

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.

OUR ELECTRONIC SURVEY WAS COMPLETED BY



NEARLY **200,000** (1% response rate) STUDENTS ATTENDING



202 COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES IN



42 STATES } **130** two-year colleges and universities } **72** four-year colleges and universities

THESE STUDENTS TOLD US THAT...

NEARLY **3 IN 5** experienced basic needs insecurity

FOOD INSECURITY AFFECTED

39% at two-year institutions

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%**

52% DID NOT APPLY FOR SUPPORTS because they did not know how

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.