

# 4. COVID-19 and Online Learning: A Community College Perspective

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## Abstract

*The COVID-19 pandemic disrupted all aspects of human lives in the United States and challenged the continuity of operations of commercial and social organizations such as community colleges. To protect their constituents' safety and health and comply with federal and state social distancing regulations, community colleges across the nation made a strategic decision to transition to online and remote learning. Although community colleges have been offering online education for decades, such a transition in a limited time and with little preparation was unprecedented and posed many challenges for students, faculty, and staff. Some practical challenges include the digital divide, online course design, and delivery requirements, student and faculty readiness to adopt an online environment, and availability of a range of academic and non-academic support to students. Although the impact of these challenges was widespread across all sectors of higher education, many nation's community college students have been particularly hard hit due to their low socioeconomic status. Recent research studies have revealed a declining enrollment trend, raising concerns among those who believe that national community colleges are engines of economic development and a path to social mobility, especially for low-income and underserved students of color. This chapter attempts to examine the experience of faculty and students during the pandemic and, taking an equity-minded approach, offers a set of recommendations to identify opportunities that the online transition experience has brought to community colleges.*

## Keywords

COVID-19; community colleges, online education, declining enrollment

## Introduction

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) a global pandemic based on alarming levels of spread and severity of the deadly virus from its origin in China to almost every country in the world (WHO, 2020). The WHO, various national health protection agencies such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), and state governments offered a set of protocols to curb the spread of the virus, including but not limited to washing hands with soap and water, using hand sanitizer, avoiding contact with confirmed cases, and

practicing social distancing (CDC, 2020). Social distance protocols required the widespread closure of in-person businesses and social, cultural, and educational organizations, necessitating their abrupt transition to remote and online modes to ensure continuity of their core missions (Ammigan et al., 2022). In the United States, community colleges quickly responded to the pandemic by pivoting to a 100 percent online learning format from their standard practices, where classes were predominantly offered in a traditional, in-person modality (Sterzenbach & Turner, 2022). Such a shift, with little time and preparation, had significant implications for faculty and students, for whom online learning was not the preferred choice when they signed up for classes; it was particularly challenging because many had no prior online teaching or learning experience (Lemay & Doleck, 2020). As community colleges enroll a disproportionate number of low income and minority students and students of color, the campus closures and 100% online learning environment created a variety of challenges for many students, exacerbating the historically rooted inequities and deepening the digital divide (Harper, 2020; Muniz, 2021).

The current COVID-19 vaccinations have helped curb the spread and severity of the virus. Still, the world is not COVID-19 free due to emerging variants that, while less severe than earlier strains of the Coronavirus, still pose potential health hazards to individuals, specifically those who are not fully vaccinated (CDC, 2021). One of the emerging thoughts among institutions is to take a long-term horizon in approaching the pandemic rather than changing strategies in the face of existing and emerging COVID-19 variants such as Delta and Omicron (Bloomberg Magazine, 2022). Taking the long-term horizon will require sustaining gains from the institutional practices that were effective during the pandemic and building them up to safeguard the institutions to combat any future crisis.

This chapter attempts to extract insights from the COVID-19 pandemic and illustrate the implications and opportunities that the online transition has brought to community colleges from the perspectives of students, faculty, and college leadership. It also offers recommendations to institutions and faculty to make online teaching and learning a successful experience for all students.

## **Overview of Community Colleges**

According to the data provided by the American Association of Community Colleges, there are a total of 1,044 community colleges in the United States serving the educational needs of 6.8 million credit and 5.0 million non-credit students (AACC, 2021). Credit headcount enrollment can further be classified based on student status (full-time=35%, part-time=65%), demographics of students enrolled (Hispanic=27%, Black=13%, White=44%, Asian/Pacific Islander=6%, and others=10%), and other significant demographics (First generation=29%, single parents=15%, with disabilities=20%, and veterans=5%) (AACC, 2021). A cursory review of these statistics reveals that two-year public community colleges are ethnically

diverse and serve the needs of a disproportionate number of minority and underserved students with the fewest resources. Of the 6.8 million total credit headcounts, 65% of students are part-time students representing the student segment that balances the competing demands of their time and attention while dealing with employment, childcare, and other family responsibilities (Jaggars & Bailey, 2010). These statistics clearly show that community college students constitute a significantly large proportion of all undergraduate students in the country. They are uniquely identified based on their enrollment status, socioeconomic background, and racial and ethnic mix compared to their peers in four-year universities (AACC, 2021). The number and geographical spread of community colleges across the country indicate their potential to influence the lives of millions of students, specifically low-income and minority and students of color for whom the community college is a gateway to American higher education. These statistics also underscore the significance of community college students' academic success and progression in public policy to achieve the overarching goals of economic prosperity, national competitiveness, social justice, and active participation in the democratic process.

### *Online Learning in Community Colleges*

Community colleges traditionally offer a wide range of individual online courses and programs to provide flexibility and convenience to students. This mode of instructional delivery is often most attractive to students who have competing demands of time and attention and are more likely to have obligations and commitments related to family and employment, making receiving traditional face-to-face instruction at college campuses inconvenient (Travers, 2016). Additionally, many students enter community colleges as digital natives and prefer to use technology to access instructional materials, faculty, and student support services. Over the last two decades, online courses and programs have witnessed remarkable growth in the number of courses offered and students enrolled in online programs (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2020). A wide variety of institutional and national data support such trends. According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), in the 2018-2019 academic year, almost 68 percent of all two-year public institutions offered online programs and individual courses, 29 percent provided only individual courses but did not complete online programs, and 3 percent offered neither online programs nor individual online lessons (NCES, 2021). In 2018, 36.8 percent of community college students enrolled in at least one online course, while 15 percent took all their classes online (Digest of Educational Statistics, 2019).

Several reasons have been cited as the primary drivers of such growth, including but not limited to the institution's mission of advancing access and flexibility to students, availability of affordable instructional technology and multimedia tools, institutional efforts to offset the instructional costs,

and demands from students, especially working and older adults (Baach et al., 2016; Means et al., 2014; Travers, 2016). To pivot on the equity plan and improve operational efficiencies, it is likely that community colleges will continue relying on online learning to provide access and flexibility to students for the foreseeable future. As posited by Travers, “For many nontraditional students wishing to pursue higher education goals, online learning is not only appealing but necessary” (Travers, 2016, p.50).

Although online learning is prevalent in community colleges, with nearly all public community colleges offering this option, students encounter several challenges in the online environment that potentially impact course attrition, learning, and course completion (Sublett, 2019). Researchers have noted the high deterioration among students who attend online courses compared to students enrolled in traditional, face-to-face learning. It is noticeable among first-generation and low-income students and students of color, who represent the majority of student populations (Sterzenbach & Turner, 2022). Hachey, Conway, and Wladis (2013) reported that the attrition rate is higher for students in lower-level courses that provide the building blocks for program completion and concern for college leadership. For some researchers, the high attrition rate potentially diminishes the overarching benefits of online learning and has economic, social, and employment implications for society (Bawa, 2016).

In addition to the attrition rate, the relative efficacy of online education and face-to-face instructions has been a point of debate among scholars since the advent of online teaching in community colleges. However, there is no consensus on which mode of instruction delivery, online or face to face, is better for engaging students in the learning process. For example, a 2009 meta-analysis of over 1,000 empirical studies by the Department of Education reported no significant difference in student learning outcomes between traditional face-to-face and online learning methods (Means et al., 2010). Skeptics raise concerns about the quality of online learning in terms of the lack of faculty-student interactions and student-student interactions relative to traditional face-to-face learning environments (Dumford & Miller, 2018). Few others consider the motivation for learning and readiness to use technology as enabling factors impacting student learning outcomes in an online environment (Tang et al., 2021, Travers, 2016;). For Travers, students in online learning “require sufficient self-motivation to learn and must possess the ability to manage their time wisely so that they can become independent in their learning” (p. 50). According to Jaggars and Bailey (2010), a lack of interactions may contribute to a low completion rate and poor performance among underprepared and historically underserved student populations. A line of research calls for improving the quality of online learning through structured course design and related planning processes encompassing measures to assess the likelihood of online student success, necessary support to learners, and organization of contents to ensure better navigation and ease for students (Branch & Dousay, 2015; Hodges et al. 2020, Johnson & Berge, 2012).

With the growth of online learning across national community colleges and given that students continue to have a stronger preference for this mode of delivery, community college leaders must consider online learning as a strategic priority and align necessary resources to provide an effective online teaching and learning experience for all students (Travers, 2016).

### **Impact of COVID-19**

The emergence of the coronavirus pandemic brought significant disruptions to all higher education sectors. Still, the impact on community colleges is noteworthy because they enroll many low-income and historically underserved students and students of color (AACC, 2021). Unlike four-year institutions, community colleges' primary function is to provide instruction to students (Crespín-Trujillo & Hora, 2021). COVID-19 severely impacted the ability of community colleges to offer traditional, face-to-face instruction and a wide range of essential in-person student services, such as enrollment, advising, and financial aid. Although online learning has existed for the last few decades and community colleges have relied on this mode of instruction delivery to meet their promise of access, the abrupt transition to 100% online in the middle of the academic year was unprecedented; furthermore, all types of instructional support and administrative services that are critical to the educational mission of the colleges also changed to online operations (Bosley & Custer, 2021). The shift to learning online has had a profound effect on students. Many students who chose to attend face-to-face classes in the spring of 2020 had no prior experience in online learning (Means & Neisler, 2020). The sudden transition to online learning brought critical logistical challenges for many students, such as the necessary computing resources, adequate bandwidth to access online content, and readiness to adapt to a relatively new learning environment (Nworie, 2021). A significant challenge was to share working spaces and computers at home with family members who also required online access. Although some of these issues existed before the pandemic, COVID-19 exacerbated them and put many students in a potentially disadvantageous position in their educational pursuits compared to their peers from relatively affluent backgrounds and high socioeconomic status (Bray, 2021; Mean & Neisler, 2021). In addition to these challenges, CDC statistics have consistently shown that the population segments representing nontraditional and low-income students are at higher risk of infection and more adversely impacted by the pandemic than other student groups (Custer & Bosley, 2021). Student responses to these challenges are a concern (Crespín-Trujillo & Hora, 2021). Many students decided not to return to their colleges, and community colleges have been experiencing steep enrollment declines (National Student Clearinghouse Research Center, 2020). For example, a recent research study at the California Community College System reported a 17 percent drop in African American and Latinx students (Bulman & Fairlie, 2021). While

we do not yet know the full impact of the pandemic on community college students, we learn about some of the challenges that certain student groups experience in an online learning environment and that colleges must assess their programming and services to attain equity in the implementation of online learning.

Like students, community college faculty experienced various professional and personal challenges. On the one hand, they had to adjust teaching practices and assessment methods to keep students motivated in an online environment; on the other hand, they had to protect their safety and health from the harmful impact of the pandemic (Crespín-Trujillo & Hora, 2021). It is not surprising that in a recent faculty survey, many respondents reported mental exhaustion and drained emotions since the pandemic started (Chronicle of Higher Education, 2020). Despite such challenges, community college faculty demonstrated their resilience and deep commitment to student success by quickly adjusting teaching practices and assessment methods rapidly to ensure the continuity of instruction (Velestianos & Seaman, 2020). However, some expressed concerns about such a quick change in the quality of education and its impact on many students who come to community colleges unprepared for college-level courses (Center for Community College Student Engagement, 2016). Critics argue that in many cases, the teaching and learning assessment methods incorporated in face-to-face instruction may not be easily translated into an online format. This is more relevant to the workforce and applied programs that require hands-on instruction and fieldwork and may be challenging to shift to online without careful planning and the availability of technology resources (Crespín-Trujillo & Hora, 2021).

The impact of COVID-19 varies based on the location of the community colleges. While many urban and suburban community colleges enjoy well-developed infrastructure to offer robust online programming, not all rural colleges offer online programs for various reasons (Summers, 2020). They lack technology infrastructure, financial resources, and the ability to provide professional development opportunities to faculty, especially given the rapid switch to remote learning. Having reliable internet access is a significant challenge for any student, and in some cases, community colleges are the sole digital providers to students (Summers, 2020). A recent study conducted by Alyssa et al. (2020) in rural communities reported that 63 percent of rural adults have access to the internet at home. Mobile phones are the only means to access internet services for many students.

COVID-19 has made the perennial issue of the digital divide and racial disparities in technology access for African American, Hispanic, and Native American individuals across all types of community colleges (Bray, 2021). It has raised issues related to pedagogy and academic support to students in a virtual environment and questioned community colleges' readiness to address public health issues in the future. As we are transitioning into the post-pandemic era and many students take online classes, it might be prudent to "reflect on what appeared to work and not work in community

college teaching during the pandemic” (Crespín-Trujillo & Hora, 2021, p.14). This reflection calls for continually engaging students, faculty, and other key stakeholders to gain insights into COVID-19-related disparities and racial inequities. It will also allow college leadership to reflect and document stories about their experiences and how they led during the crisis (Floyd, 2021).

### **Student Perspectives**

The pandemic has raised several new barriers to community college students whose ability to continue and complete their studies is at risk. For Thompson (2017), taking the student perspective is the most effective method of identifying institutional support for students and faculty. First, students who were not interested in online learning, based on their learning style, motivation, and availability of technology resources, were left with no choice but to continue with the transition. We can imagine the impact of such changes on first-year college, adult primary education, and developmental courses. Dabbagh (2007) defines a successful online student “as someone who has a strong academic self-concept; is competent in the use of online learning technologies, particularly communication and collaborative technologies; understands, values, and engages in social interaction and collaborative learning; possesses strong interpersonal and communication skills, and is self-directed” (p.8). Second, they did not have an opportunity to interact with faculty and academic support staff for tutoring and library services typically available to all students before the pandemic. Third, for many students, irrespective of their motivation and prior online learning experiences, a lack of computing resources and free Wi-Fi networks, typically accessible on campuses, posed a significant challenge. In a recent study by Velestianos and Kimmons (2020), several students reported their lack of technical abilities to troubleshoot audio and video issues and establish a Wi-Fi setup. Yeboah and Smith (2016) indicated that “the ability to use technology in varying forms plays an important role in the academic performance of minority students” (p.19). This was compounded because other avenues of accessing Wi-Fi, such as local public libraries and coffee shops, were unavailable due to the pandemic (Summers, 2020). Such a digital divide puts community college students at risk and further exacerbates equity issues of intended learning outcomes (McKenzie, 2021). In the post-COVID period, colleges need to conduct a needs assessment of students to help identify areas where they need assistance for success in online learning environments (Johnson, Velestianos, & Seaman, 2020).

The overall impact of the transition to online learning has yet to be measured. Still, one clear outcome that can be attributed to it is the decline in overall enrollment since the pandemic began (McKenzie, 2021). Given the emergence of COVID variants and the perceived risks and fear among students and staff of being infected, online learning will continue to be a

significant part of instructional delivery methods (Johnson, Velestianos, & Seaman, 2020). The question here is how community colleges reflect and reevaluate teaching and learning practices during COVID-19, gain insights from the lessons learned and rely on students' feedback to ensure an equity-centric online teaching and learning environment. COVID-19 has created a wide variety of challenges for community colleges. It has also prepared them to understand better and address the learning needs of relatively diverse and historically underserved students.

As the president of a large urban community college that serves many low-income, first-generation, older adult populations, the author has had a distinct privilege of being an observer as the students' challenges unfolded during the crisis. Taking students' perspectives and following a set of recommendations may guide institutional responses to support post-COVID-19 online learning:

### *Social Interactions*

One of the student challenges associated with online learning is their sense of isolation due to a lack of face-to-face contact with faculty and other students. Research studies affirm the importance of social interaction in online education for increased student engagement, course performance, and level of motivation for all students, particularly for minority students (Sublett, 2018; Means & Neisler, 2021). Previous research found a relationship between the lack of interactions and dropping courses (Sublett, 2018). One can imagine the importance of social interactions during a crisis. In Means and Neisler's (2020) survey of 1,000 students whose courses were moved online during the pandemic, students expressed their dissatisfaction with the absence of instructors and peers for feedback and discussing course contents.

Faculty can ask students to share their personal learning experiences, perspectives on course content and student achievements to obtain ideas for further improvement in course delivery (Jaggars et al., 2013). Muirhead (2005) encourages biographical posts during the first few days of the course: "It is a simple procedure that can humanize the online class by helping students learn more about their teacher and colleagues. Students will use the biographical posts as a reference point to communicate during the course." (p.76). Mitchell and Shepard suggest (2015) that a "social presence is initially fuelled by the instructor's design of the classroom, the types of prompts used and expectations for discussion, and how collaboration is facilitated" (p. 148). Karen and Kelly (2019) support interactions through faculty-triggered messaging and student-student and student-content engagement as mindful deep learning methods.

A personal touch in messaging from faculty to students before and during the course demonstrates care and value for students. A simple personalized message can ask if they have checked the syllabus and if they have any questions about course contents or how to navigate different

course resources (Karen & Kelly, 2019; Means & Neilser, 2021). A periodic sequence of messages is helpful, or messages can be generated when students miss an assignment or do not participate in collaborative learning activities such as discussion forums.

### *Technology Support*

It may be difficult financially for some community colleges. Still, it is a worthwhile investment to provide a one-to-one working laptop to students on loan based on their enrollment in the current semester (Harper, 2020). Although smartphones and laptops are common on campuses, a wide gap exists between the available and required quality of hardware and software components to fully engage and be successful in an online environment (Bawa, 2016). Institutions can make student computer loan programs visible and accessible to all those in desperate need of computers to participate in online learning.

Providing laptops and other devices may not be sufficient, as low-income students cannot afford Wi-Fi and reliable high-speed internet services (Harper, 2020). Several community colleges are leveraging their existing partnerships with internet Service Providers (ISP) to provide students with low-cost internet connections. For example, the Houston Community College System (HCCS, 2021), one of the largest community colleges in the country, has created partnerships with Comcast and AT&T to offer Wi-Fi services at a discounted price of \$9.95 per month for 12 months (HCCS, 2021). If feasible, the critical element is that these options are readily available to students through institution-wide announcements or personal text message accounts.

### *Targeted Mandatory Session*

In addition to the availability of technology resources, an array of non-academic resources is critical for online learners, for example, orientation, registration and records, advising, testing, counseling, bookstores, and career coaching (Nworie, 2021). Services such as advising and counseling have become more critical during crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Some research studies support mandatory orientation sessions to introduce students to course demands and expectations to complete an online course (Bawa, 2016). Johnson and colleagues (2020) conducted a large-scale survey of administrators and faculty at 672 higher education institutions, including community colleges. He reported that 58 percent of respondents supported hosting webinars for students on how to succeed in an online learning environment.

### **Faculty Perspective**

We have seen rapid growth in online learning across all community colleges; however, little is known about the number of faculty members interested

in fully embracing this mode of instruction or who have the readiness and motivation for it. Following Johnson and Berge's (2012) assertion that "not all community college teachers will embrace online learning, and not all teaching styles adapt well to the online environment" (p. 899), it can be assumed that systemic actions and encouragement on behalf of college leadership are required to achieve buy-in from faculty. This may include administrative support, professional development, information links to resources, and peer networks (Johnson et al., 2020).

From a faculty perspective, noticeable gains from the COVID-19 crisis may include exposure and experience with virtual teaching, building technology skills, and gaining perspectives on the learning styles of diverse student populations (Hachey et al., 2013). The premise is that a well-planned online learning experience differs from what students experience during the pandemic (Branch & Dousay, 2015; Hodges et al., 2020). Taking faculty perspectives and following a set of recommendations may guide institutional responses to support post-COVID-19 online learning:

### *Faculty Development*

Faculty professional development on technical and pedagogical aspects of online teaching is critical to ensure a successful learning experience (Bawa, 2016). The professional development focus should not be limited to operating learning management systems (LMS) and online tools. Still, it should also include inclusive pedagogy, assessment, and student-centric support services (Johnson et al., 2020). A successful online instructional strategy most likely involves collaborative and active learning, digital fluency, and assessment methods to provide prompt feedback to students (Means & Neilser, 2020). Harper (2020) suggested the inclusion of conversations surrounding race in faculty professional development. According to Harper, "unless these faculty development activities also include some serious attention to race and racism, problems in classrooms before the pandemic are likely to intensify online" (p.7).

The need for the professional development of adjunct faculty is critical. They constitute a significant part of the college instructional workforce and are often less knowledgeable about instructional support and other campus services than their full-time counterparts (Bosley & Custer, 2021). For students, the difference between full-time and part-time faculty is meaningless, as they expect the same quality of instruction irrespective of the faculty status.

### *Instructional Design*

Research has found that online students fare better in thoughtfully curated courses (Sublett, 2018). The pedagogy and role of the faculty are different in the online environment than in the traditional, face-to-face teaching space. Dabbagh suggests that successful online learning requires "collaboration,

communication, social interaction, reflection, evaluation, and self-directed learning” (Dabbagh, 2007, p. 224). A well-designed online course may improve student course retention, completion, and overall satisfaction (Bawa, 2016; ICT, 2020). A recent research study on the teaching and learning of students during COVID-19 reports that “instructor choices about how to structure and conduct their courses were associated with a student’s level of satisfaction” (Means & Neisler, 2021, p. 18). Moreover, course design should be based on courses and disciplines such as liberal arts and technical programs. It demands intentional efforts on the part of the faculty. As noted by Strayhorn (2022), “it’s going to take faculty some time to get used to this now. Many of them are doing what they’ve always done, and that won’t cut it. It won’t work” (p. 37). For Yeboah and Smith, “instructors who teach online must understand the varied cultures, lived experiences, and sociolinguistic backgrounds of students they teach” (2016, p. 18). In this context, a collaborative effort between faculty, instructional designers, subject-matter experts, and technology support staff may help plan and design engaging online content that offers students collaborative and cooperative learning opportunities (Means & Neisler, 2021). Such a joint effort could also potentially expedite the curricula transition into an online environment in case of a crisis.

Similarly, the assessment of online learning is different from that of traditional face-to-face classrooms, as the role of faculty changes from faculty-centered to student-centered. A practical online evaluation of student learning is essential for students taking online classes for the first time, students enrolled in developmental courses, and students identified with disabilities (ICT, 2020). Yeboah and Smith (2016) assert the integration of cultural diversity in instructional design so that faculty and students can build relationships that could lead to positive course outcomes for minority students. The need for such relationships has intensified during the pandemic and will bear value as we enter the post-COVID learning environment.

## **Leadership Perspective**

College leadership is critical in times of crisis, such as pandemics. A rapid response sends a clear message to all constituents that the leadership fully understands the extent and severity of the problem and is engaged in addressing the related situations (Fernandez & Shaw, 2020). It is equally important to build on resources and assets created during the pandemic and alter them to fit into the post-COVID era. Floyd (2021) suggests leaders document “what worked, what did not work, and what lessons were learned” (p.4). For Floyd, such historical records may help community colleges frame their policies for dealing with future crises and provide opportunities for leaders to reflect and embrace new ideas that emerged during the current situation. For Fernandez and Shaw (2021), a potential question for leaders is: “What to do with these makeshift online course

offerings, rolled out in an emergency to get through the semester? Will they be refined and sustained in a new reshaped reality or discarded like a used band-aid?" (p.3).

Taking an equity mindset and following recommendations may guide college leadership to act according to new norms where online teaching and learning have rapidly increased. Even though overall community college enrollment is declining, online registrations are experiencing growth.

1. Online learning may be included as one of the strategic priorities in academic and strategic plans. This will draw attention to the resources needed to support online students, technology infrastructure, and faculty development. Once these priorities have been established, leadership responsibility should be delegated to teams with knowledge and experience in implementing online education strategies irrespective of daily or crises (Fernandez & Shaw, 2020). It is essential to convey the value of online learning across the institution and secure faculty buy-in to make online learning an integral part of the college mission.
2. A periodic college-wide survey to assess the needs and experiences of online learners will identify the areas where faculty and students experience challenges. The survey data can inform decisions about holistic academic and non-academic support and validate the actions taken by the leadership in the era of COVID-19 (Means & Neisler, 2021).
3. A critical area that emerged during the COVID-19 pandemic for additional consideration is the need for frequent and consistent communication between leaders, faculty, students, and other stakeholders (Field, 2020). Each constituent has its information requirements; leaders should be aware of these needs because during crises, the risk of sending inconsistent and mixed messages increases, aggravating anxiety and confusion. Through clear communication, leaders may acquire support for their vision and reassure stakeholders in times of crisis (Moody-Marshall, 2020).
4. In addition to the professional development of faculty, it is critical to conduct a fair assessment of faculty load, as designing and teaching online courses may require more effort than teaching in a face-to-face mode (Thompson, 2017).

There is no single factor that will guarantee the success of the educational transition to an online environment, especially in a crisis. However, success cannot be attained without considering the experiences of students and faculty. Their voices must be incorporated into the online education strategy of community colleges. Colleges must be flexible and agile to absorb any external shocks to their system through visionary leadership, careful planning, and deployment of resources where they are needed to advance the mission.

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