As the widespread impact of COVID-19 develops around the country, Entrata continues to pay close attention to the trends among its student housing clients. Entrata will update these findings regularly as we gauge the economic impact that this pandemic is having in the student housing space. These findings will cover four main areas of impact: Rent Payments, Fees and Repayment Agreements, Leasing, and Operations.

All findings in this study are specific to Entrata’s student housing clients. The data for these findings consists of the available information through the first week of April 2020. Be aware that factors such as days of the week, property policies and office closures, campus closures and local shelter-in-place regulations, and other circumstances may affect how this data is processed, recorded, and interpreted.

RENT PAYMENTS
Initial numbers for April rent payments are encouraging, with 81 percent of student leases making a rent payment in the first week. Student operators are seeing unusually high delinquencies in April at nearly 13.81 percent, which is nearly double the rate in March 2020 (7.27 percent). As universities across the country have closed campuses and begin to make decisions for upcoming terms, these trends will be important indicators of industry performance.
FEES
One of the factors contributing to strong April numbers may be the willingness of many properties to absorb convenience fees for residents choosing to pay rent online via ACH or credit card. Students (and parents) with a free online payment option took advantage of it to submit a rent payment, on average, seven percent more than residents whose properties did not absorb transaction fees. Across the country, student housing payments via credit card increased over five percent, and ACH payments were up seven percent from April 2019. Social distancing had a clear impact on check scanning, with Check 21 payments down nearly 12 percent year-over-year. Money order payments were nearly the same.

RENT COLLECTION DISTRIBUTION BY CHANNEL

Not surprisingly, student communities have responded to their renters’ new economic landscape by significantly dropping the volume of fees charged to residents compared to previous months and year-over-year. In April of 2020, only $1.14MM in late fees were posted compared with over $2.8MM in April of 2019 and a peak of $5.1MM in November 2019. A similar adjustment is indicated by the increased number of late fees that were waived this month. In the first week of April 2020, over $123K in late fees have been waived compared to less than $38K in April of 2019 and $76K in March of 2020.
PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN LATE FEES BY STATE

REPAYMENTS

Although repayment agreements are just getting started, Entrata has observed a significant spike in the number created in April. In the first week properties generated 320 repayment agreements compared to 15 in April of 2019 and 42 in March of 2020. We anticipate this number will continue to rise sharply as more properties work with their residents to make payment plans.

REPAYMENT PLANS CREATED BY THE 7TH OF EACH MONTH
Several factors affect the leasing velocity of any given property. Entrata tracks a variety of leasing metrics, including the number of leads per unit, applications completed, how many resident screenings are conducted, and the number of leases properties generate. Taking into account the wide-ranging impacts of campus closures and the seasonal nature of student leasing in general, the early indicators leave room for optimism and reflect a general “wait-and-see” approach by student residents.

**LEAD GENERATION**

The number of new leads per unit in the first days of April 2020 was 0.70, lower than March 2020’s 0.80 but down only slightly from the number in April 2020. Seasonal fluctuations and campus closures are almost certainly impacting these early numbers, and Entrata will continue to monitor trends in the coming weeks.

**NEW LEADS PER UNIT OVER THE LAST YEAR**

![Graph showing new leads per unit over the last year.

**MONTH-OVER-MONTH PERCENT CHANGE IN NEW LEADS BY STATE**

![Map showing month-over-month percent change in new leads by state.](https://entrata.com/covid19)
APPLICATIONS AND SCREENING
Applications tell a similar story. Although new applications per unit dropped from March 2020 to April 2020, the numbers are currently down only slightly from application rates last year. Applicant screening rates, on the other hand, are less consistent. While the average of applicant screenings across the country are trending slightly down, state-by-state analysis shows large jumps in the number of screenings while others reflect lower screening activity compared to March 2020.

NEW APPLICATIONS PER UNIT OVER THE LAST YEAR

PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN NUMBER OF NEW APPLICATIONS STARTED BY UNIT
SCREENINGS PER UNIT

PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN SCREENINGS PER UNIT VS. MARCH 2020
LEASES
As expected, fewer leases than normal have been generated and approved over the last few days than we would normally expect to see in early April, with many states experiencing significant drops in the number of leases generated compared to just last month. This reflects the uncertainty many students are facing as they wait for universities to announce decisions regarding upcoming terms. Volatile swings in this trendline are possible in the coming weeks and months.

PERCENTAGE CHANGE IN LEASES GENERATED BY STATE COMPARED TO MARCH 2020
CALLS
Another indicator of leasing velocity monitored by Entrata is call volume. Student properties are seeing lower volume of calls from residents as many students leave campus and move home. Surprisingly, call volume for leads as an absolute number has remained constant.

OVERALL CALL VOLUME

PERCENTAGE OF LEAD CALLS VS. RESIDENT CALLS
OPERATIONS

MAINTENANCE
Maintenance requests in the first week of April are reported at 0.3 work orders per unit, down slightly from March 2020 and more significantly from 0.6 maintenance requests per unit reported in April 2019. Again, this likely reflects the fact that many students have left campus rather than indicating pandemic-related demand on maintenance services.

MAINTENANCE REQUESTS PER UNIT

![Maintenance Requests Per Unit Graph]

PACKAGE TRACKING
Student properties are experiencing a drop in the number of package deliveries tracked through Entrata’s ParcelAlert as campuses close and many students leave their communities to return to their permanent homes.

PARCELALERT PACKAGES PER UNIT

![ParcelAlert Packages Per Unit Graph]
CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 pandemic is having a measurable impact on student housing properties’ ability to market their communities, lease, and collect rent. However, based on Entrata’s data from properties across the country, student property managers’ mitigation efforts (absorbing transaction fees, waiving late fees, etc.) have so far kept rent payment rates and leasing activity close to normal rates.

As the crisis unfolds and campus closures create economic ripple effects through their communities, student property operators will undoubtedly feel the sting, but early indicators suggest that the industry is positioning itself to weather the pandemic well while providing necessary housing and essential services to American students.