Entering the fall 2020 term, higher education was reeling from the coronavirus pandemic. Enrollment was down — particularly among students most at risk of basic needs insecurity; fewer students had completed the Free Application for Federal Student Aid; and college retention rates had dropped. Students and faculty were stressed and anxious. And by the end of the term, more than 267,000 Americans died. At the same time, the federal government pumped an unprecedented $6+ billion of emergency aid via the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act.

This report examines the pandemic's impact on the #RealCollege students who were able to continue their education in this challenging environment. We assessed students' basic needs security and their well-being as indicated by their employment status, academic engagement, and mental health.

THESE STUDENTS TOLD US THAT...

- Nearly 3 in 5 experienced basic needs insecurity
- Food insecurity affected 39% at two-year institutions
- Food insecurity affected 29% at four-year institutions
- Housing insecurity affected 48%
- Homelessness affected 14%
- The black/white gap in basic needs insecurity was 16 percentage points

WE ALSO LEARNED...

- 41% had a close friend or family member who was sick with COVID-19, while 7% were sick with COVID-19 themselves
- 13% lost a loved one to COVID-19 with Latinx students more than twice as likely as White students to lose a loved one
- 35% of students exhibited at least moderate anxiety
- Among students facing basic needs insecurity, access to supports was limited
  - Applied for emergency aid: 34%
  - Received emergency aid: 32%
  - Received SNAP: 18%
  - Did not apply for supports because they did not know how: 52%

While vaccines offer hope for fall 2021, the impact of the pandemic will reverberate for years. Providing students the supports they need — including for their basic needs — is the best way to ensure they can complete degrees.

To read the full report visit http://bit.ly/RCReport2021