

When the pandemic devastated communities and college campuses, colleges and universities faced an emergency. For the first time in history, Congress responded by authorizing billions of dollars in emergency aid to quickly alleviate hardships.

WHAT HAPPENED NEXT? TO FIND OUT, IN 2020–2021, THE HOPE CENTER COLLECTED EXTENSIVE DATA

SURVEYS OF



- ✓ Surveys of staff and administrators at colleges and universities
- ✓ Focus groups at 23 of those institutions

WE FOUND THAT BOTH STUDENTS AND INSTITUTIONS WERE STRUGGLING...

3 WAYS EMERGENCY AID PROGRAMS VARIED

- 1 Making students aware of the program
- 2 Establishing and implementing equitable eligibility criteria
- 3 Getting money out the door FAST



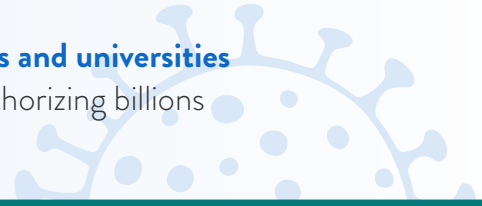
of students experiencing basic needs insecurity did not apply for emergency aid

STUDENTS IN CRISIS need money right away and apply at night and on the weekend. But most institutions only offer support during standard business hours. Students waited an average of 13 days for help.

The average time required to go from application to decision ranged from **4–6 days**.

Students could be notified of decisions within a day but could wait **up to 5 days**.

Once an award was made, students waited **3–6 days** to receive funds.



INSTITUTIONS COPEd IN DIFFERENT WAYS

- ✓ Some designed **administratively complex programs**, made more challenging by changing federal rules.
- ✓ Others, like Grambling State University, worked to **engage students** to complete a simple application.
- ✓ A multi-pronged approach, like Metropolitan State University Denver's, helped **spread funds far and wide**.
- ✓ **Speed was both a focus and a challenge**, as University of Hawaii Hilo recognized.
- ✓ A **dual-track approach**, similar to Normandale Community College, benefited students that qualify for federal funds as well as those who do not.

While the pandemic was unprecedented, given ongoing health concerns and climate change, it is likely that federal emergency aid will be needed for years to come.

WE RECOMMEND:



Congress should pass legislation to make emergency aid a permanent feature of federal higher education financing.



The U.S. Department of Education should provide technical assistance to help institutions design and deliver rapid response programs equitably.



Colleges and universities should invest in sustainable emergency aid practices that are distinct from traditional financial aid norms and free of red tape.