

An Analysis of Federal Pandemic Relief Funding at Community Colleges

Hollie Daniels, Tia Monahan, and Megan Anderson

Agenda

- Introduction to the ARCC Network
- Federal Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic
- Overview of the Study
- HEERF Award and Spending Patterns
- Tableau Dashboard
- Remaining Questions
- Questions & Answers

Team Members



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About ARCC Network



The Accelerating Recovery in Community Colleges (ARCC) Network brings together research teams from across the U.S. to explore strategies community colleges can use to bring back students who left during the COVID-19 pandemic, support their learning, and ensure they can succeed in the rapidly evolving post-pandemic economy.

Project Teams



Lead Organizations

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The ARCC Network is supported by the Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, through Grant R305X220022 to Teachers College, Columbia University.

Funding



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Federal Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

- The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act and subsequent legislation injected about \$4.6 trillion into the U.S. economy¹
- Over \$75 billion was directed to institutions of higher education through the Higher Education Emergency Relief (HEER) Fund, \$25 billion of which went to community colleges

Federal Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic

- HEER funds were intended to serve two main purposes:
 - to ensure that institutions of higher education could continue serving students in the midst of unprecedented disruptions
 - to provide emergency aid to students facing financial challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic

Institutional Aid
\$13.3 billion

Student Aid
\$9.7 billion

Other Aid
\$1.8 billion

Types of Aid

Institutional Aid
\$13.3 billion

Intended both to cover institutional costs related to COVID-19 and to bolster the funds allocated for student aid

Student Aid
\$9.7 billion

Intended to provide emergency aid to students facing financial challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic

Other Aid
\$1.8 billion

Intended as supplemental funding to institutional aid and student aid and could address unmet expenses or needs



Data and Sample

U.S. Community Colleges

- Community colleges serve a largely low-income and minoritized population, are underfunded relative to four-year public colleges²
- Community college students are more likely to be older adults and part-time attendees with jobs^{3,4}
- In the first year of the pandemic, community colleges experienced declining enrollments overall and especially among Black, Hispanic, and Indigenous students⁵

nearly

\$25 billion

in HEER funding went to community colleges

Education Stabilization Fund (ESF) Transparency Portal

- The ESF Transparency Portal (<https://covid-relief-data.ed.gov/>) was established to track funding awarded to the U.S. Department of Education
- Each institution or district that received funding has a page in the portal, showing how much was awarded and spent
- We retrieved our sample from the ESF Transparency Portal, resulting in 976 community colleges or districts

Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)

- ⦿ Variables from IPEDS include:
 - Enrollment size
 - Enrollment intensity (full-time or part-time)
 - Pell status
 - Race/ethnicity
 - Gender



Findings



**\$25.3
million**

is the average
amount of HEER
funding awarded

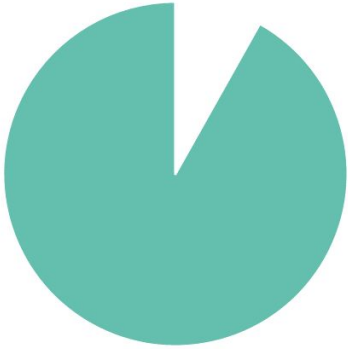
**95
percent**

of HEER funds
were spent by
community colleges

**400
colleges**

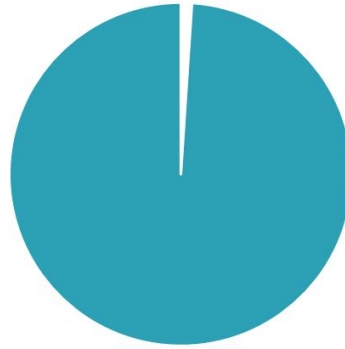
spent all of
their HEER
funds

Institutional Aid



\$13.3 billion
94% spent

Student Aid



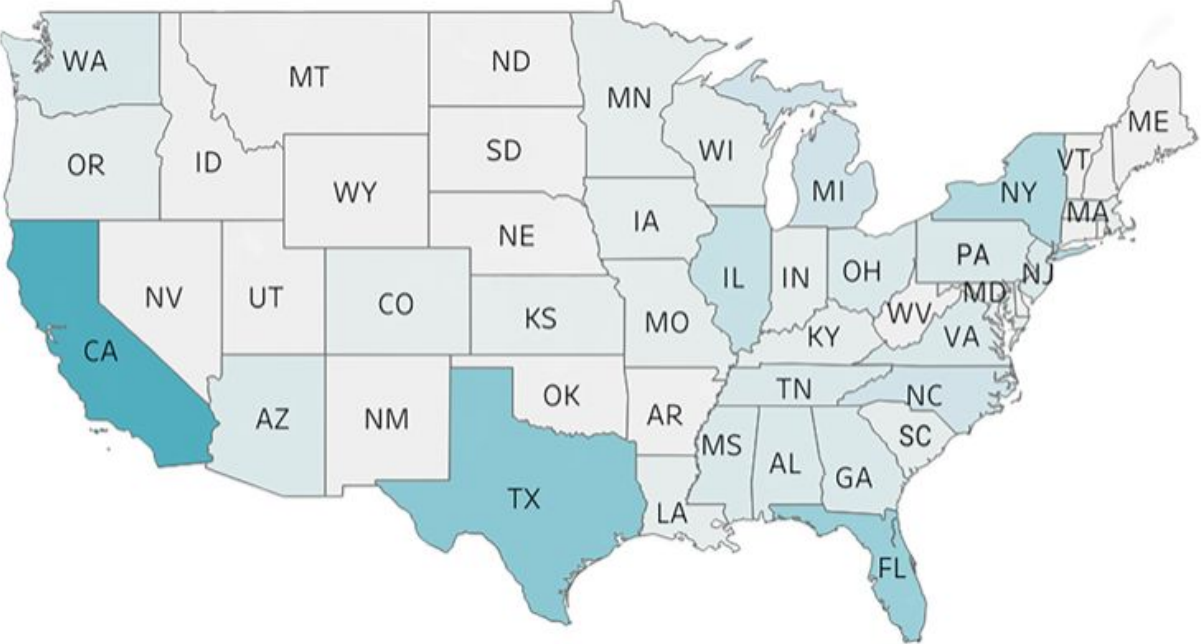
\$9.7 billion
99% spent

Other Aid



\$1.8 billion
79% spent

HEER Fund Allocations



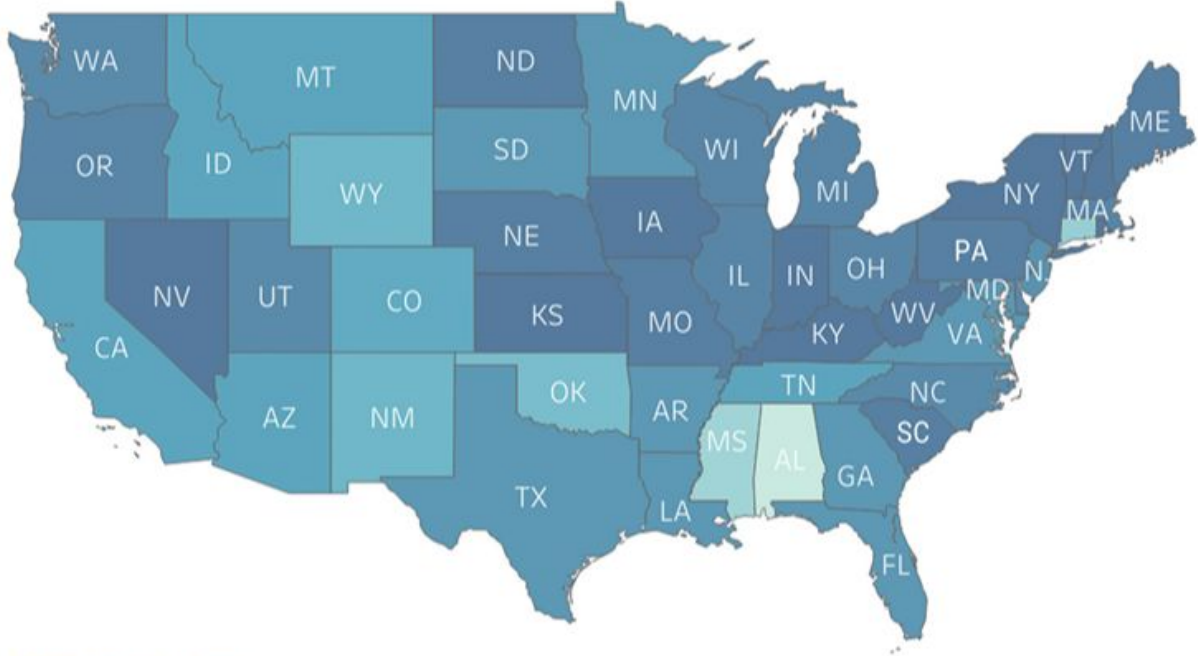
HEER Funds Awarded



HEER Fund Allocation Formulas

CARES \$14 billion	CRRSAA \$23 billion	ARP \$40 billion
75% of funds due to FTE Pell enrollment	75% of funds due to Pell, half of which is FTE and half of which is total headcount	
25% of funds due to FTE non-Pell enrollment	23% of funds due to non-Pell, half of which is FTE and half of which is total headcount	
	2% of funds due to exclusively distance learners, half of which is Pell	

HEER Spending Patterns



Lower vs. Total Spenders

	Lower Spenders <i>98 colleges</i> <i>48.2% of unspent</i>	Total Spenders <i>484 colleges</i> <i>0.2% of unspent</i>
Percent Spending Cutoffs	Less than 84.3%	At least 99.5%
Average Percent Spent	70.3%	100%
Average Total Award	\$24.0 million	\$22.5 million
Average Institutional Award	\$10.7 million	\$12.3 million
Average Student Award	\$7.8 million	\$9 million
Average Enrollment Size	5,304	5,290

Lower vs. Total Spenders

	Lower Spenders <i>98 colleges</i> <i>48.2% of unspent</i>	Total Spenders <i>484 colleges</i> <i>0.2% of unspent</i>
Average Other Award	\$6.7 million	\$1.5 million
Average % Pell	43%	35%
Number of HBCUs	8	0
Number of TCCUs	10	3
Average % White Students	42%	60%

Final Thoughts

- HEER funding worked as expected—almost all funds were spent
 - However, adjustments to the allocation formulas were necessary
- How can colleges **and** students continue to be supported moving forward?
- Other questions remain as well—an ARCC Network institutional survey is coming soon

Tableau Dashboard

Pandemic Relief Funding for Community Colleges

Purpose of the Dashboard

This dashboard presents publicly available award and spending data on Higher Education Emergency Relief (HEER) Funds from the U.S. Department of Education's [Education Stabilization Fund Transparency Portal](#). Institutional and student characteristics are sourced from the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS).

This dashboard allows users to analyze funding and spending trends at community colleges across the country by region, state, and other characteristics. Users can hover over graphics for additional information, explore how much funding institutions were awarded, and how much of those funds have been spent.

This dashboard may help inform the scope, strengths, and weaknesses of the pandemic recovery response.

Click the icons on the right to navigate between dashboard pages.

ARCCNETWORK

Dashboard Table of Contents

Background on HEER Funds

Learn more about pandemic recovery legislation and funding policies.

National Overview

Explore award and spending trends at the national, state, and regional levels.

Institutional Exploration

Find data on awards and spending by institution or institutional characteristics.

Technical Notes

Review the technical notes for this dashboard.

The data in this dashboard are through June 30, 2023.

Navigate to:



The Accelerating Recovery in Community Colleges (ARCC) Network is led by the Community College Research Center at Teachers College, Columbia University; the National Student Clearinghouse Research Center; and Wheelhouse: The Center for Community College Leadership and Research. The ARCC Network lead team is supported by the Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education, through Grant R305X220022 to Teachers College, Columbia University. This dashboard was supported through Grants R305X220022 and R305B200017. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not represent the views of the Institute or the U.S. Department of Education.

For more information about the ARCC Network, visit ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/arccnetwork/

Next Steps

- Using the Tableau dashboard, are you able to observe any noticeable patterns or disparities in the allocation and utilization of funds among your states or community colleges of interest?
- How can these findings inform discussions around equitable access to higher education resources, particularly for historically underserved student populations and institutions?
- In what ways can you leverage these findings to strategically allocate resources and tailor support initiatives to address strengths and weaknesses in the pandemic recovery response across community colleges?

New from the ARCC Network

ARCCNETWORK
ACCELERATING RECOVERY IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES

ARCC Network Brief
March 2024

Aftershocks: How the Pandemic Affected Community College Finances

By Clive Belfield, Thomas Brock, John Fink, and Davis Jenkins



For the community college sector, the COVID-19 pandemic was not like other economic shocks. Traditionally, economic downturns lead students to enroll in college at higher rates: Fiscal shocks are therefore offset by increases in tuition revenue, and college operations and institutional practices are unaffected. But the COVID-19 pandemic did the opposite: Many students *stayed away* from college, often because of health concerns. Colleges responded by moving teaching and advising online, and they used federal Higher Education Emergency

How HEER Funding Rescued Community Colleges From the Pandemic

Clive Belfield, Thomas Brock, John Fink, and Davis Jenkins

The COVID pandemic was an unprecedented shock to higher education. Unlike typical economic downturns, the pandemic was more like falling off a cliff. In a blog essay posted soon after the pandemic hit, CCRC authors highlighted the pandemic's potential to reduce revenue and to increase costs at community colleges (Jenkins et al., 2020). And with the many fiscal pressures on government budgets to combat the pandemic directly, as well as the relatively stronger bargaining power of four-year colleges, we cautioned that public support for community colleges might not be sufficient or might arrive too late. That blog post was right about the underlying consequences of the pandemic. However, its prediction about the governmental response was—we are glad to say—far too pessimistic.

Almost immediately, federal funding for community colleges was forthcoming; it was then augmented over the following year.¹ In total, more than \$75 billion was allocated to higher education—nearly \$25 billion of which went to community colleges—via the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA), and the American Rescue Plan (ARP). This Higher Education Emergency Relief (HEER) Fund had two main purposes: (1) to ensure that colleges could continue to provide education to students and (2) to provide emergency financial assistance through colleges directly to students. To this end, separate allocations were made as grants to colleges for institutional assistance and for aid to students. HEER funding

Key Takeaways

- From 2020 to 2022, community colleges saw an unprecedented 15% drop in enrollment, averaging 580 FTEs, far beyond the usual annual fluctuation of +/-2%.
- Pandemic-era Federal HEER funding prevented tuition revenue losses for community colleges, raising their average total revenue from \$81 million to \$84 million, and provided an additional \$4 million per college in student aid.
- Post-pandemic, community colleges confront tough fiscal challenges with the cessation of HEER funding, facing increased costs due to inflation and decreased overall enrollments relative to pre-pandemic levels, threatening their future stability.

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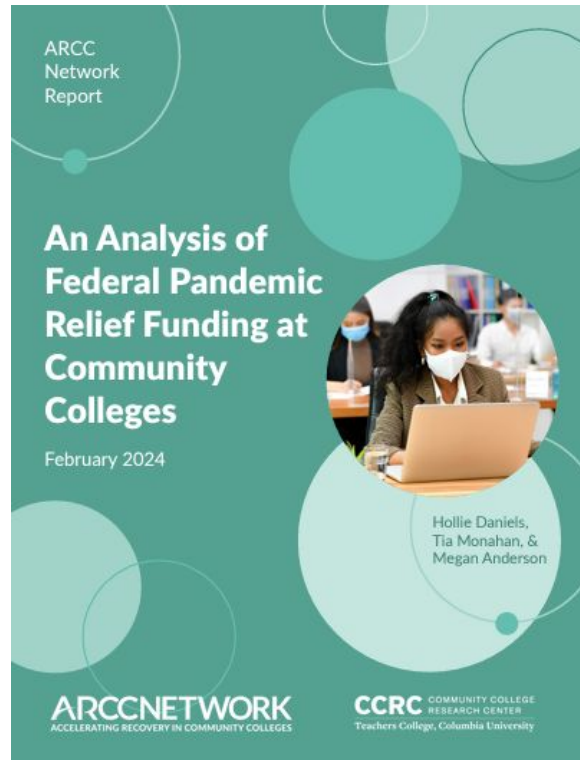
Thank you! Questions?

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References and Notes

¹ U.S. Government Accountability Office. (2023). *COVID-19 relief: Funding and spending as of Jan. 31, 2023*. <https://www.gao.gov/products/gao-23-106647>

² Edgecombe, N. (2019). Demography as opportunity: Diversity as an asset to colleges and the country. *The CCRC Mixed Methods Blog*. Columbia University, Teachers College, Community College Research Center. <https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/easyblog/demography-opportunity-diversity-asset.html>

³ National Center for Education Statistics. (2022). *College student employment*. Condition of Education. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/ssa>

⁴ National Center for Education Statistics. (2023a). *Characteristics of postsecondary students*. Condition of Education. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/indicator/csb>

⁵ Brock, T., & Diwa, C. (2021). Catastrophe or catalyst? Reflections on COVID's impact on community colleges. *Journal of Postsecondary Student Success*, 1(2), 2–17. https://doi.org/10.33009/fsop_jpss129901

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