (53 percent) and Gen Xers in 1986 (44 percent), the Pew Research Center found.

The pandemic not only stopped those gains, it reversed them. That was particularly the case for the largest segments of Gen Z students — those who were low-income and students of color (see graph *Percent Change in Fall Enrollments by High-School Characteristics* on page 23). But college enrollment also fell among affluent, well-prepared high-school graduates whose parents attended college. Instead of going to college virtually, some decided to defer admission and take a gap year — an option likely to become more popular as students and families reassess what they want to do and how they want to go to college in the future. A Gallup survey commissioned by the Carnegie Corporation of New York during the pandemic found that nearly half of parents said they would prefer not to send their children to a four-year college after high school, even if there were no obstacles, financial or otherwise.

"College has always been my plan, but during Covid I kind of turned into a hermit," said one focus-group participant, a junior from Colorado. "I like to spend a lot of time in nature, so that kind of kind of made me want to take a gap year to work on farms."

In past demographic downturns, colleges always could look further into the future for signs of growth. When the last of the Gen Zers leave high school around 2030, marking the end of the decline in graduates, the numbers simply remain stable for a few years before falling again.

As the United States emerges from Covid-19, the reality is that the nation is on the brink of what labor-market analytics company Emsi calls a "sansdemic" — a lack of people. The U.S. government reported that the number of births nationwide in 2020 — 3.6 million — was the lowest since 1979. The birth rate has fallen by 19 percent since

Post-Covid Gen Z will need time to acclimate – both academically and socially – when they arrive on campus.

its recent peak in 2007 — putting colleges in a demographic trough through at least the late 2030s.

The pandemic set back Gen Z — academically, emotionally, and financially. Under growing pressure to improve graduation rates and show the value of a degree, colleges have elevated their student-success efforts over the last two decades, deploying a variety of tactics to improve retention and move the needle on stubbornly low graduation rates. That work took on a greater sense of urgency before the pandemic as colleges welcomed larger numbers of underrepresented students — first-generation, low-income, and students of color — all of whom had historically not been well-served by higher education.

Covid-19 is likely to put a dent in those efforts given the disruption to in-person learning in K-12 schools. Almost a third of seniors in the class of 2020 surveyed by McKinsey & Company, for instance, shared concerns about their academic preparedness for school. As colleges return to normal operations, many are beefing up their tutoring services and professors are tweaking their courses to build in more time to review material that normally would have been covered in high school.

How long colleges might need to make up for any learning loss is unclear. Most of the national research that showed students regressed academically because of lost classroom time — especially in math — focused on elementary and middle schools. Those younger students could catch up by the time they graduate from high school — or not.
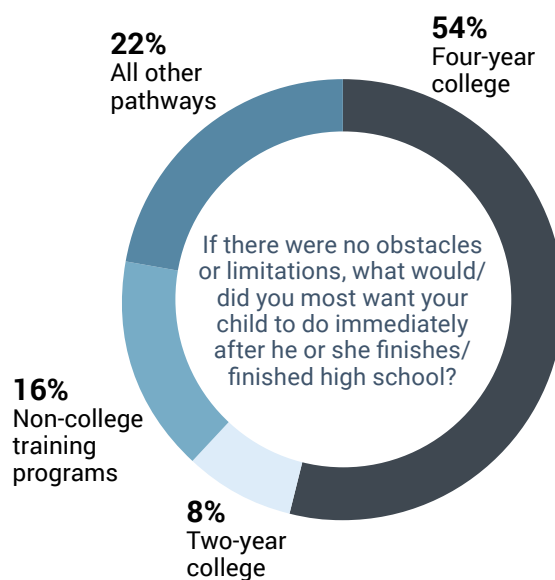
Beyond academics, colleges also need to prepare for students whose social development was curtailed during the pandemic. This generation was already coming to college less seasoned than previous generations even before Covid-19 locked them at home with their parents and forced them to communicate with friends from a distance.

Half of the students surveyed by McKinsey said Covid-19 had affected their emotional and mental preparedness to enroll in college. The McKinsey study echoes other surveys. A poll of more than 7,000 students in the class of 2022 by Niche found only half felt confident that they would be socially and emotionally prepared for college, a decline of a third from the class of 2020.

Post-Covid Gen Z will need time to acclimate socially when they arrive on campus. Campus leaders should consider

Parental Preference

Percentage among all parents

54% Four-year college

22% All other pathways

16% Non-college training programs

8% Two-year college

If there were no obstacles or limitations, what would/did you most want your child to do immediately after he or she finishes/finished high school?

Note: "Non-college training programs" and "all other pathways" are composite groups.
Source: Gallup, Carnegie Corporation of New York

TEACHING AND TECHNOLOGY AFTER THE PANDEMIC

Although Gen Zers largely gave low marks to remote learning during the pandemic and eagerly awaited their return to campuses for in-person learning, they don't want to entirely dispense with the flexibility that accompanied online education. The reality is that the post-Covid campus is likely to be a mix of virtual and face-to-face courses. Here's what colleges should plan for when it comes to teaching post-Covid Gen Z, according to Don Carter, director of academic and research technology services at Northern Arizona University.

▶ EXPECTATIONS WILL BE HIGHER AFTER THE PANDEMIC.

Students gave a pass to faculty members who were unfamiliar with using technology at the beginning of the pandemic. When it became clear that the fall of 2020 would also be online at many institutions, colleges spent the summer training the faculty to improve their remote courses. "Faculty training was successful for those who attended," Carter says, "but most opted for just-in-time training and support." If colleges expect to continue offering online courses to residential students, they need to essentially start over and redesign classes and train the faculty for the long run.

▶ PROVIDE EQUAL TECHNOLOGY FOR MULTIPLE DELIVERY CHANNELS.

If students are allowed to mix and match in-person and online learning on campuses, colleges need to provide technology that gives students the same opportunities to participate in classroom activities no matter how they consume the course. The problem, Carter says, is that online students generally have more digital tools available during class time. Institutions that are serious about hybrid learning need to invest in upgrading classroom technology or else the "in-person students will ask, 'Why not just be remote?'" Carter says.

▶ DON'T THINK OF ONLINE AS JUST COURSES.

Encourage faculty members to consider the lessons they learned about teaching during the pandemic, and not only what happened in their classroom. Take virtual office hours, for example. Most professors reported students attended office hours in greater numbers during the pandemic because they found online meetings more convenient. The convenience factor doesn't disappear with the pandemic for students who live off campus or work. Virtual office hours are also often more effective with students who are intimidated by visiting their professors, a group that includes many first-generation students.

transforming the first semester of college into a transitional term both academically and socially.
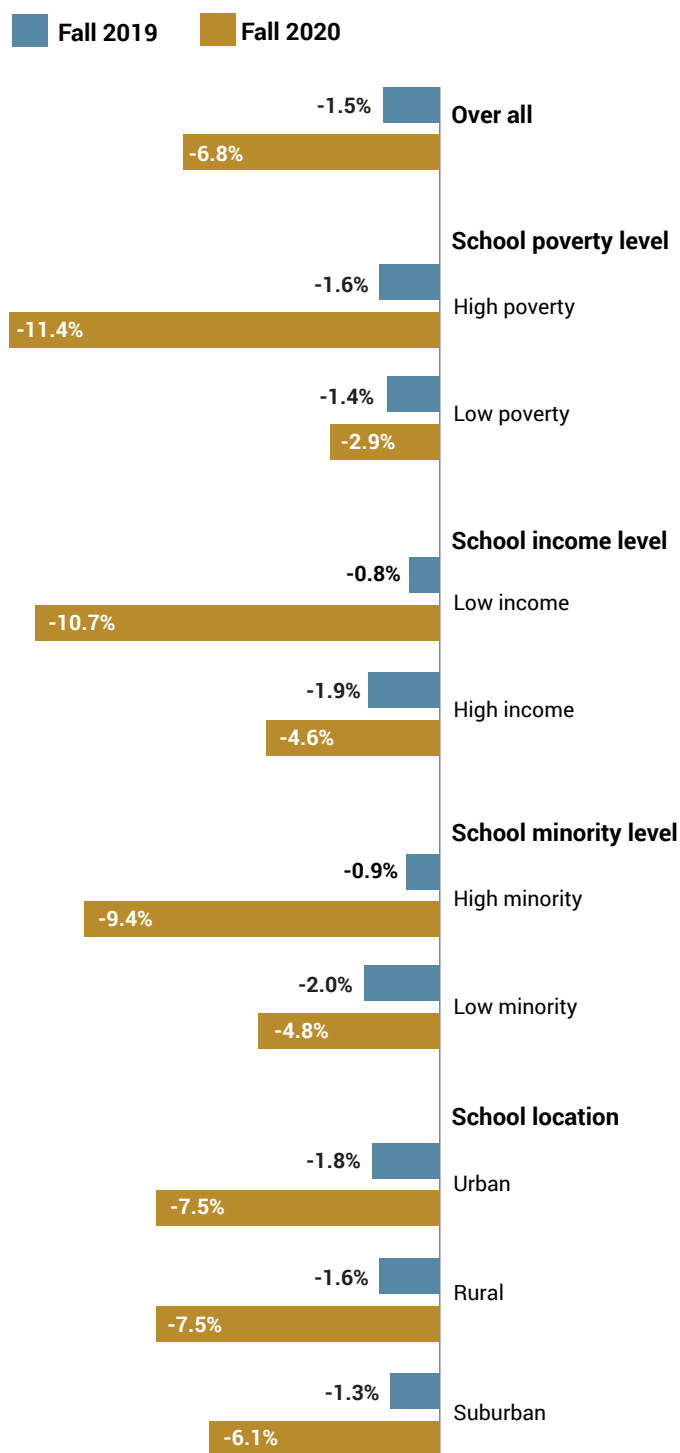
No matter what, Covid-19 is likely to worsen the mental-health crisis among Gen Zers. More than a quarter of students on 14 campuses surveyed by the American College Health Association and the Healthy Minds Network during the pandemic said anxiety or mental distress had disrupted their studies and affected their academic performance.

Mental-health problems were exacerbated by financial worries during the pandemic, as students' parents lost their jobs when unemployment surged. More than one in five Americans faced economic difficulties resulting from the pandemic, the Pew Research Center found. Nearly a third of students in the McKinsey survey said Covid-19 had a strong or extremely strong impact on their ability to afford college.

While campuses have added to their ranks of counselors in recent years, they continue to struggle to keep up with demand. College presidents are feeling the pressure to do more: Student mental health is their top concern going into the fall of 2021, according to an American Council on Education survey.

Beyond providing assistance to their current students, making mental health a priority also helps with future enrollment. In their college decision-making process, safety and well-being are increasingly as important for Gen Z as academic rigor. Eight in 10 students said well-being is a "moderately" or "very important" consideration

Percent Change in Fall Enrollments by High-School Characteristics

■ Fall 2019   ■ Fall 2020

Over all
-1.5%
-6.8%

School poverty level

High poverty
-1.6%
-11.4%

Low poverty
-1.4%
-2.9%

School income level

Low income
-0.8%
-10.7%

High income
-1.9%
-4.6%

School minority level

High minority
-0.9%
-9.4%

Low minority
-2.0%
-4.8%

School location

Urban
-1.8%
-7.5%

Rural
-1.6%
-7.5%

Suburban
-1.3%
-6.1%

Source: National Student Clearinghouse Research Center

when deciding which college to attend, according to research from Everfi, a company that provides students with online training in how to deal with alcohol, misconduct, and mental-health issues.

"I'm looking for a place that's going to accommodate my mental stress," according to a focus-group member from the high-school class of 2022.

The result is that colleges need not only a comprehensive approach to safety and well-being, but they also need to better communicate that commitment to would-be students in admissions materials.
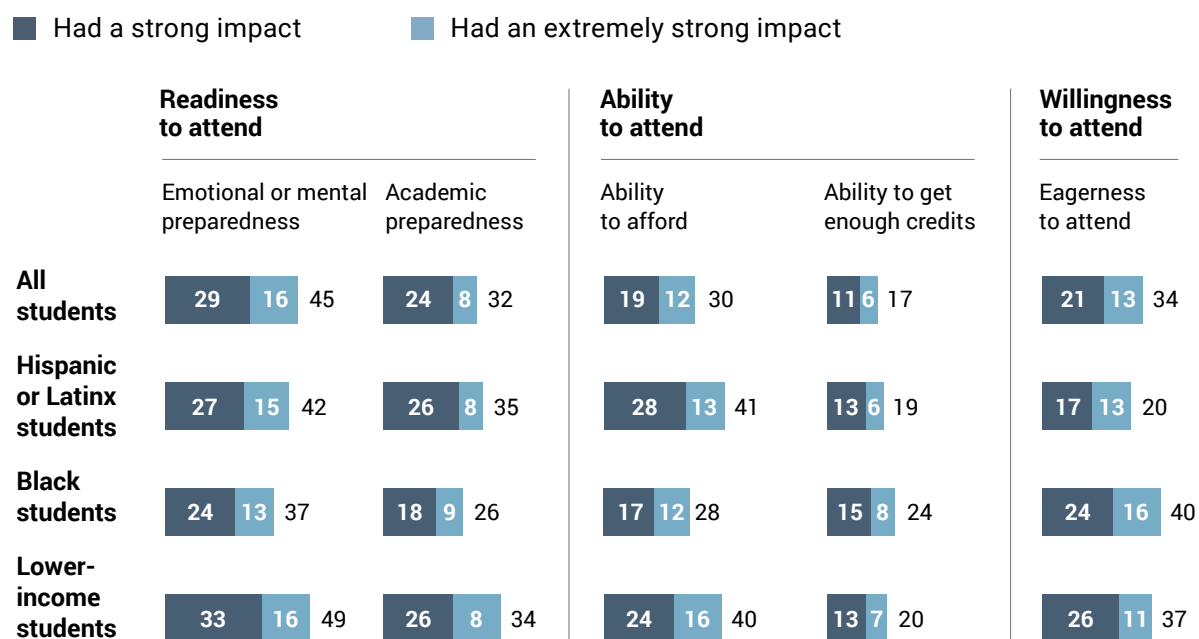
Gen Zers are even more focused on issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion in the wake of Covid-19. The protests that erupted in the wake of high-profile police

killings in 2020 were muted on college campuses because they were mostly closed or locked down to students during the pandemic. While colleges quickly released statements condemning racism, campus leaders likely missed the full effect of Gen Z's frustrations with colleges that make bold pronouncements but then fail to take actions demanded by students, such as cutting ties with local police departments, requiring classes on racism, and hiring more faculty and staff of color.

"This is a generational shift in the belief that these values are really important and foundational to their experiences," Alvin Tillery Jr., director of the Center for the Study of Diversity and Democracy at Northwestern University, told

Students at Risk

Level of reported impact of pandemic on college-preparedness factors, percent of respondents

■ Had a strong impact   ■ Had an extremely strong impact

	Readiness to attend		Ability to attend		Willingness to attend
	Emotional or mental preparedness	Academic preparedness	Ability to afford	Ability to get enough credits	Eagerness to attend
All students	29 / 16 → 45	24 / 8 → 32	19 / 12 → 30	11 / 6 → 17	21 / 13 → 34
Hispanic or Latinx students	27 / 15 → 42	26 / 8 → 35	28 / 13 → 41	13 / 6 → 19	17 / 13 → 20
Black students	24 / 13 → 37	18 / 9 → 26	17 / 12 → 28	15 / 8 → 24	24 / 16 → 40
Lower-income students	33 / 16 → 49	26 / 8 → 34	24 / 16 → 40	13 / 7 → 20	26 / 11 → 37

Notes: Figures may not sum because of rounding; the level of reported impact on college preparedness factors relates to the question: "What, if anything, has been the impact of Covid-19 on the following aspects of your preparedness for college?" Lower-income students includes those with an annual family income of less than $50,000.

Source: McKinsey Covid-19 Higher Education Enrollment Survey: wave I, conducted April 21-28, 2020

MARKETING TO POST-COVID GEN Z

During the pandemic, more than 600 colleges and universities dropped their admissions requirements for ACT and SAT scores. At some colleges, including the University of California system, those test-optional policies have become permanent.

With fewer institutions requiring the tests, fewer college-going teenagers might feel compelled to take them. Every year, colleges purchase the names of test-takers to begin their outreach to students. Without all those leads to fill the top of their recruitment funnel, colleges will need to look elsewhere for the names of prospective students at a time when Gen Z is already bypassing many of the traditional marketing channels colleges have long used, such as email.

In the aftermath of the pandemic and a national reckoning over race, skepticism is growing toward institutions of all kinds, including colleges, says Tamalyn Powell, senior vice president for education at BVK, a Milwaukee-based marketing and advertising firm. She has this advice for colleges in how they can tailor their marketing messages to the needs of post-Covid Gen Z.

▶ BE CANDID ABOUT WHAT TO EXPECT.

Gen Z is incredibly savvy, and technology has empowered them to find information on the fly. Colleges need to be forthright with information that matters most to students. Make tuition and fees clear and understandable. "Dig into efforts toward greater campus safety," Powell says. And go beyond statements about antiracist values and show what actions you've taken.

▶ STAND FOR SOMETHING OUTSIDE OF HIGHER EDUCATION, TOO.

"Students in this generation see themselves as agents of change," Powell says. "They aren't merely advocating for change, they are making it happen, pushing their agenda, and being supported by their educators, parents, and in many cases, business leaders." Any university could claim small classes, top-notch professors, and hands-on learning in their admissions materials. In order to differentiate their messages in a crowded marketplace, colleges and universities need to align with ideas that students crave and want to be part of — issues like racial justice, climate change, and social mobility.
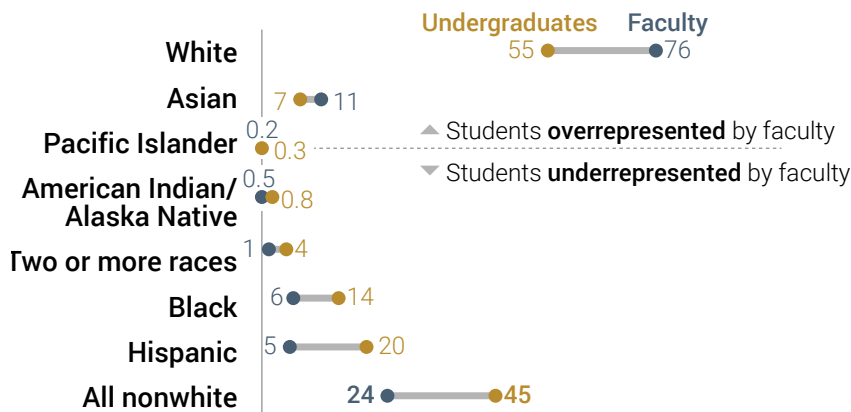
▶ MATCH THE MARKETING TO YOUR ACTIONS.

Too many times, how a university tells its story in marketing does not match what prospective students experience when engaging with the institution. This was especially true during the pandemic when some institutions said they cared about their students' well-being, but were encouraging them to live on campus and attend in-person classes. Colleges need to develop a shared commitment to a brand and mission among faculty and staff members, understand where there are any disconnects, and eliminate those gaps.

Diverging Demographics

U.S. college students are twice as likely as faculty members to be Black, and four times as likely to be Hispanic.

Percent of undergraduates and postsecondary faculty members by race and ethnicity in fall 2017

	Undergraduates	Faculty
White	55	76
Asian	7	11
Pacific Islander	0.3	0.2
American Indian/ Alaska Native	0.8	0.5
Two or more races	4	1
Black	14	6
Hispanic	20	5
All nonwhite	45	24

△ Students **overrepresented** by faculty

▽ Students **underrepresented** by faculty

Note: "Nonwhite" includes those who are Black, Hispanic, Asian, Pacific Islander, American Indian or Alaska Native, and those of two or more races. Those categorized as "nonresident alien" and "race/ethnicity unknown" are not included in this analysis, so shares may not total to 100 percent.

Source: National Center for Education Statistics, Pew Research Center

The Washington Post. "You can say there's no systemic racism, but they don't believe that."

For Gen Z, the pandemic exposed dramatic health and economic inequities that previous generations have ignored. In *The Chronicle*'s focus groups, students said they closely followed the protests and national debate. For some, it inspired a change in career plans. All paid very close attention to how colleges reacted. They want campuses that take issues of inequity seriously, just as they are looking for institutions that took the pandemic seriously. Not only did prospective students look for official communications from colleges, they also sought out student videos on YouTube and followed current undergraduates on social media to see what they were thinking and get a better sense of campus culture.

Meanwhile, on campuses, the pivot to remote education uncovered the divide between white and well-off students and everyone else. A study by the research and consulting organization Ithaka S+R found that Latino students reported the highest number of challenges during remote learning compared to every other racial and ethnic group; issues with technology were also more problematic for low-income students than their counterparts.

Yes, Zooming into homes of undergraduates helped faculty members better understand the competing pressures in their students' lives. But the reality is that given Gen Z's diversity, the racial, ethnic, and economic composition of the student body on most campuses is shifting much faster than the faculty and staff who turn over at a much slower rate.

Just among the faculty alone, about three-quarters of professors in the United States are white, compared with around

half of undergraduates, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. The fastest-growing group of students in higher education are Latinos. They now make up 20 percent of undergraduates, but only 5 percent of faculty members are Latino.

Over all, a larger share of younger, non-tenured professors are nonwhite compared with fully tenured professors, as reported by the Pew Research Center. But junior faculty still aren't diversifying as quickly as the student bodies at their institutions. Over the last decade, the share of nonwhite assistant professors grew by 10 percentage points, for instance, compared with 8 points for professors.

The demographic gap between college students and the faculty exists across academic disciplines. A study by researchers at the University of Missouri at Columbia found that faculty of color are especially underrepresented in fast-growing science, technology, engineering, and math disciplines at the nation's 40 biggest public universities.

This growing divide has critical consequences for student success. Research has found that students who have professors of the same race or ethnicity are more likely to stay in college, perform well in class, and graduate. After the pandemic, not only will students be more attuned to issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion

For Gen Z, the pandemic exposed dramatic health and economic inequities that previous generations have ignored.

but enrollment is also expected to diversify even more quickly over the next decade than the last one — compelling colleges to better ensure that the experiences of their students are reflected in classroom instruction as well as the makeup of the faculty and staff.

PRIORITIZE BELONGING AND PURPOSE.

Institutions need to embrace a greater role in helping Gen Z students find a sense of belonging and purpose that is vital to improving the post-pandemic student experience. Feeling a sense of belonging is not about "fitting in" per se; it's about having environments inside and outside classrooms where students are comfortable speaking up and learning from their mistakes. After the economic and social upheaval caused by the pandemic, post-Covid Gen Z will want colleges to do more than simply nurture human connections, however. The coronavirus outbreak had a dramatic psychological effect on people, and many students are reassessing what they want to do in life. Colleges will also need to help students understand the purpose of college by making better connections between what they're learning in the moment and how they will use that learning after graduation.

FOCUS ON EMERGING CAREERS TO CULTIVATE STUDENT DEMAND.

Even before the pandemic, Gen Z went to college to get a job. Covid-19 is already reshaping the future of work, with the rise of remote workplaces and increased automation in jobs. The moment is ripe for colleges to reverse the enrollment declines of the pandemic and cultivate greater demand by building new degree programs, offering different kinds of credentials, and establishing complementary advising services that can get students into careers. New programs can be built in fields emerging from the pandemic, such as logistics, which can help organizations get ready for the next crisis, whether it's a public-health emergency or an environmental one. Colleges should look to where jobs are being created and investments being made, in health care, biotech, cybersecurity, and infrastructure, since that will spur demand for graduates with those skills.

THINK ABOUT 30 YEARS, NOT JUST FOUR.

The pandemic revealed the need for upskilling and reskilling throughout life as jobs disappeared quickly and industries contracted while new ones emerged. Alumni no longer need to rely on their alma maters to help them maintain their networks, which can be done almost automatically online. Now, colleges must play a role in maintaining the lifelong education needs of their graduates, allowing them to more easily associate with the institution to take single courses to beef up specific skills and obtain micro-credentials. What's more, employers are increasingly turning to educational benefits to lure new employees and retain existing ones. Building lifelong learning platforms with flexible course requirements and schedules allows more colleges to serve adult learners and break into the employer market.

INVEST IN STUDENT ENGAGEMENT IN THE CLASSROOM.

The uniqueness of a residential campus in a specific geographic location was diminished by remote learning during the pandemic. It was difficult for institutions to differentiate their brand from another college's when everyone was at home learning online. Many students and their tuition-paying parents didn't think classes on their own were worth the price tag. For post-Covid Gen Z, colleges need to better integrate technology and academics and rethink how courses are taught. Gen Zers want more lectures prerecorded, so in-class time can be used for discussions or group work. Students and faculty members both realized during the pandemic that the ultimate value is in learning, not simply earning a grade. As a result, colleges should encourage faculty members to eliminate grades for class participation, give fewer high-stakes tests, and provide more flexibility with deadlines on assignments.

HELP PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS FIND THEIR FIT.

College admissions follow a certain cadence in its annual recruitment calendar. But that system was upended by Covid-19 — perhaps forever. During the pandemic, unable to visit colleges or meet with admissions counselors in their high school, teenagers were forced to browse, click, and chat their way to an opinion of a campus. Without the usual markers of student interest, enrollment leaders found it difficult to determine who would apply and who might enroll. For post-Covid Gen Z, instead of colleges controlling when to interact with prospective students, institutions can join students in exploring the right fit by collecting data on who they are, based on their academic profile and their preferences for distance from home, for instance, or for small colleges or urban institutions.

CCONNECT STUDENT DATA ACROSS CAMPUS SERVICES.

Over the past few decades, campuses have upgraded their operations from analog systems to digital records, department by department. The problem, however, is that digitization has largely stayed siloed in campus divisions. Students want a seamless campus experience that doesn't require them to go to multiple offices for help and gives them more choices in how they obtain services. By connecting all the dots between functions, campus officials can identify student needs as they arise and make services more efficient.

In conversations with college presidents and enrollment managers over the past few years, I've heard great concern about the demographic cliff coming in the middle of this decade. Yet in the same breath many also dismissed talk that the sky was falling and the possibility that hundreds of struggling colleges might close. After all, their predecessors always seemed to find new cohorts of students during demographic downturns in the past — underrepresented students who were new in the college pipeline, teenagers in geographic territories far from campus, or undergraduates from overseas.

There was optimism for a similar result once again. Besides, demographic doomsday was still a few years away. There was time to plan and hope — or pray.

Then Covid-19 happened. Campuses shuttered, and classes quickly moved online. The images that admissions officers had sold prospective students of perfectly manicured campuses, inspiring professors, Saturday football games, and undergraduates sitting around a table in a dining hall no longer held true for an entire class of incoming freshmen. As a result, some said no thanks — they would delay college for a year or maybe longer. Data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics show the share of new high-school graduates who enrolled in college in the fall of 2020 was the lowest in two decades, reaching only 62.7 percent.

Talk to college officials, and there is a widespread belief that 2020-21 was an anomaly in enrollment — and that once the pandemic subsides, students will return, and the numbers will snap right back. Maybe that's the case, but no matter what, the circumstances certainly will vary from campus to campus. A college's position in the market will play a large role, as we saw in spring 2021, when applications to selective colleges and big, name-brand public institutions were up — way up in some cases — while everyone else was down.

But there are also indications that for Gen Z and their families, the pandemic altered how they think about higher education.

The first change in thinking is around value. Even before the pandemic, the student experience was often lacking on campuses. The pandemic only exacerbated the problem as students spent their time off campus learning or socially distant from their classmates and professors on campus. Now as students return to campus, their expectations for an improved experience inside and outside the classroom are only going to be heightened.

The second is around diversity. The pandemic coincided with a national reckoning over race. Rather than issues of inclusion and well-being being peripheral to what students are looking for in a college, they've become central for Gen Z. Colleges need to do more than issue declarations of support or tweak mission statements. Whether or not a campus meets students' expectations is increasingly about whether colleges care about their students' well-being and lived experiences.

Finally, given the shifting job market both before and after the pandemic, Gen Z places greater emphasis on outcomes. Colleges that fail to step up their academic and co-curricular programming risk even greater enrollment declines than from demographics alone.

For each successive generation since the Baby Boomers, a college campus has increasingly been the venue for the passage from adolescence to adulthood. That won't change for Gen Z. But where they go to college and how they go will be largely shaped by the ease and relevance of the student experience.

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**By Elder
Lynn G. Robbins**
Of the Seventy

Resilience

SPIRITUAL ARMOR FOR TODAY'S YOUTH

Our children are capable of thriving in the face of today's challenges. Our charge as parents is to help prepare them to meet those challenges head-on.

The story is told that during British rule of colonial India, an unacceptable number of venomous cobras lived in and around Delhi. To solve the problem, local authorities began paying a bounty for dead cobras. The ill-advised bounty backfired when enterprising locals began breeding cobras for profit. When the bounty ended, the breeders set the cobras free, further compounding the problem.

The phenomenon of unintended consequences sometimes causing more harm than intended benefits is known as the "cobra effect."[1]

The Cobra Effect on the Rising Generation

During my visit to Brigham Young University–Idaho in the fall of 2017, the school's new president, Henry J. Eyring, told me that his foremost concern was the high dropout rate of college freshmen. Students leave college for a variety of reasons, but a lack of resilience is one of the leading reasons that many universities across the United States are experiencing this same challenge.[2]

Resilience is "an ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change."[3] Discovering a lack of resilience among its recruits, the U.S. Army started offering the Master Resilience Training (MRT) program to fortify solders against the stress, demands, and hardships of military service.[4]

We face the same concern in the Church with a higher percentage of full-time missionaries returning home early from their missions than in previous generations. Some missionaries face serious health challenges or other trials that necessitate early release, but others simply may not have developed enough of the virtue of resilience.

> Understanding and applying powerful gospel principles can help youth strengthen their resilience.

Lyle J. Burrup, who served as a mental health counselor in the Church's Missionary Department, has observed that the most common cause of emotional problems faced by missionaries is a lack of resilience. "In many cases," he says, "the missionary just hadn't learned how to deal with challenges well."[5]

Universities, the military, and the mission field aren't causing the problem; they are simply revealing it. Lower resilience among today's youth may actually be an unintended consequence—a modern-day cobra effect—resulting from such factors as:

- Too much time on the couch and on digital devices, and not as much exercise and physical activity as earlier generations.[6]
- Too much exposure to an unrealistic virtual or pretend world, causing distorted self-images, anxiety, depression, and lower self-worth.[7]
- Impatience in a world of instant gratification and answers at Google speed. (Conversely, resilience is developed in great part through the virtue of patience.)
- Protection from rough seas. "Smooth seas do not make skillful sailors."[8]
- Innumerable options that distract us; fake news and half-truths that confuse us; and a life of ease that desensitizes us to the things of the Spirit.

- Too much digital face time and not enough face-to-face time, resulting in underdeveloped interpersonal skills.

Many books have been written addressing this complex and formidable challenge, including this one with the telling title *iGen: Why Today's Super-Connected Kids Are Growing Up Less Rebellious, More Tolerant, Less Happy—and Completely Unprepared for Adulthood.*

Fortifying Our Youth

In our highly digital age—with countless modern conveniences—we might conclude that children and youth today have it easy. But in truth, youth are inundated with challenges, trials, and temptations that previous generations never faced.

The good news is that youth today are exceptional. President Russell M. Nelson recently told them: "Our Heavenly Father has reserved many of His most noble spirits—perhaps, I might say, His finest team—for this final phase. Those noble spirits—those finest players, those heroes—are *you*!"[9]

The bad news is that Satan knows this as well. He is doing all in his power to derail, detract, diminish, and destroy these noble members of the Lord's team. But our children are capable of thriving in the face of Satan's onslaught. Our charge as nurturing parents is to help prepare them to meet those challenges head-on by cultivating and encouraging their resilience, faith, and fortitude.

With powerful gospel principles to assist us, we can help youth strengthen their resilience, enabling them to become more like the Savior

> Charity (giving someone a fish) and self-reliance (teaching someone the art of fishing) also apply to parenting.

by "increas[ing] in wisdom [intellectually] and stature [physically], and in favour with God [spiritually] and man [socially and emotionally]" (Luke 2:52). I want to discuss four of these gospel principles: (1) self-reliance, (2) opposition in all things, (3) the gift of the Holy Ghost, and (4) moral agency.

1. Raising Self-Reliant Children—Santa Claus vs. Scrooge

In efforts to help the needy, we strive to find the right balance between two complementary principles: charity and self-reliance. Charity without self-reliance is Santa Claus. Self-reliance without kindness is Scrooge.[10] Either extreme by itself is unbalanced.

Charity (giving someone a fish) and self-reliance (teaching someone the art of fishing) also apply to parenting. We could make every decision for our children, but it would be wiser to teach them the art of decision-making and thus help them become intellectually, spiritually, socially, and emotionally self-reliant.

An inspiring example is found in the touching production *The Miracle Worker,* a dramatic work derived from the autobiography of Helen Keller, who suffered an illness as an infant that left her deaf and blind.[11] In their Santa-like approach in raising their daughter, Helen's hovering and coddling parents were overprotective and overindulgent, with the counterproductive results of stunting Helen's progress.

Conversely, Anne Sullivan, Helen's private teacher, recognized that Helen had received far too much indulgence and therefore began helping Helen confront her problems and become more self-reliant. In the end, it was Anne Sullivan, who helped Helen live up to her true potential.

Because we love our children, we want to see them succeed. We may be tempted to remove obstacles from their path, which would make us "snowplow" parents.[12] Or to minimize their disappointment and failure, we may be tempted to do the hard work for them, like Helen's parents. When we do so, however, we may be unwittingly impeding our children from developing the resilience they need to be strong, independent disciples of Christ.

Rather than raise our children as Helen's parents did, we should consider the Savior's approach. Rather than remove our burdens, He strengthens us to "bear up [our] burdens" (Mosiah 24:15). Often, He does not come to our rescue as quickly as we would like (see Doctrine and Covenants 121:1–3).

> The path is often steep and rocky, and we will all have our share of stumbles and setbacks.

2. Opposition—the Blessing of Hard Things

One of the ways Heavenly Father raises us to be resilient and to prepare us for our future happiness is by sending us into a world where our resilience will be tried and refined, as evidenced in the following scriptures:

- We will be "tried, even as Abraham" (Doctrine and Covenants 101:4).
- Adversity "shall give [us] experience, and shall be for [our] good" (Doctrine and Covenants 122:7).
- "There is an opposition in all things" (2 Nephi 2:11), so Heavenly Father allows us to "taste the bitter, that [we] may know to prize the good" (Moses 6:55).
- We "receive no witness until after the trial of [our] faith" (Ether 12:6).

Learning to develop the Christlike virtues of faith, patience, diligence, and resilience, among many others, cannot happen without opposition or the "furnace of affliction" (Isaiah 48:10). Our Father in Heaven, therefore, allows us to face difficult challenges and do hard things. How can we ever become like our great Exemplar if we don't face trials similar to those that made Him who He is? Likewise, how can we as parents help our own children progress if we don't allow them and even encourage them to do hard things?

The greatest and most enabling thing a parent could teach a child is to recognize the whisperings of the Holy Ghost.

I often tell missionaries, "In the mission field you're going to be enrolled in high-level courses: Diligence 501 and Patience 505, among many others. It is only through this advanced curriculum that you will learn to become great missionaries and later outstanding husbands and wives, fathers and mothers. If you have a tough day, celebrate your suffering as did the Apostles Peter and John did, who after being imprisoned and beaten, "rejoic[ed] that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name'" (see Acts 5:18, 40–41; see also 1 Peter 4:13; Colossians 2:8).

It is the hardships, the struggling, and the stretching that help us develop resilience—the ability to get up, dust ourselves off, and continue on the strait and narrow path. That path is often steep and rocky, and we will all have our share of stumbles and setbacks. It is the Lord's gift of unlimited second chances that enables us to move forward with resilience.[13]

3. The Holy Ghost and Inspired Decision-Making

Rather than receiving easy answers, children need to grow in the art of decision-making. We can provide guidance but should allow them to think for themselves and begin making even the smallest of decisions.

Because the gift of the Holy Ghost is the greatest gift that mortal man can receive,[14] it would logically follow that the greatest and most enabling thing a parent could teach a child is to recognize and follow the whisperings of the Holy Ghost. Teaching children to be worthy of this great gift and how to receive personal revelation is the foremost thing we can do to raise spiritually self-reliant and resilient children. The Holy Ghost, along with the other members of the Godhead, is every parent's strongest ally in raising resilient youth.

We learn an important lesson from Oliver Cowdery, who asked in prayer and didn't receive. The Lord told him:

"But, behold, I say unto you, that you must study it out in your mind; then you must ask me if it be right, and if it is right I will cause that your bosom shall burn within you; therefore, you shall feel that it is right" (see Doctrine and Covenants 9:7–8).

When our children come to us and ask for help with a math assignment, for example, we don't do the homework for them. We provide guidance, and then, as the Lord said to Oliver, say, "Now, go work on it, and when you're finished, come back and I'll see if you have the right answer."

Teaching children how to face, work through, and conquer their trials helps them think for themselves, reason through problems, and recognize and understand the whisperings of the Holy Ghost. Only through their own experience in solving problems do they develop common sense and wisdom and grow in their ability to "study it out" and receive revelation.

Not teaching our children spiritual self-reliance and resilience comes with this sobering warning from President Nelson: "In coming days, it will

When our children come to us and ask for help with a homework assignment, we don't do the assignment for them.

not be possible to survive spiritually without the guiding, directing, comforting, and constant influence of the Holy Ghost."[15]

4. Honoring Agency at the Crossroads

Many years ago, I read of a father who awakened his son one Sunday to get ready for church. The son replied, "I'm not going to church today." Many parents in a moment like that would be tempted to say, "Oh, yes you are" and then add a threat. This father was wiser and simply said, "Son, you don't need to explain why to me, because this isn't my Church. But you ought to get down on your knees and give your excuse to your Father in Heaven."

The father then left his son at the crossroads with the Holy Ghost. The Holy Ghost can bother our children far better than we can if we will just trust in that great gift. "There is no witness so terrible or no accuser so powerful as the conscience."[16] Within a few minutes, the teen was up and getting ready for church. Had the father forced his son to go to church, he might have planted seeds of resentment and rebellion, with the cobra effect slithering in.

There is risk in honoring the agency of our children and leaving them at the fork in the road. Because the doctrine of agency was indispensable to the plan of salvation, our Father in Heaven took that same risk in the premortal life.

If I could amend slightly a quote by the Prophet Joseph Smith, I would state it this way regarding children: "We teach them correct principles because whether we like it or not, they will govern themselves."[17] The day will come when our children will leave home. Our only hope as parents is to teach them correct principles about the plan of salvation and help them recognize the whisperings of the Spirit to guide them in the wise use of their agency. Otherwise, they may lack the spiritual self-reliance and resilience to face future trials, with a chance that we could lose them.

We are all profoundly and eternally grateful for the greatest act of resilience in the history of the world—the Atonement of Jesus Christ. The Savior did not shrink from facing His crucible, even when under incomprehensible pressure and stress.

The gift of the Holy Ghost and spiritual self-reliance nurture spiritual resilience, which is a synonym for enduring. And those who faithfully "endure to the end . . . shall have eternal life" (2 Nephi 31:20).

The gift of the Holy Ghost and spiritual self-reliance nurture spiritual resilience.

May the Lord bless us as parents in our imperative duty of raising intellectually, physically, spiritually, socially, and emotionally resilient children. ■

For additional practical ideas, see Lyle J. Burrup, "Raising Resilient Children," Ensign, Mar. 2013, 12–17.

NOTES

1. Horst Siebert, a German economist, is credited with coining the phrase "cobra effect," which occurs when a solution to a problem worsens the problem.
2. See Connie Matthiessen, "Why Are So Many College Students Returning Home?" Jan. 9, 2019, greatschools.org.
3. *Merriam-Webster's Collegiate Dictionary,* 11th ed. (2003), "resilience," merriam-webster.com.
4. See "Master Resilience Training (MRT) in the U.S. Army: PowerPoint & Interview," Positive Psychology Program, positivepsychologyprogram.com.
5. Lyle J. Burrup, "Raising Resilient Children," *Ensign,* Mar. 2013, 13.
6. See Meena Azzollini, "Declining Physical Activity Levels in Children and Teens," *WellBeing,* July 10, 2017, wellbeing.com.au.
7. See Rachel Ehmke, "How Using Social Media Affects Teenagers," Child Mind Institute, June 6, 2016, childmind.org.
8. African proverb.
9. Russell M. Nelson, "Hope of Israel" (worldwide youth devotional, June 3, 2018), HopeofIsrael.ChurchofJesusChrist.org.
10. Scrooge is the miserly character in Charles Dickens's *A Christmas Carol.*
11. See Helen Keller, *The Story of My Life* (1902).
12. "Snowplow parents have it backward. . . . The point is to prepare the kid for the road, instead of preparing the road for the kid" (Julie Lythcott-Haims, in Claire Cain Miller and Jonah Engel Bromwich, "How Parents Are Robbing Their Children of Adulthood," *New York Times,* March 16, 2019, nytimes.com).
13. See Lynn G. Robbins, "Until Seventy Times Seven," *Ensign,* May 2018, 21–23.
14. See *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Wilford Woodruff* (2004), 49.
15. Russell M. Nelson, "Revelation for the Church, Revelation for Our Lives," *Ensign,* May 2018, 96.
16. Sometimes attributed to Polybius or Sophocles.
17. See *Teachings of Presidents of the Church: Joseph Smith* (2007), 284.

Come What May, and Love It

Elder Joseph B. Wirthlin
Of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles

The way we react to adversity can be a major factor in how happy and successful we can be in life.

When I was young I loved playing sports, and I have many fond memories of those days. But not all of them are pleasant. I remember one day after my football team lost a tough game, I came home feeling discouraged. My mother was there. She listened to my sad story. She taught her children to trust in themselves and each other, not blame others for their misfortunes, and give their best effort in everything they attempted.

When we fell down, she expected us to pick ourselves up and get going again. So the advice my mother gave to me then wasn't altogether unexpected. It has stayed with me all my life.

"Joseph," she said, "come what may, and love it."

I have often reflected on that counsel.

I think she may have meant that every life has peaks and shadows and times when it seems that the birds don't sing and bells don't ring. Yet in spite of discouragement and adversity, those who are happiest seem to have a way of learning from difficult times, becoming stronger, wiser, and happier as a result.

There may be some who think that General Authorities rarely experience pain, suffering, or distress. If only that were true. While every man and woman on this stand today has experienced an abundant measure of joy, each also has drunk deeply from the cup of disappointment, sorrow, and loss. The Lord in His wisdom does not shield anyone from grief or sadness.

For me, the Lord has opened the windows of heaven and showered blessings upon my family beyond my ability to express. Yet like everyone else, I have had times in my life when it seemed that the heaviness of my heart might be greater than I could bear. During those times I think back to those tender days of my youth when great sorrows came at the losing end of a football game.

How little I knew then of what awaited me in later years. But whenever my steps led through seasons of sadness and sorrow, my mother's words often came back to me: "Come what may, and love it."

How can we love days that are filled with sorrow? We can't—at least not in the moment. I don't think my mother was suggesting that we suppress discouragement or deny the reality of pain. I don't think she was suggesting that we smother unpleasant truths beneath a cloak of pretended happiness. But I do believe that the way we react to adversity can be a major factor in how happy and successful we can be in life.

If we approach adversities wisely, our hardest times can be times of greatest growth, which in turn can lead toward times of greatest happiness.

Over the years I have learned a few things that have helped me through times of testing and trial. I would like to share them with you.

Learn to Laugh

The first thing we can do is learn to laugh. Have you ever seen an angry driver who, when someone else makes a mistake, reacts as though that person has insulted his honor, his family, his dog, and his ancestors all the way back to Adam? Or have you had an encounter with an overhanging cupboard door left open at the wrong place and the wrong time which has been cursed, condemned, and avenged by a sore-headed victim?

There is an antidote for times such as these: learn to laugh.

I remember loading up our children in a station wagon and driving to Los Angeles. There were at least nine of us in the car, and we would invariably get lost. Instead of getting angry, we laughed. Every time we made a wrong turn, we laughed harder.

Getting lost was not an unusual occurrence for us. Once while heading south to Cedar City, Utah, we took a wrong turn and didn't realize it until two hours later when we saw the "Welcome to Nevada" signs. We didn't get angry. We laughed, and as a result, anger and resentment rarely resulted. Our laughter created cherished memories for us.

I remember when one of our daughters went on a blind date. She was all dressed up and waiting for her date to arrive when the doorbell rang. In walked a man who seemed a little old, but she tried to be polite. She introduced him to me and my wife and the other children; then she put on her coat and went out the door. We watched as she got into the car, but the car didn't move. Eventually our daughter got out of the car and, red faced, ran back into the house. The man that she thought was her blind date had actually come to pick up another of our daughters who had agreed to be a babysitter for him and his wife.

We all had a good laugh over that. In fact, we couldn't stop laughing. Later, when our daughter's real blind date showed up, I couldn't come out to meet him because I was still in the kitchen laughing. Now, I realize that our daughter could have felt

humiliated and embarrassed. But she laughed with us, and as a result, we still laugh about it today.

The next time you're tempted to groan, you might try to laugh instead. It will extend your life and make the lives of all those around you more enjoyable.

Seek for the Eternal

The second thing we can do is seek for the eternal. You may feel singled out when adversity enters your life. You shake your head and wonder, "Why me?"

But the dial on the wheel of sorrow eventually points to each of us. At one time or another, everyone must experience sorrow. No one is exempt.

I love the scriptures because they show examples of great and noble men and women such as Abraham, Sarah, Enoch, Moses, Joseph, Emma, and Brigham. Each of them experienced adversity and sorrow that tried, fortified, and refined their characters.

Learning to endure times of disappointment, suffering, and sorrow is part of our on-the-job training. These experiences, while often difficult to bear at the time, are precisely the kinds of experiences that stretch our understanding, build our character, and increase our compassion for others.

Because Jesus Christ suffered greatly, He understands our suffering. He understands our grief. We experience hard things so that we too may have increased compassion and understanding for others.

Remember the sublime words of the Savior to the Prophet Joseph Smith when he suffered with his companions in the smothering darkness of Liberty Jail:

"My son, peace be unto thy soul; thine adversity and thine afflictions shall be but a small moment;

"And then, if thou endure it well, God shall exalt thee on high; thou shalt triumph over all thy foes."[1]

With that eternal perspective, Joseph took comfort from these words, and so can we. Sometimes the very moments that seem to overcome us with suffering are those that will ultimately suffer us to overcome.

The Principle of Compensation

The third thing we can do is understand the principle of compensation. The Lord compensates the faithful for every loss. That which is taken away from those who love the Lord will be added unto them in His own way. While it may not come at the time we desire, the faithful will know that every tear today will eventually be returned a hundredfold with tears of rejoicing and gratitude.

One of the blessings of the gospel is the knowledge that when the curtain of death signals the end of our mortal lives, life will continue on the other side of the veil. There we will be given new opportunities. Not even death can take from us the eternal blessings promised by a loving Heavenly Father.

Because Heavenly Father is merciful, a principle of compensation prevails. I have seen this in my own life. My grandson Joseph has autism. It has been heartbreaking for his mother and father to come to grips with the implications of this affliction.

They knew that Joseph would probably never be like other children. They understood what that would mean not only for Joseph but for the family as well. But what a joy he has been to us. Autistic children often have a difficult time showing emotion, but every time I'm with him, Joseph gives me a big hug. While there have been challenges, he has filled our lives with joy.

His parents have encouraged him to participate in sports. When he first started playing baseball, he was in the outfield. But I don't think he grasped the need to run after loose balls. He thought of a much more efficient way to play the game. When a ball was hit in his direction, Joseph watched it go by and then pulled another baseball out of his pocket and threw that one to the pitcher.

Any reservations that his family may have had in raising Joseph, any sacrifices they have made have been compensated tenfold. Because of this choice spirit, his mother and father have learned much about children with disabilities. They have witnessed firsthand the generosity and compassion of family, neighbors, and friends. They have rejoiced together as Joseph has progressed. They have marveled at his goodness.

Trust in the Father and the Son

The fourth thing we can do is put our trust in our Heavenly Father and His Son, Jesus Christ.

"God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son."[2] The Lord Jesus Christ is our partner, helper, and advocate. He wants us to be happy. He wants us to be successful. If we do our part, He will step in.

He who descended below all things will come to our aid. He will comfort and uphold us. He will strengthen us in our weakness and fortify us in our distress. He will make weak things become strong.[3]

One of our daughters, after giving birth to a baby, became seriously ill. We prayed for her, administered to her, and supported her as best we could. We hoped she would receive a blessing of healing, but days turned into months, and months turned into years. At one point I told her that this affliction might be something she would have to struggle with the rest of her life.

One morning I remember pulling out a small card and threading it through my typewriter. Among the words that I typed for her were these: "The simple secret is

this: put your trust in the Lord, do your best, then leave the rest to Him."

She did put her trust in God. But her affliction did not disappear. For years she suffered, but in due course, the Lord blessed her, and eventually she returned to health.

Knowing this daughter, I believe that even if she had never found relief, yet she would have trusted in her Heavenly Father and "[left] the rest to Him."

Conclusion

Although my mother has long since passed to her eternal reward, her words are always with me. I still remember her advice to me given on that day long ago when my team lost a football game: "Come what may, and love it."

I know why there must be opposition in all things. Adversity, if handled correctly, can be a blessing in our lives. We can learn to love it.

As we look for humor, seek for the eternal perspective, understand the principle of compensation, and draw near to our Heavenly Father, we can endure hardship and trial. We can say, as did my mother, "Come what may, and love it." Of this I testify in the name of Jesus Christ, amen.

1. 1.   D&C 121:7–8.

2. 2.   John 3:16.

3. 3.   See Ether 12:27.