

# SAILS Student Engagement

## Impact of the COVID-19 School

## Building Closures in the Spring 2020 Semester

### SUMMARY

In March 2020, the United States began sheltering in place in response to the COVID-19 global pandemic. As a result, high schools in Tennessee closed their buildings and transitioned their in-person instruction to online instruction. Fortunately, the Seamless Alignment and Integrated Learning Support Program (SAILS) was a hybrid course model, whereas students worked online and had access to a licensed mathematics teacher in the classroom as an instructional resource. Subsequently, it was a seamless process for students to remotely work in the SAILS course from their homes.

To support students' progress in the course while working remotely, SAILS disabled internal course prerequisites during the week of March 16th. More specifically, these prerequisites were test reviews and module tests. By disabling this functionality, students continued to work through the course with plans to complete test reviews and tests when school buildings reopened. By March 20th, all the SAILS secondary partners had closed their facilities and begun implementing remote learning options for their students. During this time, many schools had inquired about remotely proctoring students' tests. As a result, SAILS developed the Remote Proctoring Guidelines for the schools that were interested in this option to assist students.

Another SAILS Program effort to help students was permitting schools to extend the course end date to August 14<sup>th</sup>. In a typical year, the course ends by the second week in June. The intent of extending the date was to allow students more time to finish the coursework, complete module tests, and ultimately waive college mathematics learning support requirements.

This report will give an overview of the effects that the COVID-19 crisis had on the SAILS Program during the Spring 2020 semester. The first section, *Key Takeaways*, will summarize the SAILS student engagement during the Spring 2020 semester. Next, the report will identify *Barriers to Student Engagement* that were observed and documented by the SAILS field coordinators. Finally, this report will conclude with the SAILS Program's next steps for approaching a new academic year considering the challenges that the COVID-19 crisis will likely present to in-person instruction, remote learning, and SAILS operations.

### KEY TAKEAWAYS

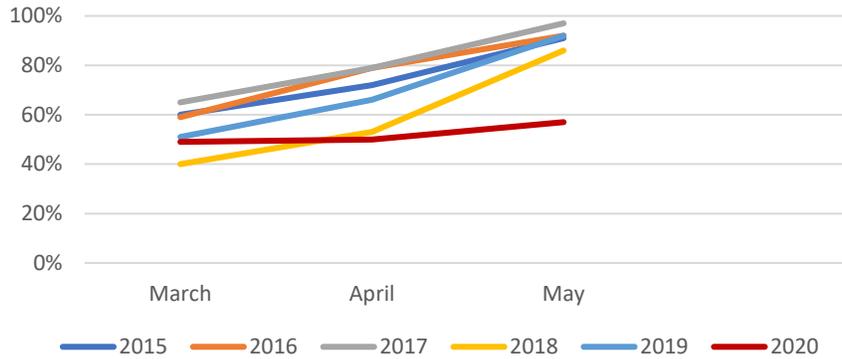
**Compared to academic year 2018-19, 37% fewer students completed the SAILS course due to the COVID-19 pandemic's influence on the Spring 2020 student engagement. Subsequently, this will also impact the overall number of Tennessee students who will likely need college mathematics learning support in academic year 2020-21.**

At the onset of the COVID-19 crisis and school building closures across Tennessee, the SAILS completion rate was 49% (2 percentage points less than that same week in March 2019). This completion rate was on track with the 2018-19 trajectory. However, in May 2020, the gap widened (35 percentage points) between the May 2020 and May 2019 completion rates (see Figure 1).

By April, it was evident that the 2019-20 completion rate would not be as high as it was in 2018-19 (92%). To give students more time to complete the course and five module tests, SAILS extended the course end date from June 8<sup>th</sup> to August 14<sup>th</sup>.

At the close of the course, 5,735 of 9,680 students completed SAILS (59% completion rate). As a result, there were 3,373 fewer completers compared to last year (37% change).

**Figure 1: SAILS Completion Rate 2015- 2020**



The following Tables 1 through 3 provide details regarding how students progressed through the SAILS course competencies during three periods of data collection.

**Table 1: Course Competencies Passed by the Week of March 21 – 27**

<b>Total Students Enrolled</b>	<b>9,704</b>
Passed all 5 competencies	4,778
Passed 4 of 5 competencies	6,584
Passed 3 of 5 competencies	8,299
Passed 2 of 5 competencies	9,076
Passed 1 of 5 competencies	9,581
No competencies passed	123
<b>Completion Rate</b>	<b>49%</b>

**Table 2: Course Competencies Passed by the Week of April 18 – 24**

<b>Total Students Enrolled</b>	<b>9,681</b>
Passed all 5 competencies	4,804
Passed 4 of 5 competencies	6,591
Passed 3 of 5 competencies	8,298
Passed 2 of 5 competencies	9,068
Passed 1 of 5 competencies	9,560
No competencies passed	121
<b>Completion Rate</b>	<b>50%</b>

**Table 3: Course Competencies Passed by the Week of May 16 – 22**

<b>Total Students Enrolled</b>	<b>9,680</b>
Passed all 5 competencies	5,480
Passed 4 of 5 competencies	6,919
Passed 3 of 5 competencies	8,426
Passed 2 of 5 competencies	9,115
Passed 1 of 5 competencies	9,562
No competencies passed	118
<b>Completion Rate</b>	<b>57%</b>

**After the first full week of school building closures in Spring 2020 (March 21 – 27), 85 of 89 counties with SAILS still had schools with open courses. However, all 9,704 students were not engaged and working in these open courses.**

Prior to the school building closures, Houston, Morgan, Union, and Van Buren counties had all SAILS completers; therefore, these counties had no student engagement during the defined periods of data collection. Table 4 describes the distribution of students working in the SAILS course across counties during the first week after school building closures (see Figures A1 and A2 for details at the end of this report).

**Table 4: Student Engagement — March 21 - 27**

<i>Total Number of Counties by Percent of Students Working Remotely in SAILS</i>		>40%	20-40%	<20%	0
All Counties*	85	8	40	28	9
Distressed Counties**	11	3	2	1	5
Urban Counties***	13	1	11	1	0

Note: \*Includes all but Houston, Morgan, Union, and Van Buren. \*\* Bledsoe, Clay, Cocke, Fentress, Grundy, Hancock, Hardeman, Jackson, Lauderdale, Scott, and Wayne. \*\*\*Carter, Davidson, Hamilton, Hawkins, Knox, Madison, Montgomery, Rutherford, Shelby, Sullivan, Sumner, Washington, and Williamson. Morgan County was distressed at the time of this data analysis.

**During the week ending April 24, 2020, there was a positive shift in the number of counties where students were working. Overall, the number of enrolled students decreased to 9,681.**

Since there were fewer counties where students were not working in the SAILS course and where 20 – 40% of students were working, there were noticeable increases in the number of counties where less than 20% of the students were working and an increase in the number of counties where more than 40% of the students were working. In contrast to the previous month’s data, all distressed counties with open SAILS courses had students working (see Table 5 for a summary of this data; see Figures A3 and A4 at the end of this report for further details). Moreover, the small decrease in the overall number of enrolled students is not unusual. At times, schools may determine that the SAILS course is not a good fit for students’ academic exceptionalities. As a result, the teacher and school counselor sometimes drop students from the SAILS course and move them to other courses such as traditional Bridge Math.

**Table 5: Student Engagement — April 18 - 24**

<i>Total Number of Counties by Percent of Students Working Remotely in SAILS</i>		>40%	20-40%	<20%	0
All Counties*	85	14	34	33	4
Distressed Counties**	11	3	3	5	0
Urban Counties***	13	2	9	2	0

Note: \*Includes all but Houston, Morgan, Union, and Van Buren. \*\* Bledsoe, Clay, Cocke, Fentress, Grundy, Hancock, Hardeman, Jackson, Lauderdale, Scott, and Wayne. \*\*\*Carter, Davidson, Hamilton, Hawkins, Knox, Madison, Montgomery, Rutherford, Shelby, Sullivan, Sumner, Washington, and Williamson. Morgan County was distressed at the time of this data analysis.

**By the week ending May 22, 2020, there were three additional counties where all students completed the SAILS course (Cannon, DeKalb and Tipton). However, there was a negative shift in the number of counties where students were working. Overall, the number of enrolled students decreased to 9,680.**

As changes occurred during the semester, 34% of the counties had no students working in the course compared to only 5% of the counties in the previous month. Although the negative shift occurred in both the distressed and urban counties, the shift to no students working was most noticeable in the distressed counties. Seventy-three percent of the distressed counties with open SAILS courses had no students working, whereas all urban counties

had students continuing to work during the third week in May 2020. Interestingly, throughout the periodic data collection, all students continued to work in the schools located in the urban counties (see Table 6 for the number of counties by student engagement; see Figures A5 and A6 for further details at the end of this report).

**Table 6: Student Engagement — May 16 - 22**

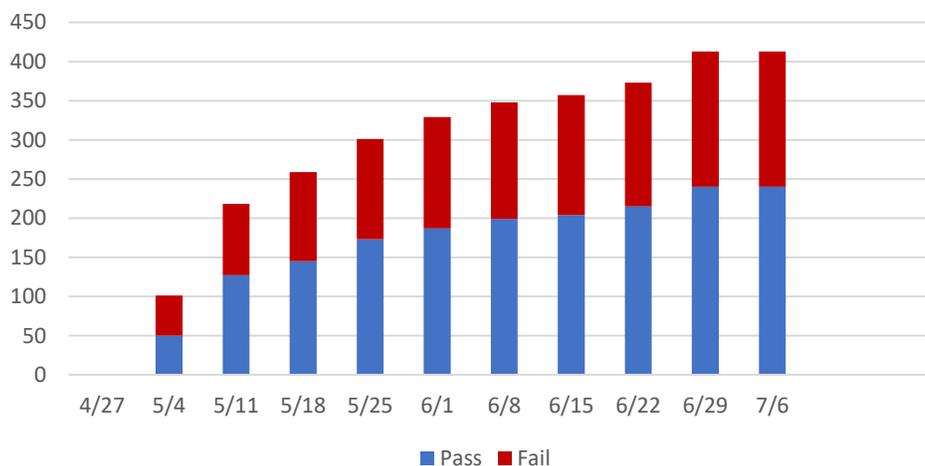
<i>Total Number of Counties by Percent of Students Working Remotely in SAILS</i>		>40%	20-40%	<20%	0
All Counties*	82	6	20	28	28
Distressed Counties**	11	0	1	2	8
Urban Counties***	13	1	6	6	0

*Note: \*Includes all but Houston, Morgan, Union, and Van Buren. \*\* Bledsoe, Clay, Cocke, Fentress, Grundy, Hancock, Hardeman, Jackson, Lauderdale, Scott, and Wayne. \*\*\*Carter, Davidson, Hamilton, Hawkins, Knox, Madison, Montgomery, Rutherford, Shelby, Sullivan, Sumner, Washington, and Williamson. Morgan County was distressed at the time of this data analysis.*

**Since implementing the Remote Proctoring Guidelines on April 27, remotely proctored tests represented 17% of the total tests completed from April 27 through July 31.**

Overall, 58% of the 413 proctored tests had a passing score of 75% or higher. It is worth noting that field coordinators also supported in-person testing once schools reopened buildings during the months of May through July (see Figure 2 for details regarding the pass and fail results for remotely proctored tests during the Spring 2020 semester).

**Figure 2: Total of Remotely Proctored Tests — April 27 - July 10**



## BARRIERS TO STUDENT ENGAGEMENT

As an effect of the COVID-19 pandemic, 41% of students did not complete the SAILS Program's mathematics learning support course. In weekly reports, SAILS field coordinators cited several barriers to student engagement in the Spring 2020 semester.

### *Technology access*

Many students were not able to continue working remotely in the SAILS course from home due to the lack of broadband internet and/or the lack of devices (e.g., laptops).

### *Teacher engagement*

Some schools forbade teachers from contacting students at home. Other teachers ceased email and phone communication with SAILS field coordinators after their school buildings closed. As a result, it is assumed that they also ceased communication with their SAILS students.

### *State Board of Education emergency rules*

In response to COVID-19, the Tennessee State Board of Education adjusted rules and policies such as final student grades could not be lower than the grade as of March 20, 2020. Consequently, some schools lowered student expectations and assigned passing grades for Bridge Math regardless of students completing SAILS. Moreover, other schools closed their SAILS courses without taking advantage of the SAILS Program extending the course to August 14<sup>th</sup>.

### *Testing*

Some teachers were prohibited from accessing school buildings; therefore, they could not test students. Although the SAILS Program implemented remote proctoring as a testing option, some schools considered remote proctoring as an invasion of privacy and were not comfortable with teachers conducting video meetings with minors.

## LOOKING FORWARD

As we look forward to a new academic year, we have guidelines and contingency plans in place to help minimize the uncertainty that the COVID-19 crisis may present to secondary education and the SAILS course. See an overview of these plans below.

1. **Develop accelerated pacing guides.** Field coordinators will work with teachers to create accelerated pacing guides aimed at completing fall courses by November 19th and completing modules 1-3 in the yearlong course by November 19<sup>th</sup>.
2. **Complete student registration for college identification numbers earlier.** Field coordinators will work with teachers and begin gathering student information for registration as soon as school starts. The goal is to complete the registration process by October 2<sup>nd</sup> and upload all college identification numbers to the Pearson MyLabsPlus system by October 30<sup>th</sup>.
3. **Proactively plan virtual communication between teachers and field coordinators.** In preparation for potential school building closures and transitions to remote learning and instruction, field coordinators will work with teachers to create a contingency schedule to virtually meet every two weeks in place of the field coordinator's routine classroom visits. In addition, field coordinators will hold regular virtual office hours for teachers to ask questions and discuss issues.
4. **Proactively plan communication between teachers and students.** In preparation for potential school building closures and transitions to remote learning and instruction, teachers will train students how to work in the SAILS online course and follow the accelerated pacing guide from home, as well as ensure that the students understand and practice using the *Question Helps* and *Ask My Instructor* features in the

course. Furthermore, field coordinators will encourage teachers to collect and verify students' and parents' contact information as soon as school begins (e.g., cell phone numbers and email addresses). Teachers will instruct students to put their email addresses into their Pearson MyLabsPlus profile. This feature will allow students to email teachers within the course platform and ask questions regarding assignments.

5. **Create remote proctoring and testing plans.** Teachers and field coordinators will create testing plans for remote and hybrid instruction scenarios. For example, teachers who have hybrid instruction models will create and share a testing schedule with students in advance. Teachers will also review remote proctoring guidelines and practice the process of taking tests remotely with their students. Finally, SAILS will allow remote students to skip tests in order to continue working independently in the course until they can either test in person or remotely with a teacher.

Although the United States is still battling the effects of the COVID-19 crisis, the SAILS Program will continue to provide quality support services to our secondary partners. We plan to leverage the lessons learned from the Spring 2020 semester and adapt to the needs of students in multiple local education agencies (LEA) across the SAILS network. Not only will we implement health and safety protocols in field operations to mitigate the risk of virus exposure to our staff and schools, but we will also mitigate barriers to student engagement and success by implementing appropriate contingency plans as needed.

## APPENDICES

### About the Data

Several concepts are used throughout this report. The following bullets describe each concept for understanding and interpretation of data presented in the *Key Takeaways* section.

- The data used in the analyses for this report were collected from three periods in the Spring 2020 semester: a) March 21 - 27, b) April 18 - 24, and c) May 16 – May 22.
- *Student engagement* was defined as students who were actively (and remotely) working in the course. Students were considered working in the course if they a) completed a homework assignment (90%), b) completed an attempt on a quiz (pass or fail), c) completed an attempt on a test review (pass or fail), or d) completed an attempt on a test (pass or fail).
- *Students working percentage* was calculated to quantify student engagement as  $[(\text{number of SAILS students actively working in the course}) / (\text{number of SAILS students who are enrolled but have not completed the course}) \times 100]$ . Levels of student engagement were defined as follows: a) significant engagement = >40%, b) moderate engagement = 20-40%, and c) minimum engagement = <20%, and d) no engagement = 0.
- *SAILS completion rate* was calculated as  $[(\text{total number of students who successfully completed SAILS}) / (\text{total number of students enrolled in SAILS}) \times 100]$ . Completion rate was often used as a performance indicator and was published in a weekly SAILS State Report (e.g., statewide data, county data, and school data) during the months of August through June.

Figure A1: Percent of Students Working Remotely by County — March 21 – 27, 2020

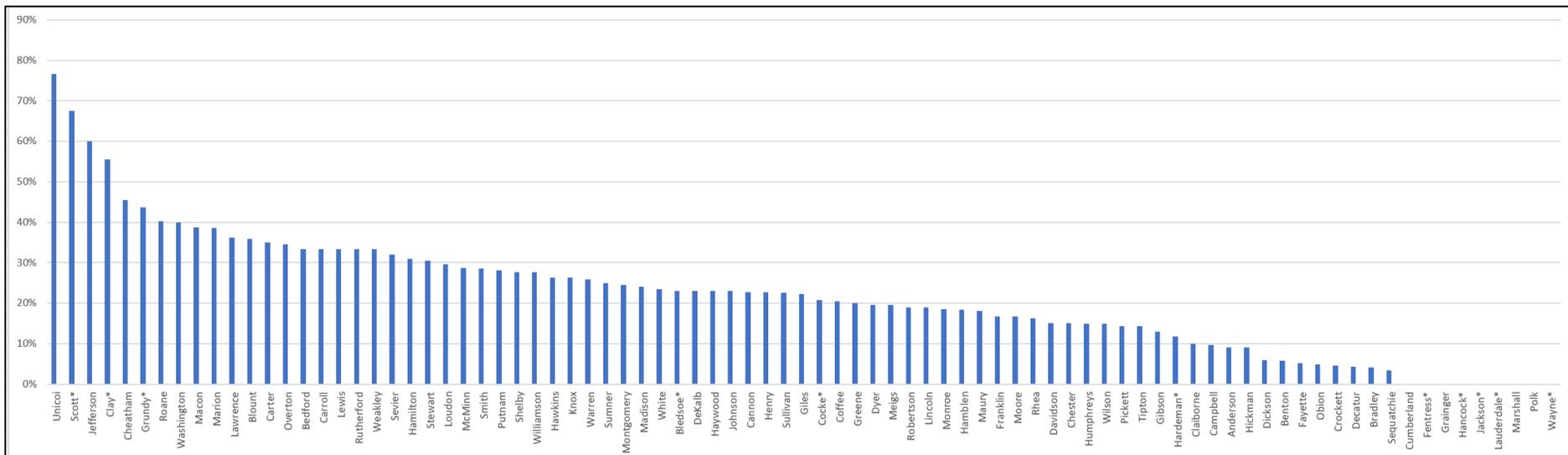


Figure A2: Percent of Students Working Remotely by Community College Service Area — March 21 – 27, 2020

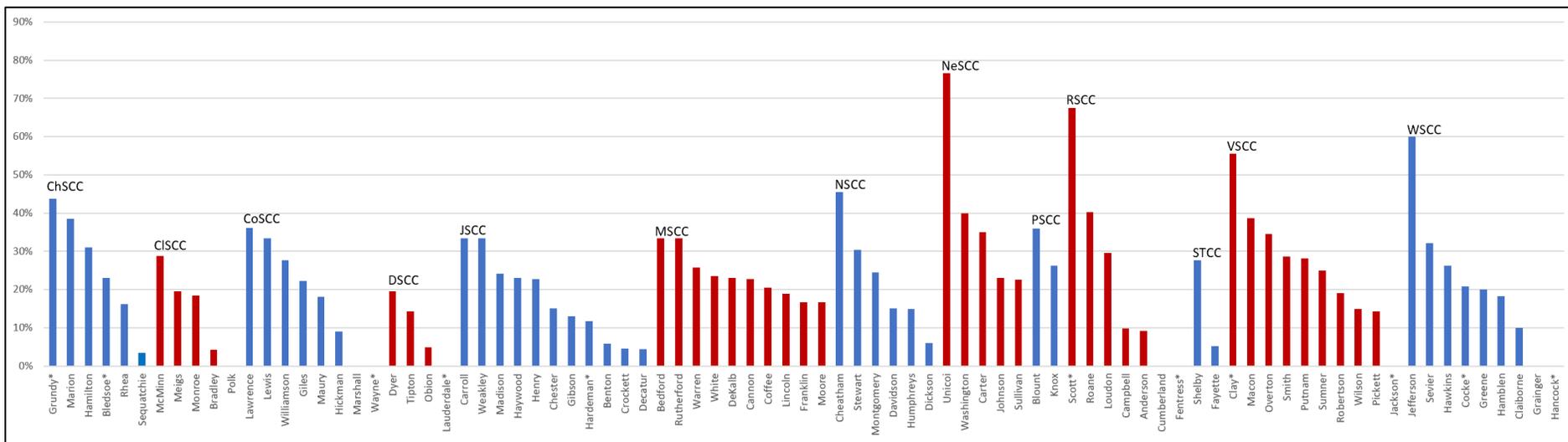


Figure A3: Percent of Students Working Remotely by County — April 18 – 24, 2020

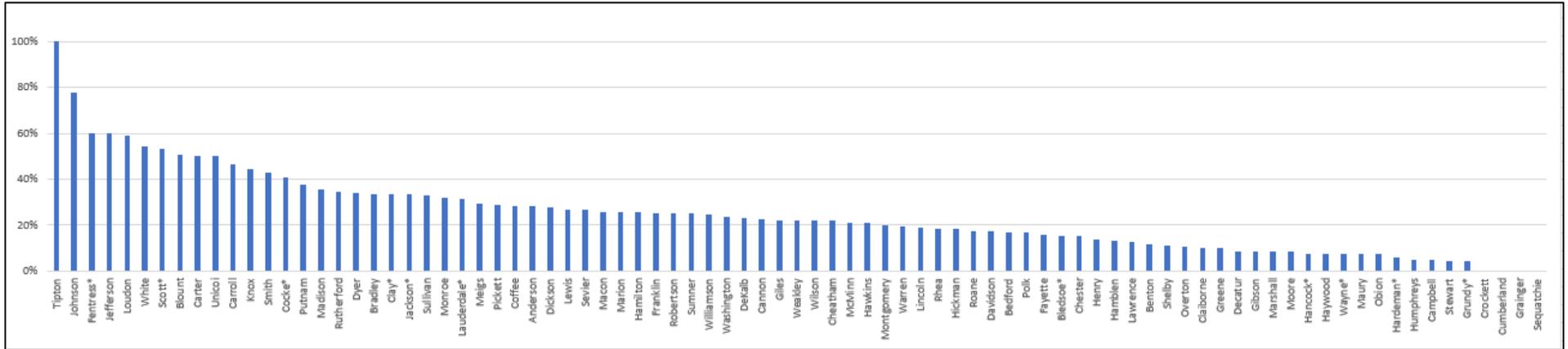


Figure A4: Percent of Students Working Remotely by Community College Service Area — April 18 - 24, 2020

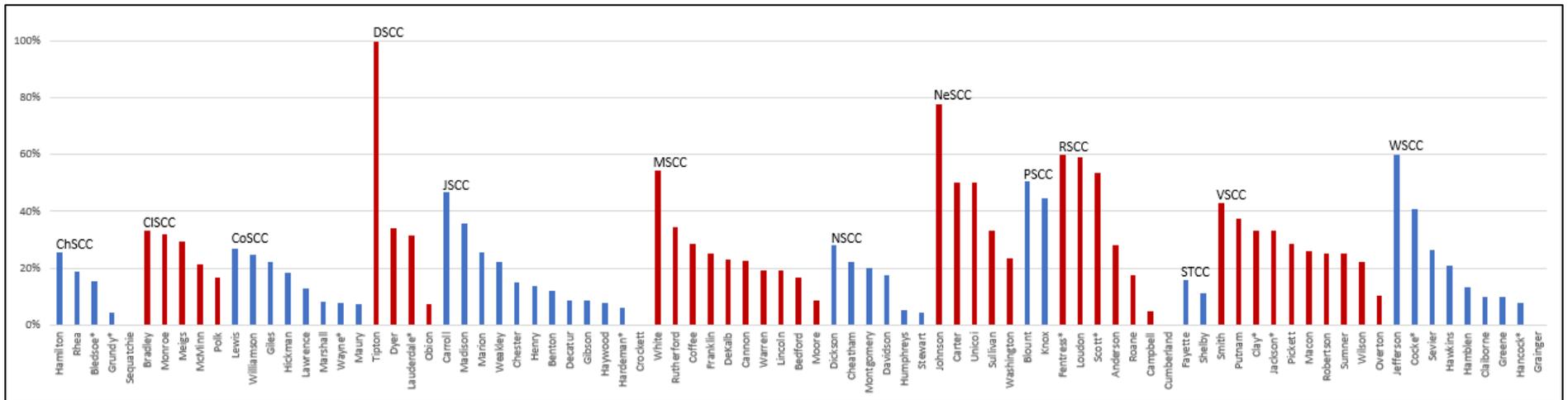


Figure A5: Percent of Students Working Remotely by County — May 16 - 22, 2020

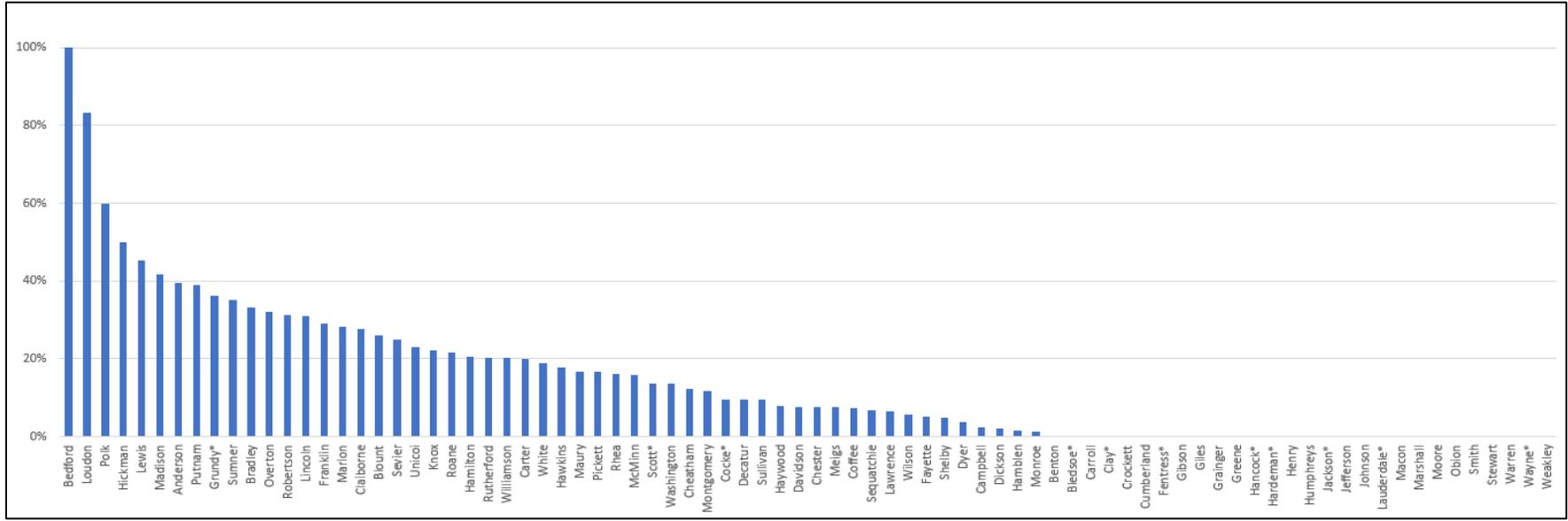


Figure A6: Percent of Students Working Remotely by Community College Service Area — May 16 - 22, 2020

