

TheDream.US 2019-2020 Scholar Survey Report: In Their Own Words

September 2020

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Executive Summary

TheDream.US is the nation's largest college access and success program serving undocumented immigrants. Over the past seven years, TheDream.US has awarded over 6,000 scholarships for DREAMers - undocumented immigrant students – to pursue a college degree at one of 70+ Partner Colleges in 16 states and Washington D.C.

In May through mid-June, 2020, TheDream.US administered its second Annual Scholar Survey to better understand our Scholars' college experiences and the contexts in which they are navigating their college and career journeys. Given the unprecedented pandemic, we included a section on the impact of COVID-19 on the Scholars' academic journey and personal well-being.

In addition to the uncertainty surrounding COVID-19, this Scholar Survey was conducted amidst two other significant events – first, the *U.S. Supreme Court's decision* to reject the Trump Administration's attempt to terminate DACA; and second, the killing of George Floyd on May 25 and the heightened *Black Lives Matter movement*. Both of these events undoubtedly impacted Scholars' survey responses that demonstrate higher levels of anxiety but also resilience as Scholars made their way through college in an increasingly tenuous immigration and social climate.

Of the ≈3,850 Scholars enrolled during the 2019-2020 academic year, 2,681 participated in the survey (70% response rate). 86% of respondents had DACA, 3% were TPS, 9% were undocumented and never had DACA or TPS, and 2% were of other undocumented status. 80% identified as Hispanic or Latino.

Overall, survey responses indicate that during the 2019-2020 academic year, anxiety around their legal status and COVID-19 weighed heavily on Scholars. When compared to last year's survey findings:

- The financial burden brought on by the loss of their and their parents' jobs as well as the exclusion from higher education funds in the CARES Act stimulus package, was significant.
- Their confidence in achieving their academic goals and their sense of community and belonging in the United States was lower.
- Scholars' had heightened concerns around their short and long-term plans and their ability to pursue meaningful careers.

Remarkedly, despite these challenges, TheDream.US Scholars remained focused on completing college, giving back to their communities, and pursuing post-undergraduate goals.

<u>Executive Summary – Findings</u>

- COVID-19 Impact on Financial and Personal Well-being
 - % of Scholars working decreased from 70% prior to COVID-19 to 43% post COVID-19
 - 83% have an immediate family member whose job has been affected by COVID-19
 - 78% have less than 4 months before experiencing significant financial hardship
 - 30% said their access to physical or mental health care worsened since COVID-19
 - 43% of Scholars said their sense of community and belonging in the United States "decreased a lot" or "moderately" since COVID-19
- COVID-19 Impact on College Education
 - All Scholars moved to remote learning during the Spring 2020 term
 - Majority of Scholars were satisfied with the support received from their Partner College since the outbreak of COVID-19
 - 1 in 3 Scholars expressed "less" or "a lot less" confidence in graduating on-time
- Educational Experience and Engagement
 - 79% evaluated their entire educational experience thus far as "good" (51%) or "excellent" (28%)
 - 42% of respondents were involved in an undocumented club or community on-campus during the 2019-2020 academic year
 - Scholars' assessment of the frequency and quality of interactions with different agents on-campus decreased
- Employment
 - 52% of currently working Scholars are in industries considered "essential" or "front-line"
 - 57% are pursuing careers requiring licensing, such as medical, legal, engineering careers
 - 30% of Scholars completed internships during the 2019-2020 academic year
 - 75% of senior Scholars are currently looking for a job that meets their career interests
- Legal Status
 - 70% are "more" (32%) or "much more" (38%) anxious about their legal status since COVID-19
 - 55% see their legal status as a "very" or "extremely" significant barrier in achieving their long-term goals
- · Resilience and ambition
 - 89% of Scholars did not change their academic course load since COVID-19
 - 92% of Scholars intend to return to school in Fall 2020
 - 49% have a "very" or "extremely" clear idea of what they want to do with their career
 - 71% want to pursue graduate school



Recommendations



<u>Recommendations</u>

Response data pertaining to COVID-19 reflect national conversations on the disproportionate impact of the virus on racial and ethnic minority groups, and, particularly, the Black and Hispanic/Latino communities. The decline in access to healthcare and financial supports amplify long-standing inequities in the healthcare system and economy. This in turn means more devastation in communities that are already at a disadvantage in recovering from an ongoing pandemic.

Regarding legal status, although the U.S. Supreme Court's decision reinstated the DACA program, the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS), has refused to do so and, instead presented new roadblocks. USCIS currently *rejects all initial DACA applications*, *limits renewals to one-year* (down from two) and *rejects advance parole requests*.

The continued volatility of the DACA program and absence of permanent protections or pathways to citizenship for undocumented immigrants constricts social mobility and opportunities to contribute more to the country that is their home. It also creates high levels of anxiety for their own safety and livelihood as well as for their family members - who are often also undocumented.

Given these uncertainties, below is a set of recommendations needed to help undocumented students complete their college degrees and find gainful employment leading to a meaningful careers:

	 Consistent access to the internet and learning devices Workshops on managing virtual learning Regular one-on-one check-ins with an Advisor, faculty member, or mentor on-campus
•	Community and social supports addressing feelings of isolation and loneliness ☐ Platform and space to connect informally with peers
•	 Healthcare supports □ Provide services and information to help undocumented students access physical and mental healthcare □ Designate counselors and staff trained to serve immigrant populations to increase the utilization of mental health supports

¹https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/community/health-equity/race-ethnicity.html; https://www.npr.org/sections/health-shots/2020/05/30/865413079/what-do-coronavirus-racial-disparities-look-like-state-by-state

Tools and supports to adapt and thrive in a remote and hybrid-learning environment



Recommendations Continued

 Career and economic supports in response to loss of income and exclusion from the CARES Act stimulus package □ Extend institutional aid and raise private funds for emergency grants to undocumented students □ Establish income earning opportunities open to all undocumented undergraduate students such as fellowships and teaching assistantships □ Provide professional development and job placement opportunities for undocumented immigrants with and without work authorization □ Provide information on alternative income opportunities for students without work authorization
 Legal assistance for DACA renewals and immigrants' rights □ Raise and extend private funds for DACA renewal fees □ Provide services and information on: Accessing pro bono legal assistance for completing DACA renewal forms and/or general immigration consultation Immigrants' rights beyond immigration status, e.g., employment and housing rights
 Increased graduate school access □ Provide Undocu-friendly resources and application supports for undocumented students pursuing graduate school □ Raise and extend private funds for graduate scholarships and fellowships accessible to undocumented students
 Include undocumented college graduates in the equitable revitalization of our economy □ Provide internships and apprenticeships for seniors and graduates □ Proactively recruit and hire graduates through website, social media, job fairs, and opportunity placement firms □ Ensure HR and hiring managers are informed of rights of DACA/TPS applicants and employees □ Advocate for Congress to pass legislation giving DREAMers ability to stay and work in U.S.
Recommendations for federal, state, and local policymakers: ☐ Fully reinstate DACA - allowing for new applications and renewals valid for two years ☐ Enact federal legislation providing:

COVID-19 Impact: Educational Experience

<u>Summary</u>

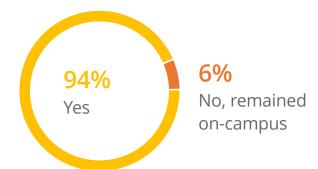
- The majority of participants were satisfied with the support received from their Partner College since the outbreak of COVID-19:
 - 77% were "moderately" or "very satisfied" with the support received from *professors*
 - 82% were "moderately" or "very satisfied" with the support received from college staff
- Scholars from all Partner Colleges reported transitioning to virtual learning in Spring 2020
- 94% of Scholars living on-campus moved out of on-campus housing
- Overall, about two-thirds of Scholars maintained the same level of confidence as before COVID-19 about graduating with TheDream.US Scholarship and maintaining a 2.5 cumulative GPA, however, Scholars expressed less confidence in completing the Spring 2020 term
- Scholars are focused on continuing their college career:
 - 89% of Scholars did not change their course load since COVID-19
 - 92% of Scholars intend to return to school in Fall 2020
- Educational resources Scholars have *already utilized* the most include:
 - Virtual check-ins with professors, classmates, and Academic Advisors
 - Access to internet and learning devices
- Educational resources Scholars need the most include:
 - Consistent access to the internet and learning devices
 - · Workshops on managing and adapting to a virtual or hybrid learning environment
 - · Regular one-on-one check-ins with their TheDream.US Scholar and Academic Advisors

Did Scholars' Partner College move to virtual learning in Spring 2020?

(n=2,575)

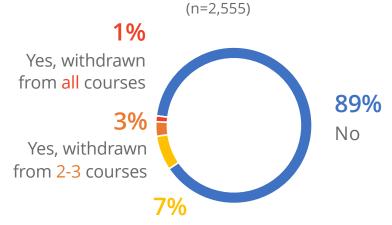


For Scholars living on-campus, did they move-out because of COVID-19? (n=632)



¹Reflects respondents at Purdue University Global, who were already online prior to COVID-19.

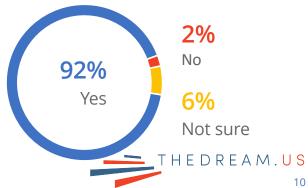
Did Scholars change their course-load since COVID-19?



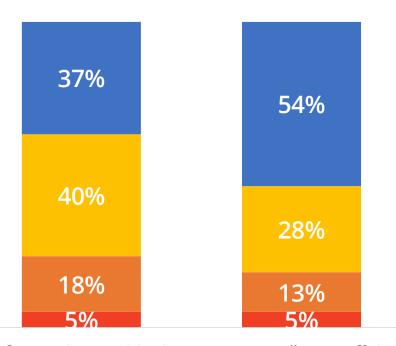
Yes, withdrawn from 1 course

Do Scholars intend to return to their Partner College in Fall 2020?

(n=2,316)



How *satisfied* were Scholars with the support received so far from: (n=2,678)

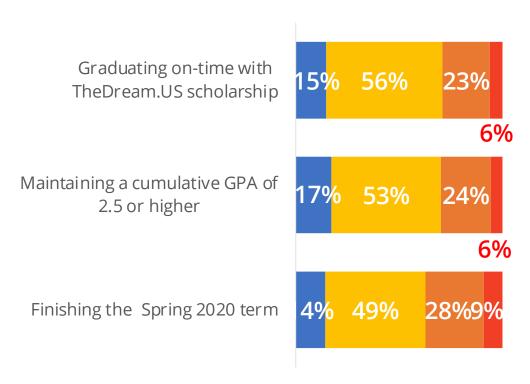


Professors in transitioning to virtual learning?

Partner College staff (i.e. TheDream.US Scholar Advisor, Academic Advisor) in response to COVID-19?

- Not at all satisfied
- Moderately satisfied
- Slightly satisfied
- Very satisfied

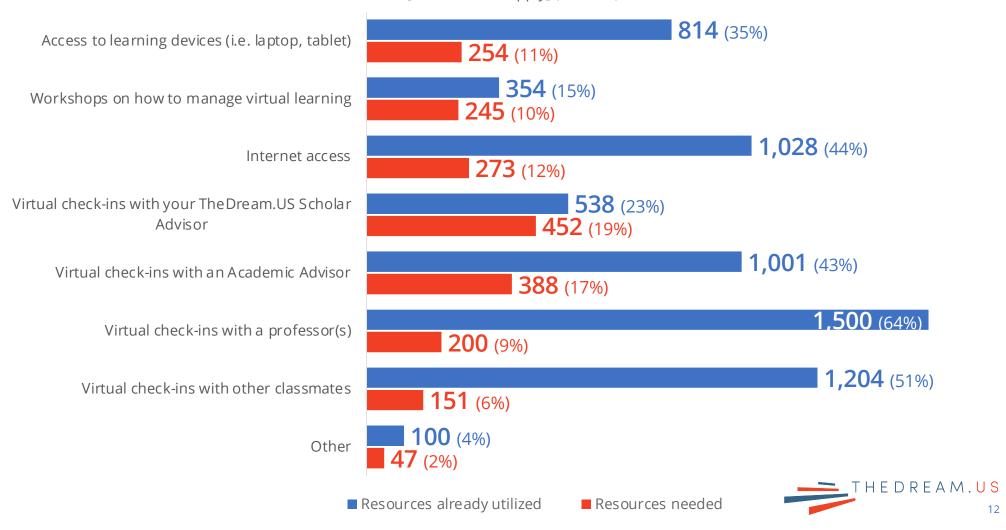
Relative to before COVID-19, how confident do Scholars feel about the following (n=2,678)



- More confident than before COVID-19
- Same as before COVID-19
- Less confident than before COVID-19
- \blacksquare A lot less confident than before COVID-19 THEDREAM. US

Learning resources Scholars have already utilized versus need

[Select all that apply] (n=2,347)



COVID-19 Impact: Personal Well-being

<u>Summary</u>

- % of Scholars working decreased from 70% prior to COVID-19 to 43% post COVID-19:
 - 21% were temporarily laid off and 6% were permanently laid off
 - Of those temporarily laid off, the majority are receiving no pay (68%) or reduced pay (13%)
 - 13% are working reduced hours
- 52% of currently working Scholars are in industries considered "essential" or "front-line"
- Financial resources are the biggest challenge and concerns for Scholars since COVID-19:
 - 61% said their access to money for rent/utilities is "worse" or "much worse" since COVID-19
 - 78% think they can go up to 4 months (42%), 1 month (32%), or 1 week (4%) before experiencing significant financial hardship
- Approximately 30% said their access to physical or mental health care worsened since COVID-19
- 43% of Scholars said their sense of community and belonging in the US "decreased a lot" or "moderately" since COVID-19
- 37% said they "frequently" or "always" feel they have the ability to make meaningful contributions to their community, compared to 55% last year
- Family adds another layer of responsibility and anxiety for Scholars:
 - 27% are living with other family members enrolled in college
 - 83% have an immediate family member whose job has been affected by COVID-19
 - · Scholars have heightened anxiety around the safety of their family as well as financially supporting family
- Scholars expressed heightened anxiety around their legal status since COVID-19
- Personal well-being resources Scholars need the most:
 - Increased utilization of mental health resources
 - Career and economic supports in response to loss of income
 - Legal assistance to complete DACA renewals
 - · Know your rights beyond immigration status, for example employment and housing rights



Employment status prior to COVID-19

(n=2,670)

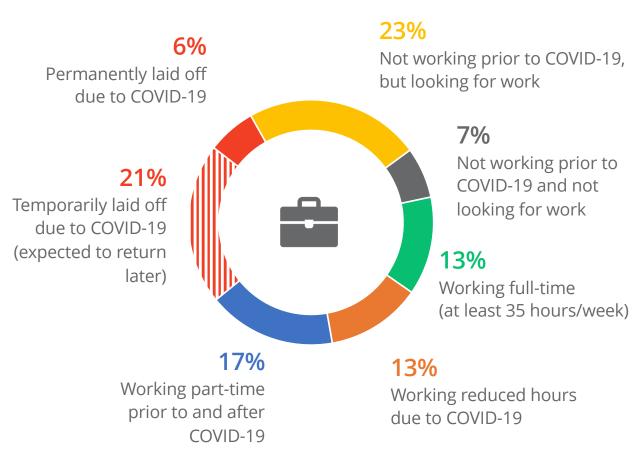
30%

Not working prior to COVID-19

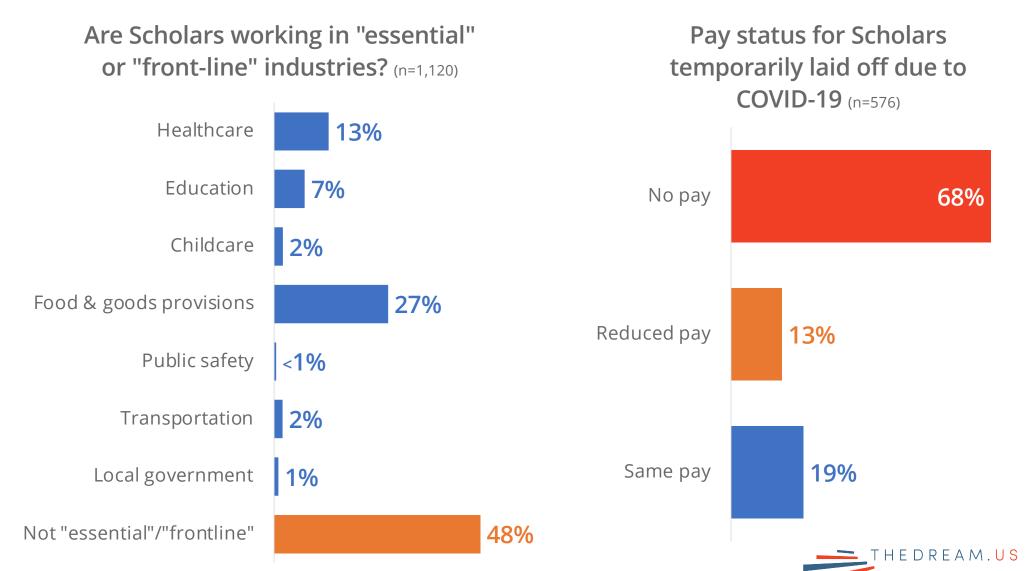
70%Working prior to COVID-19

Current employment status¹

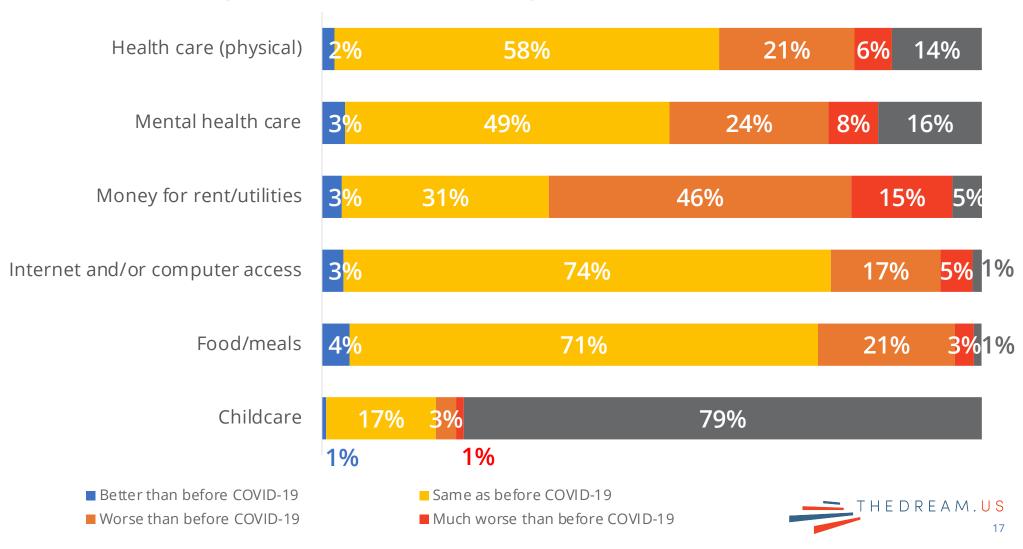
(n=2,670)



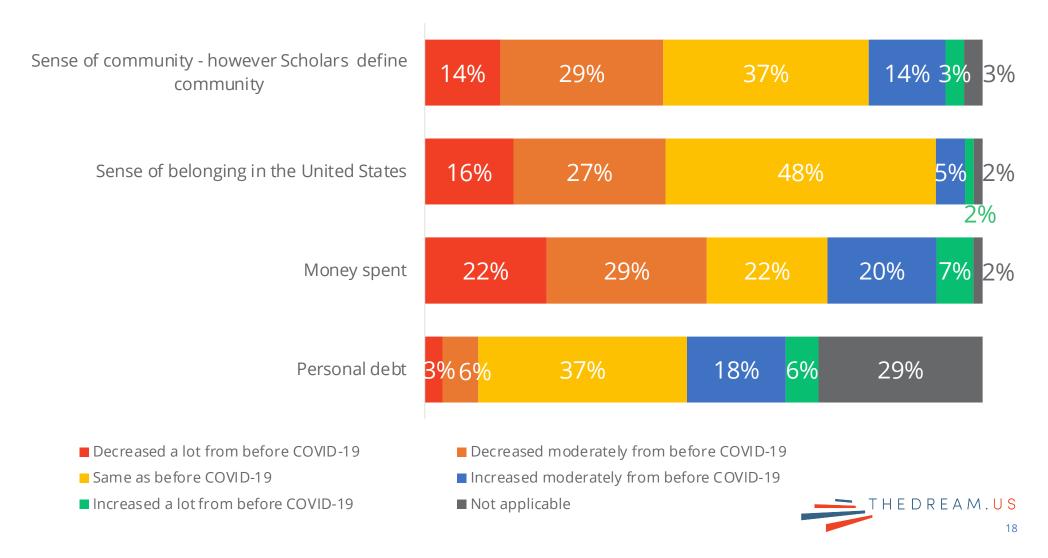
¹As of May-June 2020



Change in access to the following resources since COVID-19 (n=2,645)

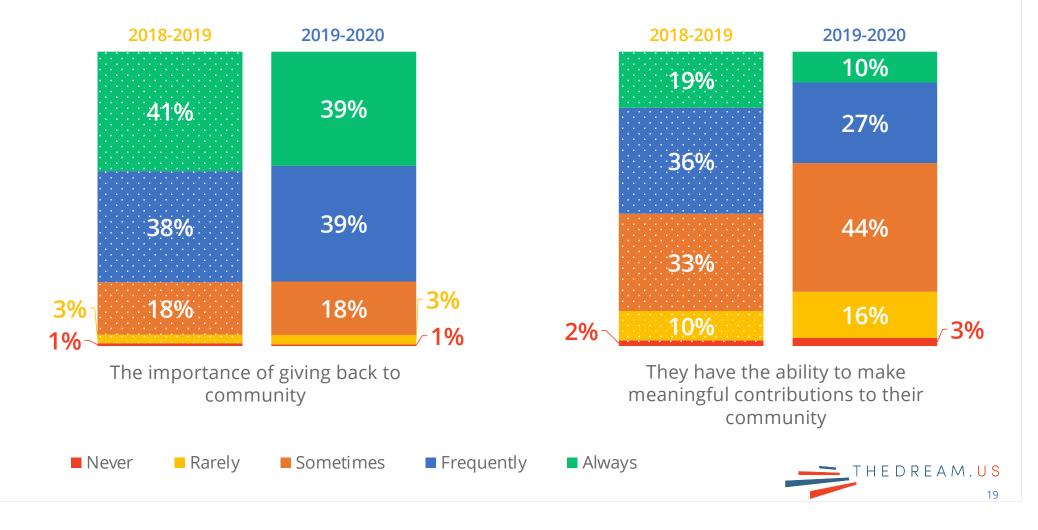


Change in personal livelihood since COVID-19 (n=2,643)



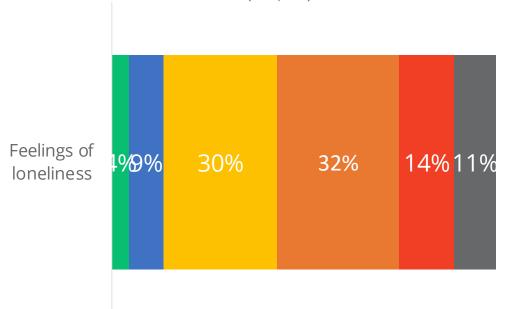
How often have Scholars felt the following in the past academic year:

[comparing 2018-2019 survey (n=1,821) and 2019-2020 Survey (n=2,568)]



Change in personal livelihood since COVID-19

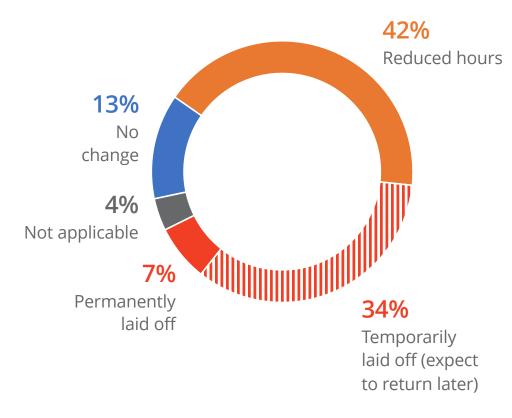
(n=2,643)



- Decreased a lot from before COVID-19
- Decreased moderately from before COVID-19
- Same as before COVID-19
- Increased moderately from before COVID-19
- Increased a lot from before COVID-19
- Not applicable

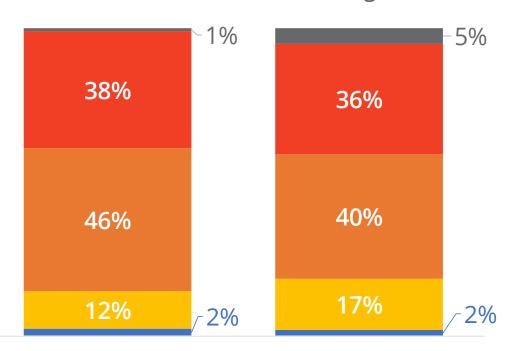
COVID-9 Impact on immediate family members' jobs

(n=2,615)





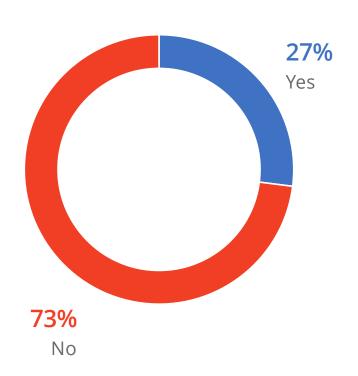
Relative to before COVID-19, how anxious do Scholars feel about the following: (n=2,613)



Health and safety of family Supporting family members members financially

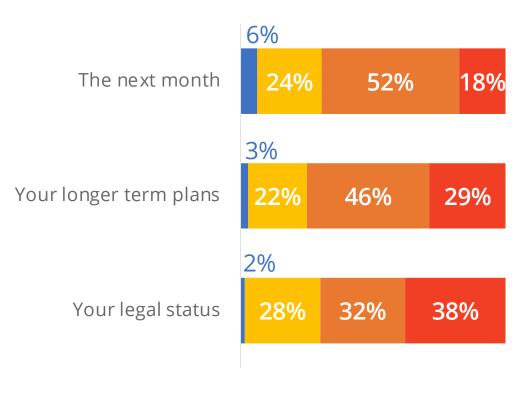
- Not applicable
- Much more anxious than before COVID-19
- More anxious than before COVID-19
- Same as before COVID-19
- Less anxious than before COVID-19

Are Scholars living with other family members enrolled in college? (n=2,611)



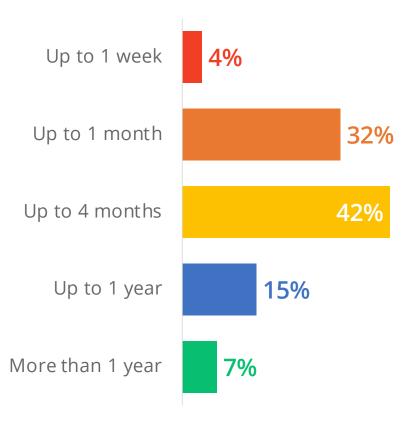


How anxious Scholars feel about the following since COVID-19 (n=2,641)



- Less anxious than before COVID-19
- Same as before COVID-19
- More anxious than before COVID-19
- Much more anxious than before COVID-19

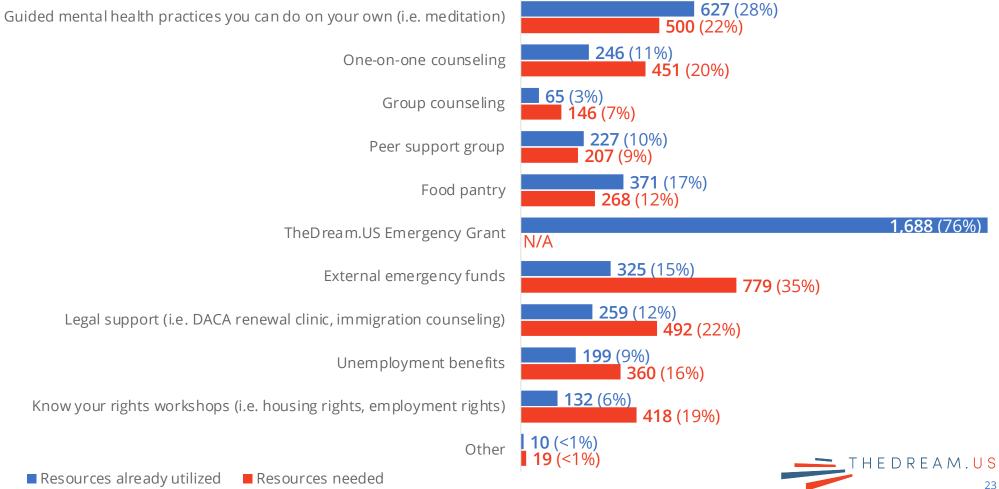
How long Scholars think they can go before experiencing significant financial hardship (n=2,636)





Personal well-being resources Scholars have already utilized versus need

[Select all that apply] (n=2,229)



Overall Educational Experience

<u>Summary</u>

- Overall, Scholars' evaluation of their entire Partner College experience and sense of belonging at their college was positive and similar to results from last year's 2018-2019 Scholar Survey
 - 79% evaluated their entire educational experience thus far as "good" (51%) or "excellent" (28%)
 - 83% said they would "definitely" (48%) or "probably" (35%) attend the same Partner College if they could start over
- While 92% of Scholars continue to see themselves as a part of their Partner College community, their assessment of the frequency and quality of interactions with different agents on-campus decreased from last year – likely as a reflection of the uncertainty and disruptive experience of COVID-19
- Approximately **40%** of respondents were involved in an undocumented club or community on-campus during the 2019-2020 academic year.

Scholars' evaluation of their entire educational experience at their Partner College so far:

Comparing 2018-2019 Survey and 2019-2020 Survey

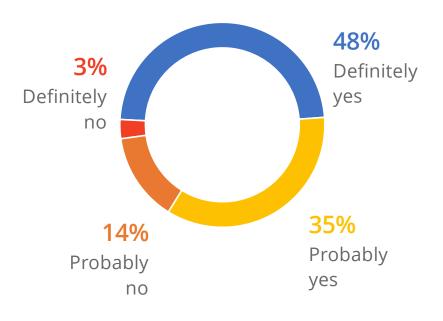
51% 51% 34% 28% 13% Poor Fair Good Excellent

■ 2018-2019 Survey (n=1,890)



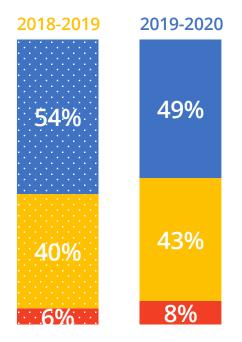
If Scholars could start over again, would they attend the same Partner College?

(n=2,598)

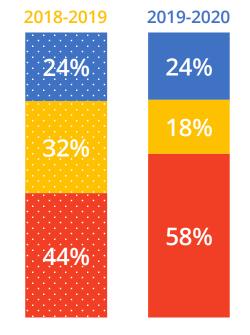


Scholar reflections on belonging at their Partner College

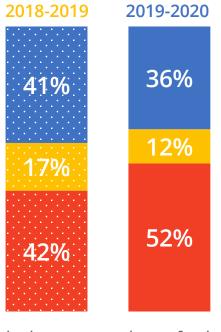
Comparing 2018-2019 Survey (n=1,922) and 2019-2020 Survey (n=2,599)



Do Scholars see themselves as a part of their Partner College community?



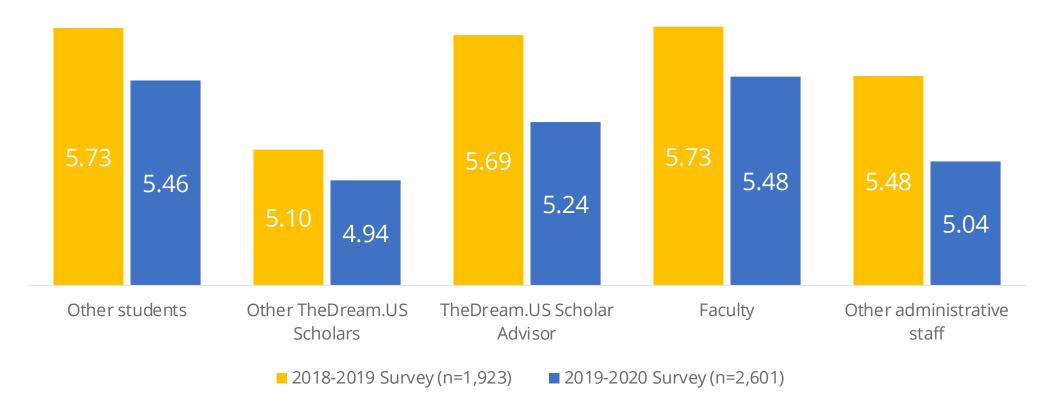
Are Scholars involved with an undocumented club or community on-campus?



Are Scholars a member of other student-run organizations?

Quality of Interactions on-campus with the following:

[Average on a scale of 1-7, where 1 is "Poor" and 7 is "Excellent"] Comparing 2018-2019 Survey and 2019-2020 Survey

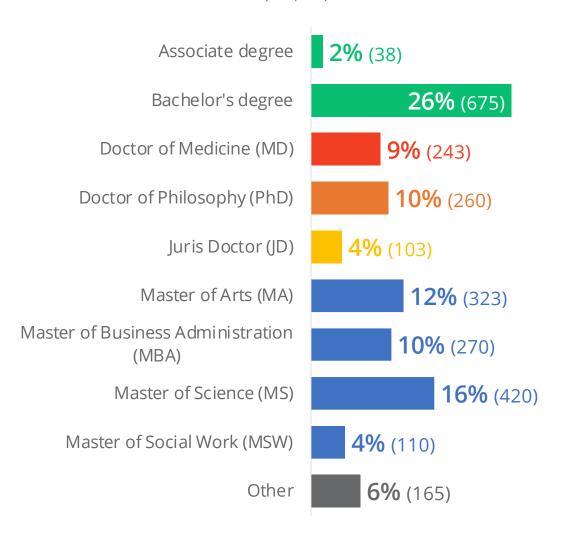


Professional Experience & Life After College

<u>Summary</u>

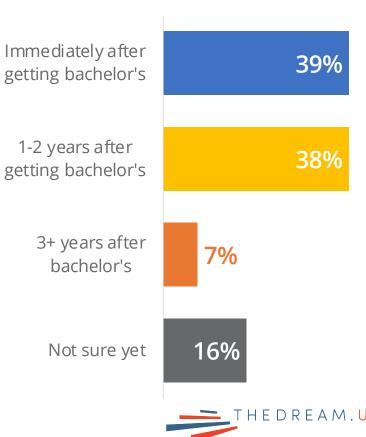
- Just over 70% of Scholars want to complete a graduate degree
- Of those who want to attend graduate school, **77%** want to attend immediately after obtaining their bachelor's degree (39%) or 1-2 years after obtaining their bachelor's degree (38%)
- Compared to last year's survey, there was decreased certainty in what Scholars want to do for their career, coupled with heightened anxiety around legal status:
 - 49% said they were "extremely" or "very" sure of what they want to do with their career, compared to 64% last year
 - 55% consider their legal status to be a significant barrier to achieving their long-term goals, compared to 44% last year
- Of the career resources available to Scholars during the 2019-2020 academic year (i.e. from TheDream.US and their Partner College), Scholars assessed resources from TheDream.US to be most helpful
- **36%** said they did not *use* (30%) or *know about* (6%) the Career Services Center at their Partner College, however the majority of those who did use their Career Services Center found it "very helpful"
- 57% are pursuing careers requiring licensing consistent with last year's survey
- 30% of Scholars completed internships during the 2019-2020 academic year
 - 51% were paid, 49% were unpaid
 - Similar to last year, access is the key challenge *finding paid opportunities that work with their schedules*
- Two-thirds of respondents are currently looking for a job that meets their career interests
 - 78% for *graduated* Scholars and 75% for *senior* Scholars
- A common theme in open-ended responses regarding other professional resources that would be helpful, was information and job opportunities in health and medicine and the non-profit/public sector _____ THEDREAM

Highest level of education Scholars want to complete (n=2,607)



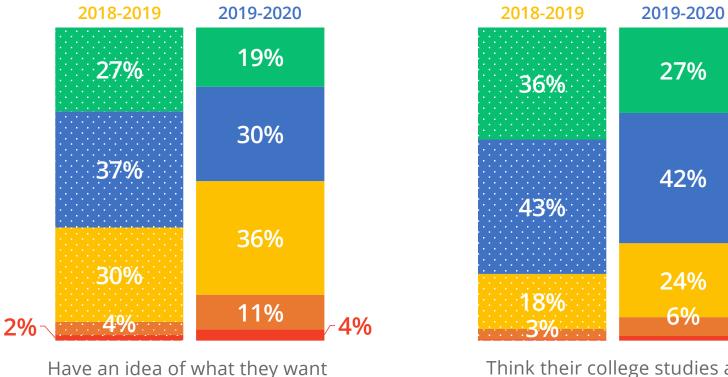
For Scholars who want to go to graduate school, when do they want to go?

(n=1,890)



Do Scholars currently:

[Comparing 2018-2019 Survey (n=1,837) and 2019-2020 Survey (n=2,573)]



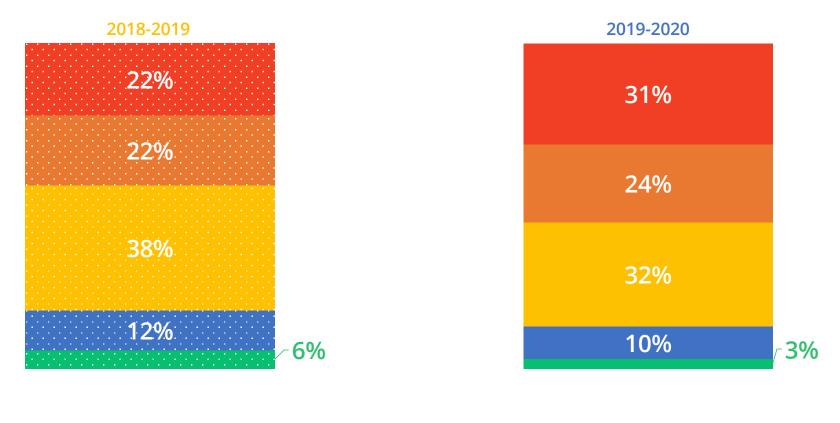


1%

to do with their career?

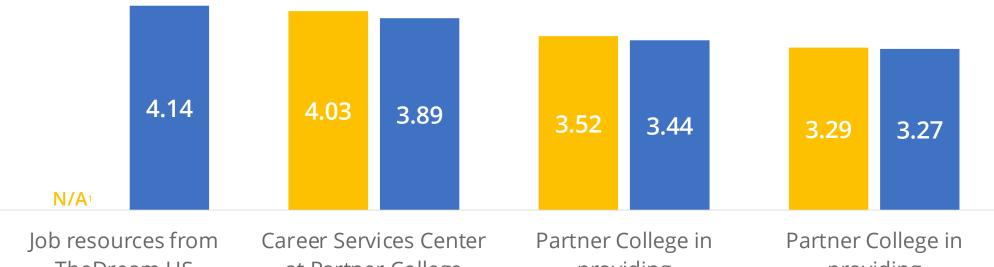
Do Scholars think being undocumented poses a barrier to achieving their long-term goals?

[Comparing 2018-2019 Survey (n=1,835) and 2019-2020 Survey (n=2,564)]



How helpful were the following resources on a scale of 1-5

[Average scores, where 1 is "Not at all helpful" and 5 is "Extremely helpful"] Comparing 2018-2019 Survey with 2019-2020 Survey



The Dream US

at Partner College

providing undocumented-friendly resources for finding a job

providing undocumented-friendly resources for graduate school

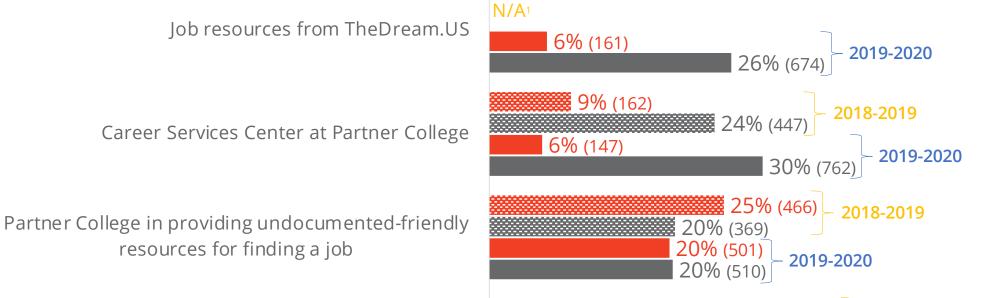
■ 2018-2019 Survey (average n=1,066)

■ 2019-2020 Survey (average n=1,596)



Scholars who did *not know* about or *use* the following resources:

Comparing 2018-2019 Survey (n=1,835) and 2019-2020 Survey (n=2,575)



Partner College in providing undocumented-friendly resources for graduate school

■ Did not know about this resource

■ Did not use this resource

18% (330)

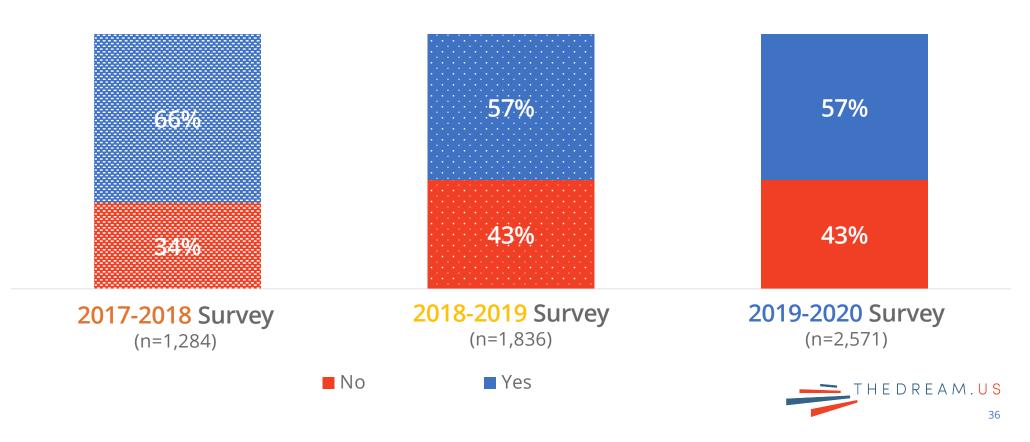
19% (496)



2019-2020

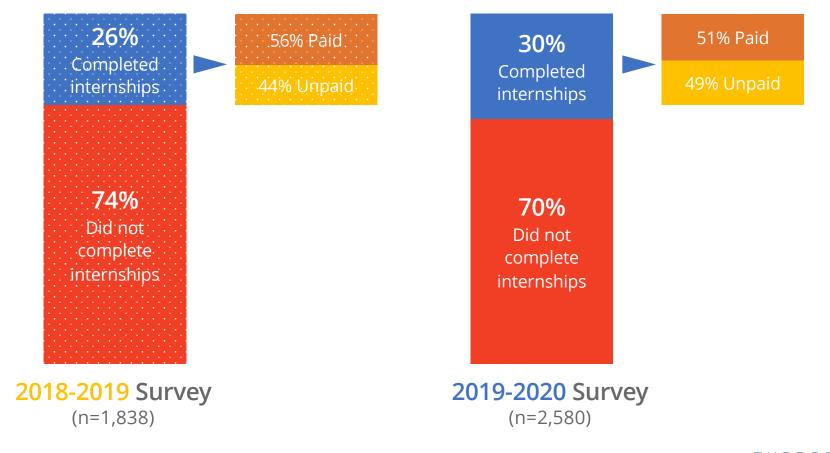
Percent of Scholars pursuing a career requiring licensing remained consistent from last year

Are Scholars pursuing a career requiring licensing?



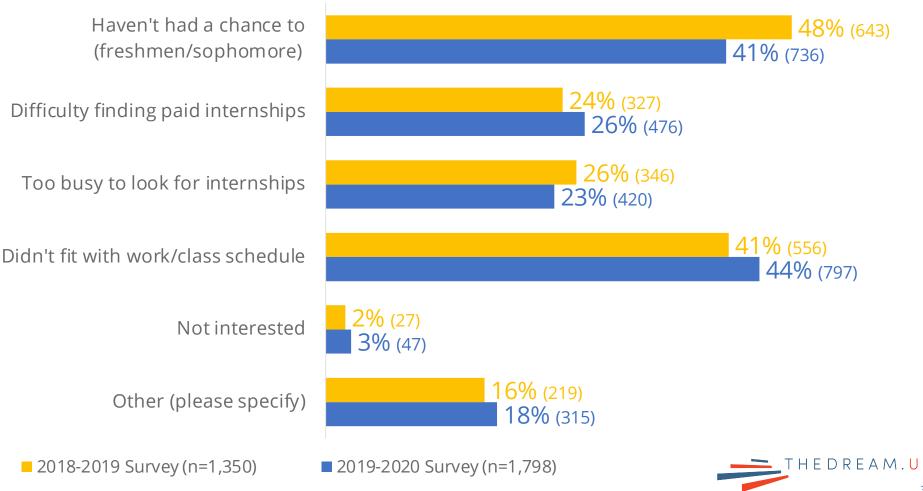
Did Scholars complete internships in the past academic year?

For Scholars who did complete internships, were they paid?

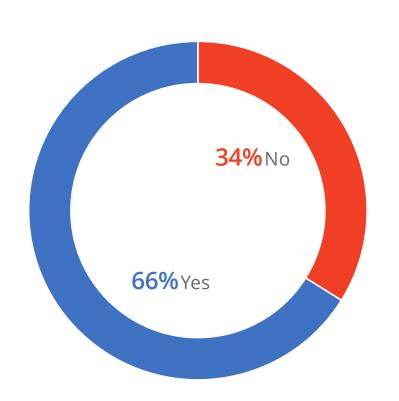


Reasons why Scholars have <u>not</u> done internships

Comparing 2018-2019 Survey and 2019-2020 Survey

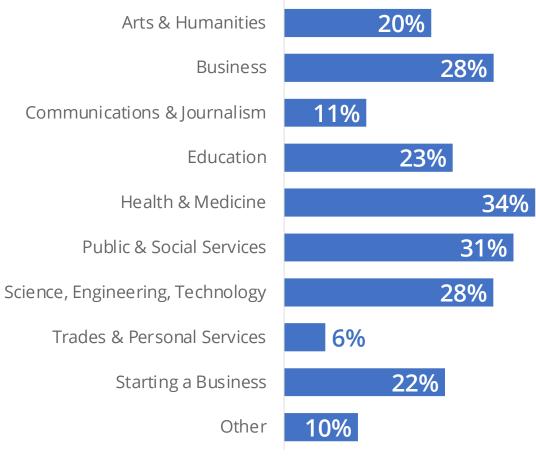


Are Scholars currently looking for a job that meets their career goals? (n=2,558)



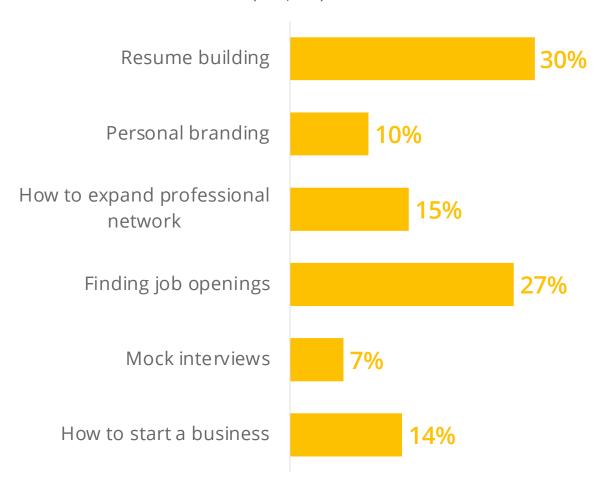
Industries of employment interest

[Select all that apply] (n=2,554)



Professional resources that Scholars would find *most useful*

(n=2,541)

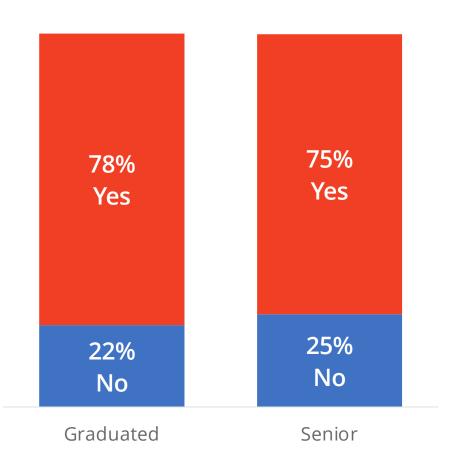


Popular answers from open-ended responses on other resources that would be useful:

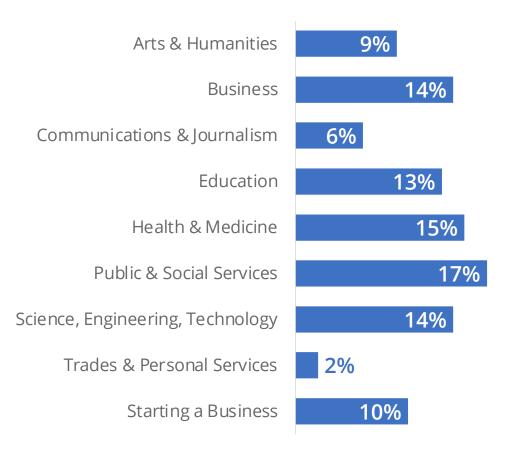
- Finding paid internship opportunities
- Coaching
- Mentoring from industry professionals
- Job fairs
- Workshops on types of job Scholars can get with their undergraduate degree

Percentage of graduated and senior Scholars currently looking for a job that meets their career goals



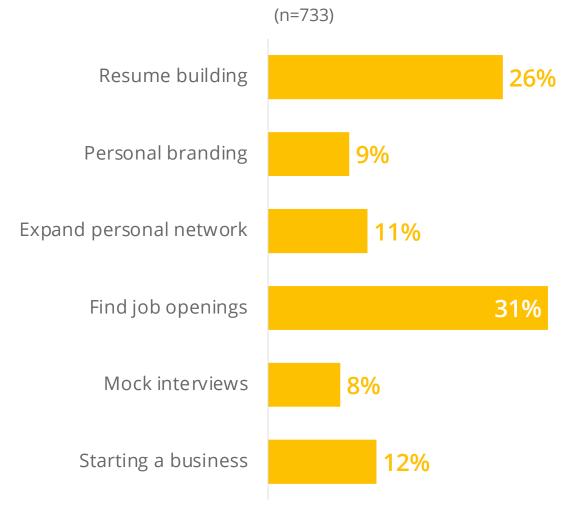


Industries of employment interest for graduated and senior Scholars (n=751)





Professional resources that *graduated and* senior Scholars would find most useful



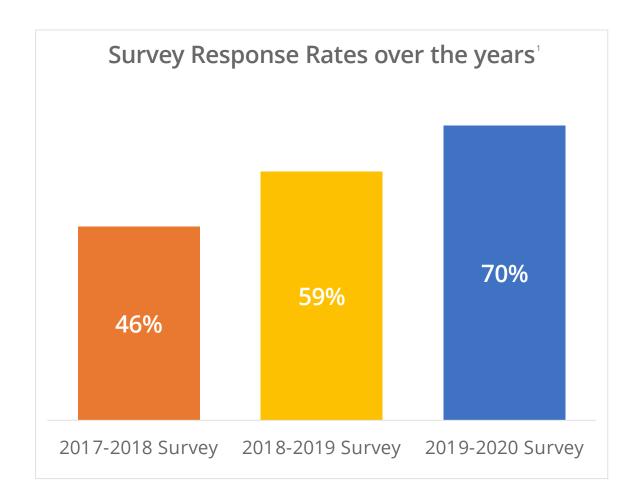
Popular answers from open-ended responses on other resources that would be useful for graduated and senior Scholars:

- Finding paid internship opportunities
- Job opportunities in health and medicine, non-profit/public sector
- Coaching
- Mentoring from industry professionals
- Job fairs
- Workshops on earning a living without work authorization

Implementation & Participants

<u>Implementation</u>

- The 2019-2020 Scholar Survey was administered online between May 4 – June 10, 2020
- The survey was sent to approximately 3,850 Scholars who were eligible to receive the scholarship in the 2019-2020 academic year
- There were 2,681 participants (70% response rate)
- This reflects an 11% increase in response rate from 2018-2019 Scholar Survey
- Participants spent an average of 19 minutes on the survey



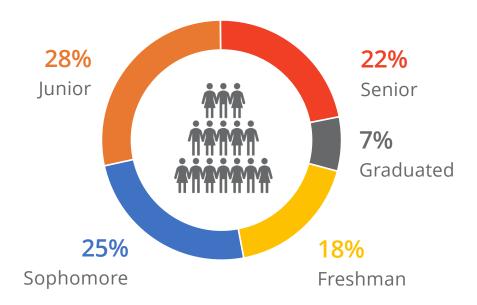
¹The 2017-2018 Survey was an online survey in response to the recission of DACA and identifying immediate supports needed. The 2018-2019 Survey was the first annual Scholar Survey and provides comparison data when relevant for the 2019-2020 survey in this report.



<u>Participants</u>

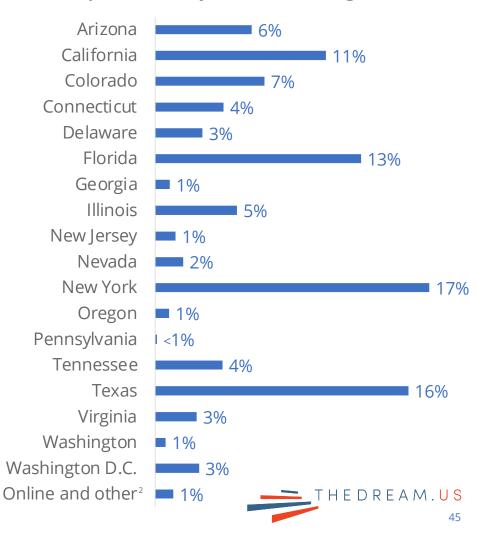
Participants by year in college

(n=2,569)



¹Respondents were from 86 Partner Colleges with currently enrolled Scholars and includes Partner Colleges in states that no longer accept new Scholars such as Pennsylvania. ²Includes respondents attending Purdue University Global (online) and one Scholar at York University in Canada.

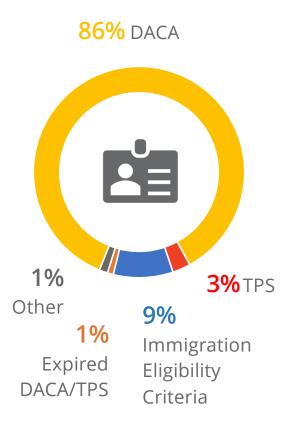
Respondents by Partner College State¹

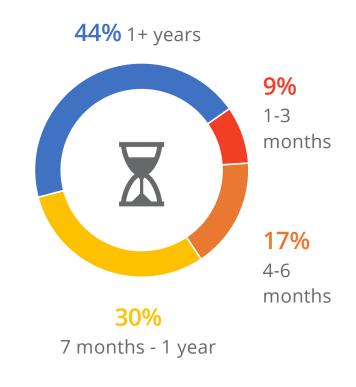


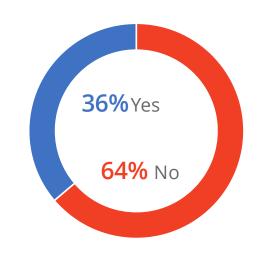
Participants by **Immigration Status** (n=2,569)

If DACA/TPS, how soon will status expire? (n=2,279)

If DACA/TPS, have Scholars applied for renewal? (n=2,279)







Scholar Background

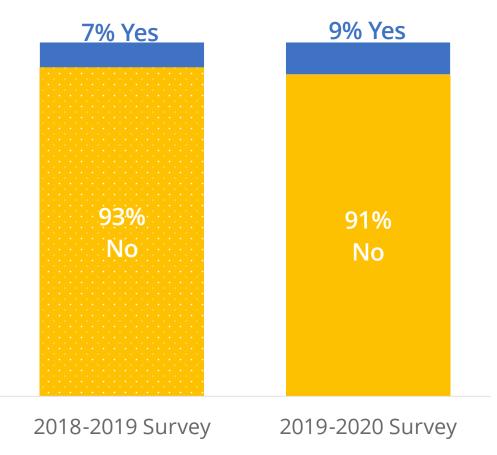
Has TheDream.US scholarship allowed Scholars to work fewer hours:

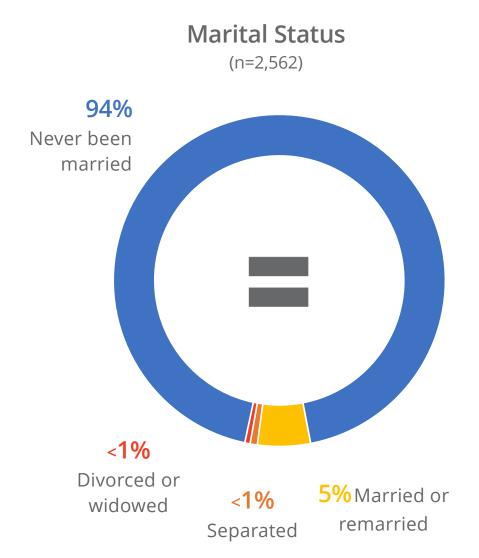
32% 32% No No 68% 68% Yes Yes

2019-2020 Survey

2018-2019 Survey

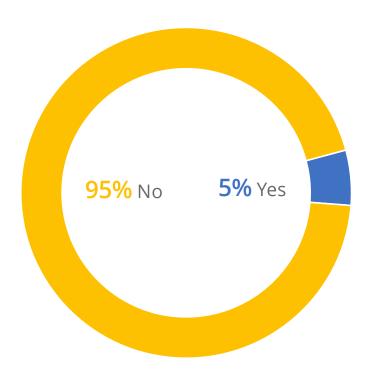
Are Scholars self-employed:





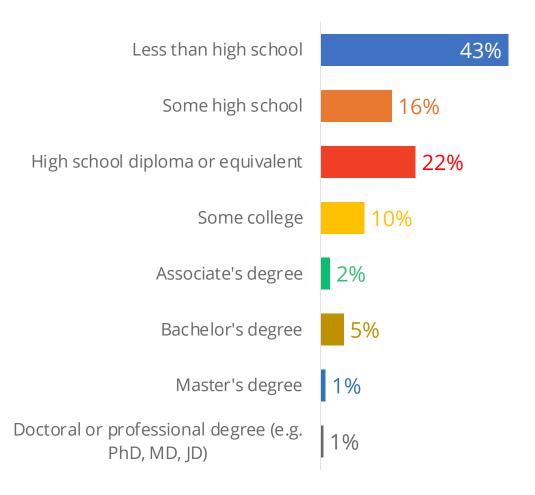
Do Scholars have children or expecting children

(n=2,562)

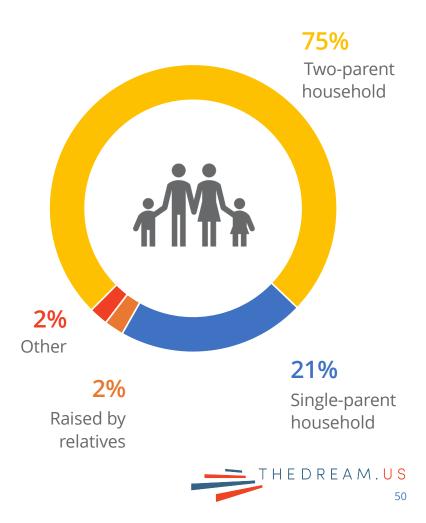


Highest level of education completed by either parents (or those who raised Scholars)

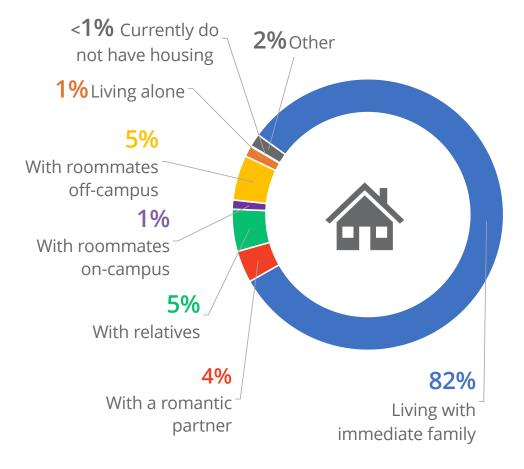
(n=2,559)



Family structure Scholars grew up in (n=2,557)

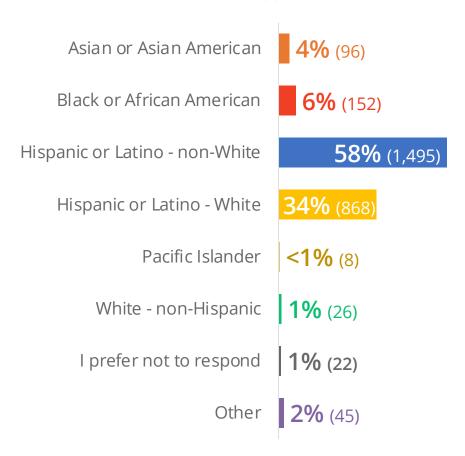


Current living situation (n=2,549)



How Scholars identify racially

[Select all that apply] (n=2,565)



Scholar Voices: biggest concerns at the moment (open-ended responses)

- "The future of DACA"
- "Graduating on time"
- "I know I should be doing some internships by now to gain experience but I don't have a SSN or ITIN
 to be able to even apply"
- "Being able to find a job in my career field during this pandemic"
- "Finishing the quarter strong. There is a lot going on in the world and in the country currently and I find everything very emotionally overwhelming which is impacting my studies."
- "Finding a job"
- "How to afford graduate school"
- "My children's health"
- "...figuring out what I'm going to do after graduating..."
- "Rent payment"
- "I am struggling with keeping up with school and being able to pay the bills that are piling up. The stress is also taking a toll on me physically and mentally"

Key themes: the uncertainty of DACA, completing and financing undergraduate degree, family health and finances during COVID-19, finding a job or internship, financing graduate school

Scholar Voices: key supports in college (open-ended responses)

- "Support of my advisors and being able to speak with them about concerns I had for the future"
- "My TheDream.US scholar advisor was very helpful with giving advice about staying on track and motivated [me] to finish each semester strong."
- "The counseling center at my school! I was able to find a therapist who helped learn a lot about myself and skills that I've been able to use to cope with everything that's happening."
- "My friends and family"
- "TheDream.US recipients at my school all became friends"
- "Professors serving as mentors, my manager at work, and TheDream.US have been important to my college experience."
- "Support from my family, professors, and program advisor"
- "YES! Honestly seeing people graduate on the Facebook page definitely motivated me!"
- "Yes, the emergency fund helped out greatly. Very thankful for that."
- "Immigrant Student Success Center"
- "the dreamers club at my partner school and my advisors"

Key themes: Having someone they trust and believes in them on-campus (especially Scholar or Academic Advisors and professors); having community (on-campus, family, and online); mental health supports

Scholar Voices: additional suggestions (open-ended responses)

Suggestions and Feedback

- "I think a seminar or a circle group for TheDream.US would be very useful. Maybe even a club room, where undocumented students can make friends with fellow undocumented students would be helpful."
- "More tips on how to stay positive during this time [and] how to manage college overall"
- "I think more community college students need to be acknowledged. I once felt that a community college education was insufficient compared to a University education. However, I was wrong. I'm proud to say I'm a first-generation college student that started at community college"
- "I would like a way to meet other dreamers"
- "I feel like the advisors did nothing and made everything very confusing, they never explained anything and their actions were always very secretive and shady especially when it came to funds and disbursement, they provided no support"
- "Having more job options for other majors not just business majors"
- "I would like if TheDream.US would send us [an] email on when they actually send the payments to the colleges."

Contact Us

Information or Questions on "TheDream.US 2019-2020 Scholar Survey Report: In Their Own Words"

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