ARCC Network Report

Pandemic Relief Spending and Recovery Strategies:

Findings From a Survey of Community Colleges in Six States

June 2024

Serena C. Klempin
Sarah Griffin
Tia J. Monahan
Megan N. Anderson
Thomas Brock

ARCCNETWORK
ACCELERATING RECOVERY IN COMMUNITY COLLEGES

CCRC COMMUNITY COLLEGE RESEARCH CENTER
Teachers College, Columbia University

The Community College Research Center (CCRC), Teachers College, Columbia University, has been a leader in the field of community college research and reform for more than 25 years. Our work provides a foundation for innovations in policy and practice that help give every community college student the best chance of success.

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. The research reported here was supported through Grants R305X220022 and R305B200017. The opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not represent views of the Institute or the U.S. Department of Education.

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

The authors of this report—Serena C. Klempin, Sarah Griffin, Tia J. Monahan, and Megan N. Anderson, and Thomas Brock—are researchers at the Community College Research Center.

Cover photos by Allison Shelley/The Verbatim Agency for EDUimages.

Table of Contents

Introduction

In order to assist the American people with the hardships caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, Congress infused approximately $4.6 trillion into the U.S. economy through a series of acts starting with the $2.2 trillion Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act in March 2020 (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2023). The CARES Act established the Higher Education Emergency Relief (HEER) Fund (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.-a), which, along with two subsequent acts, directed over $75 billion to institutions of higher education—including nearly $25 billion to community colleges—over a three-year period (Daniels Sarica et al., 2024). The U.S. Department of Education worked on a rapid timeline to distribute these funds to institutions, which they could use to provide direct aid to students facing financial challenges and cover institutional costs related to the pandemic.

While some information is known about how higher education institutions used HEER funds, much is still unknown, particularly with regard to how community colleges spent these monies (NASFAA, NASPA, & MDRC, 2021; O'Leary & June, 2023; U.S. Department of Education, 2023). In 2023, researchers at the Community College Research Center (CCRC), the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC), and Wheelhouse: The Center for Community College Leadership and Research at the University of California, Davis (Wheelhouse) partnered through the Accelerating Recovery in Community Colleges (ARCC) Network to understand how community colleges used HEER funds to support their students and institutions during the pandemic. Drawing on a survey of community colleges in six states—California, Michigan, New York (State University of New York [SUNY] colleges), Ohio, Tennessee, and Texas—this report provides insight into the specific pandemic recovery activities colleges implemented, colleges' perceptions of how successful funds were in addressing student and institutional needs during the pandemic, and colleges' views of unmet needs.

Research Questions and Key Findings

The institutional survey of pandemic relief spending and recovery strategies we administered, which was completed by 170 out of a total of 265 community colleges in the six states, sought to answer the following research questions:

1. How did colleges use HEER student and institutional aid?
2. How did colleges target specific populations for HEER-funded student supports?
3. What do colleges' expenditure patterns reveal about how student and institutional needs changed over time?
4. How successful did colleges perceive HEER funds to be in meeting student and institutional needs during the pandemic?
5. What do colleges' concerns about the end of HEER funds reveal about how to prioritize future funding efforts?
6. In what ways did colleges' experiences with HEER funds vary based on institutional characteristics?

These are key findings from the report:

Colleges spent nearly all the HEER funds they received. Given the large amount of HEER funding and the fact that colleges did not need to submit a proposal and budget for how they would use the funds, it should not be assumed that colleges would have spent all the money they received. Yet, consistent with findings from an analysis of HEER awards and spending (Daniels Sarica et al., 2024), colleges reported having spent nearly all the funds they received by the time the HEER program ended in June 2023.

HEER funds met a variety of student and institutional needs during the pandemic. Colleges reported relatively few problems using the funds and generally felt that the aid was successful in mitigating student and institutional hardships.

Colleges focused on retaining existing students; they employed a variety of methods to support students in need. Colleges used HEER funds to support and retain existing (pre-pandemic) students rather than to recruit new students. To help students with the greatest needs, colleges focused on supporting students with college-related and other financial exigencies, including those experiencing food and housing insecurity. They used institutional aid to forgive debt owed to the college and to provide food, housing, and childcare assistance.

Spending patterns suggest that colleges experienced similar challenges during the pandemic and often prioritized the same objectives. Despite differences in state contexts and institutional settings, colleges tended to allocate funds in similar ways. For example, most colleges used aid for campus safety and technology hardware. Expenditure patterns also shifted over time in similar ways, indicating that colleges were responsive to evolving needs. Changes in spending were enabled by the broad discretion colleges were given by the federal government in using the funds.

Expenditures related to campus safety and technology remained strong but decreased in frequency over time; expenditures to support students' mental health increased in frequency. The top priorities for many colleges were addressing health and safety concerns and building a technology infrastructure for remote learning. Equipment and supplies, technology hardware, campus safety (e.g., air filters, personal protective equipment [PPE]), and distance learning supplies remained among the most frequent expenditures in each of the roughly three years of the HEER grant period, though the frequency of all these uses declined modestly by the third year of funding. Recouping lost revenue became more frequent in the second year. Of all the expenditure categories, mental health services was the only one that increased in frequency in each of the three years, likely reflecting the toll the pandemic took on students' mental health.

Comparing pre- and post-pandemic spending, HEER funds had the most impact on increasing support for technology hardware, high-speed internet, and housing assistance. Colleges used HEER funds both to fund existing services and to begin offering new ones based on needs that arose during the pandemic. Prior to the pandemic, the majority of colleges already offered student aid, food pantries, and health and mental health services, but fewer than a third of colleges had services in place to provide technology hardware, high-speed internet, and housing assistance. These three areas recorded the largest increases in the proportion of colleges that did not offer such services before the pandemic but did so afterward.

Concerns about the end of HEER funding and priorities for future funding expose a need for continued flexible resources to address students' financial needs. Colleges' main concern about the end of HEER funding was that it would limit their ability to support students during an emergency. Their top priority for using future funding was additional student aid.

Rural and vocational/technical colleges (as defined by the Carnegie Classification) may have had fewer resources prior to the pandemic and may be in greater need of additional support. Colleges in towns and rural areas were less likely to offer a number of supports both pre- and post-pandemic. Rural colleges were also less likely to report having received additional funding for pandemic recovery from sources other than HEER funds, and they were more likely to report having experienced challenges using HEER funds. Similarly, vocational/technical colleges were less likely to offer a number of supports both pre- and post-pandemic and were more likely to report having experienced challenges.

Survey Findings From California

The study described in the current report was conducted by CCRC and PPIC. CCRC led the survey work in Michigan, New York, Ohio, Tennessee, and Texas. PPIC led the survey work in California in collaboration with Wheelhouse and the California Community Colleges Chancellors Office (CCCCO). PPIC shared the California data with CCRC for inclusion in this report. It also released a separate report, ***How Did Pandemic Recovery Funding Support California Community Colleges?*** (Rodriguez et al., 2024), with more detailed findings on how California community colleges used HEER funds to support pandemic recovery efforts.

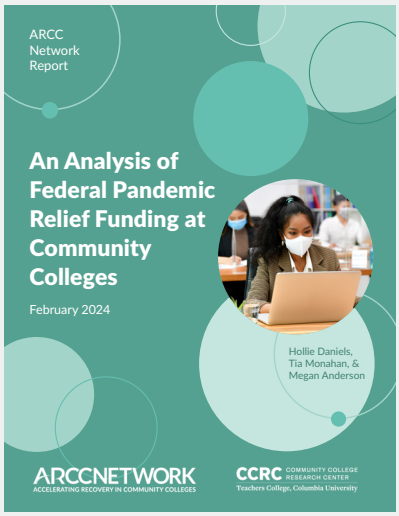
Background on Higher Education Emergency Relief Funding

The COVID-19 pandemic was an unprecedented crisis for higher education institutions. For community colleges, in particular, it laid bare existing inequities in resources relative to four-year colleges, and it exacerbated challenges facing key populations of students that community colleges serve (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2022; Olaniyan et al., 2023). Community colleges enroll disproportionate numbers of underserved students, including students with low incomes, first-generation college students, students from minoritized racial and ethnic groups, students experiencing basic needs insecurity, and adult learners (American Association of Community Colleges, 2023; Cruse et al., 2020; Lo & Dancy, 2023; McKibben et al., 2023; National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 2022a; RTI International, 2019). And compared with those at four-year colleges, students at community colleges are more likely to enroll part-time and to work substantial numbers of hours per week in addition to attending classes (NCES, 2022b). And yet, relative to public four-year institutions, community colleges receive less funding per student for instruction and student support (Kolbe & Baker, 2019; Yuen, 2020).

In the wake of the pandemic, many community college students experienced job loss, housing insecurity, and difficulties paying for household expenses (Belfield & Brock, 2021a, 2021b). Thus, the pandemic left many community college students—who were disadvantaged before it began—even more vulnerable (Evans et al., 2019). Facing mounting financial pressures and health concerns, community college students left college in large waves beginning in fall 2020. Through spring 2021, enrollments in community colleges declined overall and in particular among Black, Hispanic, and Indigenous students (Brock & Diwa, 2021; National Student Clearinghouse Research Center [NSCRC], 2024).

HEER funds were established to support two major goals: (1) to provide aid directly to students experiencing financial hardships during the pandemic, and (2) to help institutions of higher education continue serving students despite disruptions caused by the pandemic (U.S. Department of Education, 2021c). Unlike most federal grant programs, HEER gave colleges considerable flexibility in how they used the funds. HEER funds also represent an unprecedented federal investment in community colleges, as these institutions derive most of their funding from state and local governments and student tuition and fees. For comparison, the last big federal investment in community colleges—the Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT) program—invested $2 billion over four years (U.S. Department of Labor, n.d.).

Federal Data on the Spending of HEER Funds



A companion ARCC Network report, *An Analysis of Federal Pandemic Relief Funding at Community Colleges* (Daniels Sarica et al., 2024), analyzes data from the U.S. Department of Education's *Education Stabilization Fund (ESF) Transparency Portal* on the use of HEER funds in all 50 states and outlying areas. It provides information about how pandemic relief funding was distributed to community colleges, how colleges spent those funds, and how award and spending patterns varied by student and institutional characteristics. Complementing that report, a *Pandemic Relief Funding Dashboard* (Daniels Sarica, 2023) allows users to analyze HEER funding and spending at community colleges across the country based on ESF Transparency Portal data.

Congress appropriated HEER funds to higher education institutions through three acts passed between March 2020 and July 2022.[1] Over this three-year period, community colleges received a total of nearly $25 billion (Daniels Sarica et al., 2024). The amount of HEER funds awarded to any given college was based largely on student enrollment.[2] Table A1 in Appendix A shows criteria used for student and institutional aid awards in an allocation formula.

Funds were designated as student, institutional, and other aid. The guidance for spending HEER funds in any of these categories was quite broad, thus providing colleges with great flexibility in how they deployed their HEER funding. Colleges had until June 30, 2023, to use the funds, after which unspent funds were to be returned to the government.[3] Table 1 provides more information about these categories and the guidance provided to institutions for each category.

Table 1. HEER Funding Categories and Guidance

Type of Aid	Purpose	Allocation	Spending Guidance
Student aid	Provide emergency aid (cash grants) to students facing financial challenges during the pandemic	$9.7 billion awarded (39% of total)	• Allowable uses included any component of students' cost of attendance or for emergency costs that arose due to coronavirus, such as tuition, food, housing, health care (including mental health care), or childcare. • Institutions were advised to prioritize students with exceptional need, such as students who receive federal Pell Grants. • Institutions could determine eligibility criteria for aid; they could also determine how to advertise and distribute aid to students.
Institutional aid	Cover institutional costs related to the pandemic and bolster the funds allocated for student aid	$13.3 billion awarded (54% of total)	• Allowable uses included compensating for lost revenue, reimbursing already incurred expenses, covering technology costs related to the shift to remote education, providing training for faculty and staff, and managing payroll. • Institutions were strongly advised to allocate a significant amount of these funds to supplement student aid.
Other aid	Provide supplemental funding for institutional and/or student expenditures. Other aid was often awarded to colleges with greater needs by meeting certain criteria for serving underserved populations by income or ethnic and racial categories, such as Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), or Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities (TCCUs)	$1.8 billion awarded (7% of total)	• Allowable uses included any unmet needs for either institutional or student expenditures.

Sources. Daniels Sarica et al. (2024); National Association of College and University Business Officers (2022); U.S. Department of Education (2021a, 2021c); The White House (2022).

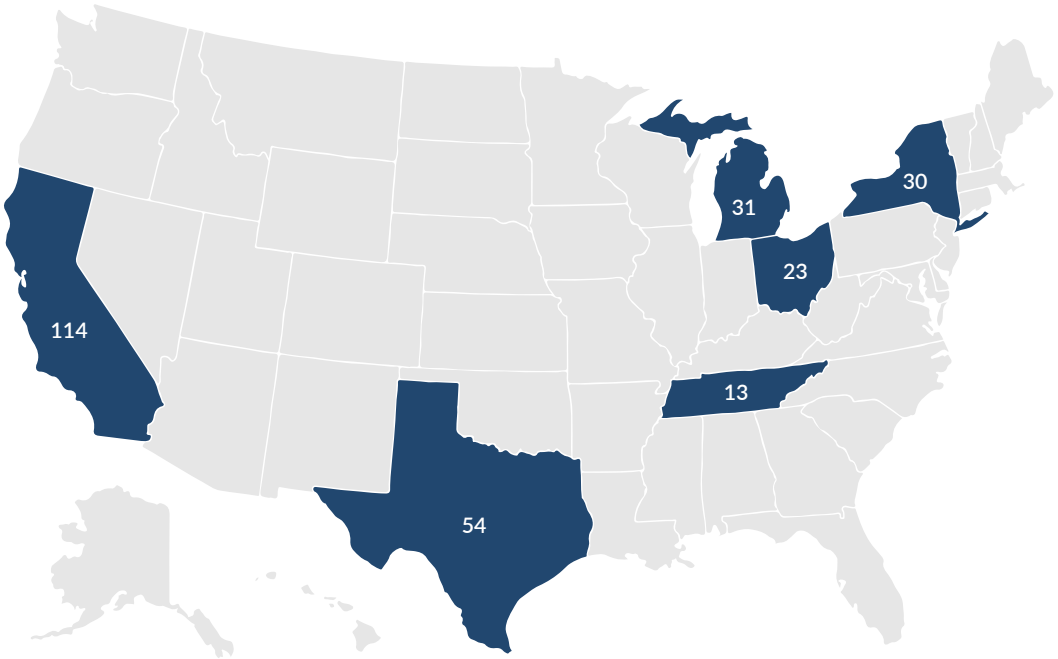
About the Study

In this section we describe the states and colleges that participated in the survey, how the survey was designed and distributed, and the data and methods used to analyze the survey results. More information about the survey fielding, sample, and survey analysis methodology can be found in the appendices.

Participating States

The survey was administered to a total of 265 community colleges across six states. CCRC administered the survey to all community colleges in Michigan, Ohio, Tennessee, and Texas and to all community colleges in the SUNY system in New York. PPIC, with support from Wheelhouse and the California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office (CCCCO), administered the survey to all community colleges in California. To help plan and support the administration of the survey, CCRC collaborated with a partner organization in each state that helps support the improvement of programming, policy, and practice for community colleges in that respective state.[4] The states represented in the survey include the first largest (California), second largest (Texas), and fourth largest (New York) community college systems in the country and three mid-sized systems (Michigan, Ohio, and Tennessee), respectively. Together, they enroll close to 2.4 million community college students, or 43% of the national total (NCES, 2021b; The State University of New York, 2024). Colleges in these systems are diverse with respect to student demographics, governance, and campus setting. Figure 1 shows the number of colleges in each state that participated in the study.

Figure 1. Number of Community Colleges in Survey States



Fall 2020 Enrollment

California | 1,333,500

Michigan | 153,391

New York | 173,850

Ohio | 181,651

Tennessee | 78,838

Texas | 593,010

Source. Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System.

Survey Design and Distribution

The survey was designed to capture information about the following four topics: (1) the amount of HEER funds each college received and spent for (a) student aid and (b) institutional aid; (2) the use of student aid, including how many students received aid, how eligibility was determined, whether certain student groups were targeted to receive aid, how aid was made available to students, and the perceived effectiveness of student aid; (3) the use of institutional aid, including how institutional aid was spent and the perceived effectiveness of such aid; and (4) colleges' opinions regarding the end of HEER funding and any remaining unmet needs. The survey was administered between May and August 2023. To help reduce any burden associated with study participation, we invited the colleges that had not yet completed the survey by late June 2023 to complete a short version of the survey, which included a subset of questions from the original survey questionnaire. A full description of how the survey was distributed as well as how survey questions were analyzed can be found in Appendices B and C.[5]

The survey was sent to a primary contact at each college that was identified by our state partners. In all states except Michigan, the primary contact was the college president or another college leader. For colleges in Michigan, the primary contact was the head of institutional research. In each state, the primary contact was given instructions to select one person as the designated survey taker. The designated survey taker was responsible for collecting information needed to answer survey questions and submitting the survey. Usually, personnel in multiple offices—including the business, financial aid, institutional research, and student affairs offices—were involved in providing information for the survey.

Additional Data Sources

We supplemented the survey with two data sources from the U.S. Department of Education. First, we used the Education Stabilization Fund (ESF) Transparency Portal to prepopulate each college's survey with the amount of HEER funds it received and spent.[6] Colleges were allowed to update this information if they wished. Second, we collected information on institutional and student characteristics of the colleges in our study through the Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), including Carnegie Classification,[7] enrollment size, enrollment intensity, locale,[8] and Pell recipient shares.[9]

Survey Sample

We received a total of 170 completed surveys for an overall response rate of 64%.[10] Of these, 142 colleges (84%) completed the original survey, and 28 colleges (17%) completed the short survey.[11] Table 2 presents the overall response rate and the response rate by state. See Appendix Table C1 for differences in sample sizes across questions.

Table 2. Response Rates by State and Survey Type

State	Number of Colleges			Response Rate
	Offered Survey	Completed Original Survey	Completed Short Survey	
Overall	265	142	28	64%
California	114	62	9	62%
Michigan	31	11	5	52%
New York	30	22	3	83%
Ohio	23	15	3	78%
Tennessee	13	11	0	85%
Texas	54	21	8	54%

Generally speaking, we did not find systematic differences between colleges in each state that did and did not respond to our survey request. Participating colleges' aggregated student characteristics (age, enrollment size, and proportion of students by enrollment, intensity status, gender, Pell recipient status, and race/ethnicity) and their institutional characteristics (percent of colleges with certain Carnegie Classifications or in certain locales) are not significantly different from nonparticipating community colleges in the same state. Appendix Tables D4 and D5 compare the colleges in our sample by state to all nonresponding colleges in each respective state according to key student and institutional characteristics.

Analysis

To answer our research questions, we primarily rely on summary statistics of survey responses. To supplement these, we use descriptive ordinary least squares (OLS) regression to examine select correlations between variables, especially between college characteristics as reported in IPEDS (e.g., size of college, location of college, and Carnegie Classification) and survey responses. We analyze the data for all states and report the findings across all states together. We also disaggregate our results by state and report any differences of interest.

Survey Results

1. How Did Colleges Use HEER Student and Institutional Aid?

The average amount of HEER funds awarded and spent per institution by type of award is shown in Table 3. Across all 976 community colleges in the U.S., colleges received an average of $9.9 million in student aid and $13.6 million in institutional aid (Daniels Sarica et al., 2024). Colleges in our sample received slightly more money than the national averages, with survey colleges averaging $14.3 million in student aid and $18.7 million in institutional aid per college. This can be explained by the HEER allocation formula, which was weighted toward colleges that had higher proportions of full-time students and students who received Pell Grants.[12] In our sample, colleges in California and Texas received the most HEER funding, and colleges in Michigan received the least amount of funding.

A previous ARCC Network study found that community colleges nationwide spent virtually all of the student aid (99%) and the overwhelming majority of the institutional aid (94%) they were awarded (Daniels Sarica et al., 2024). Mirroring national trends, colleges in our sample reported having spent the vast majority of the student aid (97%) and institutional aid (87%) they received. For both student and institutional aid, colleges in our sample spent slightly less than the national average. Colleges in California spent less institutional aid (79%) compared to those in the other five states in our sample, which each spent the vast majority or all of the institutional aid they received.

Table 3. Average Amount of HEER Funds Awarded and Spent by Type of Award

State	Student Aid			Institutional Aid		
	Awarded		Spent	Awarded		Spent
	Per Institution	Per Student		Per Institution	Per Student	
Total U.S. (976 colleges)	$9.9 million	$1,929	99%	$13.6 million	$2,625	94%
Total sample (170 colleges)	$14.3 million	$1,570	97%	$18.7 million	$2,136	87%
California (71 colleges)	$16.6 million	$1,426	94%	$21.1 million	$1,865	79%
Michigan (16 colleges)	$9.0 million	$1,655	98%	$12.1 million	$2,238	94%
New York (25 colleges)	$11.5 million	$1,901	100%	$15.3 million	$2,533	92%
Ohio (18 Colleges)	$10.6 million	$1,589	100%	$14.1 million	$2,029	95%
Tennessee (11 colleges)	$12.1 million	$1,891	98%	$14.5 million	$2,365	91%
Texas (29 colleges)	$17.0 million	$1,456	99%	$23.6 million	$2,015	91%

Note. Award and spending data originally sourced from the ESF Transparency Portal, though values were in some cases updated by information received from the survey. Percentages rounded to nearest whole number.

Average per-student awards, also shown in Table 3, varied by state. For instance, colleges in California and Texas—which received more HEER funding than colleges in the other states—had the lowest student aid award per student ($1,426 in California and $1,456 in Texas) and the lowest institutional award per student ($1,865 in California and $2,015 in Texas). Of colleges in all survey states, colleges in New York had the highest student aid award per student ($1,901) and the highest institutional award per student ($2,533). Again, this most likely reflects differences in student characteristics that were included as inputs in the allocation formula, such as the proportions of Pell Grant students, full-time students, and distance learners (see Appendix Table A1).

Use of Student Aid

The six states we surveyed together enroll over 2 million community college students each fall. From 2020 through 2023, across all colleges in our sample, over 1.6 million students received aid through HEER funds.

Colleges had considerable discretion in determining the eligibility criteria for student aid and the amount of aid disbursed to each student. The choice between universal versus targeted aid is fundamental to any cash assistance program and involves complex decisions around social goals and strategies for assessing need (Grosh et al., 2022). Consistent with guidance from the federal government to prioritize students experiencing "exceptional needs" in the distribution of student aid (Office of Postsecondary Education, 2021; U.S. Department of Education, 2023), the vast majority of colleges (89%) varied the amount of student aid provided to students based on need at least part of the time (Table 4). Over a third of colleges varied the amount throughout the entire HEER grant period (38%), while half of colleges adopted a blended strategy consisting of both universal and targeted amounts of student aid at different times (51%). Very few colleges reported consistently providing the same amount of student aid to all students (6%). Across states, New York colleges varied the amount of student aid most often (67%), while Ohio colleges did so least frequently (17%).

Table 4. Universal Versus Targeted Methods for Disbursing Direct Student Aid

Method	Number of Colleges	Percentage of Colleges
Same amount to all students	11	6%
Varied amount to students	64	38%
Same amount and varied amount at different times	86	51%

Note. n = 170.

To understand how eligibility for student aid was determined, the survey asked whether colleges used any of the following criteria to establish need: (1) eligibility for Pell Grants and other financial aid, (2) Estimated Family Contribution (EFC) from the FAFSA, and (3) students' attestation of their eligibility. Across all colleges in our study, the majority (70%) used eligibility for Pell Grants or other forms of federal financial aid to determine eligibility for student aid. Slightly over half (53%) asked students to attest to their eligibility, and slightly under half (49%) used students' EFC. Use of EFC varied by state: Nearly all New York colleges relied on it (88%), whereas only one Tennessee college did so. Colleges in Tennessee and Ohio (73% and 78%) were more likely than colleges in other states to ask students to attest to their eligibility.

Table 5 shows that in calendar year 2020, the median HEER aid provided to students with Pell Grants ($826 for students enrolled full-time and $697 for students enrolled part-time) was higher than that provided to students without Pell Grants ($650 for students enrolled full-time and $542 for students enrolled part-time). Survey data also show that six colleges (across four states) provided student aid only to Pell Grant students and that one college provided aid only to students enrolled full-time.

Table 5. Median Direct Aid per Student in 2020 by Pell and Enrollment Intensity Status

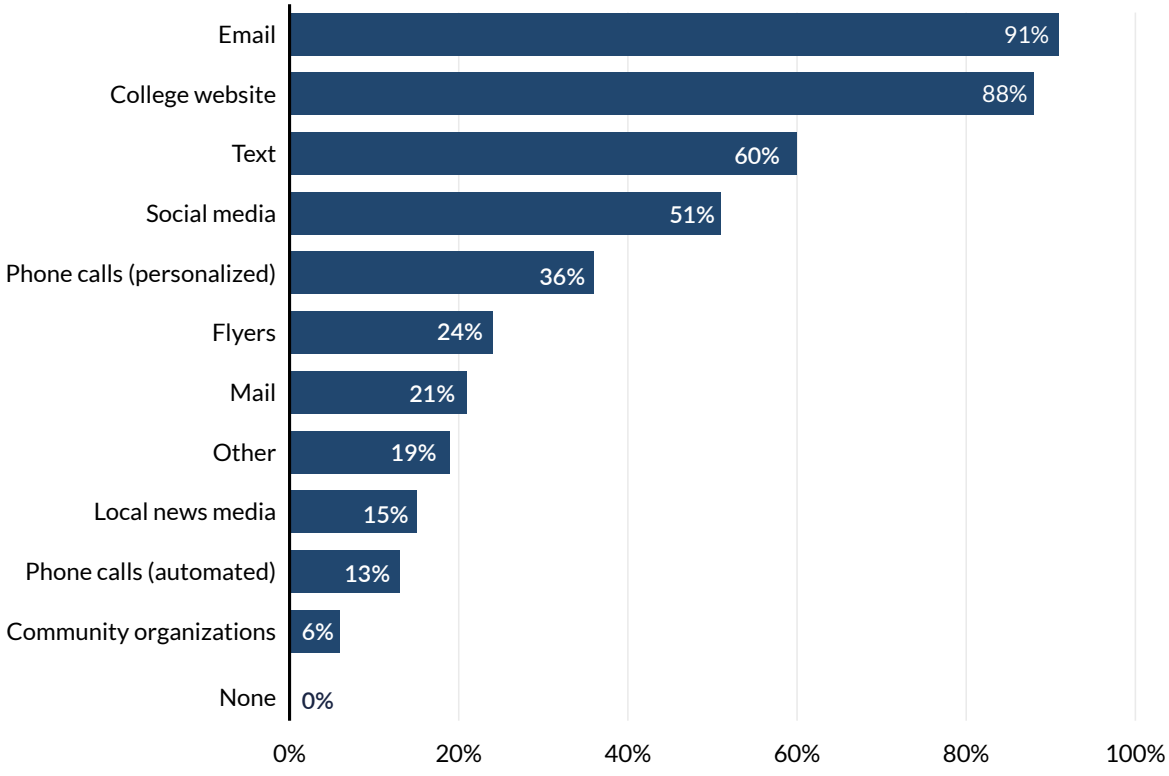
Student Groups	Median Amount per Student
Pell, full-time	$826
Pell, part-time	$697
Non-Pell, full-time	$650
Non-Pell, part-time	$542

Note. n = 124. Median amount provided is conditional on the number of colleges that answered this question.

In addition to the three criteria for determining eligibility described above (Pell eligibility, EFC, and students' attestation of their need), some colleges reported that they took additional factors into consideration. These included enrollment intensity (e.g., students must be enrolled in at least three credits to receive aid) and eligibility criteria established by their state community college systems. Several colleges also noted that they initially limited eligibility to Pell Grant students but later expanded it to include some students who were not eligible for Pell.

Colleges reported using multiple methods of outreach to inform students about the availability of student aid. Figure 2 shows that the most popular forms of outreach were email (91% of colleges), posting information on the college website (88%), and text messages (60%).

Figure 2. Types of Student Aid Advertising



Note. n = 151. Bars show the percentage of colleges that reported using each type of advertising.

Use of Institutional Aid

Table 6 lists institutional aid expenditures in order of frequency. The most frequently cited use was for expenses related to campus safety (e.g., face masks and upgrades to air ventilation systems) (92% of colleges), followed by technology hardware (88%), equipment and supplies (86%), distance learning supplies (78%), and faculty and staff training (78%), which often focused on how to use technology and online resources to deliver instruction and services. Following these top five expenditure categories, colleges reported spending institutional aid on lost revenue due to reduced enrollment (75%), lost revenue due to non-enrollment expenses (72%), high-speed internet (71%), additional student aid to students (in addition to the HEER student aid already provided) (71%), and "other" expenses (54%). Using short-answer responses from the original survey, we learned that the "other" expenses frequently included outreach to students, indirect costs, staffing costs, books for students, and facilities-related costs. Many of these spending categories suggest colleges prioritized efforts to protect students' health, support their learning, and keep them enrolled—for example, by increasing safety protocols, ensuring that colleges had the infrastructure to deliver instruction and services online, and providing students with financial needs additional student aid.

Table 6. Uses of Institutional Aid Expenditures

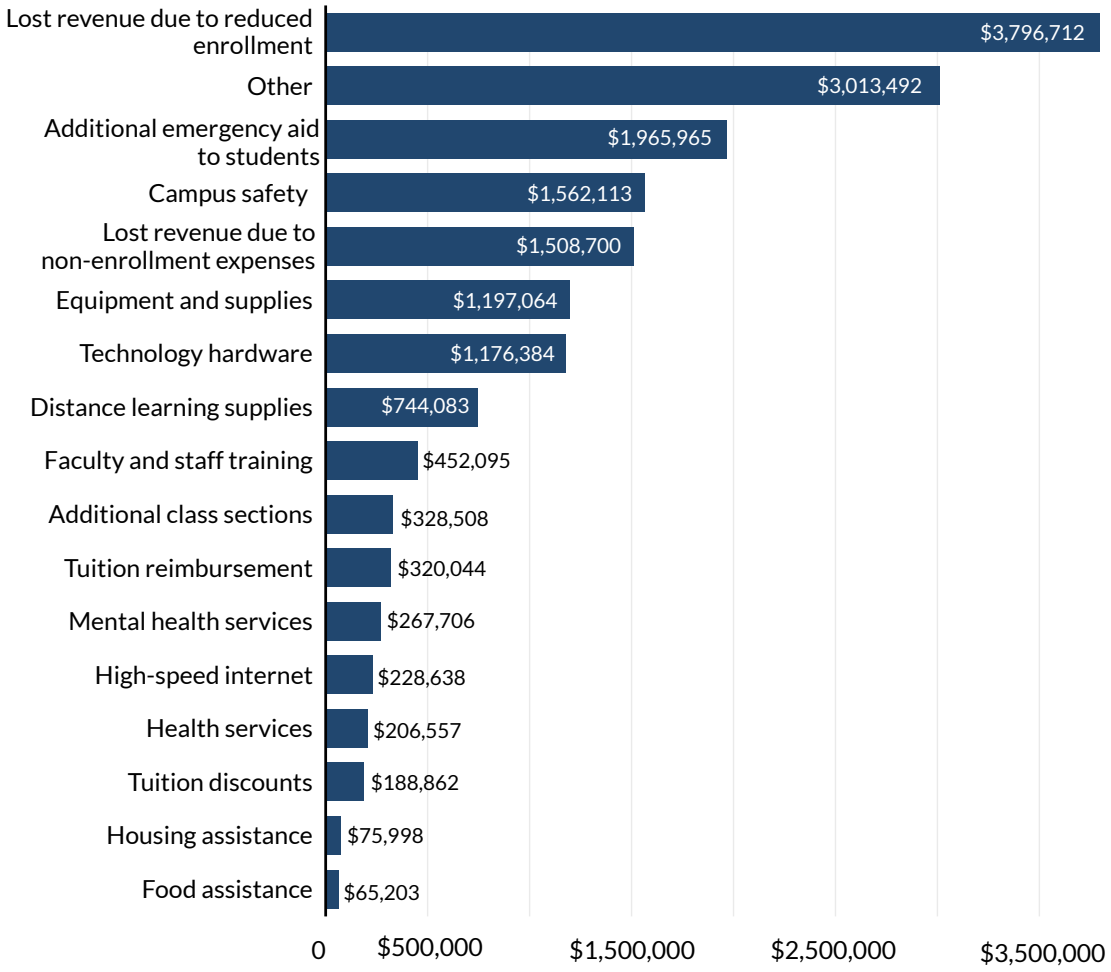
Use	Number of Colleges	Percentage of Colleges
Campus safety (e.g., PPE, air filters, screens)	157	92%
Technology hardware (e.g., laptops and cameras)	149	88%
Equipment and supplies	147	86%
Distance learning supplies	133	78%
Faculty and staff training	133	78%
Lost revenue due to reduced enrollment	127	75%
Lost revenue due to non-enrollment expenditures (e.g., lost parking fees)	123	72%
High-speed internet	121	71%
Additional student aid	120	71%
Other[a]	91	54%
Additional class sections	84	49%
Mental health services	78	46%
Health services	68	40%
Food assistance	61	36%
Tuition reimbursement	59	35%
Housing assistance	29	17%
Tuition discounts	19	11%

Note. n = 170.

[a] The survey provided colleges the option to describe, in short-answer form, up to three alternative ways that colleges spent institutional aid (i.e., uses of institutional aid not included in the answer choices for the question). The "other" category in this table combines all three "other" response options.

Figure 3 shows how much money colleges spent on different uses of institutional aid. Far and away, the greatest use of institutional aid was to replace lost revenue and fees, which accounted for an average of $3.8 million per college. This was followed by "other" uses (see definition above) ($3.0 million) and additional student aid ($2.0 million). Colleges spent the least amount of money on housing assistance ($76,000) and food assistance ($65,000), though as we discuss later, these uses became more prominent in the last year of HEER funding.

Figure 3. Uses of Institutional Aid by Average Amount Spent per College



Note. n = 143. Average amount spent is conditional on the number of colleges that answered this question.

Other Pandemic Recovery Aid

In addition to the student and institutional aid funding that colleges received through HEER, 113 colleges (75%) reported that they received pandemic recovery aid from other sources (Table 7). The most common were state funds: Half of colleges (50%) reported receiving additional state support in addition to typical state support. Colleges in Ohio (80%) and California (66%) were the most likely to cite additional state aid and received the most amount of funding from this source. Colleges in New

York were the least likely to report receiving additional state aid (9%). Colleges that received other funds used these additional sources of aid most often for technology (50% of colleges), campus safety (44%), and equipment and supplies (43%).[13]

Table 7. Other Types of Pandemic Recovery Aid Received by Colleges

Source	Number of Colleges	Percentage of Colleges	Average Amount per College[a]
Additional state aid	76	50%	$2.8 million
Additional federal aid[b]	46	30%	$1.4 million
Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) Fund[c]	42	28%	$1.8 million
Private/philanthropic	20	13%	$232,000

Note. n = 151.

[a] Average amount is conditional on the number of colleges that reported the given funding source.

[b] Includes either any non-HEER aid or HEER aid designated under the "other" HEER aid category (e.g., Supplemental Assistance to Institutions of Higher Education [SAIHE], Strengthening Institutions Program [SIP], Supplemental Support under American Rescue Plan [SSARP]) (see Daniels Sarica et al., 2024).

[c] Funded through the CARES Act and subsequent pandemic relief acts to provide governor's emergency support for local educational agencies and institutions of higher education (see U.S. Department of Education, 2022).

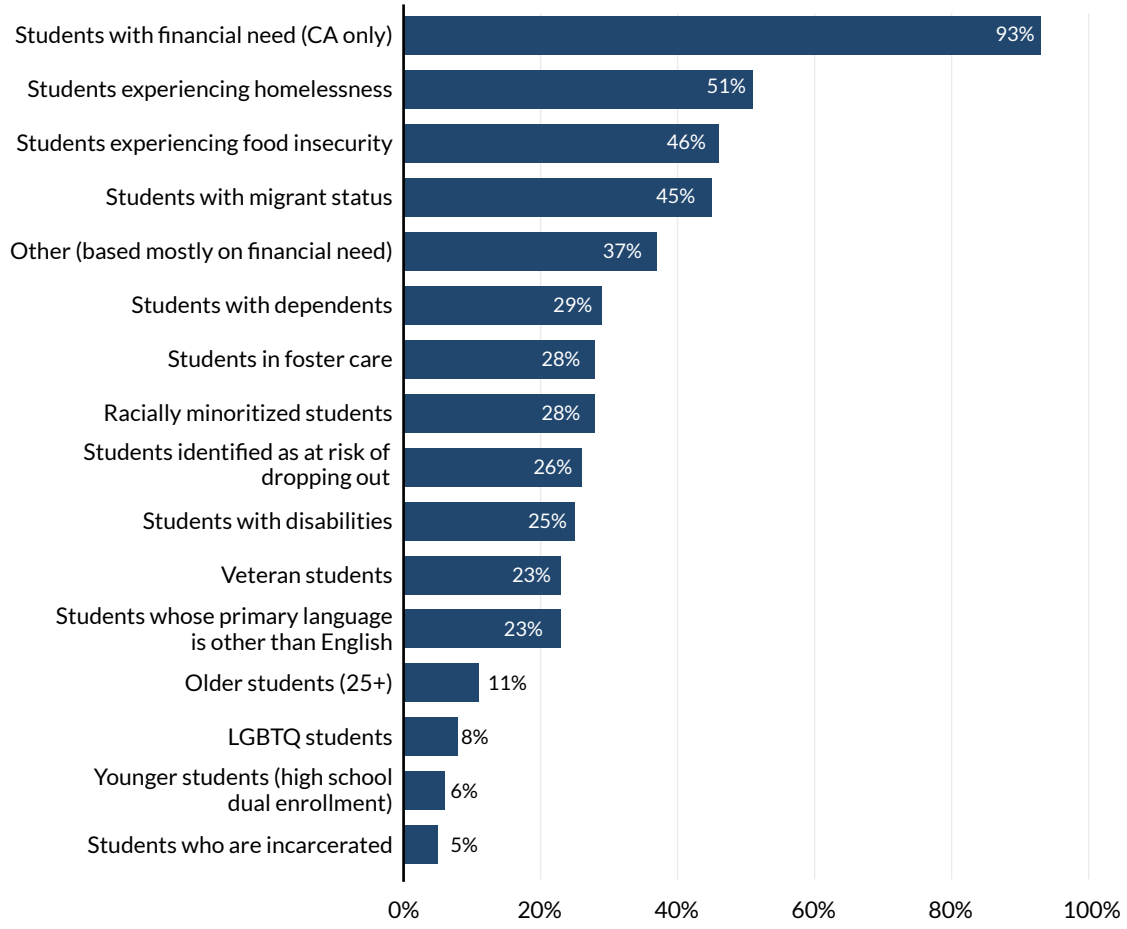
2. How Did Colleges Target Specific Populations for HEER-Funded Student Supports?

As mentioned, the vast majority of colleges (89%) targeted direct aid to students by varying the amount of student aid provided based on students' needs at least part of the time (Table 4). Additionally, the survey asked colleges if they targeted pandemic-related supports to specific student populations. Slightly under half of colleges indicated that they targeted pandemic-related supports (43% of 151 colleges). We discuss below how student populations were prioritized by the colleges in our sample and the use of institutional aid for basic needs services (food, housing, and childcare), which helps illustrate how colleges targeted support.

Identifying Student Populations

Colleges that indicated they targeted pandemic-related supports were asked to identify which student populations they targeted. As shown in Figure 4, half of them (51%) prioritized students experiencing homelessness. The next most frequently mentioned focal populations included students experiencing food insecurity (46%), students with migrant status (45%), and other groups (based mostly on financial need[14]) (37%). The California survey included an option for selecting students with financial need as a target population; 93% of California colleges selected this group.

Figure 4. Student Populations Targeted by Some Colleges for Pandemic Supports



Note. n = 65. Percentages are conditional on the number of colleges that indicated that they targeted certain groups.

In addition to targeting supports to specific student populations, colleges also targeted financial support by treating unpaid student account balances as an indication of financial need. In five states, the majority of colleges used student or institutional aid to cover unpaid student account balances, ranging from 56% in Michigan to 100% in Tennessee. In contrast, in New York, only a quarter (25%) of colleges used aid for this purpose. While covering unpaid balances does not provide direct financial support for students, eliminating the debt can remove barriers to continued enrollment.

Support for Basic Needs

The primary list of institutional aid expenditure categories in the survey included two types of basic needs supports: food assistance and housing assistance. Overall, 36% of colleges used funds for food assistance, and 17% used funds for housing assistance. The survey also asked specifically whether colleges had a campus-based food pantry and offered campus-based childcare and, if so, whether they used institutional aid to pay for these supports. The vast majority of colleges (90%) reported having a campus-based food pantry, but only 24% said they used institutional aid to help

cover the costs. A slight majority of colleges (55%) said they offered campus-based childcare, but only 19% said they used institutional aid to fund it. Colleges in California were the most likely to use institutional aid for food assistance generally (55%) as well as specifically for campus-based food pantries (34%). State funding was often anticipated by colleges to be the primary source of funding for food pantries, other forms of food assistance, housing assistance, and childcare after HEER funding ended. Philanthropy was also anticipated to be a significant source of future funding for food pantries and other forms of food assistance. (For more information on how colleges were planning to fund these supports following the end of HEER funding, see Figure 9 below.)

Finally, it is worth noting that because student aid was disbursed directly to students in the form of cash grants, students could use the aid for any purpose, including basic needs. As noted in the previous section, nearly three fourths of colleges used institutional aid to provide additional student aid, and it represented the third largest use of institutional aid. A recent student survey on uses of HEER student aid conducted with nearly 18,000 students enrolled in both two- and four-year institutions found that food and housing represented two of the top three expenses for which students used student aid, with 61% of students reporting the use of aid for food and 50% for housing (NASFAA, NASPA, & HCM Strategists, 2022).

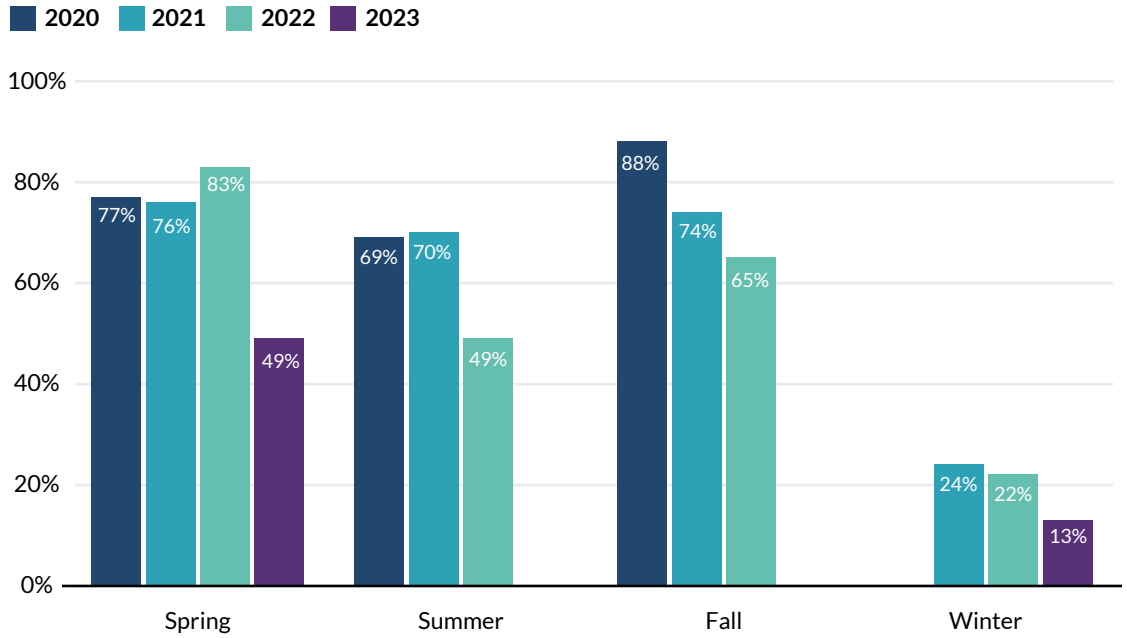
3. What Do Colleges' Expenditure Patterns Reveal About How Student and Institutional Needs Changed Over Time?

Examining trends in expenditures over time shows how student and institutional needs shifted, and it may indicate areas that will likely continue to be priorities. To assess how needs evolved during the pandemic, the survey asked which terms student aid was offered and about institutional aid expenditures during each year of the HEER grant period (from spring 2020 to summer 2023). To assess longer term impacts of HEER funds on the services and supports colleges offered, the survey asked about which supports were in place prior to the pandemic and which colleges planned to continue providing after HEER funding ended.

Student Aid Expenditures During the HEER Grant Period

Figure 5 shows that the number of colleges offering student aid was highest during the height of the pandemic from spring 2020 to spring 2022, with slightly fewer colleges offering aid during summer terms and only a small number offering aid during winter terms. By the summer of 2022, the number of colleges offering student aid began to decline. Importantly, when asked separately about whether the average amount of student aid grants changed between 2020 and 2022, the majority of colleges (71%) reported that they increased the amount of student aid awarded per student over time.

Figure 5. Proportion of Colleges Offering Direct Aid to Students by Term and Year



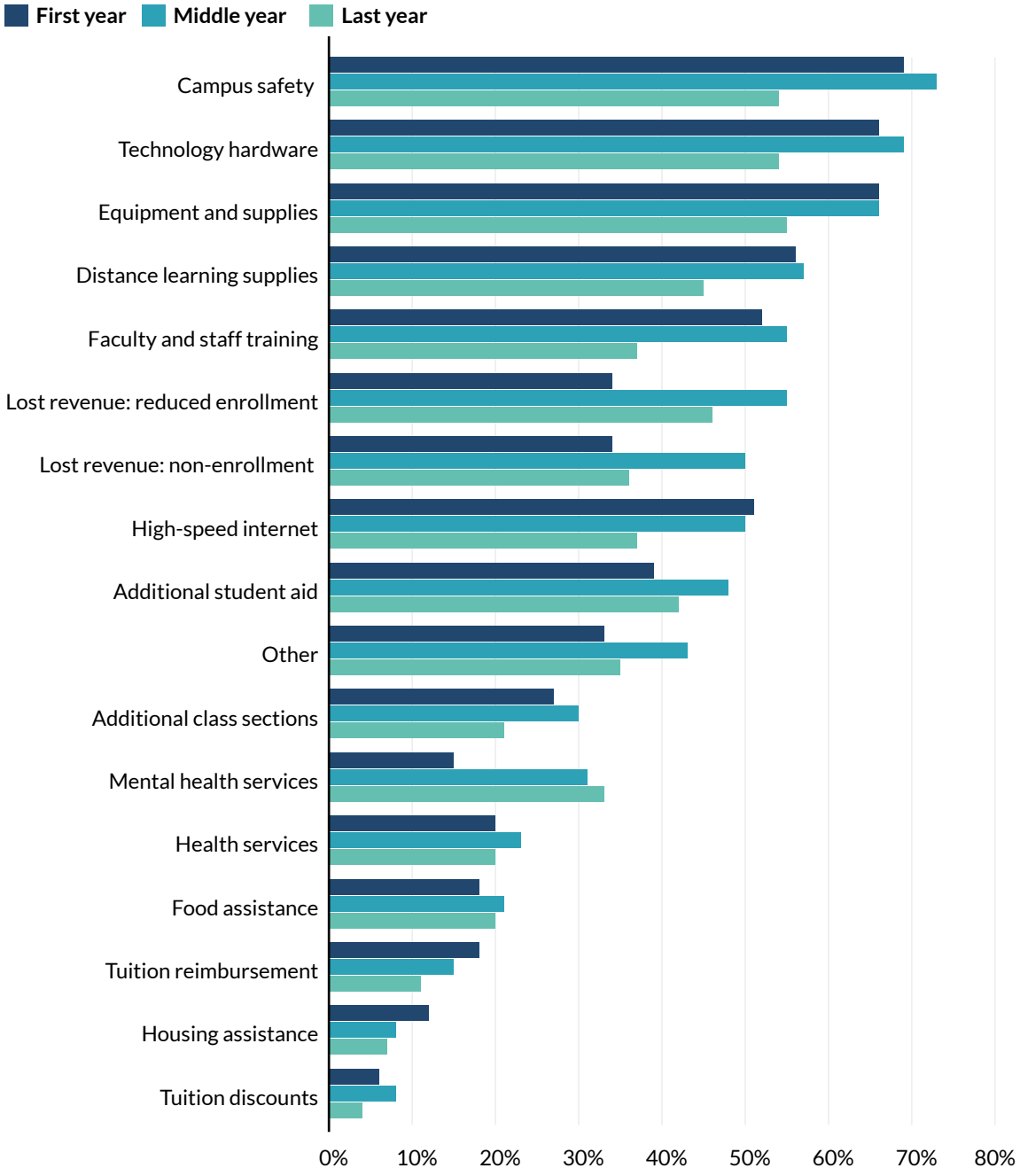
Note. n = 144.

Institutional Aid Expenditures During the HEER Grant Period

Figure 6 shows how the uses of institutional aid changed over the roughly three years that HEER funds were available.[15] Expenditure categories are ordered by the overall frequency that colleges reported using aid for each purpose (see Table 6 above). In the first year of HEER, the most frequently reported expenditures were for campus safety (69% of colleges), technology hardware (66%), equipment and supplies (66%), and distance learning supplies (56%). By the third year of HEER, all four of these expenditure categories remained among the very highest used by colleges relative to other categories, though they all declined in frequency. Over the same period, recovering revenue from reduced enrollment became more common, replacing faculty and staff training as one of the top five expenditure categories in the third year.

One of the most notable changes in frequency of expenditures over time is the increase in the percentage of colleges using institutional aid for mental health services, which may suggest that mental health challenges and/or awareness of students' mental health needs increased over the course of the pandemic.[16] Conversely, the percentage of colleges that used institutional aid for housing assistance, tuition reimbursement, and high-speed internet decreased in the second and third years. In all other expenditure categories, the percentage of colleges reporting each use of institutional aid peaked in the second year of the program and declined in the third year.

Figure 6. Uses of Institutional Aid Over Time



Note. n = 143. Bars show the percentage of colleges making expenditures in each category and period.

Supports Before and After HEER Funding

To find out how HEER impacted colleges' spending for student supports pre- and post-pandemic, the survey asked colleges whether key supports—including student aid, free or reduced-price internet access or technology hardware, campus-based food pantries, other forms of food assistance, housing assistance, childcare assistance, and health or mental health services—were in place *before* and *after* HEER funding. Table 8 shows that the largest increases in the proportion of colleges offering key supports were for high-speed internet (145% change from pre- to post-pandemic) and technology hardware (124% change). The areas with smaller increases were those for which larger numbers of colleges already had supports in place. The most common supports prior to the pandemic were food pantries, followed by mental health services, student aid, and health services.

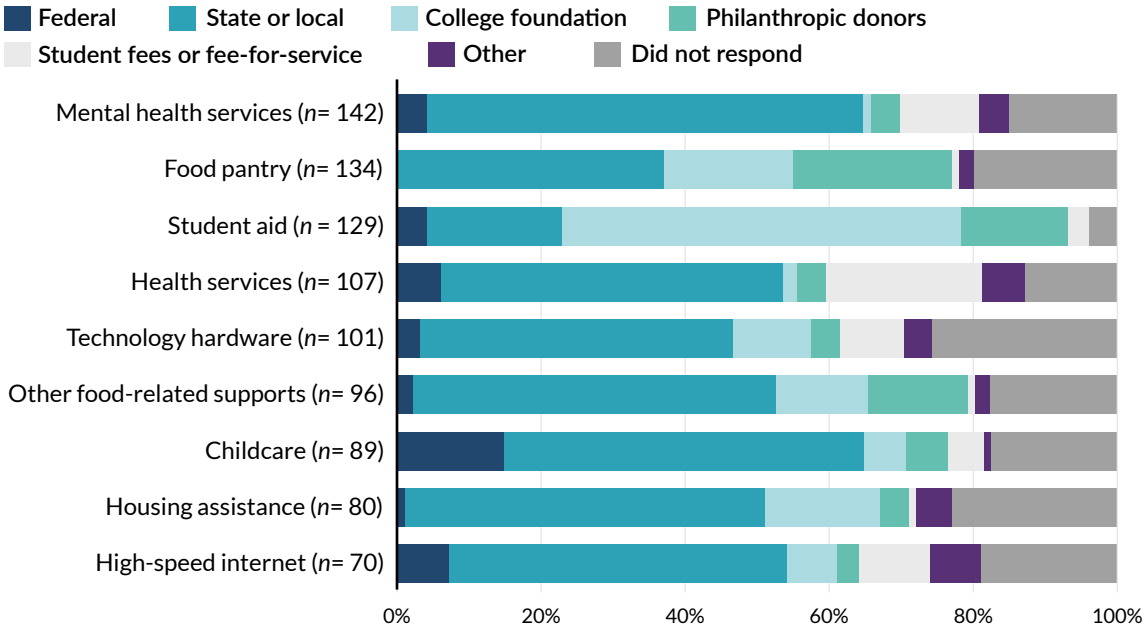
Table 8. Colleges Offering Key Student Supports Before and After the Pandemic

Support	Number of Colleges Offering the Support		Percentage Increase
	Pre-HEER Funding	Post-HEER Funding	
High-speed internet	31	76	145%
Technology hardware	50	112	124%
Housing assistance	55	85	55%
Other food assistance	76	102	34%
Childcare	79	98	24%
Student aid	121	145	20%
Health services	102	118	16%
Mental health services	138	159	15%
Food pantry	141	150	6%

Note. $n = 170$.

Colleges that indicated that they planned to have supports in place after HEER funds ended were also asked what they anticipated the primary funding source to be for each support. Colleges selected a single primary funding source for each support. Except for student aid, the largest share of colleges anticipated that state or local funding would be the primary funding source for supports after HEER funding ended (Figure 7). For student aid, over half of colleges expected to receive funding from college foundations (56%).

Figure 7. Anticipated Primary Post-Pandemic Funding Source for Key Student Supports



Note. Percentages are conditional on the number of colleges that reported they plan to have the relevant support after the pandemic. (The *n* shown for each support is the number of colleges out of the *n* = 151 sample, as not every college in the *n* = 170 sample was asked this question.)

4. How Successful Did Colleges Perceive HEER Funds to Be in Meeting Student and Institutional Needs During the Pandemic?

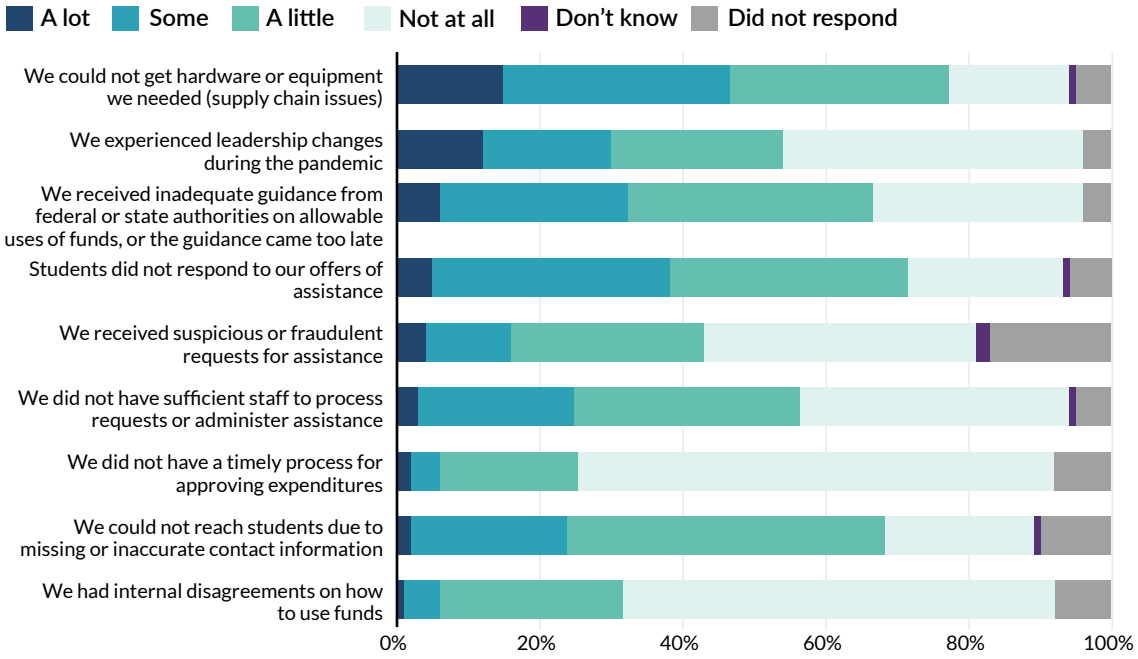
Overall, colleges reported few major challenges accessing and using HEER funds. They also perceived the use of HEER funds to be largely successful in helping both students and institutions manage the difficulties created by the pandemic.

Perceived Challenges

When asked to what extent their college had experienced a range of challenges using HEER student and institutional aid ("a lot," "some," "a little," "not at all," or "don't know"), very few colleges selected "a lot" for any of the challenges listed (Figure 8).

More broadly, based on the number of colleges that reported experiencing challenges either "a lot" or "some" of the time, relatively few colleges appeared to have had major problems using HEER funds. The most frequently cited challenge was related to supply chain issues (47%), followed by lack of response from students to offers of assistance (38%) and inadequate guidance or guidance that came too late on allowable uses of funds (32%). Very few colleges reported that they were stymied by internal disagreements (5%) or lack of a timely process for approving expenditures (6%), suggesting that colleges were well equipped to manage the distribution of funds.

Figure 8. Challenges in Using Student and Institutional Aid



Note. n = 170.

State Differences in Perceptions of Challenges

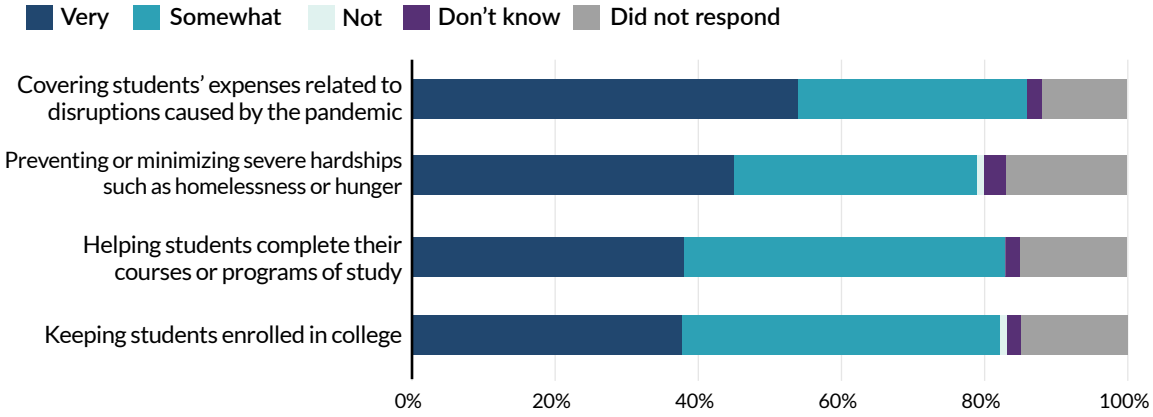
Overall, colleges across states reported similar levels of challenges. Colleges in Michigan were slightly more likely to report challenges with the guidelines for using aid. In Michigan, half of colleges (50%) indicated that inadequate guidance was a challenge either "a lot" or "some" of the time. In comparison, the proportion of colleges reporting the same level of challenge with inadequate guidance in the other five states ranged from 25% to 39%.

One other difference was that inadequate staffing seemed to present a bigger challenge for colleges in California, Texas, and Tennessee than for colleges in the other three states. Nearly half (45%) of colleges in Tennessee, 34% of colleges in Texas, and 29% of colleges in California indicated that lack of sufficient staff was a challenge either "a lot" or "some" of the time. In contrast, none of the colleges in Michigan, New York, and Ohio reported that lack of sufficient staff was a challenge "a lot" of the time, and only 13% of Michigan colleges, 17% of New York colleges, and 6% of Ohio colleges reported that it was a challenge "some" of the time.

Perceived Success of Student Aid

Most colleges reported that student aid was "very" or "somewhat" successful in addressing a range of issues (Figure 9), with little variation at the state level. Very few colleges reported that aid was "not successful" or responded "don't know."

Figure 9. Perceived Success of Student Aid in Addressing Key Issues



Note. n = 170.

Colleges indicated that aid was the most successful in covering students' expenses related to disruptions caused by the pandemic and mitigating severe hardships such as homelessness or hunger. A large majority of colleges (86%) indicated that student aid was "somewhat" or "very" successful in covering students' expenses related to disruptions caused by the pandemic, with over half (54%) stating it was "very" successful. Over three fourths of colleges (79%) reported that aid was "somewhat" or "very" successful in mitigating severe hardships, with slightly under half (45%) reporting that it was "very" successful.

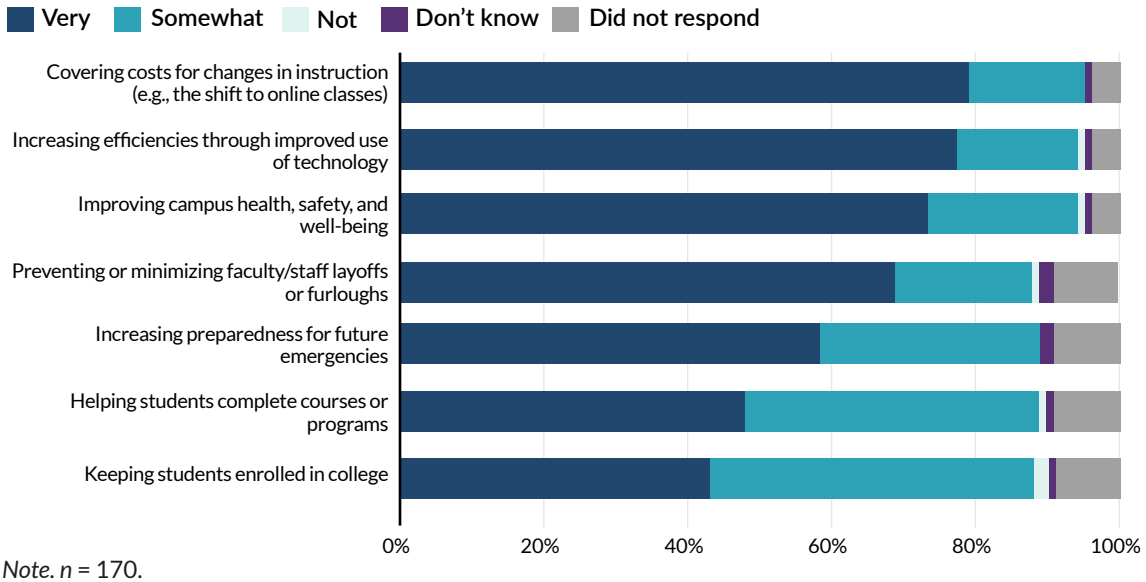
Variation in Perceived Success of Student Aid

As described earlier in this report (see Table 4), some colleges always used a targeted method to disburse direct aid to students (38%) by varying the amount of aid based on each student's needs. Other colleges used a targeted method only sometimes (51%) or not at all (6%). Those that always used a targeted method were more likely to report that student aid was "very successful" in keeping students enrolled. A similar pattern was observed among colleges reporting that student aid was "very successful" in helping students complete college, with half (48%) of colleges that always targeted aid reporting it was "very successful," compared to a little over a third (36%) of those that used the targeted method sometimes and a little over a fourth (27%) of those that did not target student aid.

Perceived Success of Institutional Aid

As with student aid, most colleges reported that institutional aid was "very" to "somewhat" successful in addressing a range of issues (Figure 10), with little variation between states.

Figure 10. Perceived Success of Institutional Aid in Addressing Key Issues



Note. n = 170.

Most colleges perceived institutional aid as "very" successful in covering costs associated with changes in the delivery of instruction during the pandemic and the shift to online courses (79%), increasing efficiencies through the improved use of technology (78%), improving campus health and safety (74%), minimizing faculty and staff layoffs (69%), and other purposes. Very few colleges reported that institutional aid was "not successful" in addressing any of the issues listed in the survey question.

Variation in Perceived Success of Institutional Aid

Colleges that used institutional aid to lower the cost of attendance and to support students' basic needs were more likely to report that institutional aid was "very successful" at keeping students enrolled than colleges that did not use institutional aid for these purposes. Over half of colleges that used institutional aid for tuition discounts (reducing the cost of tuition) (58%) reported that aid was "very successful" at keeping students enrolled, while only 42% of colleges that did not use aid to provide such discounts did so. Although the difference between colleges that did and did not use institutional aid for tuition reimbursements (paying students back for tuition already paid) was smaller, the pattern was the same. Nearly half of colleges (47%) that used institutional aid to offer tuition reimbursement indicated that aid was "very successful" at keeping students enrolled, compared to 40% of colleges that did not use aid for reimbursements.

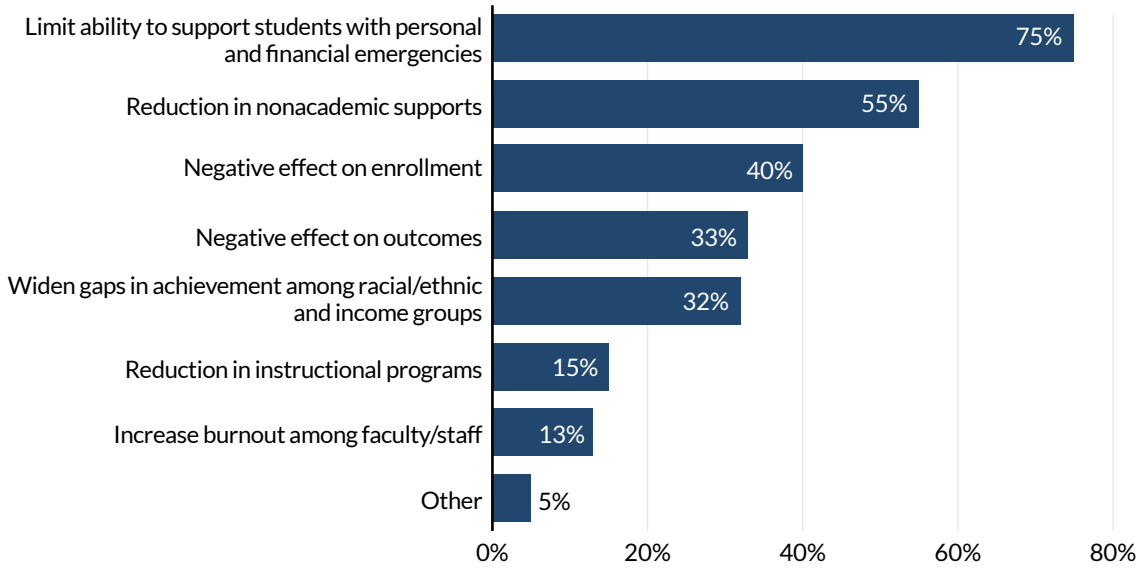
Similar patterns were observed for housing assistance and food assistance. While half of colleges (52%) that used institutional aid for housing assistance reported that aid was "very successful" at keeping students enrolled, only 43% of colleges that did not use aid for housing assistance did so. Likewise, half of colleges (48%) that used institutional aid for food assistance indicated that aid was "very successful" at keeping students enrolled, compared to 41% of colleges that did not use aid for food assistance.

5. What Do Colleges' Concerns About the End of HEER Funding Reveal About How to Prioritize Future Funding Efforts?

Concerns About Funds Ending

When asked how concerned their college was about the end of HEER funding, most colleges (89%) had at least some concern about funds ending, with only 9% reporting that they were "not concerned." Colleges with some level of concern (those that reported being "very," "somewhat," or "a little" concerned) were then asked about their main concerns related to the funds ending, with the option of selecting up to three responses. Among those colleges, three fourths indicated that the ending of HEER funding would limit their ability to support students with financial or personal emergencies (Figure 11). Only a small percentage of colleges reported specific concerns about reductions in instructional programs (15%) or an increase in faculty and staff burnout (13%).

Figure 11. Concerns About the End of HEER Funds



Note. n = 152. Among colleges that reported being "very concerned," "somewhat concerned," or "a little concerned" about the end of HEER funding, bars show the percentage of colleges with the specific concern indicated.

One factor that appears to have mitigated the concern colleges felt about the end of HEER funding is the receipt of additional funding for pandemic recovery from other sources (additional state aid, additional federal aid, Governor's Emergency Education Relief [GEER] Fund, private/philanthropic funds; see Table 7 above). Not surprisingly, colleges were more likely to report that they were "very concerned" about the end of HEER if they did not identify other sources of support.

We also observe some variation across states in colleges' level of concern about the end of HEER funding. Colleges in Tennessee and New York were the most concerned, with close to two thirds of colleges in Tennessee (64%) and half of colleges in New York (50%) reporting being "very concerned" about HEER funds ending. Colleges in

Michigan and Ohio were the least concerned, with only 6% of colleges in Michigan and 17% in Ohio reporting being "very concerned." Colleges in California and Texas fell in the middle, with 34% and 21%, respectively, being "very concerned."

Priorities for Future Funding

Additional student aid and mental health services are colleges' top priorities for future emergency federal funding (Table 9). In total, 71% of colleges selected student aid as one of their top three priorities, with 58% selecting it as their first priority. Mental health services were selected by 49% of colleges as one of their top three priorities, with comparable numbers ranking it as their first (16%), second (17%), and third (16%) choice. Following student aid and mental health services, technology hardware was the third most frequent priority, listed by 35% of colleges. However, more colleges selected it as a second (15%) or third (15%) priority than as their first priority (5%).

Table 9. Priorities for Future Federal Aid

Priority	Percent of Colleges			
	Ranked as 1st, 2nd, or 3rd	Ranked 1st	Ranked 2nd	Ranked 3rd
Additional student aid	71%	58%	6%	6%
Mental health services	49%	16%	17%	16%
Technology hardware	35%	5%	15%	15%
Housing	25%	4%	11%	11%
Food pantry	24%	2%	14%	8%
High-speed internet	17%	1%	9%	7%
Other food-related supports	12%	1%	6%	5%
Childcare	12%	1%	5%	6%
Health services	11%	1%	2%	8%

Note. n = 170.

6. In What Ways Did Colleges' Experiences With HEER Funds Vary Based on Institutional Characteristics?

In this section, we examine variation among colleges in their survey responses based on two characteristics: college setting (colleges located in cities and/or suburbs and those located in small towns and/or rural areas) and Carnegie Classification (in particular, "high transfer" and "high vocational/technical" community colleges). Colleges differed modestly across these characteristics in how they used HEER funds. They also differed modestly in their perceptions of how successful the funds were, the challenges they experienced, their level of concern about the end of HEER funding, and priorities for additional funding. In addition, colleges differed, again modestly, in the types of services and supports they had in place prior to the pandemic and

in those they planned to continue offering after HEER funding ended. Our analysis is based on a series of simple regressions. For the complete results, see additional tables in Appendix A.

Overall, the patterns described below suggest that the kinds of assistance colleges may need in the future will likely vary based on location and institutional type and that rural and vocational/technical colleges in particular may have fewer resources and need greater support. It is also worth noting that colleges in rural areas were less likely to report having received additional funding for pandemic recovery from sources other than HEER funds (see Appendix Table A4).

College Setting

Looking at HEER institutional aid expenditures across college settings, colleges in cities were more likely than other colleges to spend money on health services, and colleges in suburbs were more likely to use funds for childcare. Colleges in suburbs were also more likely to use funds for student aid, while colleges in towns and rural areas were less likely to do so (Table 10). In addition, colleges in rural areas were less likely than other colleges to use HEER aid for food pantries.

Table 10. Difference in Likelihood of Institutional Aid Uses by College Setting

Purpose	College Setting			
	City	Suburb	Town	Rural Area
Additional student aid		+	–	–
Health services	+			
Food pantry				–
Childcare		+		

Note. **+** denotes more likely than colleges in all other settings. **–** denotes less likely than colleges in all other settings. See also Appendix Table A2.

Two differences are also observed in terms of priorities for future funding (see Appendix Table A10)—urban colleges were more likely to prioritize food assistance other than pantries, and rural colleges were more likely to prioritize mental health services.

There are also differences related to college setting with respect to supports offered before and after HEER funding. These are shown in Table 11. Pre-pandemic, urban and suburban colleges were more likely to offer several supports, and colleges in towns and rural areas were less likely to offer various supports. A similar pattern is observed post-pandemic: Colleges in cities and suburbs indicated that they would offer several supports, whereas colleges in towns and rural areas indicated that they would not. These differences likely reflect differences in college resources.

Table 11. Difference in Likelihood of Offering Supports Before and After the Pandemic by College Setting

Support	Pre- or Post-HEER Funding	College Setting			
		City	Suburb	Town	Rural Area
High-speed internet	Pre				
	Post	+		–	–
Housing assistance	Pre		+		–
	Post		+	–	
Health services	Pre		+	–	–
	Post	+	+	–	–
Mental health services	Pre	+			–
	Post				
Food pantry	Pre	+	+	–	–
	Post	+		–	–
Other food assistance	Pre		+		–
	Post	+		–	–

Note. **+** denotes more likely than colleges in all other settings. **–** denotes less likely than colleges in all other settings. See also Appendix Tables A8 and A9.

Finally, colleges' reports of successes and challenges based on college setting (see Appendix Tables A6 and A7) follow similar patterns as pre- and post-HEER funding supports, with colleges in cities and suburbs appearing to be better resourced than those in towns and rural areas. For example, colleges in cities were more likely to report that institutional aid was successful in meeting multiple objectives (preventing layoffs, preparing for future emergencies, covering costs of the switch to remote learning, and improving the use of technology). And colleges in suburbs were less likely to report challenges in having sufficient staffing and reaching students. Rural colleges, on the other hand, were more likely to report challenges in having sufficient staffing, reaching students, and obtaining needed equipment due to supply chain issues. Colleges in towns were more likely to report the challenge of receiving fraudulent requests for student aid.

Carnegie Classification

A key difference between transfer-oriented and vocational/technical colleges was their use of institutional aid (see Appendix Table A2). Transfer-oriented colleges were more likely than all other types of colleges to use institutional aid for technology hardware and high-speed internet but less likely to use aid for tuition discounts. Transfer-oriented colleges were also less likely to use either student or institutional aid for the provision of industry-sought credentials (see Appendix Table A3). Vocational/technical colleges exhibited opposite spending patterns: They were less likely to use institutional aid for technology hardware and high-speed internet but more likely to use aid for tuition discounts and the provision of industry-sought credentials. These differences in expenditures could reflect a greater emphasis on assisting students

with the shift to remote learning among transfer-oriented colleges, which might be expected if vocational/technical colleges were offering more courses requiring in-person lab or other hands-on work that could not be taught online.

Mirroring differences seen in the offering of pre- and post-pandemic supports observed based on college setting (urban and suburban colleges versus more rural ones), vocational/technical colleges were less likely to offer a number of supports both prior to the pandemic (mental health services, health services, food pantries, and other forms of food assistance) and following the end of HEER funding (health services and food pantries as well as technology hardware). And prior to the pandemic, transfer-oriented colleges were more likely to have food pantries (see Appendix Tables A8 and A9).

Like rural colleges, vocational/technical colleges were more likely to report challenges with being unable to reach students and were also more likely to have challenges with students not responding to offers of assistance. However, while transfer-oriented colleges were less likely to have concerns about the end of HEER funding, vocational/technical colleges were more likely to report that student aid was successful at keeping students enrolled (see Appendix Tables A5 and A11).

Conclusion

HEER funding represented an unprecedented federal investment in community colleges and community college students. Findings from the national ARCC Network institutional survey provide promising evidence that community colleges are well positioned to identify and respond quickly to the needs of their students when provided with the resources to do so. At the same time, findings highlight the importance of ongoing, sustainable funding streams to ensure that community college students have the support they need to be successful. HEER funding may be over, but the effects of the pandemic linger on at many community college campuses. Below we summarize where the survey suggests HEER fulfilled its goals and where there may still be unfinished business.

In line with findings from the U.S. Department of Education's (2023) report on HEER, a central takeaway from the national survey is that colleges used the funds to support students and keep their institutions running. Colleges successfully developed systems for distributing student aid, spending nearly all of the aid they received in a timely fashion and ensuring it went directly to students. Trends in institutional aid expenditures also suggest that colleges pivoted rapidly to cover the costs associated with the switch to remote learning and to address new needs for technology and campus health and safety measures at a scale never before seen. In these respects, HEER accomplished its major goals of keeping colleges operational and helping them avoid massive layoffs, helping colleges quickly transition to online modes of instruction and service delivery, and getting cash aid quickly to students.

However, while colleges were extremely positive about the extent to which HEER enabled institutions and students to handle the immediate difficulties caused by the pandemic, a number of signs indicate that ongoing challenges remain. Colleges felt that aid was less successful in enabling students to stay enrolled, a concern reflected in the steep decline in community college enrollment nationwide observed during the pandemic (NSCRC, 2023). Although enrollment has started to gradually increase, fall 2023 enrollment numbers were still well below pre-pandemic levels (NSCRC, 2024).

The need to focus on the persistent challenges preventing students from enrolling and staying enrolled is also evident in colleges' high level of concern about their ability to support students experiencing financial hardships or other emergencies after HEER ends, as well as their identification of additional student aid as their top priority for future funding. The large demand for student aid likely reflects students' broader need for greater financial stability and not just a need for one-time funds to address a specific emergency. Highlighting the level of students' unmet needs, a recent report found that Pell-eligible community college students in California, Michigan, and New York experienced significant affordability gaps[17] during the 2019-20 and 2020-21 academic years, ranging from approximately $4,000 to $7,500 (Heller, 2023). Additionally, the steady increase in mental health expenditures over the course of the pandemic as well as colleges' prioritization of mental health services for future funding suggest that more still needs to be done to address mental health issues experienced by many community college students.

Overall, while the survey findings suggest that HEER largely met the goals for which it was intended, they also point to the importance of addressing systemic challenges facing community college students and the institutions that serve them. Now that the immediate crisis of the pandemic has passed and HEER funding has ended, there is an opportunity to think strategically about the investments that are needed to promote student success over the long term, particularly for underserved and financially vulnerable students who are the most at risk of stopping out or not enrolling in the first place.

Endnotes

1. The first—the $2.2 trillion CARES Act passed in March 2020—included $14 billion for the Office of Postsecondary Education to allocate to the HEER Fund (HEERF I). At the end of that same year, in December 2020, the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA) allocated an additional $23 billion to the HEER Fund (HEERF II). In March 2021, the American Rescue Plan (ARP) (HEERF III) allocated another $40 billion. Finally, in July 2022, the Supplemental Support under American Rescue Plan (SSARP) awarded a final $198 million (also through HEERF III).
2. Due to nuances in the formula to allocate student and institutional aid—which, for example, gave greater weight to enrollments of Pell Grant recipients—colleges with larger total enrollments did not always receive more funds than smaller ones. And the amount of other HEER funding (in addition to student and institutional aid) varied widely among institutions. For a fuller explanation and examples of funding, see Daniels Sarica et al. (2024).
3. Institutions could request a six-month extension for the distribution of student aid and a 12-month extension for the distribution of institutional aid from the U.S. Department of Education. See U.S. Department of Education (n.d.-c) for more information. However, as discussed later in this report, we found that colleges spent nearly all the HEER funds they received by the June 30, 2023, deadline.
4. State partners included the Michigan Community College Association, the New York State Student Success Center, the Ohio Association of Community Colleges, the Tennessee Board of Regents, and the Texas Success Center.
5. The survey questionnaires are available upon request.
6. Surveys were prepopulated with the most recent data available through the ESF Transparency Portal at the time of survey distribution, which was either January or February 2023 depending on the specific college.
7. This study uses the Carnegie Classification's method for undergraduate instructional programs to designate two-year institutions of higher education (community colleges) into the following five categories: (1) Associate's Colleges: High Transfer, (2) Associate's Colleges: High Vocational/Technical, (3) Associate's Colleges: Mixed Transfer/Vocational, (4) Baccalaureate/Associate's Colleges: Associate's Dominant, and (5) Other. See American Council on Education (2024) for more information.
8. This study uses the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) locale framework to define a college's locale as one of four basic types: (1) City, (2) Suburban, (3) Town, and (4) Rural. See NCES (n.d.) for more information.
9. Data on Pell recipients were from years 2019-20.
10. Data used for this report were collected from colleges that consented to survey participation and submitted at least one response to a survey question.
11. Because the short version of the survey includes a subset of questions from the original survey, all 170 responding colleges were given the opportunity to answer the questions included on the short survey.

12. The allocation formula was adjusted after the HEER I funding wave. For more, see Daniels Sarica et al. (2024) and Appendix A Table A1.
13. Percentages are conditional on the number of colleges (n = 111) that reported receiving other funds.
14. Colleges that selected "other groups" as a target population were asked to write in the student population(s) on which they focused. Many colleges reported prioritizing students based on indications of financial need, such as Pell eligibility, EFC from the FAFSA, student application information, and state system guidelines.
15. The survey allowed colleges to report HEER expenditures by calendar year, academic year, or fiscal year. For the ease of interpretation, we grouped their responses into three general categories: beginning year (e.g., CY 2020, AY 2020–2021, or FY 2020–2021); middle year (CY 2021, AY 2021–2022, FY 2021–2022); and final year (CY 2022, AY 2022–2023, FY 2022–2023).
16. The negative impact of the pandemic on college students' mental health has been well documented, with multiple studies reporting heightened levels of stress, anxiety, depression, and other mental health challenges among both two- and four-year college students starting in fall 2020 (Gallup & Lumina Foundation, 2023; The Hope Center, 2021; Lipson et al., 2022).
17. The affordability gap was defined as the estimated cost of attendance (tuition, fees, room and board, books, and other living expenses) minus income (expected family financial contributions as measured by the FAFSA's EFC, grant aid, and work earnings) (Heller, 2023).

References

American Association of Community Colleges. (2023). *Fast facts*. https://www.aacc.nche.edu/research-trends/fast-facts/

American Council on Education. (2024). *Undergraduate instructional program classification.* The Carnegie Classification of Institutions of Higher Education. https://carnegieclassifications.acenet.edu/carnegie-classification/classification-methodology/undergraduate-instructional-program-classification/

Belfield, C., & Brock, T. (2021a, January 21). Community college graduates and the COVID-19 pandemic. *The CCRC Mixed Methods Blog.* Columbia University, Teachers College, Community College Research Center. https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/easyblog/community-college-graduates-covid19.html

Belfield, C., & Brock, T. (2021b, December 7). An updated look at community college graduates and the COVID-19 pandemic. *The CCRC Mixed Methods Blog*. Columbia University, Teachers College, Community College Research Center. https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/easyblog/community-college-graduates-covid19-update.html

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

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities. (2022). *Tracking the COVID-19 economy's effects on food, housing, and employment hardships*. https://www.cbpp.org/research/poverty-and-inequality/tracking-the-covid-19-economys-effects-on-food-housing-and

Cruse, L. R., Holtzman, T., Gault, B., Croom, D., & Polk, P. (2020). *Parents in college: By the numbers*. Institute for Women's Policy Research and Ascend at the Aspen Institute. https://iwpr.org/parents-in-college-by-the-numbers/

Daniels Sarica, H. (2023). *Pandemic relief funding dashboard* [Data dashboard]. Accelerating Recovery in Community Colleges Network and CCRC. https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/arccnetwork/projects/spending-of-federal-recovery-funds/dashboard/

Daniels Sarica, H., Monahan, T., & Anderson, M. (2024). *An analysis of pandemic relief funding at community colleges*. Accelerating Recovery in Community Colleges Network and CCRC. https://ccrc.tc.columbia.edu/arccnetwork/portfolio-items/analysis-federal-pandemic-relief-funding/

Evans, W. N., Kearney, M. S., Perry, B., & Sullivan, J. X. (2019). A cautionary tale about emergency financial assistance without services: Evidence from a randomized controlled trial evaluation at a community college. *AEA Papers and Proceedings, 109,* 218–222. https://doi.org/10.1257/pandp.20191014

Gallup & Lumina Foundation. (2023). *Stressed out and stopping out: The mental health crisis in higher education*. https://www.luminafoundation.org/resource/stressed-out-and-stopping-out/

Grosh, M., Leite, P., Wai-Poi, M., & Tesliuc, E. (Eds.). (2022). *Revisiting targeting in social assistance: A new look at old dilemmas*. World Bank Publications.

Heller, D. E. (2023). *Closing the college affordability gap.* The Institute for College Access and Success. https://ticas.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/Heller-College-Affordability-Gap.pdf

The Hope Center. (2021). *The Hope Center Survey 2021: Basic needs insecurity during the ongoing pandemic*. Temple University. https://hope.temple.edu/sites/hope/files/media/document/HopeSurveyReport2021.pdf

Kolbe, T., & Baker, B. D. (2019). Fiscal equity and America's community colleges. *Journal of Higher Education, 90*(1), 111–149. https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2018.1442984

Lipson, S. K., Zhou, S., Abelson, S., Heinze, J., Jirsa, M., Morigney, J., Patterson, A., Singh, M., & Eisenberg, D. (2022). Trends in college student mental health and help-seeking by race/ethnicity: Findings from the national healthy minds study, 2013–2021. *Journal of Affective Disorders, 306,* 138–147. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jad.2022.03.038

Lo, P., & Dancy, K. (2023, November 9). *A snapshot of today's college students*. Institute for Higher Education Policy. https://www.ihep.org/a-snapshot-of-todays-college-students/

McKibben, B., Wu, J., & Abelson, S. (2023, August 3). New federal data confirm that college students face significant—and unacceptable—basic needs insecurity. *The Hope Blog*. Temple University, The Hope Center. https://hope.temple.edu/npsas

National Association of College and University Business Officers. (2022, February 4). New HEERF supplemental support, applications are available. https://www.nacubo.org/News/2022/2/New-HEERF-Supplemental-Support-Applications-Are-Available

National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators. (n.d.). *Higher education emergency relief funds comparison chart*. https://www.nasfaa.org/uploads/documents/HEERF_Funds_Comparison_Chart.pdf

NASFAA, NASPA, & HCM Strategists. (2022). *Evaluating student and institutional experiences with HEERF.* https://www.nasfaa.org/evaluating_heerf_report

NASFAA, NASPA, & MDRC. (2021). *An evaluation of Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act funding for postsecondary institutions*. https://www.nasfaa.org/cares_evaluation_report

National Center for Education Statistics. (n.d). *NCES locale classifications and criteria*. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/edge/docs/LOCALE_CLASSIFICATIONS.pdf

National Center for Education Statistics. (2021b). *Table 304.60: Total fall enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by control and level of institution and state or jurisdiction: 2018 and 2019* [Data table]. Digest of Education Statistics. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d20/tables/dt20_304.60.asp

National Center for Education Statistics. (2022a). *Table 306.20: Total fall enrollment in degree-granting postsecondary institutions, by level and control of institution and race/ethnicity or nonresident status of student: Selected years, 1976 through 2021* [Data table]. Digest of Education Statistics. U.S. Department of Education, Institute of Education Sciences. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d22/tables/dt22_306.20.asp

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

National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. (2023). *Stay Informed with the latest enrollment information*. https://nscresearchcenter.org/stay-informed/

National Student Clearinghouse Research Center. (2024). *Current term enrollment estimates: Fall 2023* (Expanded edition). https://nscresearchcenter.org/current-term-enrollment-estimates/

Office of Postsecondary Education. (2021). *Overview on the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund under the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.* U.S. Department of Education. https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/opebriefingheerfarpinstitution.pdf

Olaniyan, M., Magnelia, S., Coca, V., Abeyta, M., Vasquez, M. C., Harris, F., III, & Gadwah-Meaden, C. (2023). *Two pandemics: Racial disparities in basic needs insecurity among college students during the COVID-19 pandemic*. Temple University, The Hope Center. https://hope.temple.edu/racial-disparities-basic-needs-insecurity-college-students-covid-19-pandemic

O'Leary, B., & June, A. W. (2023, June 2). How colleges spent extra Covid-relief money on their students. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*. https://www.chronicle.com/article/how-colleges-spent-extra-covid-relief-money-on-their-students

RTI International. (2019). *First-generation college students: Demographic characteristics and postsecondary enrollment* [Fact sheet]. NASPA and The Suder Foundation, Center for First-Generation Student Success. https://firstgen.naspa.org/journal-and-research/national-data-fact-sheets-on-first-generation-college-students/7A515490-E6AA-11E9-BAEC0242AC100002

The State University of New York. (2024). *SUNY fast facts*. https://www.suny.edu/about/fast-facts

U.S. Department of Education. (n.d.-a). *Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund*. https://www2.ed.gov/programs/heerf/index.html

U.S. Department of Education. (n.d.-b). *Methodology for calculating allocations per Section 18004(a)(1) of the CARES Act*. https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/heerf90percentformulaallocationexplanation.pdf

U.S. Department of Education. (n.d.-c). *No cost extension (NCE) request form*. www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/heerfnocostextension2023.pdf

U.S. Department of Education. (2021a). *Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund III: Frequently asked questions*. https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/arpfaq.pdf

U.S. Department of Education. (2021b). *Methodology for calculating allocations under Section 314(a)(1): Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2021*. https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/314a1methodologyheerfii.pdf

U.S. Department of Education. (2021c). *Notice inviting applications for funds under the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF), Section 314(a)(1); Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2021 (CRRSAA)*. Federal Register. https://www.federalregister.gov/d/2021-00935

U.S. Department of Education. (2022). *Frequently asked questions: Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) programs, Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) programs*. https://oese.ed.gov/files/2022/12/ESSER-and-GEER-Use-of-Funds-FAQs-December-7-2022-Update-1.pdf

U.S. Department of Education. (2023). *Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund: 2021 annual performance report*. https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/heerf-2021-annual-performance-report.pdf

U.S. Department of Labor. (n.d.). *Trade Adjustment Assistance Community College and Career Training (TAACCCT): Equipping community colleges for success* [Fact sheet]. https://www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/ETA/TAACCCT/pdfs/TAACCCT-Fact-Sheet-Program-Information.pdf

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

The White House. (March 7, 2022). *Fact sheet: State-by-state analysis of record $2.7 billion American Rescue Plan investment in Historically Black Colleges and Universities*. https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2022/03/07/fact-sheet-state-by-state-analysis-of-record-2-7-billion-american-rescue-plan-investment-in-historically-black-colleges-and-universities/

Yuen, V. (2020). *The $78 billion community college funding shortfall.* The Center for American Progress. https://www.americanprogress.org/article/78-billion-community-college-funding-shortfall/

Appendices

Appendix A: Supplementary Tables

Table A1. HEER I, II, and III Allocation Formula Criteria for Institutional and Student Awards

CARES (HEER I) $14 billion March 2020	CRRSAA (HEER II) $23 billion December 2020	ARP (HEER III) $40 billion March 2021
(1) 75% of the funds awarded to IHEs based on each IHE's share of FTE enrollment of Pell Grant recipients who were not enrolled exclusively in distance education prior to the coronavirus emergency, relative to the total FTE enrollment of such individuals in all IHEs (2) 25% of the funds awarded to IHEs based on each IHE's share of FTE enrollment of students who were not Pell Grant recipients and who were not enrolled exclusively in distance education prior to the coronavirus emergency, relative to the total FTE enrollment of such individuals in all IHEs	(1) 75% of the funds awarded to IHEs based on each IHE's relative share of enrollment of Pell Grant recipients who were not enrolled exclusively in distance education courses prior to the coronavirus emergency, split evenly between total (i.e., headcount) enrollment and FTE enrollment (2) 23% of the funds awarded to IHEs based on each IHE's relative share of enrollment of students who were not Pell Grant recipients and who were not enrolled exclusively in distance education courses prior to the coronavirus emergency, split evenly between total enrollment and FTE enrollment (3) 2% of the funds awarded to IHEs based on each IHE's relative share of enrollment of Pell Grant recipients who were enrolled exclusively in distance education courses prior to the coronavirus emergency, split evenly between total enrollment and FTE enrollment	

Sources. U.S. Department of Education (n.d.-b) and U.S. Department of Education (2021a). See also National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (n.d.).

Table A2. Regression Results by College Setting and Carnegie Classification: Use of HEER Institutional Aid

Panel A									
Variable	Additional Class Sections	Campus Safety	Childcare	Distance Learning	Equipment and Supplies	Faculty and Staff Training	Food Pantry	Health Services	High-Speed Internet
College setting									
City	0.0729	−0.0113	−0.0791	0.0927	−0.0397	0.0851	0.0478	**0.148***	−0.0128
Suburb	0.0914	0.0345	**0.226*****	−0.103	0.0571	0.0273	0.0409	−0.0442	0.0661
Town	−0.213*	−0.0653*	−0.044	−0.0163	0.012	−0.230***	0.0606	−0.0724	−0.00692
Rural	−0.0469	0.0301	−0.153	0.0057	−0.0244	0.0437	**−0.188****	−0.12	−0.0626
Carnegie Classification									
High Transfer	−0.00988	0.0239	0	0.0451	−0.00108	0.0864	0.084	0.0911	**0.114***
High Vocational & Technical	−0.0455	−0.0179	0.00899	−0.151*	0.00824	−0.0833	−0.0326	−0.148	**−0.264*****
Mixed	0.0305	0.00061	−0.00962	0.0418	−0.0142	0.0111	−0.0219	−0.0294	0.0123
Primarily Associate's Baccalaureate	0.0362	0.0272	0.0327	0.0753	0.0109	−0.117	−0.214*	0.00111	0.0875
Other	−0.039	−0.481***	−0.194	−0.352	0.0881	−0.325	0.739*	0.04	−0.269

Panel B										
Variable	Housing	Lost Revenue, Non-Tuition	Lost Revenue, Tuition	Mental Health Services	Other Food Assistance	Student Aid	Technology Hardware	Tuition Discounts	Tuition Reimburse-ments	Other
College setting										
City	−0.00417	0.0673	−0.0964	0.033	−0.0396	0.111	0.0596	0.0458	−0.059	−0.00512
Suburb	−0.0373	0.131*	0.166**	0.133	0.102	**0.145***	−0.028	0.0245	0.0834	0.0646
Town	0.0265	−0.295***	−0.0234	−0.177	0.0107	**−0.213****	−0.102*	−0.146**	−0.174*	−0.0526
Rural	0.0346	−0.0227	−0.047	−0.075	−0.0848	**−0.179****	0.0382	0.0319	0.149	−0.0444
Carnegie Classification										
High Transfer	−0.0128	0.0375	−0.00262	0.238***	0.0485	0.085	**0.0858****	**−0.125****	−0.104	0.122*
High Vocational & Technical	−0.167*	−0.0346	0.101	−0.134	−0.102	−0.153	**−0.156*****	**0.176****	0.12	−0.185*
Mixed	0.120*	−0.0498	−0.0112	−0.15	0.0651	0.00186	−0.0417	0.0477	0.025	−0.0823
Primarily Associate's Baccalaureate	0.049	0.0969	−0.16	−0.152	−0.0909	−0.068	0.0753	0.035	0.0579	0.165
Other	−0.188	−0.272	0.214	−0.0238	−0.396	0.248	0.0696	−0.123	0.126	0

Note. Bolded results are referred to in the body of the report.

***$p < 0.01$, **$p < 0.05$, *$p < 0.1$.

Table A3. Regression Results by College Setting and Carnegie Classification: Use of HEER Student and Institutional Aid

Variable	Career and College Advising	Dual Enrollment	Industry-Sought Credentials	Unpaid Account Balances	Work-Based Learning Opportunities
College setting					
City	0.0891	0.201**	0.188**	0.022	0.291***
Suburb	−0.0259	−0.0429	−0.112	0.0986	−0.0542
Town	−0.0524	−0.101	−0.0554	−0.146	−0.167
Rural	−0.0594	−0.168	−0.0967	−0.0414	−0.236*
Carnegie Classification					
High Transfer	0.0157	−0.0403	**−0.165***	0.0275	−0.157*
High Vocational & Technical	0.0735	−0.15	**0.268****	−0.0713	0.0833
Mixed	0.0289	0.209**	0.0818	−0.0135	0.145
Primarily Associate's Baccalaureate	−0.275*	−0.0677	−0.0959	0.0929	−0.0152
Other	0.0822	−0.297	−0.343	−0.203	0.155

Note. Bolded results are referred to in the body of the report.

***$p < 0.01$, **$p < 0.05$, *$p < 0.1$.

Table A4. Regression Results by College Setting and Carnegie Classification: Receipt of Other Funds

Variable	Any Other Funds	Other State Funds
College setting		
City	0.0919	0.0580
Suburb	0.00483	0.0727
Town	0.0820	−0.148
Rural	**−0.235****	−0.0833
Carnegie Classification		
High Transfer	−0.0713	0.135
High Vocational & Technical	0.0723	0.120
Mixed	0.0349	−0.259***
Primarily Associate's Baccalaureate	0.0222	0.0776
Other	0.222	−0.531

Note. Bolded results are referred to in the body of the report.

***$p < 0.01$, **$p < 0.05$, *$p < 0.1$.

Table A5. Regression Results by College Setting and Carnegie Classification: Success of Student Aid

Variable	Completions	Enrollment	Hardships	Student Expenses
College setting				
City	−0.0209	−0.0778	−0.12	−0.11
Suburb	−0.123	0.00149	−0.154	−0.082
Town	0.109	0.075	0.283*	0.205
Rural	0.0813	0.048	0.132	0.0868
Carnegie Classification				
High Transfer	−0.176*	−0.0915	−0.0477	−0.159
High Vocational & Technical	0.205	**0.237***	0.127	0.0606
Mixed	−0.0412	−0.081	−0.0423	0.0593
Primarily Associate's Baccalaureate	0.366**	0.159	0.132	0.349*
Other	−0.599	−0.613	−0.554	−0.435

Note. Bolded results are referred to in the body of the report.

***$p < 0.01$, **$p < 0.05$, *$p < 0.1$.

Table A6. Regression Results by College Setting and Carnegie Classification: Success of Institutional Aid

Variable	Campus Health and Safety	Changes in Instruction Delivery	Helping Students Complete	Keeping Students Enrolled	Prep for Future Emergencies	Preventing Layoffs	Technology Improvements
College setting							
City	0.115	**0.168****	0.124	0.0693	**0.174***	**0.233****	**0.158****
Suburb	−0.174**	−0.07	−0.127	−0.183*	−0.0222	−0.190*	−0.144*
Town	0.0668	−0.0651	−0.0463	0.0108	−0.0877	0.0219	−0.0651
Rural	−0.00185	−0.115	0.0239	0.142	−0.183	−0.122	0.00688
Carnegie Classification							
High Transfer	−0.0583	−0.0834	0	0.00549	−0.0954	−0.122	−0.0711
High Vocational & Technical	0.145	0.202*	0.148	0.0785	0.0274	0.0564	0.0843
Mixed	0.00581	−0.0482	−0.0699	−0.0634	0.0566	0.154	0.0397
Primarily Associate's Baccalaureate	−0.0226	0.0911	−0.0786	−0.039	0.158	−0.144	0.00623
Other	−0.255	−0.205	0	0.429	−0.396	0.719	−0.21

Note. Bolded results are referred to in the body of the report.

***$p < 0.01$, **$p < 0.05$, *$p < 0.1$.

Table A7. Regression Results by College Setting and Carnegie Classification: Challenges

Variable	Approval for Uses	Fraudulent Requests	Internal Disagreements	Lack of Guidance	Leadership	Reaching Students	Staffing	Student Responses	Supply Chain
College setting									
City	−0.159	−0.185	−0.0519	0.203	−0.0719	−0.157	−0.126	−0.22	−0.0477
Suburb	−0.0698	−0.267	0.0207	−0.0884	−0.137	**−0.296****	**−0.336****	0.176	−0.0508
Town	0.094	**0.414****	−0.0936	−0.0452	0.0769	0.195	0.143	−0.114	−0.331
Rural	0.263*	0.31	0.141	−0.159	0.244	**0.511*****	**0.557*****	0.214	**0.462****
Carnegie Classification									
High Transfer	−0.0513	−0.266*	−0.0741	0.124	0.0986	−0.185	−0.145	−0.136	−0.129
High Vocational & Technical	−0.167	0.258	0.0491	−0.31	0.127	**0.429*****	0.105	**0.347***	0.0632
Mixed	0.0457	0.0579	0.0928	0.0846	−0.0798	0.156	0.0387	0.132	0.0658
Primarily Associate's Baccalaureate	0.299	0.148	−0.15	−0.214	−0.515*	−0.410*	0.06	−0.401	0.0748
Other	0.364	0.748	0.406	0.618	1	−0.974*	0.9	−0.797	0.459

Note. Bolded results are referred to in the body of the report.

***$p < 0.01$, **$p < 0.05$, *$p < 0.1$.

Table A8. Regression Results by College Setting and Carnegie Classification: Supports in Place Pre-Pandemic

Variable	Childcare	Food Pantry	Health Services	High-Speed Internet	Housing	Mental Health Services	Other Food Assistance	Student Emergency Aid	Technology Hardware
College setting									
City	0.116	**0.0928***	0.0922	0.0375	−0.0522	**0.108***	0.0545	0.0326	0.0243
Suburb	0.077	**0.104***	**0.205****	−0.00784	**0.313*****	−0.0511	**0.237****	0.00184	0.0909
Town	−0.153	**−0.153****	**−0.192***	−0.033	−0.164	0.0723	−0.157	−0.021	−0.0662
Rural	−0.139	**−0.145****	**−0.256*****	−0.0207	**−0.192***	**−0.159****	**−0.272****	−0.0347	−0.104
Carnegie Classification									
High Transfer	−0.0627	**0.110****	0.0494	0.0101	0.00779	0.05	0.0458	0.11	0.116
High Vocational & Technical	−0.0388	**−0.212*****	**−0.286*****	−0.00219	0.0332	**−0.230*****	**−0.230***	−0.181*	−0.0876
Mixed	0.08	−0.00351	0.0107	−0.075	−0.0182	0.0833	0.0831	−0.0229	−0.0815
Primarily Associate's Baccalaureate	0.167	0.0688	0.314**	0.0224	0.0305	0.0724	0.134	−0.0494	−0.0547
Other	−0.519	−0.364	−0.144	0.800***	−0.394	−0.367	−0.55	0.265	0.167

Note. Bolded results are referred to in the body of the report.

***$p < 0.01$, **$p < 0.05$, *$p < 0.1$.

Table A9. Regression Results by College Setting and Carnegie Classification: Supports in Place Post-Pandemic

Variable	Childcare	Food Pantry	Health Services	High-Speed Internet	Housing	Mental Health Services	Other Food Assistance	Student Emergency Aid	Technology Hardware
College setting									
City	0.0832	**0.119*****	**0.140***	**0.184****	0.0527	−0.00285	**0.159***	−0.0367	0.113
Suburb	0.132	0.0444	**0.138***	0.11	**0.221****	0.0129	0.095	−0.021	−0.0328
Town	−0.154	**−0.158*****	**−0.270*****	**−0.255****	**−0.254****	−0.00948	**−0.225***	−0.0311	−0.0273
Rural	−0.163	**−0.114****	**−0.167***	**−0.210***	−0.137	−0.00485	**−0.195***	0.115*	−0.106
Carnegie Classification									
High Transfer	0.103	0.0494	0.101	−0.0227	0.0819	0.0129	−0.0703	0.0148	0.0191
High Vocational & Technical	−0.0112	**−0.109***	**−0.270*****	−0.126	−0.0142	−0.0151	−0.15	−0.0936	**−0.240****
Mixed	−0.0667	0.00121	−0.0781	−0.0108	−0.202**	0.00898	0.133	0.0605	0.150*
Primarily Associate's Baccalaureate	−0.0371	0.0811	0.353***	0.275	0.418**	0.0333	0.352**	−0.0654	−0.0528
Other	−0.658*	−0.431**	−0.252	0.442	−0.62	−0.475***	−0.776**	0.0949	0.241

Note. Bolded results are referred to in the body of the report.

***$p < 0.01$, **$p < 0.05$, *$p < 0.1$.

Table A10. Regression Results by College Setting and Carnegie Classification: Priorities for Future Funding

Variable	Childcare	Food Pantry	Health	High-Speed Internet	Housing	Mental Health	Other Food Assistance	Student Emergency Aid	Technology	Other
College setting										
City	0.0391	0.051	−0.0596	0.000874	0.0474	−0.103	**0.138****	−0.0105	−0.00856	−0.022
Suburb	−0.0617	−0.032	0.130**	0.0385	−0.0291	−0.162*	−0.0404	0.0867	0.00683	−0.0129
Town	0.0536	0.00523	−0.0409	0.0369	−0.119	0.184	−0.0559	−0.137	0.0154	−0.0333
Rural	−0.0207	−0.0413	−0.0577	−0.0904	0.0698	**0.245****	−0.118	0.0103	−0.00947	0.0844
Carnegie Classification										
High Transfer	0.0415	0.0316	−0.0222	−0.00148	−0.0084	−0.0928	−0.0232	0.0178	0.0351	−0.00889
High Vocational & Technical	0.00262	−0.0458	−0.0409	−0.0651	0.136	0.184	−0.0559	−0.0353	−0.0356	−0.0333
Mixed	−0.0651	0.0437	0.0129	0.0326	−0.121	0.0535	0.0308	−0.00803	−0.0825	0.091
Primarily Associate's Baccalaureate	0.0417	−0.187	0.0486	−0.0208	0.153	−0.222	0.125	0.160	0.132	−0.125
Other	−0.13	0.247	0.383	0.318	−0.279	0.468	−0.136	−0.779***	0.123	−0.117

Note. Bolded results are referred to in the body of the report.

***$p < 0.01$, **$p < 0.05$, *$p < 0.1$.

Table A11. Regression Results by College Setting and Carnegie Classification: Concerns About the End of HEER Funds

Variable	Concerned?	Burnout	Emergencies	Enroll	Gaps	Outcomes	Programs	Supports	Other
College setting									
City	0.245	−0.014	−0.0491	0.0316	0.112	−0.0772	−0.0456	0.0702	−0.029
Suburb	−0.304*	0.0111	0.0243	−0.00832	−0.0836	0.0277	0.0484	−0.0247	−0.0173
Town	0.0473	−0.00135	−0.115	−0.063	0.0377	0.125	0.0266	−0.0364	0.0607
Rural	−0.00848	0.00785	0.138	0.0154	−0.092	−0.023	−0.0165	−0.0437	0.0229
Carnegie Classification									
High Transfer	**−0.287****	0.0125	−0.0264	0.0236	−0.0597	0.124	0.05	−0.0847	0.0149
High Vocational & Technical	0.339*	0.0683	−0.0414	0.0869	−0.0901	0.00509	−0.0651	0.0218	−0.0667
Mixed	0.159	−0.0702	−0.0175	−0.219**	0.140	−0.0877	−0.0614	0.175*	0.00536
Primarily Associate's Baccalaureate	−0.0779	0.0542	0.172	0.449***	−0.0464	−0.159	0.131	−0.204	0.0449
Other	0.434	−0.133	0.253	−0.407	0.187	−0.333	−0.153	−0.0533	−0.0588

Note. Bolded results are referred to in the body of the report.

***$p < 0.01$, **$p < 0.05$, *$p < 0.1$.

Appendix B: Survey Administration

This section provides information about the data collection process and survey recruitment strategies used by CCRC for the administration of the ARCC Network Institutional Survey (hereafter, the survey) in Michigan, New York, Ohio, Tennessee, and Texas. Some additional information about PPIC's administration of the short survey in California is also provided.

Survey pilot. In November 2022, a draft version of the survey was shared with CCRC's national advisory board, which includes community college presidents, for review. Then, in April 2023, two colleges participated in a pilot of the survey. These colleges were recommended to participate in the pilot by the community college organizations in their respective states. Feedback on the survey from these colleges was used to make minor revisions to the survey.

Original survey administration. The survey (which we refer to in the report as the "original survey") was administered via email to all colleges in the five survey states on May 1, 2023. Each survey recruitment email included a unique link to the survey (in Qualtrics), a copy of the informed consent form for the college's reference, and instructions for completing the survey. In addition, the recruitment email included a fillable PDF version of the survey. Colleges could either use the PDF version as an internal tool to gather responses to the survey before entering the responses in the Qualtrics survey or enter their responses in the PDF and upload the survey to Qualtrics instead of completing the survey in Qualtrics. The survey deadline was originally June 16, 2023 (see below).

Informational webinar. In May 2023, CCRC hosted an informational webinar for colleges in the five survey states. The webinar was advertised by CCRC and by the partner organizations in each respective state. In addition to describing the goals of the survey, the webinar provided information about the structure and contents of the survey as well as the data sources and institutional resources that colleges would need to complete the survey. The webinar also included a question-and-answer session.

Office hours. CCRC hosted three virtual "office hours" for colleges. Colleges had the option to join office hours if they had any questions about the survey.

Email communication. CCRC sent regular email reminders to colleges about the survey deadline, including emails notifying colleges that the survey deadline had been extended (see below). Email was also used to advertise the informational webinar and the office hours.

Cold calls. In June 2023, CCRC study researchers called the primary contact of each college that had not completed the survey. The purpose of the calls was to verify that these colleges had received the survey link and to provide the college with assistance (as needed or requested by the college) to complete the survey.

Extended survey deadlines. The survey's general deadline was extended twice to encourage survey participation. The deadline was extended first from June 16, 2023, to June 30, 2023, and then to August 11, 2023. In addition, CCRC extended the survey

deadline to August 31, 2023, on an individual basis to colleges that were working on the survey but requested more time to complete the survey.

CCRC's short survey administration. Beginning in July 2023, CCRC provided colleges that had not yet completed the survey the opportunity to complete a short version (in lieu of the original survey). The short survey included 16 questions from the original survey. Colleges could complete the short survey using the fillable PDF provided to them via email or by completing the short survey in real time on a video call with CCRC study researchers.

PPIC's short survey administration. PPIC also provided colleges that had not yet completed the survey the opportunity to complete a short version. The PPIC short survey included every question on CCRC's short survey, in addition to some other questions from the original survey. Colleges were sent a fillable PDF of the original survey with all of PPIC's short survey questions highlighted. Colleges were instructed to answer only the highlighted questions; however, some colleges answered additional questions from the original survey.

Appendix C: Survey Samples and Analysis

Survey types. Survey administration efforts resulted in a total of 170 respondents from the following sources:

- Original: 142 respondents
- Short (CCRC): 19 respondents
- Short (PPIC): 9 respondents

Survey type merging and coding. CCRC analyzed all survey responses in STATA. Surveys completed in Qualtrics were exported into a .csv file that was then imported into STATA. Responses from PDF surveys and short surveys were manually entered into STATA. All of PPIC's data—in Qualtrics, PDFs, and short surveys—were sent via .csv file and appended to CCRC's data in STATA. For each survey, we assigned numerical values to survey responses. Responses to each survey question were coded as their own variables; some survey question responses are associated with many variables (for example, survey question 3.35 on the original survey resulted in 19 separate variables). Responses were only coded as "missing" when the college was provided the opportunity to respond to the question but did not. Responses to questions 3.38 and 4.41 on the original survey about how much money colleges spent on each institutional aid expenditure were coded as "0" if the college reported not spending any money on that expenditure in question 3.35.

Differences in sample sizes across questions. We constructed three subsets of questions based on the total maximum sample across survey types. The three question groups were as follows.

- ***Short survey questions.*** This subset of questions was prioritized by both CCRC and PPIC. As such, these questions were included in the original survey and in both CCRC's and PPIC's short surveys. Responses to short survey questions were analyzed using a sample size of 170 colleges.
- ***Short survey (PPIC only) questions.*** This subset of questions was included in PPIC's short survey and on the original survey. These questions were not included in CCRC's short survey. Responses to short survey (PPIC) questions were analyzed using a sample of 151 colleges.
- ***Original survey questions.*** This subset of questions was included only in the original survey. Neither CCRC nor PPIC included these questions in its short survey. Responses to original survey questions were analyzed using a sample size of 142 colleges. (Responses to original survey questions were analyzed using all available data. Due to how PPIC distributed its short survey, some short survey respondents in California answered "additional" questions from the original survey that were not part of either PPIC's or CCRC's short survey. As a result, the sample size for analyses of original survey questions ranged from 142 to 151.)

Appendix Table C1 describes the number of survey questions included in each question group, the survey(s) from which those questions were sourced, the number of survey questions that comprise each question group, and the total sample size used to analyze responses from each question group.

Appendix Table C1. Survey Samples and Analysis Samples

Question Group	Survey Type(s)	Number of Questions	Survey Questions	Sample Size for Analysis
Short survey questions	Short (PPIC), short (CCRC), original	16	O3.9 (S1) through O6.7 (S16)	170
Short survey (PPIC only) questions	Short (PPIC), original	12	O(SP)3.24 through O(SP)6.4	151
Original survey questions	Original	13	O3.3 through O3.64	142

Note. O = original survey, S = short CCRC survey, SP = short PPIC survey.

Appendix D: Characteristics of Survey Colleges

Table D1. IPEDS Institutional Characteristics of Survey Colleges

Characteristic	Mean	Minimum	Maximum
College fall enrollment size	9,668	96	74,781
Pell recipient (%)	30.2	8.0	83.0
Full-time (%)	33.5	11.3	87.5
Men (%)	45	17.3	73.5
Race/ethnicity			
American Indian or Alaska Native (%)	0.9	0.1	76.0
Asian (%)	6.1	0.0	41.0
Black or African American (%)	8.1	0.1	60.4
Hispanic or Latino (%)	31.6	1.4	97.4
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (%)	0.3	0.0	2.6
White (%)	44.2	1.5	92.9
Two or more races (%)	3.5	0.0	9.4
Unknown race (%)	4.5	0.0	50.6
U.S. nonresident (%)	0.8	0.0	8.7

Table D2. IPEDS Student Characteristics of Survey Colleges

Characteristic	Number of Colleges	Percentage
College setting		
City	64	37.6%
Suburb	48	28.2%
Town	27	15.9%
Rural	31	18.2%
Carnegie Classification		
Associate's Colleges: High Transfer	86	50.6%
Associate's Colleges: High Vocational/ Technical	25	14.7%
Associate's Colleges: Mixed Transfer/ Vocational	43	25.3%
Baccalaureate/Associate's Colleges	14	8.2%
Other	2	1.2%

Table D3. Means of IPEDS Student Characteristics of Survey Colleges by State

Characteristic	CA *n* = 71	MI *n* = 16	NY *n* = 25	OH *n* = 18	TN *n* = 11	TX *n* = 29
College fall enrollment size	11,827	5,765	6,037	7,112	6,417	12,482
Pell recipient (%)	27.3	34.4	34.2	28.9	38.2	29.6
Full-time (%)	30.2	30.9	46.3	28.8	47.1	29.4
Men (%)	42.1	38.3	40.6	40.5	36.5	39.1
Race/ethnicity						
American Indian or Alaska Native (%)	0.5	5.5	0.5	0.4	0.3	0.4
Asian (%)	11.1	2.1	3.6	1.5	1.8	2.8
Black or African American (%)	5.6	6.8	9.3	9.5	15.6	9.9
Hispanic or Latino (%)	48.3	5.9	11.2	3.7	6.6	49.0
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander (%)	0.5	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.1
White (%)	25.4	70.4	60.3	74.3	70.1	33.4
Two or more races (%)	4.4	3.8	2.6	3.5	3.2	2.0
Unknown race (%)	3.1	4.4	11.1	6.5	2.0	2.0
U.S. nonresident (%)	1.1	1.0	1.1	0.5	0.3	0.3

Table D4. Difference in Means *T*-tests by Survey Response Status, Institutional Characteristics, Whole Sample

Variable	Difference in Means (Nonrespondents - Respondents)	*t*-statistic
College setting		
City	0.017	0.27
Suburb	-0.006	-0.10
Town	-0.010	-0.21
Rural	-0.0015	-0.03
Carnegie Classification		
High Transfer	-0.048	-0.75
High Vocational & Technical	-0.030	-0.68
Mixed	0.002	0.04
Primarily Associate's Baccalaureate	0.067	1.685
Other	0.0095	0.60

$^{***}p < 0.01$, $^{**}p < 0.05$, $^{*}p < 0.1$.

Table D5. Difference in Means *T*-tests by Survey Response Status, Student Characteristics, Whole Sample

Variable	Difference in Means (Nonrespondents - Respondents)	*t*-statistic
College fall enrollment size	-404.6	-0.36
Pell recipient	-1.922	-1.33
Full-time	-3.272*	-2.34
Men	-0.0599	-0.07
Race/ethnicity		
American Indian or Alaska Native	0.716	-0.87
Asian	1.157	-1.11
Black or African American	0.049	-0.05
Hispanic or Latino	-0.625	-0.2
Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander	0.0295	-0.7
White	-1.245	-0.39
Two or more races	0.336	-1.26
Unknown race	-0.59	-0.73
U.S. nonresident	0.18	0.97

***$p < 0.01$, **$p < 0.05$, *$p < 0.1$.