



Adult-Serving Programs and Policies at New England's Institutions

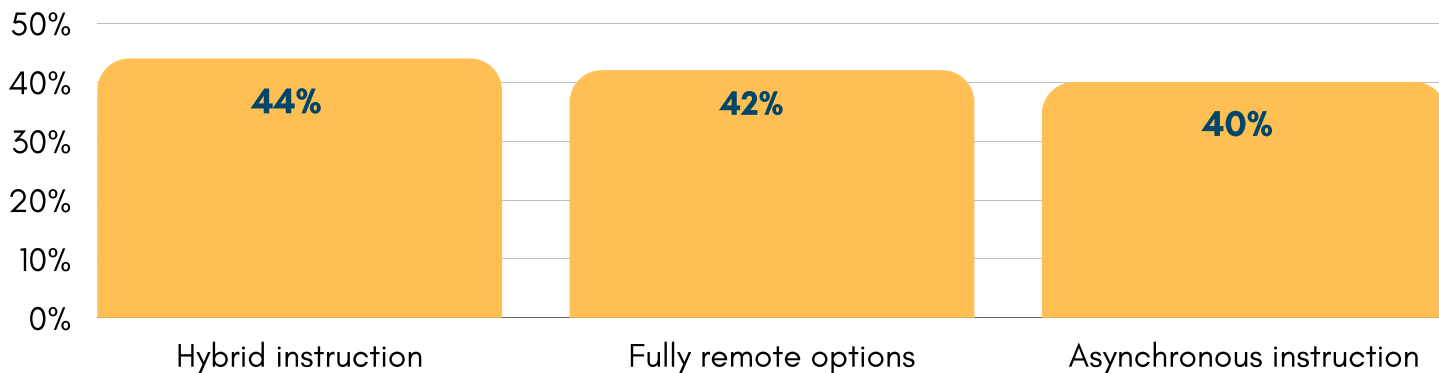
Results from NEBHE's Guide to Adult-Serving Colleges and Universities Survey:
Innovations Resulting from Covid-19's Impact

Adults over 25 years old represent approximately one quarter (25.6%) of New England's enrolled undergraduate population. However, New England's colleges and universities are largely perceived as traditionally structured, serving students aged 18-24. While four-year institutions, in particular, are geared more toward younger students, many institutions in the region are implementing programs and policies to better serve adult learners who hold additional professional, personal and familial responsibilities.

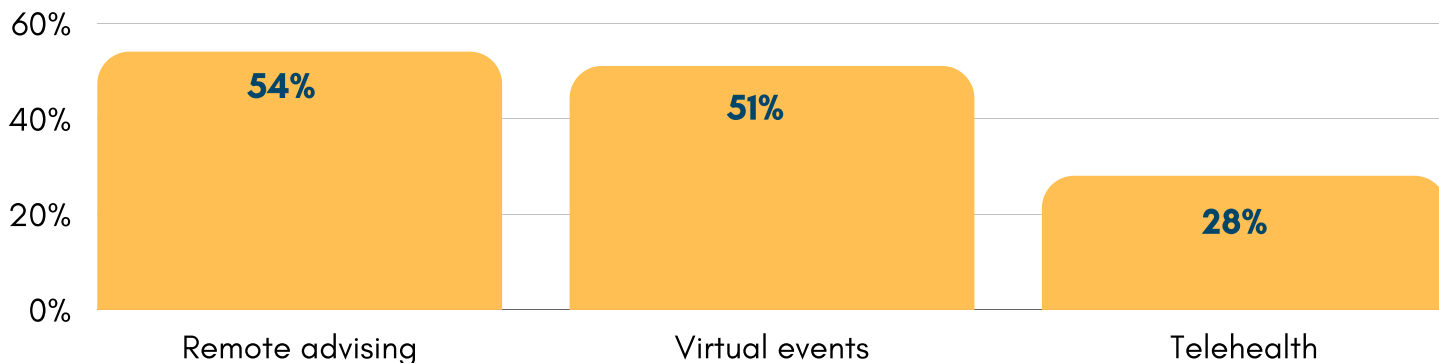
In August 2021, NEBHE surveyed the region's nearly 185 undergraduate institutions about programs, policies and services available to our adult learner population. This was the second iteration of what will be a biennial survey. So far, 73 institutions have responded (a near 40% response rate).

Below are data related to **innovations institutions put into place as a result of Covid-19**. While these items were implemented to uphold safety precautions, some institutions have decided to maintain certain programs long-term. Additional online, hybrid, synchronous and asynchronous options provide additional flexibility for adult learners juggling work, life and academic commitments.

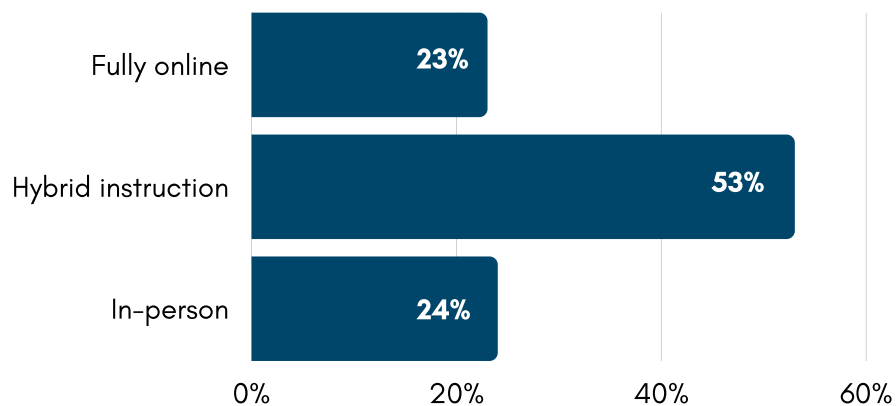
Nearly 60% of responding institutions plan to maintain *academic innovations* put in place as a result of Covid-19.



Over 60% of responding institutions plan to maintain *innovations in student services* put in place as a result of Covid-19.



In fall 2020, NEBHE tracked New England two- and four-year institutions' responses to the pandemic. Due to safety concerns, institutions offered courses in the below modalities:



The above data represents all colleges and universities in the region.

While over three-quarters of all institutions in the region offered online or hybrid instruction in fall 2020 out of necessity, 60% of institutions that responded to the survey are choosing to maintain these flexible instructional methods in the future. While responding institutions compose only a small portion of all colleges and universities in the region, those that indicated plans to maintain flexible learning options are representative of two- and four-year, public and private institutions. In short, all campuses, not just a single type of campus, are assessing instructional modalities that effectively cater to their student body. Hybrid and online course offerings may benefit future enrollment, retention and completion rates. This would be especially true for adult learners who do not have the option of attending in-person courses due to work and family commitments.

Sustaining community and student support online has been critical for institutions throughout the pandemic, especially for campuses who still do not have the option of returning to campus in full capacity or have had to pivot to hybrid or online instruction due to campus outbreaks. Over half of institutions noted their intention to maintain remote advising and virtual events. Access to advising without having to commute to campus is an excellent resource, particularly for adult learners who may require more support than traditional students to compose a course schedule and navigate a balance between academics, work and family. Additionally, virtual events provide an opportunity to participate in the campus community from home. For New England's adult learners, the ability to access a sense of inclusion online will only enhance their academic experience.

[See more survey results here!](#)

[Explore NEBHE's Adult Learner Fact Sheets here](#)