



BENCHMARKING FINANCIAL POLICIES

May 2020

In the following report, Hanover reviews financial policy changes directly related to COVID-19 at institutions nationally.



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

KEY FINDINGS

Many institutions have provided pro-rated room, board, and other fee refunds to students for the spring 2020 semester/quarter.

However, most institutions have not offered tuition refunds to students as the institutions continue to provide instruction. Many institutions cite the costs associated with rapidly moving to an online delivery model as evidence that significant tuition reductions are not warranted. Nonetheless, some higher education opinion writers recommend that institutions refund pro-rated tuition beginning from the date of online instruction, if they have the resources to do so. This practice may avoid lawsuits as well as boost the goodwill of students, families, and alumni.

Summer 2020 financial changes at institutions due to COVID-19 include tuition discounts, waived fees, and full-time scholarships.

Community colleges and other public institutions are most likely to offer this type of financial response. Community colleges tend to advertise their discounts as a service to district residents, while public and private institutions market these discounts to broad audiences.

Many institutions and public institutional systems have already announced tuition and fee freezes for the fall 2020 semester.

These include community colleges (e.g., Washtenaw Community College), public institutions (e.g., Clemson University, Rutgers University, Temple University, and the University of Georgia System), and private institutions (e.g., DePaul University, Kansas City University, and the University of Chicago). The University of Nebraska System implemented a tuition freeze for the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 years, which was planned before COVID-19 but accelerated due to the impacts of the virus.

In general, institutions have not yet announced fall 2020 tuition and fee changes.

Most institutions will likely announce any fall 2020 tuition and fee changes in June or July as they make decisions on their fall semester/quarter mode(s) of instruction (e.g., fully online, on-campus, or hybrid). There have been a handful of institutions that have already announced financial changes such as free tuition for incoming freshmen (Albion College and Southern New Hampshire University), tuition discounts for specific groups of students (Mississippi College and Thomas University), and deferred payments (Davidson College). Notably, the University of California, Berkeley has stated that fall 2020 tuition and fees are set regardless of instruction modality.

REVIEW OF FINANCIAL POLICIES

FINANCIAL POLICIES: SPRING 2020

SPRING 2020 TUITION REFUNDS/ DISCOUNTS

A [survey](#) that sampled 100 institutions on their COVID-19-related refund policies found that none of them were refunding or discounting their tuition. Institutions have defended their decisions because course instruction is still being provided via online learning, as well as the common cost increases associated with moving to 100 percent online learning. Of note, a New Jersey state senator [proposed](#) a bill on May 7 requiring institutions in the state to refund 25 percent of spring semester tuition.

Many institutions nationally have given pro-rated room, board, and other fee refunds to students, however. The Chronicle of Higher Education [recommends](#) that institutions should consider refunding pro-rated tuition from the point of full-time online instruction if they have the resources, both from the legal perspective and to retain the goodwill of students and families.

STUDENT PETITIONS AND LAWSUITS

Thousands of students nationally have circulated petitions asking for partial [tuition and fee refunds](#) due to perceptions of receiving a subpar education in an online format, canceled classes, and a loss of on-campus resources and opportunities. Most have not been successful to date.

Additionally, Boston University, Brown University, Drexel University, the University of Miami, and Vanderbilt University are among several institutions facing [lawsuits](#) by students who believe they are owed partial tuition and fee refunds for courses moved online, unused room and board plans, as well as other on-campus services. Legal experts believe that these cases will [likely not succeed](#) in court based on precedents from the 2008 recession.

Source: Institutional websites, [US News and World Report](#), [Chronicle of Higher Education](#), [CNBC](#)

PROFILE: UNIVERSITY OF MINNESOTA

The University of Minnesota has in-depth COVID-19-related financial break policies. In addition to refunding the pro-rated room and board for the spring 2020 semester, the University of Minnesota has also issued pro-rated refunds for many other fees (see below). On May 8, the institution approved [course fee refunds](#). These policies were likely enacted as a result of [student criticism](#) claiming they were being shortchanged for the unused room, board, and other services.

On April 21, the institutional board voted unanimously to [freeze tuition](#) for the 2020-2021 academic year for undergraduate, graduate, and professional students systemwide (with exceptions).

REFUNDED FEES

“For students who have paid for parking on the Crookston, Duluth, Morris, or Twin Cities campuses, they will receive 100% of their parking fee credited from March 16 on the Duluth, Rochester, and Twin Cities campuses...students will receive 100% credit of the recreation and wellness fee from March 16 on the Duluth, Rochester, and Twin Cities campuses...Students will receive 50% credit for the student services fee from March 28 through the last day of finals in May...For the Duluth and Twin Cities campuses, students will receive 100% credit of the transportation and safety fee from March 16 through the last day of finals in May.”

Source: [University of Minnesota](#)

FINANCIAL POLICIES: SUMMER 2020

SUMMER 2020 TUITION AND FEE DISCOUNTS

[Inside Higher Education](#), [University Business](#), and institutional websites report summer 2020 course discounts such as:

- **American University:** A 10 percent discount on all classes
- **Bacone College:** 15 percent tuition reduction and a 70 percent fee reduction
- **Colorado Mountain College:** Tuition, books, and fees waived for in-district students, in-state students who took credit courses in spring 2020, and displaced workers who live in the district. This policy applies to students taking credit, English as a Second Language (ESL), and GED courses.
- **Farleigh-Dickinson College:** Undergraduate students can take one course at the regular price (three credits for graduate students) and any subsequent courses at 50 percent off
- **Florida Gateway College:** Two three-credit online courses for the price of one for current students
- **Hopkinsville Community College:** \$19,000 in scholarships, up from none normally
- **Mercer County Community College:** 20 percent reduction in tuition for all classes
- **Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College:** Two online courses for the price of one for current and former students, as well as district residents
- **New York Institute of Technology:** \$720 per credit for all undergraduate courses, 42 percent less than regular semester per credit tuition
- **St. John Fisher College:** Courses will be offered at a reduced rate of \$468 per credit
- **University of Colorado-Boulder:** Several fees waived
- **University of Dayton:** Tuition for undergraduate courses will be reduced by 46 percent to \$875 per credit
- **University of Houston-Downtown:** Scholarships and grants for up to two summer classes for students facing financial hardships as a result of COVID-19
- **University of Nebraska-Lincoln:** Institutional program and facilities fees, as well as online course fees, are waived. Summer tuition will also be set at the in-person tuition rate for resident and non-resident students
- **University System of Georgia:** With the exception of technology and special institutional fees, all fees are waived
- **Winthrop University:** 12 percent off tuition in addition to an-already 20 percent lower in-state tuition rate for summer classes compared to those offered in the spring and fall
- **Worcester Polytechnic Institute:** 30 to 50 percent tuition discount for all undergraduate courses

Source: Institutional websites, [Inside Higher Ed](#), [University Business](#)

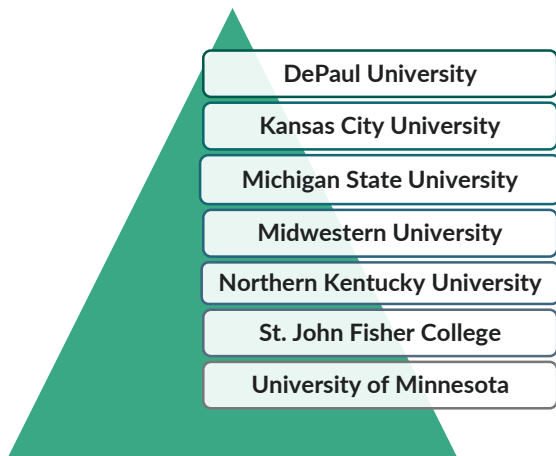


FINANCIAL POLICIES: ACADEMIC YEAR 2020-2021

2020-2021 TUITION AND FEE FREEZES

Several institutions have already announced tuition and fee freezes for the 2020-2021 academic year (see examples below). The University of Nebraska is notable for instituting a two-year tuition [freeze](#) for the 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 school year for all students at all campuses, resident and non-resident students alike. The freeze also includes the differential tuition rates charged by some academic colleges. While this plan was part of a long-term plan to make the institution more accessible and affordable, it took on greater importance as a result of COVID-19.

EXAMPLE INSTITUTIONS ANNOUNCING COVID-19-RELATED TUITION FREEZES



PROFILE: UC Berkeley

No Financial Policy Changes due to COVID 19

In an April 23 statement, UC Berkeley announced that “Tuition and mandatory fees have been set regardless of the method of instruction and will not be refunded in the event instruction occurs remotely for any part of the Academic Year.”

The institution has justified this policy as the charges cover class instruction costs and the cost of student services such as registration, financial aid, remote academic advising, and health. Other fees cover building and facility safety, including the need for seismic retrofitting.

Source: [UC Berkeley](#)

EXAMPLE INSTITUTIONS ANNOUNCING COVID-19-RELATED TUITION AND FEE FREEZES



FINANCIAL POLICIES: ACADEMIC YEAR 2020-2021

ACADEMIC YEAR 2020-2021 FINANCIAL BREAKS

Although most institutions have not yet announced fee changes and/or tuition reductions as well as other financial changes for the upcoming academic year, some have already announced a tuition freeze for the 2020-21 academic year and beyond (see the previous page). A [survey](#) of institutional presidents found that 81 percent of them anticipate maintaining current tuition levels for the upcoming academic year. Some of the institutions that have already publicized future tuition and/or fee changes as well as scholarships for 2020-2021 are profiled below.

Albion College: Free Tuition Based On Income

- All incoming freshmen and transfer students whose families make less than \$65,000 annually will receive [free tuition](#).
- Incoming freshman and transfer students whose families make between \$65,000-\$1,000,000 will receive at least \$23,000 and up to \$34,000 in scholarship money annually

Davidson College: Deferred Payments

- All students except seniors can [defer](#) paying their fall 2020 bill until August 2021 (seniors can defer until April 1, 2021). The institution will decide at a later date whether to apply the policy for the spring 2021 semester.

Franciscan University: "Step in Faith"

- The institution will [cover](#) the remainder of tuition costs for the fall 2020 semester, after scholarships and grants have been applied, for all incoming and transfer undergraduate students studying full-time in on-campus programs.

Mississippi College: Graduate School Discount

- Graduating seniors will receive a 30 percent [discount](#) for Fall 2020 graduate studies. Students are eligible by enrolling in classes full-time or part-time. The discount applies to more than 50 of the institutions' graduate programs.

Southern New Hampshire University: Scholarship

- As a one-time offering in 2020, all incoming freshmen receive an "[Innovation Scholarship](#)" covering 100 percent of the first-year tuition. Students will take their courses online and live on-campus. The institution is planning for tuition to be reduced to \$10,000 by 2021.
- Tuition for all students will be reduced if in-person instruction does not resume in the fall

Thomas University: Tuition Discount

- Individuals who have lost their jobs, been furloughed, or have had their work hours drastically reduced due to COVID-19 are eligible to receive a [30 percent tuition](#) discount for online undergraduate programs full-time and part-time for the 2020-21 academic year. The program is meant to serve as a career stimulus through a college degree or certification.

University of Maine System: In-State Tuition

- Successful students who were [displaced](#) by a COVID-19-related permanent closure of a U.S. institution are eligible for in-state tuition. However, the system does not define "successful."

Source: Institutional websites

INSTITUTIONAL FINANCIAL POLICIES BENCHMARKING

SUMMER 2020 FINANCIAL POLICY CHANGES

Institution	Location	COVID-19-Related Financial Policy Change(s)
American University	Washington, DC	10 percent discount on all summer classes
Bacone College	Muskogee, OK	Summer tuition reduced by 15 percent and fees by 70 percent for all students except those who already receive reduced rates through Pawnee Nation College and charting tribes
Colorado Mountain College	Glenwood Springs, CO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tuition, books, and fees waived for in-district students, in-state students who took credit courses in spring 2020, and displaced workers who live in the district. This policy applies to students taking credit, English as a Second Language (ESL), and GED courses.
Farleigh-Dickinson College	Teaneck, NJ	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undergraduate students can take one course at the regular price and any subsequent courses for 50 percent off Graduate students can take three credits at the regular price and take any subsequent courses for 50 percent off
Florida Gateway College	Lake City, FL	Two three-credit online courses for the price of one for current students
Hopkinsville Community College	Clarksville, TN	\$19,000 in scholarships for students who will be attending in the fall and want to take summer classes
Mercer County Community College	West Windsor, NJ	20 percent reduction in tuition for all classes
Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College	Perkinston, MS	Two online courses for the price of one for current and former students, as well as district residents
New York Institute of Technology	New York, NY	\$720 per-credit for all undergraduate courses, 42 percent less than regular semester per credit tuition
Ohio State University	Columbus, OH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Columbus-campus undergraduate students can take classes at 25 percent off the normal price All university site-based fees are being waived Other changes here
St. John Fisher College	Rochester, NY	Courses will be offered at a reduced rate of \$468 per-credit

Source: Institutional Websites (see embedded hyperlinks)



SUMMER 2020 FINANCIAL POLICY CHANGES (CONTINUED)

Institution	Location	COVID-19-Related Financial Policy Change(s)
St. Mary's University	San Antonio, TX	50 percent discount for all incoming students and recent undergraduate alumni returning for a graduate program
University of Colorado-Boulder	Boulder, CO	Several fees waived, including the arts and cultural enrichment fee, the student bus and bike program fee, and the student information system fee
University of Dayton	Dayton, OH	Undergraduate summer tuition will be \$875 per credit hour, a 46 percent discount from the originally published rate
University of Houston-Downtown	Houston, TX	Scholarships and grants for up to two summer classes for students facing financial hardships as a result of COVID-19
University of Nebraska-Lincoln	Lincoln, NE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summer 2020 tuition will be set at the in-person tuition rate for resident and non-resident students • The university program and facilities fee and online course fees will be waived
University System of Georgia	Multiple Campuses	Except technology and special institutional fees, all fees are waived
Winthrop University	Rock Hill, SC	12 percent off tuition in addition to an-already 20 percent lower in-state tuition rate for summer classes compared to those offered in the spring and fall
Worcester Polytechnic Institute	Worcester, MA	30 to 50 percent tuition discount for all undergraduate courses
York Technical College	Rock Hill, SC	Up to a 50 percent reduction in tuition and course fees

Source: Institutional Websites (see embedded hyperlinks)

ACADEMIC YEAR 2020-2021 TUITION AND FEE FREEZES

Institution	Location	Fee(s) Freeze Listed in Addition to Tuition?
Central Michigan University	Mount Pleasant, MI	Yes
Christopher Newport University	Newport News, VA	Yes
Clemson University	Clemson, SC	Yes
College of William and Mary	Williamsburg, VA	Yes
Delaware Valley University	Doylestown, PA	Yes
DePaul University	Chicago, IL	No
Kansas City University	Kansas City, MO	No
Michigan State University	Lansing, MI	No, but considering room and board freeze
Midwestern University	Glendale, AZ	No
Northern Kentucky University	Highland Heights, KY	No
Pennsylvania State University System	Multiple Campuses	Yes
Rutgers University	New Brunswick, Newark, and Camden, NJ	Yes
St. John Fisher College	Rochester, NY	Yes
Temple University	Philadelphia, PA	No
University of Chicago	Chicago, IL	Yes
University of Minnesota	Multiple Campuses	No
University of Nebraska (2021-23)	Lincoln, Kearney, Omaha, and Omaha Medical Center, NE	No
University System of Georgia	Multiple Campuses	No
Washtenaw Community College	Ann Arbor, MI	Yes
Western Michigan University	Kalamazoo, MI	Yes

Source: Institutional Websites (see embedded hyperlinks)



OTHER COVID-19 RELATED FINANCIAL POLICIES

Institution	Location	COVID-19-Related Financial Policy Change(s)
Albion College	Albion, MI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All incoming freshman and transfer students whose families make less than \$65,000 annually will receive free tuition Incoming freshman and transfer students whose families make \$65,000-\$1,000,000 annually will receive at least \$23,000 and up to \$34,000 in scholarship money annually
Central Michigan University	Mount Pleasant, MI	Fall 2020 student payments deferred until November 1
Cuyahoga Community College	Cleveland, OH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Full tuition coverage for new or returning students who are residents of Cuyahoga County with financial needs that intensified during the pandemic response The funding can be used toward academic credit courses or workforce training programs and can be used for three consecutive sessions beginning summer or fall 2020
Davidson College	Davidson, NC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All students except seniors can defer paying their fall 2020 bill until August 2021 (seniors can defer until April 1, 2021) The institution will decide at a later date whether to apply the policy for the spring 2021 semester
Franciscan University	Steubenville, OH	“Step in Faith”-The institution will cover the remainder of tuition costs for the fall 2020 semester, after scholarships and grants have been applied, for all incoming and transfer undergraduate students studying full-time in on-campus programs.
Mississippi College	Clinton, MS	Graduating seniors can receive 30 percent off graduate school tuition on most programs for full- or part-time study
New Jersey Public Colleges	Statewide	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Jersey Scholar Corps Program-New Jersey residents currently attending out-of-state institutions who transfer to a New Jersey public college will receive access to all scholarship and financial aid opportunities All credits with a C grade or higher will be transferred Guaranteed housing based on availability at the time of commitment

Source: Institutional Websites (see embedded hyperlinks)

OTHER COVID-19 RELATED FINANCIAL POLICIES (CONTINUED)

Institution	Location	COVID-19-Related Financial Policy Change(s)
Southern New Hampshire University	Manchester, NH	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As a one-time offering in 2020, all incoming freshmen receive an "Innovation Scholarship" covering 100 percent of the first-year tuition. Students will take their courses online and live on-campus. The institution is planning for tuition to be reduced to \$10,000 by 2021 Tuition for all students will be reduced if students do not return to campus in fall 2020
St. Mary's University	San Antonio, TX	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alumni who graduated in fall 2019, spring 2020, or summer 2020 are eligible for 50 percent off a total of 15 graduate credit hours in summer 2020, fall 2020, and/or spring 2021 for certain programs Alumni must be new applicants, have not returned from breaks in studies, and must be pursuing a degree program
St. Michael's College	Colchester, VT	Home State Promise-Freshman and transfer students are guaranteed at least \$25,000 in financial aid
Thomas University	Thomasville, GA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Individuals who have lost their jobs, been furloughed, or have had their work hours drastically reduced due to COVID-19 are eligible to receive a 30 percent tuition discount for online undergraduate programs full-time and part-time for the 2020-21 academic year The program is meant to serve as a career stimulus through a college degree or certification
University of California, Berkeley	Berkeley, CA	No tuition or fee changes
University of Maine System	Statewide	In-state tuition rates to any successful US student displaced by a COVID-19-related permanent closure of an institution
University of Nebraska	Lincoln, Kearney, Omaha, and Omaha Medical Center, NE	Nebraska Promise-All undergraduate students whose families earn less than \$60,000 will receive free tuition, mostly due to a long-term plan to make the institution more affordable

Source: Institutional Websites (see embedded hyperlinks)

