In March 2020, the coronavirus pandemic struck American higher education. Colleges closed campuses, students lost jobs, and emergency resources failed to meet the demands caused by the crisis. This report examines the pandemic’s impact on students, from their basic needs security to their well-being, as indicated by employment status, academic engagement, and mental health.

While the survey response rate was 6.7%, it nevertheless represents an uncommonly large multi-institutional student sample; perhaps the largest thus far during the pandemic. The timing of the survey—fielded from April 20 to May 15, during the uncertain early days of the pandemic—likely contributed to the response rate. Participating in the survey also required internet access and provided limited incentives to students.

The survey assessed food insecurity over the prior 30 days, and housing insecurity and homelessness at the time the survey was completed.

**THE BLACK/WHITE GAP IN BASIC NEEDS INSECURITY WAS 19 percentage points**

**NEARLY 3 IN 5** were experiencing basic needs insecurity

**FOOD INSECURITY AFFECTED**

- 44% at two-year institutions
- 38% at four-year institutions

**15% & 11%** were experiencing HOMELESSNESS due to the pandemic

**HALF of respondents exhibited at least moderate anxiety**

**JOB SECURITY**

- 36% at two-year colleges
- 37% at four-year colleges

- 32% at two-year colleges
- 28% at four-year colleges

- 15% at two-year colleges
- 15% at four-year colleges

- 21% of respondents applied for UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE

- 15% for SNAP
- 15% for EMERGENCY AID

- 0%
- 10%
- 20%
- 30%
- 40%
- 50%
- 60%
- 70%
- 80%
- 90%
- 100%

- Nothing changed with my job
- Reduced hours/pay
- I lost this job

**Respondents could not concentrate on schooling during the pandemic**

- 50% at two-year colleges
- 63% at four-year colleges

Many students did not apply for supports because they did not know they were eligible to do so.

With epidemiologists advising that the novel coronavirus, which causes COVID-19, will likely be around for years, these new challenges are not temporary. The nation’s economic recovery depends, in part, on higher education’s recovery. Those efforts must begin by addressing students’ basic needs, since learning (online or offline) depends on it.

To read the full report visit: hope4college.com/realcollege-during-the-pandemic