

# #REALCOLLEGE DURING THE PANDEMIC

## 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 DATA COME FROM AN ELECTRONIC SURVEY COMPLETED BY



**38,602**  
STUDENTS ATTENDING



**54**  
COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES IN



**26**  
STATES

**39** two-year colleges : **15** four-year colleges and universities

## 38K+ STUDENTS TOLD US THAT...

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

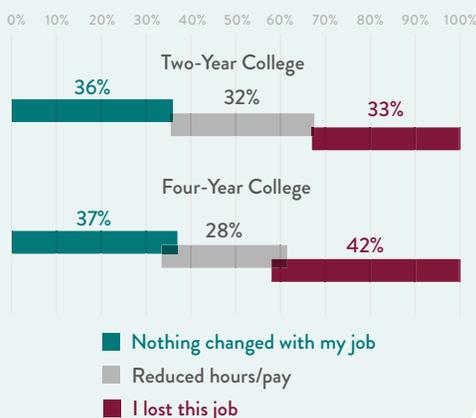
FOOD INSECURITY  
AFFECTED  
**44%** at two-year  
institutions  
**38%** at four-year  
institutions

**15%** & **11%**  
AT FOUR-YEAR INSTITUTIONS AT TWO-YEAR INSTITUTIONS  
were experiencing  
**HOMELESSNESS**  
due to the pandemic

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

## WE ALSO LEARNED...

### JOB SECURITY



**21%**

of respondents applied for  
**UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE**

**15%** for SNAP : **15%** for EMERGENCY AID

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



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

Respondents could not concentrate  
on schooling during the pandemic

**50%**  
AT TWO-YEAR COLLEGES  
**63%**  
AT FOUR-YEAR COLLEGES

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.