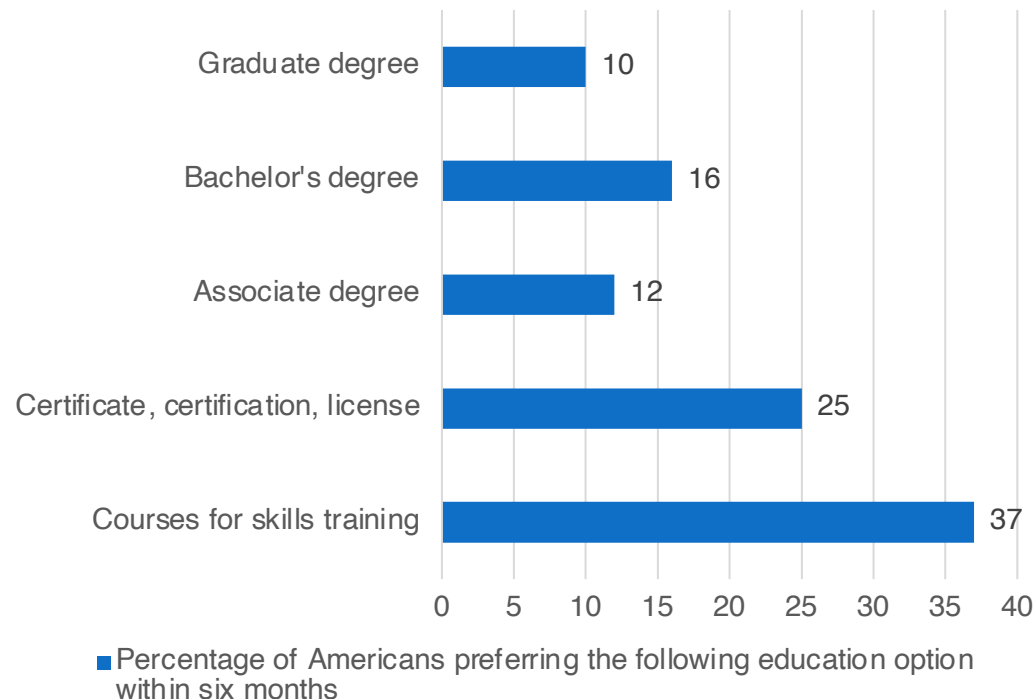Northwest College
WYOMING

INSTITUTIONAL TRANSFORMATION | Flexible Academic Delivery
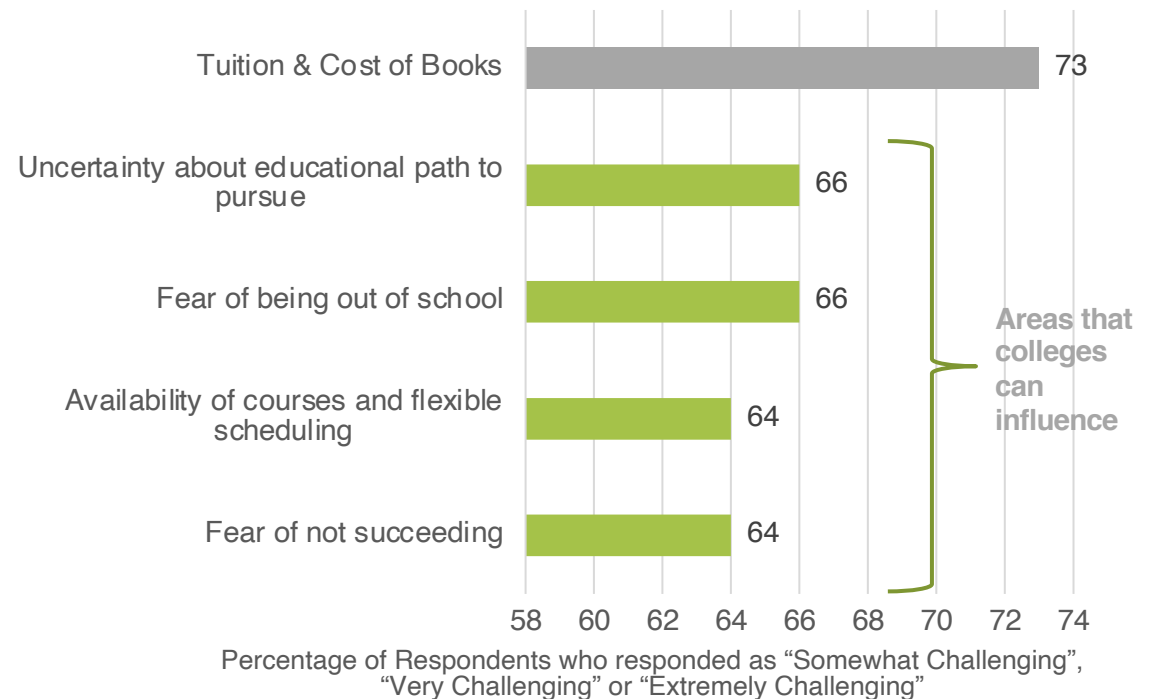
CONTEXT FOR FLEXIBLE ACADEMIC DELIVERY

PROSPECTIVE STUDENTS SEEK SHORTER-TERM DEGREES, BUT COME WITH SOME FEARS

Percentage of Americans preferring the following education option within six months

Education Option	Percentage
Graduate degree	10
Bachelor's degree	16
Associate degree	12
Certificate, certification, license	25
Courses for skills training	37

■ Percentage of Americans preferring the following education option within six months

Top educational challenges for Americans since COVID-19

Challenge	Percentage
Tuition & Cost of Books	73
Uncertainty about educational path to pursue	66
Fear of being out of school	66
Availability of courses and flexible scheduling	64
Fear of not succeeding	64

Areas that colleges can influence

Percentage of Respondents who responded as "Somewhat Challenging", "Very Challenging" or "Extremely Challenging"

Source(s): Strada Higher Education Survey, post-COVID Educational Preferences, 2021.
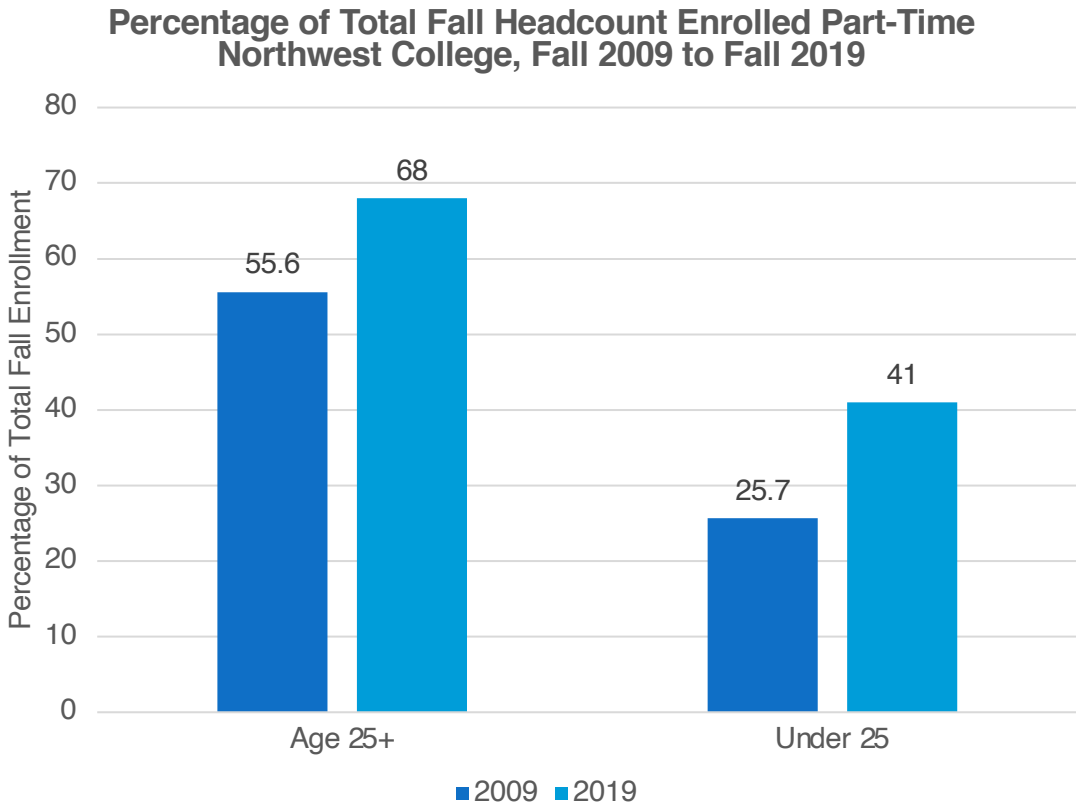
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STUDENTS, ESPECIALLY ADULT LEARNERS, VALUE FLEXIBLE AND ONLINE OPTIONS

❑ **45%** of interest prospects in pursuing further education say that **family** and **work-related commitments** are the top reason that they are not pursuing an education

❑ 39.6% say that cost of attending is the reason for not pursuing an education

❑ Students cite length of program, online services/courses, and flexible scheduling as the top-rated needs for adult learners, specifically.

Category	Mean
Length of program/time required for degree completion	3.79
Online support services (e.g., application for admissions, payments, class registration)	3.78
Flexible scheduling (e.g., part-time, evening, weekend)	3.70
Online courses	3.43
Full-time program	3.25
Joint or hybrid programs (e.g., online and in class)	3.14
Designed for executives/professionals (e.g., weekend program)	3.09
Expedited program	3.06

INCREASING PART-TIME POPULATION SUGGESTS NEED FOR INCREASING FLEXIBLE OPTIONS

Percentage of Total Fall Headcount Enrolled Part-Time Northwest College, Fall 2009 to Fall 2019

Chart showing Percentage of Total Fall Enrollment:
- Age 25+: 2009 = 55.6, 2019 = 68
- Under 25: 2009 = 25.7, 2019 = 41

Legend: ■ 2009 ■ 2019

❑ Northwest College has experienced an increase in the number of students attending part-time, including an absolute increase in the number of students attending part-time.

❑ Part of the increase for students under 25 was due to the increase in dual enrollment students (part-time, non-degree seeking students), but there was some increase in the traditional population as well.

❑ The increase in part-time students may indicate more responsibilities on behalf of students over the last ten years and becoming a key enrollment driver.

FLEXIBLE ACADEMIC DELIVERY

TYPES OF FLEXIBLE ACADEMIC OPTIONS

Academic Credential & Pathways Design

- Academic Program Innovation
- Credential Naming
- Credential Type (e.g., A.S., A.A., degree, certificate)
- Credential transition (from certificate to degree)

Academic Delivery

- Modality
- Start date
- Program length
- Class times

Academic Experience

- Cohort model
- Practicum
- Course titles
- Assessment structure

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Future Discussion(s)

Academic Delivery

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COURSE MODALITY

Flexible Academic Delivery

COURSE MODALITY HAS BECOME MORE NUANCED SINCE COVID-19

FACE TO FACE

- REQUIRED SYNCHRONOUS
- REQUIRED LOCATION

Traditional courses, including lecture, seminar, labs, studio, and vocational.

BLENDED

- REQUIRED SYNCHRONOUS
- REQUIRED LOCATION
- SUPPLEMENTAL WEB

Traditional face-to-face with supplemental online requirements (i.e. "Flipped").

HYBRID

- REQUIRED SYNCHRONOUS
- REQUIRED LOCATION
- WEB OR PHONE

A predictable and scheduled combination of required modalities.

SPECTRUM OF ACCESS

SPECTRUM OF ACCESS

ONLINE

- WEB ONLY

Asynchronous course with deadlines and student interaction. Limited-to-no synchronous requirements.

HYFLEX

[REQUIRED SYNCHRONOUS + REQUIRED LOCATION]   OR   WEB OR PHONE

Either a face-to-face course with optional web/phone modules or an online/distance course with optional in-class attendance.

DISTANCE

- REQUIRED SYNCHRONOUS
- WEB OR PHONE

Courses with required synchronous meetings held via web or with phone access for low bandwidth areas.

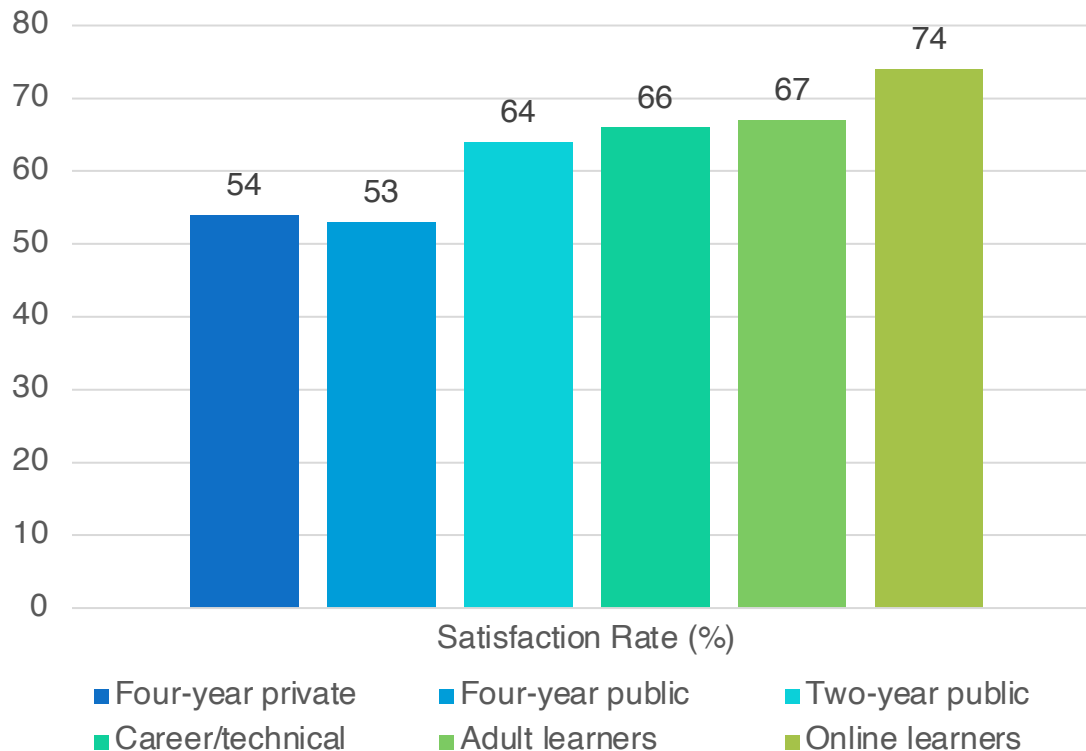# WYOMING CC'S SEE LARGEST GROWTH IN HYBRID ENROLLMENTS

Degree-Seeking Undergraduate Headcount Enrollments	Exclusively Online Enrollment		Enrolled in Some, but not All Online Courses	
	Fall 2019	Fall 2012	Fall 2019	Fall 2012
Casper College	16.7%	11.3%	54.6%	30.9%
Central Wyoming College	19.8%	16.2%	33.4%	44.8%
Eastern Wyoming College	12.2%	12.5%	33.1%	26.5%
Laramie County Community College	16.9%	9.2%	35.9%	31.3%
Northern Wyoming Community College District	10.1%	5.6%	37.7%	25.8%
Northwest College	9.7%	8.6%	40.4%	30.2%
Western Wyoming Community College	23.3%	21.2%	44.1%	18.7%

- ❑ Wyoming Community Colleges experienced most significant growth in a hybrid course schedule with a mix of online and on-campus courses.

- ❑ The largest jump in hybrid enrollment was experienced by Western Wyoming with an increasing portion of its credit share given to hybrid course model.

- ❑ Casper College and Western Wyoming top the list of students who are taking at least one course online at 71% and 67% respectively.

- ❑ Students are responding to the increased capabilities and flexibility that hybrid courses are providing.

ONLINE LEARNERS SHARE HIGH LEVEL OF SATISFACTION, BUT SEE ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES FOR INSTRUCTION

How satisfied are today's college students?

Category	Satisfaction Rate (%)
Four-year private	54
Four-year public	53
Two-year public	64
Career/technical	66
Adult learners	67
Online learners	74

Satisfaction Rate (%)

- Four-year private
- Four-year public
- Two-year public
- Career/technical
- Adult learners
- Online learners

Preferences for Instructional Practices from Perspective of Student and Instructors

Instructional Practices	Students 2-Year	Instructors 2-Year
Live sessions for asking questions/participating in discussions	59%	67%
Real-world examples	64%	49%
Recorded lectures	54%	55%
Frequent quizzes	72%	53%
Live lectures by the instructor with students watching	56%	44%
Videos from external sources	57%	59%
Personal messages from the instructor	66%	79%
Assignments having you express what you had learned	54%	45%
Breaking course activities up into shorter pieces	40%	34%
Group projects	25%	22%
Breakout groups during a live class	24%	--

Source(s): RNL Student Satisfaction Survey, 2018.

SCHEDULING

Flexible Academic Delivery

LATE-START COURSE SCHEDULING

Model 1: Late-Start with Same Finish Date

12-week course

16-week course

End of Semester

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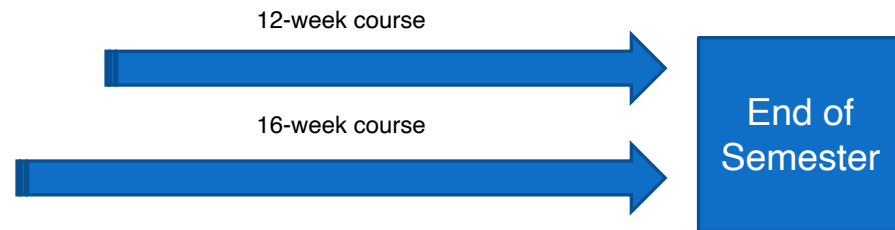
Model 2: Accelerated with Varied Start/End Times

8-week course

16-week course
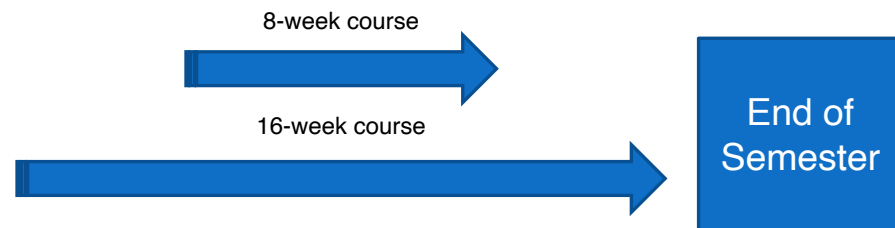
End of Semester

Course Format

❑ Accelerated courses in online/hybrid formats, offered in later part of the semester.

Strategy

❑ Students begin to show signs of struggle by the third or fourth week of class. Allows students to drop classes at beginning of semester and enroll in another course to stay on track.

❑ Some students are still not ready for full course load at beginning of semester as they are finishing onboarding process, allows "breathing room" to adjust.

Implementation

❑ Typically implemented for courses without prerequisites.

❑ Students planning to withdraw from courses meet with an advisor, who encourage pickup of late-start courses.

❑ Coordination between registrar's office and academic leadership essential to ensure room scheduling and availability for late-start courses. May impact registration windows for students as well.
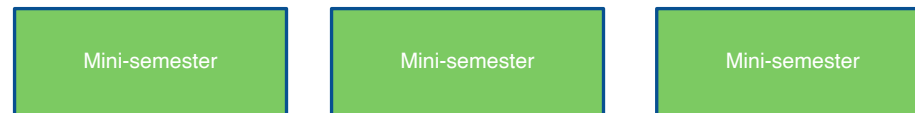
MINI-SEMESTERS

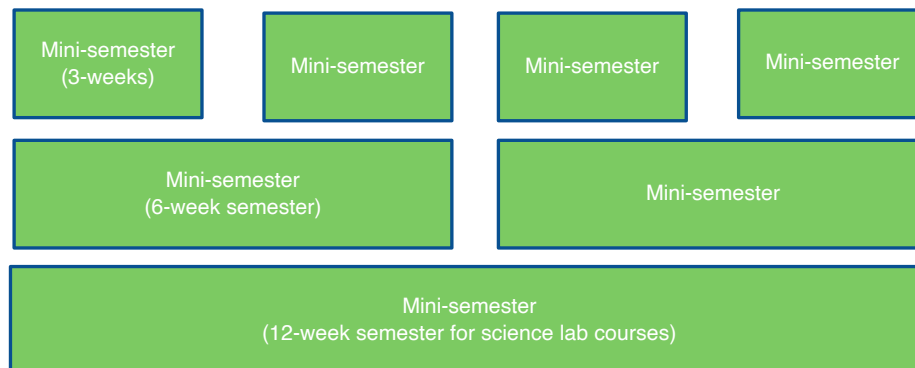**Model 1: Sequenced/Cohort-Based Mini-Semesters**

Consecutive 8-week Cohort-Based, Associate Degree Courses

First Block Gen-ed courses and prerequisites for classes in second block	**Second Block** Gen-ed courses and prerequisites for classes in second block

Five-week Mini-Semester of Hybrid Bachelor's Degree Courses in Applied Health Care

Mini-semester	Mini-semester	Mini-semester

Mode 2: Overlapping Mini-Semesters

Mini-semester (3-weeks)	Mini-semester	Mini-semester	Mini-semester

Mini-semester (6-week semester)	Mini-semester

Mini-semester (12-week semester for science lab courses)

Course Format

❑ Accelerated courses in varying lengths based on cohort programs or overlapping lengths that bridge throughout the entire year.

Strategy

❑ Ensures greater acceleration, especially for working adults and students who are required to work part-time or full-time.

Implementation

❑ Mini-semesters were designed to fit within the 16-week (Fall, Spring) or 12-week (Summer) traditional shell so that changes in the calendar did not adversely impact other students.

❑ Schedules still required reconfiguration of meetings times/dates (e.g., weekends, evenings, etc.)

❑ Implementation required significant coordination among academic leadership to analyze enrollment data, identify successes with pilot short-term classes, and ensure that major courses were not scheduled at conflicting times.

BLOCK COURSE SCHEDULING

Courses Scheduled One a Time Over 16 Week Period

Course 1 → Course 2 → Course 3

Course Format

❑ Intensive courses or scheduled courses taken one at a time in sequence.

Strategy

❑ Intensive courses have allowed for students to use short-term experiential opportunities for internship or travel opportunities.

❑ Allow students to focus on once course at a time where they would not be distracted from quizzes and tests from other courses and ensure deeper focus on enrolled course. Increased course success for working adults and students with significant family and caregiving responsibilities.

Implementation

❑ Curricular transition/scheduling committee with faculty, academic leadership, and registrar helped to make implementation effective.

❑ General education and major courses have been transitioned in summers by providing redesign stipends to faculty.

ACADEMIC DELIVERY COMPETITOR ANALYSIS

- Completed a sample journey for a student considering enrollment in an Associate's degree program in business administration

- Business administration is typically a program that is popular among variety of key student segments: traditional students, part-time students, adults over age 25.

- The sample program analysis was used to test ways in which colleges have offered varied academic delivery for the institution.

- The following matrix demonstrates a sampling of ways that Wyoming Community Colleges have begun to develop flexible academic delivery for a sample program.

EXAMPLE COMPETITOR ANALYSIS FOR A.A. SEQUENCE FOR BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION, GENERAL

Category "Availability of…"	Casper College	Central Wyoming	Eastern Wyoming	Northern Wyoming	Northwest College	Laramie County CC	Western Wyoming
Course sequence maps	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
Courses offered at the recommended time/sequence	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓
Online courses in major or program	Fully scaled	Fully scaled	Partially scaled	Fully scaled	Partially scaled	Fully scaled	Fully scaled
Online courses in general education requirements	Fully scaled	Fully scaled	Partially scaled	Fully scaled	Partially scaled	Fully scaled	Fully scaled
Evening or weekend courses	✓	✓	✓	✓	General ed	Major & General ed.	
Accelerated programs							16 months (w/ 7 week online block schedule)
Accelerated/shortened course lengths (e.g., 4, 8, 12 week)	8 week	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	5, 7, 12, & 15 week courses
Meta-majors	No	Yes	No	No	No	No	Yes

Source(s): College websites, course catalogs, and published class schedules.

FINDINGS

- Program mapping is present, but is unevenly communicated among institutions. The "guiding" part of program maps, for those colleges that have them, is not clearly communicated.

- In providing flexibility outside of the 8 AM-5 PM timeframe, most colleges are providing online courses to enhance flexibility over evening and weekend classes. Most evening and weekend classes were scheduled for general education courses.

- Two institutions are offering short-term, accelerated courses: Casper College and Western Wyoming Community College.
  - Casper is offering 8-week sequential courses that can be combined in a full 16 week semester and they can take up to 3 courses (3-credits each).
  - Western Wyoming offers a series of accelerated courses in 5, 7, and 12 week courses. These are being combined with block scheduling to offer a 16-month accelerated business program that is helping onboard students to the bachelor's of business management degree.

- Two colleges have structured their majors and academic majors into "meta-majors," that allow students to choose umbrella areas of study (e.g., Business Meta-Major includes hospitality, agribusiness, business, and accounting, etc.).

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