

**COVID-19 RESPONSE AND RECOVERY:  
SUPPORTING THE NEEDS OF STUDENTS  
IN HIGHER EDUCATION & LESSONS ON  
SAFELY RETURNING TO CAMPUS**

---

---

**HEARING**  
OF THE  
**COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION,  
LABOR, AND PENSIONS**  
**UNITED STATES SENATE**  
ONE HUNDRED SEVENTEENTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

ON

EXAMINING COVID-19 RESPONSE AND RECOVERY, FOCUSING ON SUP-  
PORTING THE NEEDS OF STUDENTS IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND  
LESSONS ON SAFELY RETURNING TO CAMPUS

—————  
JUNE 17, 2021  
—————

Printed for the use of the Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions



Available via the World Wide Web: <http://www.govinfo.gov>

—————  
U.S. GOVERNMENT PUBLISHING OFFICE

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS

PATTY MURRAY, Washington, *Chair*

|                                    |   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| BERNIE SANDERS (I), Vermont        | RICHARD BURR, North Carolina, <i>Ranking Member</i> |
| ROBERT P. CASEY, JR., Pennsylvania |   |
| TAMMY BALDWIN, Wisconsin           | RAND PAUL, M.D., Kentucky                           |
| CHRISTOPHER S. MURPHY, Connecticut | SUSAN M. COLLINS, Maine                             |
| TIM KAINE, Virginia                | BILL CASSIDY, M.D., Louisiana                       |
| MAGGIE HASSAN, New Hampshire       | LISA MURKOWSKI, Alaska                              |
| TINA SMITH, Minnesota              | MIKE BRAUN, Indiana                                 |
| JACKY ROSEN, Nevada                | ROGER MARSHALL, M.D., Kansas                        |
| BEN RAY LUJAN, New Mexico          | TIM SCOTT, South Carolina                           |
| JOHN HICKENLOOPER, Colorado        | MITT ROMNEY, Utah                                   |
|                                    | TOMMY TUBERVILLE, Alabama                           |
|                                    | JERRY MORAN, Kansas                                 |

EVAN T. SCHATZ, *Staff Director*

DAVID P. CLEARY, *Republican Staff Director*

JOHN RIGHTER, *Deputy Staff Director*

# C O N T E N T S

## STATEMENTS

THURSDAY, JUNE 17, 2021

Page

### COMMITTEE MEMBERS

|  |   |
|--|---|
| Murray, Hon. Patty, Chair, Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions, Opening statement .....      | 1 |
| Burr, Hon. Richard, Ranking Member, a U.S. Senator from the State of North Carolina, Opening statement ..... | 3 |
| Cassidy, Hon. Bill, a U.S. Senator from the State of Louisiana, statement .....                              | 6 |

### WITNESSES

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Copeland-Morgan, Youlanda, Vice Provost of Enrollment Management, University of California, Los Angeles, CA ..... | 7  |
| Prepared statement .....  | 9  |
| Summary statement .....   | 11 |
| Verret, Reynold, President, Xavier University of Louisiana, New Orleans, LA .....                                 | 11 |
| Prepared statement .....  | 13 |
| Summary statement .....   | 21 |
| Harris, Anthony, Student, Baldwin Wallace University, Berea, OH .....   | 22 |
| Prepared statement .....  | 24 |
| Pumariaga, Madeline, President, Miami Dade College, Miami, FL .....   | 26 |
| Prepared statement .....  | 27 |
| Summary statement .....   | 30 |



**COVID-19 RESPONSE AND RECOVERY:  
SUPPORTING THE NEEDS OF STUDENTS  
IN HIGHER EDUCATION & LESSONS ON  
SAFELY RETURNING TO CAMPUS**

---

**Thursday, June 17, 2021**

U.S. SENATE,  
COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, EDUCATION, LABOR, AND PENSIONS,  
*Washington, DC.*

The Committee met, pursuant to notice, at 10 a.m., in room 430, Dirksen Senate Office Building, Hon. Patty Murray, Chair of the Committee, presiding.

Present: Senators Murray [presiding], Casey, Kaine, Hassan, Lujan, Hickenlooper, Burr, Cassidy, and Tuberville.

**OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR MURRAY**

The CHAIR. The Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee will please come to order. Today, we are holding a hearing on supporting the needs of students in higher education during COVID-19 and safely returning to campus. Ranking Member Burr and I will each have an opening statement and then we will introduce today's witnesses. After the witnesses give their testimony, Senators will each have 5 minutes for a round of questions.

While we remain unable to have the hearing fully open to the public or media for in-person attendance, live video is available on our Committee website at [help.senate.gov](https://help.senate.gov). And if you are in need of accommodations, including closed captioning, you can reach out to the Committee or the Office of Congressional Accessibility Services. This pandemic upended our education in so many different ways.

Colleges and universities have had to close campuses and services, rapidly transitioned to online education and implemented critical public health measures, all while facing budget shortfalls. And overall spring enrollment fell to 16.9 million from 17.5 million, marking a one-year decline of over 600,000 students. Meanwhile, this pandemic has disrupted students, classrooms, and housing security, challenged their mental health, upended the economy, and created more uncertainty for students who are already struggling to pay for tuition and rent and food and other basic needs.

The pandemic has also shown us how much college students are hanging on by a thread. The fact that students were food and housing insecure before the pandemic truly concerns me. And now these needs have only deepened. But the pandemic has also shown us the power of supporting communities. As colleges look to safely reopen

this fall, there are many lessons we can draw on from institutions that are thoughtfully and safely reopening. The work to safely reopen must continue. Each college will need to take into the account of needs of students, faculty, staff and vulnerable populations as they bring back more people to campus.

Colleges must continue to address students' academic health, including mental health and basic needs. The Federal relief funds provided to colleges was a powerful and important step forward. The University of Washington in my home state told my office the amount of emergency aid requests they are receiving is 20 times higher than what it was before the pandemic. A study from the University of North Carolina Chapel Hill found first year students reported significantly higher levels of depression and anxiety in the wake of the pandemic. What is more, 2 in 5 students report experiencing food insecurity, almost half report experiencing housing insecurity, and 1 in 6 report experiencing homelessness.

We know this pain has not been felt equally. It has been hardest on historically under-resourced institutions like HBCUs, other minority serving institutions, and community colleges. It has been the hardest on students of color, families with low income, students with disabilities, LGBTQ students, rural students, veterans, and first generation college students, students who have always experienced inequities in our education system. That is why it was so important Congress take action. And while we have more work to do to see everyone through this crisis, we have been able to make student loan forgiveness, tax free, full stop and provide more than \$76 billion in higher education emergency relief funds, including nearly \$40 billion we passed as part of the American Rescue Plan.

I have heard from so many people back in my state what a lifeline those funds have been for schools and students. Colleges have been able to use these funds to support vaccination efforts, secure personal protective equipment, purchase cleaning supplies, update technology for remote learning, and cover lost revenue. And perhaps most importantly, they have been able to provide students desperately needed direct financial support as they grapple with the fallout of this pandemic. Because of the pandemic, a student at Western Washington University is living in a tent with her children. Now she is receiving a major emergency aid because of that American Rescue Plan. An international student at Seattle College couldn't go home due to the pandemic, couldn't pay for their rent or food. Those funds are now helping them make ends meet.

A student at Edmonds College was considering skipping spring quarter so she could afford to cremate and bury her father. Emergency financial aid meant she could keep her classes. And these are just a few of the many stories of the impact this funding is having on students. Whitcombe Community College has provided emergency funds to nearly 4,500 students. Clark College to 2,500 students. Washington State University nearly 10,000. And University of Washington has awarded aid to over 21,000 students. There are countless stories from Heritage University, Big Bend Community College, Wenatchee Valley College and other schools, and those are just the ones in my state.

Millions more from across the country about what this aid has meant to students, how to help them afford tuition and books and

food and housing and childcare and technology for remote learning, whatever it was they needed to continue their education. And I am pleased we have a student with us today, Anthony Harris from Baldwin Wallace University in Ohio, to share his own story. Anthony, thank you so much for being here. I hope we all take an important lesson away from this about the difference it makes when someone gets a helping hand during tough times. Students like Anthony and students like those whose stories I just shared are in many ways the future. And the schools they attend are foundational to local economies nationwide. Their success is critical to the success of our country and our communities.

But if we truly want to help students succeed, we have to do more than simply return to normal. Because even before this pandemic, normal's price tag was far too expensive and out of reach for too many students. Normal left too many students hungry and homeless and hanging by a thread. It left them with historic amounts of student loan debt and with empty promises from predatory for profit colleges. Normal was systemic racial and economic inequities in higher education and an epidemic of sexual assault, harassment, and bullying on campuses. If this pandemic has taught us anything is that we have to do better than normal.

That is why I worked with colleagues on both sides of the aisle to make sure legislation we passed last year restored Pell Grant eligibility for incarcerated individuals, students who have been defrauded, and students with drug related offenses. It is why we worked to provide relief for historically Black colleges and universities, and to better support working students, working families, students who are paid low incomes, and student parents. And it is why I am still pushing to do more. I am working to reverse the Trump administration's harmful Title IX rule, which made it so much harder for a student to report an incident of sexual assault or harassment and much easier for a school to just sweep it under the rug. Yesterday, I introduced legislation to double the maximum amount for Pell Grants and further expand Pell eligibility.

I joined my Democratic colleagues to introduce legislation to make community college tuition free. Back in my state, the Seattle Promise Program is showing how supporting students with tuition free community college can strengthen communities, which is why the city is using COVID relief funds to expand this program and help it cover even more student needs because they understand this is how we help Seattle return from this pandemic stronger and fairer. We have a lot of work to do to make sure every single student has the opportunity to achieve a higher education in a safe environment free from debt.

As we continue that work, I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today about what the pandemic can teach us about how we can get this done and working with my colleagues then to make it happen. With that, I will turn it over to Ranking Member Burr for his opening remarks.

#### OPENING STATEMENT OF SENATOR BURR

Senator BURR. Thank you, Madam Chair. Let me welcome our witnesses here today. And I would also like to highlight, Mr. Harris, thank you for being here. You are the only one that is pro-

viding testimony today that had their testimony in on time. So if your professors are listening, I hope you will get extra credit for the timeliness of your testimony. The full reopening of higher education system this fall is important. But I am very disappointed that we aren't focusing on reopening K through 12 schools for every student first.

During the pandemic, many higher education institutions reopened by fall 2020 or converted to online education and hybrid models with relative ease. And we know the distance learning in higher education works better because we have seen it around the country for years. So I am not really sure that this is the right focus at this time. Congress gave \$76 billion directly to higher education through three laws passed during the pandemic. So they have plenty of money. Yet as of the first week of June, \$53 billion allocated to institutions remains unspent. That is 70 percent of the money still sitting, just waiting to go out the door.

This makes me question if such institutions truly needed all this money. As former Harvard President Derek Boake noted almost two decades ago, "Universities share one characteristic with compulsive gamblers and exiled royalty." "There is never enough money to satisfy their desires." With all this free money, I am really concerned about the lack of accountability that it brings to higher education. The four-year graduation rate for a four-year degree is just 52 percent, according to the National Center for Education Statistics. We kid ourselves and have decided to talk about the six-year graduation rate instead, but that is just 62 percent completion rate. Show a lot of moms and dads and potential grads about our expectations for completion and then we lower those expectations so that 62 percent is somehow comforting.

Where I am from 62 percent is a D. I guess D stands for diploma. Yet tuitions keep rising. Tuition fees at 4 year private schools jumped 44 percent over the past decade—55 percent at 4 year public schools. In some, graduation rates are terrible, tuitions up, and debt is soaring. Democrats have refused to engage in the serious conversation about steps to change this trend. Instead, they want to talk about it, how to throw more money at the same problem as if new Government programs will somehow solve the problems of the last 30—the last 30 Government programs created. Make college free, cancel debt may be good talking points, but back home in North Carolina, we have already made community college very affordable.

In West Virginia and Arizona, they have made community college tuition less than the average Pell Grant. I am not sure these so-called solutions make a lot of sense, and I don't think we should reward states like California and Massachusetts with their sky high community college tuitions and give them a bunch of new taxpayer money. On top of that, colleges and universities are themselves becoming more and more isolated from reality with regular assaults on free speech and returning to segregated programming such as race specific graduation ceremonies and woke counseling sessions. Plus, institutions are harming society with near communist style indoctrination that any idea that is offered that offends you must be banned from the classrooms, or at least any idea that offends if you are a liberal, I should say.

Then there is the threat from China. Too many institutions of higher education rely on students from China paying full tuition to pad their books. But then these same institutions don't understand the concerns about efforts by China's Government to steal our intellectual property and subvert our research base. That business model needs to change, and universities need to take the threat from China much more seriously. Some are still toying with student debt forgiveness schemes that is breaking—breathtaking in its embrace of reckless financial responsibility and has zero regard for the deep moral hazard that we are creating for borrowers, institutions, and taxpayers.

The Biden administration still hasn't released any plan for returning to loan repayments this October, despite the fact that each year of the loan pause cost taxpayers more than the annual budget of Pell Grants. All adults have had the chance to get vaccinated and to get back to work. There is no reason to extend the non-payment at this point. I agree that there should be a discussion about helping people who don't earn enough to make full payment. There is a bipartisan solution that I have worked with Angus King called the Repay Act. We are ready to get the work if only someone from the White House would pick up the phone and call. You should have my number, but if you don't, [burr.senate.gov](mailto:burr.senate.gov) will give you my telephone number. But back to the elephant in the room.

We aren't—why aren't we having a discussion on K through 12 reopening? Are we concerned what the teachers union will say if we demand that schools fully reopen this fall? Last year, Republicans were blocked in our efforts to demand school reopening. Will we be blocked again and when unions say that they don't want to go back to school this fall? Science tells us that children are much less likely than adults to experience severe illnesses as the result of COVID-19. Science tells us that teachers can be safely vaccinated.

Thanks to Operation Warp Speed, BARDA, FDA, we got safe and effective vaccines approved in record time, and every adult in this country, including every teacher, has had plenty of time to get vaccinated at this point. Science tells us that children over 12 can be vaccinated, and hopefully this fall and winter the vaccines will be approved for younger children as well. And until then, we know the steps to take to keep everyone safe for in-person learning. So there is no excuse for schools not to fully reopen this fall.

Today, we will hear about the very troubling mental health consequences of a pandemic on college students who hadn't—had more opportunity to get back to the classroom than America's school children. So what do we know about younger students who saw massive surges in anxiety, depression because of unnecessary school closings? As of April, less than half of all fourth grade Black, Hispanic, Asian, economically disadvantaged, and English learning students were in fully in-person learning.

As of April, less than half of all eighth grade students nationwide were enrolled for fully in-person learning, and less than a third of all Black, Hispanic and Asian eighth graders were in fully in-person learning. Emergency department visits for suspected suicide attempts were up 22 percent in the summer of 2020, 39 percent in the winter of 2021 for children age 12 to 17. Since the science

shows us and schools can open safely, it is on the adults, the unions, school boards, superintendents that make decisions to keep them closed. Most of our country's private schools stayed open. They made plans. They followed the science. They serve their children far better than the public system.

I strongly encourage every Member of this Committee to read a powerful Op-ed in yesterday's New York Times by Ms. Lelac Almagor about her experience teaching this last year in a charter school in Washington, DC. She speaks powerfully about the harm done by school closures to children. She speaks about the power of education. It is an eloquent essay. It is elegant an essays as I have ever read, and I hope all of you will take the time to read it and to reflect on it as well.

Madam Chair, I yield back.

The CHAIR. Thank you, Senator Burr. And I assure you this—we agree opening our K through 12 schools is an incredibly important issue. It is a goal of everyone I know on my side as well as yours. And I intend to work with you to have a reopening on K through 12 schools as we get closer to the fall when schools are actually going to be back in session. So I look forward to working with that. I know we are seeing a lot more students in—back in schools, including my granddaughters, which I am delighted about. And I know we all share that goal.

With that, we will now introduce today's witnesses. Youlonda Copeland-Morgan is the Vice Provost of Enrollment Management at the University of California, Los Angeles. She oversees the university's offices of graduate—of undergraduate admission, financial aid and scholarships, strategic partnerships, and community engagement, and the early academic outreach program.

Vice Provost Copeland Morgan, welcome. Thank you for joining us today. With that, I am going to turn over to my colleague, Senator Cassidy, who will introduce President Reynold Verret.

#### STATEMENT OF SENATOR CASSIDY

Senator CASSIDY. Thank you, Madam Chair. It is my pleasure to introduce a man I consider as a friend, Dr. Reynold Verret, the sixth President of Louisiana's Xavier University, Historically Black College and University in New Orleans. Dr. Verret is a leader. He has been a leader throughout the pandemic, pioneering the way to reopen schools and universities safely, providing students the opportunity to learn in a way best suited to their needs and circumstances.

Under Dr. Verret's leadership, Xavier continues to be a top feeder school in the Nation, producing African-American physicians. He has increased Xavier's freshman enrollment by 21 percent and improve retention rates by 3 percent. He is an accomplished biochemist and immunologist, participating in COVID-19 vaccine trials, and has been an advocate for vaccination of all in my state. From the start of the pandemic Dr. Verret Xavier worked with local health agencies and hospitals to host mobile testing centers and to set up a fully operational COVID-19 testing lab to serve local communities and to serve Xavier.

Before joining Xavier, Dr. Verret was a Provost at Savannah State and Welch Universities, as a Dean at the University of the

Sciences in Philadelphia, as faculty and Department Chair of Chemistry at Tulane and at Clark Atlanta University, and as an Adjunct Professor of Immunology at the Tulane and Morehouse School of Medicine. He has also conducted cancer research at MIT. Dr. Verret's leadership over these past few months in reopening Xavier and leading his community has been impressive.

With his background, Dr. Verret understands the science behind the virus and the pandemic. And because of this, he made the decision to reopen Xavier to allow students to be educated in person. He knows the benefits for students on the individual level and on the community level that outweigh the risk associated with reopening. By the way, he also kind of, if I may, thought about the social aspect, restarting baseball at Xavier, which had not been there for 60 years.

Xavier not only reopened and not only gave students and community a sense of normalcy, they had a great season with 27–11, made it to the Black College World Series championship. But universities like Xavier have shown us the path forward as to how to reopen colleges and universities safely while giving students the education and learning environment they deserve. With that, I yield.

The CHAIR. Thank you, Senator Cassidy. Hi, Dr. Verret. I appreciate you joining us today as well. Next, I will introduce Anthony Harris, who you already heard, got his testimony in on time. We appreciate that. He is a senior at Baldwin Wallace University. He is pursuing a bachelor's degree in fine arts. Mr. Harris is also a resident assistant on his campus and a member of the Black Student Alliance.

Mr. Harris, again, thank you for joining us to share your personal experience and to speak about some of the challenges that students have been facing during this pandemic. We are very glad to have you with us today. Finally, Madeline Pumariega—Pumariega, did I say it correctly, Pumariega? Is the first woman to become President of Miami-Dade College, a position she has held since November 2020.

Before that, she was the Executive Vice President and Provost of Tallahassee Community College. And in both of those positions, she has played a key role in seeing students through this pandemic. We are glad to have you with us. We look forward to your testimony. And with that, we will begin with Vice President Copeland-Morgan. You may begin your opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF YOULONDA COPELAND-MORGAN, VICE PROVOST OF ENROLLMENT MANAGEMENT, UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, LOS ANGELES, CA**

Ms. COPELAND-MORGAN. Thank you, Chair Murray, Ranking Member Burr and Members of the Committee for inviting me to appear before you today. I appreciate the opportunity to provide testimony on the significant impact of the congressionally approved higher education emergency relief funds known as HEERF. The funds enabled students to continue their education just when their dreams of a college degree seemed shattered by COVID–19.

HEERF funds also proved to be a powerful investment in the recovery and growth of our economy. My testimony will address why

the end of COVID-19 does not mean that the need for increased Federal financial aid will end. There will not be a return to normal for students in public universities and community colleges. The needs of students may change, but they will not diminish. In fact, the opposite is true. To help meet these needs, the University of California system has not increased tuition for the last 8 years.

Also, in 2019, 2020, the State of California awarded \$950 million in state grants, and the UC system awarded \$800 million in need based grants to undergraduate students, compared to the \$400 million in Federal Pell Grants. Despite these efforts, funding from the state and the UC system, along with generous philanthropy—it is not sufficient to meet needs—students' basic needs for food, adequate housing, health care, affordable transportation, and other emergency needs. Federal financial aid will continue to be critical in providing a college education to students who are the future engine of the country's economic growth.

In March 2020, when COVID-19 cases began to rise dramatically in Los Angeles, UCLA closed. Students, especially from low income, rural, and underserved communities had difficulty studying remotely without computers, Internet service, or other basic technologies. Students from low and middle income families tried to find work to help their families pay the bills and to keep food on the table. Anyone who watched television and saw the long lines of cars with people waiting to get boxes of food for their family knows how widespread food insecurity is. The Federal Government helped by allowing universities flexibility in the Federal work study program.

We created new jobs that students could do remotely. We gave students their Federal work study payments in the form of grants if they were unable to find work. Thank you for this flexibility. HEERF funds authorized by Congress were indeed a lifeline. At UCLA from April 2020 to March 2021, CARES, HEERF I grant of nearly \$18 million were awarded to 22,695 students to cover specific pandemic related expenses. They provided need based grants to all students with a particular focus on Pell Grant and middle income families. In early June 2021, UCLA awarded HEERF II grants of \$17.3 million to over 13,000 students. An additional 600,000 will be awarded throughout the summer. The process of awarding the American Rescue Plan HEERF III funds, exceeding \$46 million, is already underway.

Without HEERF funds, the post pandemic COVID future would be extremely challenging for higher education institutions. HEERF funds enabled students to continue their education, graduate on time, and work toward their dream of a college degree. HEERF funds have an even greater lasting impact. They are an investment in the country's economic recovery and growth. Research shows that as workers' educational attainment rises, unemployment rates decrease and earnings increase, and as earnings increase, tax revenues also increase.

Importantly, college graduates provide Governments with a disproportionate share of tax revenue. Now, at UCLA, we are eagerly looking to the future. When UCLA opens in September, two new entering classes will arrive on campus at the same time, the class of fall 2020 and the class of fall 2021. They will become a part of

UCLA 43,000 student body. With your ongoing support, UCLA's graduation rate will continue to be higher than most colleges and universities across the Nation. We are extremely proud of our most recent undergraduates as they upheld our extraordinary record of achieving a four-year graduation rate of 84.2 percent.

After this terrible year, the future finally looks bright again for our Nation's students. They need and deserve our support. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Copeland-Morgan follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF YOULONDA COPELAND-MORGAN

Thank you, Chair Murray, Ranking Member Burr and Members of the Committee for inviting me to appear before you today as you review how colleges and universities have supported students using Federal relief funds during COVID-19.

My name is Youlonda Copeland-Morgan and I am the Vice Provost for Enrollment Management at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). In this capacity, I oversee the offices of Undergraduate Admission, Financial Aid and Scholarships, Strategic Partnerships and Community Engagement, as well as the nearly one-billion dollar financial aid and scholarship budget for UCLA's undergraduate, graduate and professional schools. I appreciate the opportunity to appear before you today and provide testimony on the significant impact of the congressionally provided Higher Education Emergency Relief Funds, known as HEERF.

These funds enabled students to continue their education and pursue their dreams of a college degree just when that dream seemed shattered by COVID-19. HEERF funds will also prove to be a powerful investment in the recovery and growth of our economy. Research has proven that higher education leads to increased earnings, lower unemployment and higher tax revenues.

My testimony will also address why the end of COVID-19 does not mean that the need for increased Federal financial aid will end. There will not be a return to normal for students in public universities and community colleges. The needs of students may change, but they will not diminish. In fact, the opposite is true.

Recently, a November 2020 report from the University of California Regents' *Special Committee on Basic Needs* acknowledged that "basic needs insecurity ... has pervaded universities nationwide for decades."

Over the past several years, colleges and universities have increased their efforts to meet these needs. For example, the University of California system (UC) has not increased tuition for the last 8 years. Also, the UC system and the state of California have awarded substantial financial aid in the form of institutional and state aid to qualifying students. In 2019-2020, the state of California awarded \$950 million in state grants, and the UC system awarded \$800 million in need-based grants to undergraduate students, compared to \$400 million in Federal Pell Grants. The Regents' *Special Committee* also estimated that the UC system's efforts to help meet students' basic needs supported an estimated minimum number of 40,000 students in the 2019-2020 academic year.

Despite these efforts, and families' willingness to contribute to their students' college education, funding from the State of California and the UC system, along with generous philanthropy, is not sufficient to meet students' basic needs for food, adequate housing, healthcare, affordable transportation and other emergency needs. Federal financial aid will continue to be critical to help colleges and universities provide a college education to the students who are the future engine of the country's economic growth.

In March 2020, when Covid-19 cases began to rise substantially in Los Angeles, UCLA closed. Students, especially from low-income, rural and other underserved communities, had difficulty studying remotely without computers, internet service or other basic technology. Students from low-and middle-income families tried to find work to help their families pay their bills and put food on the table. Anyone who watched television and saw long lines of cars with people waiting to get boxes of food for their family knows how widespread food insecurity was at the beginning of the pandemic.

The Federal Government helped by allowing the University flexibility in our work-study programs that are required for some students to receive additional financial aid. We were encouraged to create different types of jobs that students could do remotely. We were also allowed to give students their work-study payments if

they tried, but were unable, to find work. It's important to know that our students preferred to work, but the pandemic made it extremely difficult for them to find jobs they could do from home.

I want to thank you for this flexibility. It made a big difference for many students and helped the University with retention so students could complete their education.

However, even with this support, many students had to drop out of college. According to a Los Angeles Times article, dated June 10, 2021, California had the largest drop in college enrollment numbers in the Nation from Spring 2020 to Spring 2021. The state's overall community college and university enrollment dropped by about 123,000 students or 5.3 percent.

<https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2021-06-10/california-has-the-largest-drop-in-spring-college-enrollment-numbers-in-the-nation>.

These conditions would have gotten even worse if Congress had not taken action to help higher education institutions meet their students' basic and pandemic-driven emergency needs. The HEERF funds authorized by Congress were indeed a lifeline.

At UCLA, from April 2020 through March 2021, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES) HEERF I grants of nearly \$18 million were awarded to 22,695 students. These grants covered specific pandemic-related expenses and provided need-based grants to undergraduate, graduate and professional students, with a particular focus on Pell Grant and middle-income families, and those facing higher than expected housing and technology costs.

Upon notification of HEERF II funds, UCLA immediately began to determine eligibility for these grants. In early June, 2021, UCLA awarded HEERF II student grants of \$17.3 million to over 13,000 students to date. An additional \$600,000 will be awarded to address ongoing student financial aid appeals throughout summer enrollments.

The process is already underway for awarding the American Rescue Plan (ARP) HEERF III funds exceeding \$46 million dollars for the Fall 2021–2022 academic year. These funds will be used to address parental unemployment, changes in student income and other pandemic related costs.

Without HEERF funds, the post-pandemic future would have been extremely challenging for higher education institutions, students, families, communities and our country. HEERF funds were ... and continue to be ... extremely important. They enable students to continue their education, graduate on time and work toward their dreams of a college degree.

HEERF funds have an even more lasting impact. They are an investment in the country's economic recovery and growth. In May 2020, the Bureau of Labor Statistics published a report that said it well. The headline was "Learn more, earn more: Education leads to higher wages, lower unemployment." The report went on to say that "As workers' educational attainment rises, their unemployment rates decrease and earnings increase."

Other research has demonstrated that as earnings increase, tax revenues to governments also increase. In 2015 the Association of Public & Land Grant Universities, including UCLA, published a fact sheet entitled *How Do College Graduates Benefit Society At Large?* <https://www.aplu.org/projects-and-initiatives/college-costs-tuition-and-financial-aid/publicvalues/publicvalues-resources/q4/GradsSociety.pdf>.

This publication affirmed that college graduates provide governments with a disproportionate share of tax revenues. Moreover, it stated that "Over a lifetime, bachelor's degree holders contribute \$381,000 more in taxes than they receive in benefits." This contribution is likely to have grown even bigger over the last 6 years since the report was published.

Now, at UCLA, we are eagerly looking to the future.

When UCLA opens in September, *two* new entering classes will arrive on campus at the same time, the class of Fall 2020 and the new class of Fall 2021. They will become part of UCLA's 43,000 undergraduate, graduate and professional students.

With your ongoing support, along with support from the state of California and the UC system, UCLA's graduation rate will continue to be higher than the average graduation rate of similarly situated colleges and universities across the Nation. We are extremely proud of our most recent graduating class that entered UCLA in 2016 and graduated at the end of the 2019–20 academic year. They upheld our extraordinary record, especially for a public institution, by achieving a four-year graduation rate of 84.2 percent.

After this terrible year, the future finally looks bright again for students who dream of graduating from college and creating productive lives for themselves, their families and their communities.

They need ... and deserve... all the help we can give them to become the future our country needs. Thank you and now I'll be happy to answer any questions you may have.

---

[SUMMARY STATEMENT OF YOULONDA COPELAND-MORGAN]

The congressionally provided Higher Education Emergency Relief Funds (HEERF) have been an extraordinary lifeline for college and university students facing basic needs for food, housing, healthcare, transportation and other emergencies during the pandemic. They have enabled students to continue their education just when their dreams of a college degree seemed shattered by COVID-19.

Over the past few years, colleges and universities have increased efforts to meet students' basic needs. For example, the University of California system (UC) has not increased tuition for the last 8 years. Also, in 2019-2020, the state of California awarded \$950 million in state grants, and the UC system awarded \$800 million in need-based grants to undergraduate students, compared to \$400 million in Federal Pell Grants.

Despite these efforts, this funding has not been sufficient. Federal financial will continue to be critical to provide a college education to students who are the future engine of the country's economic growth.

In March, 2020, UCLA closed when Covid-19 cases were rising rapidly in Los Angeles. Students, especially from low-income, rural and other underserved communities, as well as middle-income families burdened with debt, had difficulty studying remotely without computers, internet service, or family income to provide food for their families or pay bills.

HEERF funds have provided crucial financial aid. At UCLA, from April 2020 through March 2021, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES) HEERF I grants of nearly \$18 million were awarded to 22,695 students. These grants covered pandemic-related expenses and provided need-based grants to undergraduate, graduate and professional students, with a particular focus on Pell Grant and middle-income families, and those facing higher than expected housing and technology costs.

Upon notification of HEERF II funds, UCLA immediately began to determine eligibility for these grants. In early June, 2021, UCLA awarded HEERF II student grants of \$17.3 million to over 13,000 students to date. An additional \$600,000 will be awarded to address financial aid appeals throughout summer enrollments.

The process is already underway for awarding the American Rescue Plan (ARP) HEERF III funds exceeding \$46 million dollars for the Fall 2021-2022 academic year. These funds will be used to address parental unemployment, changes in student income and other pandemic related costs.

HEERF funds have provided crucial financial aid to students during the pandemic. They are also an investment in the country's economic recovery and growth. Research has demonstrated that as educational levels rise, earnings increase, unemployment rates decrease, and taxes revenues increases. Specifically, college graduates provide governments with a disproportionate share of tax revenues.

When UCLA opens in September, the two entering classes of Fall 2020 and Fall 2021 will become part of UCLA's 43,000 undergraduate, graduate and professional student body. After this terrible year, the future finally looks bright for them. They need ... and deserve ... all the help we can give them to meet their basic needs.

---

The CHAIR. Thank you very much.  
President Verret.

**STATEMENT OF REYNOLD VERRET, PRESIDENT, XAVIER  
UNIVERSITY OF LOUISIANA, NEW ORLEANS, LA**

Dr. VERRET. Chair Patty Murray, Ranking Member Richard Burr, Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am Reynold Verret, Xavier University's sixth President. My institution is a historically Black university, an HBCU.

It is also a Catholic institution. The ultimate purpose of Xavier is to contribute to the promotion of a more just and humane society by having its students assume roles of leadership and service in the global society.

This preparation takes place in diverse learning environments that include research and community service. I was asked to testify before the Committee today about how Xavier has employed and utilized Federal funds, relief funds passed by Congress as a result of the novel coronavirus, COVID-19. I will speak for my institution, but you may infer from any of my comments it also applies to 100 other HBCUs in this country. I began discussing the COVID-19 virus with my leadership team in late January 2020, and soon after my team began planning for the eventuality that possibly this virus might reach our shores.

On February 25th, 2020, we had Mardi Gras in New Orleans, one of our iconic celebrations. On April 2nd, there were 725 cases of COVID-19 in Orleans Parish, population 391,000 roughly. Further, I began to note what the data would later prove to us, that the health disparities that we have always known that had ravaged African-American communities throughout this country had been exacerbated and now were being revealed to us in special ways. Working class African-Americans, especially these people who are at the center of the vigor and the identity of the city of New Orleans, would be bearing the larger burden of disease.

On campus, I created a task force to consider following options that we had to consider for the spring 2020 semester. One option was to actually continue face to face instruction if we could. The other was remote instructions, vacating the campus, sending people home. Our administration ultimately decided to offer instruction remotely, and for the 2020 spring semester, continue this into the summer. In the fall semester, return to mixed modalities in person on campus with special public health considerations. The majority of instruction took place in person, and we had a hybrid instructor for some students which allowed them some choices as to their preferred mode of instructions.

The university redoubled especially efforts for academic support, attending to the students' physical and also emotional needs for those students present on campus and also those who remained at home. All rooms at our residential facilities became single occupancy. 44 percent of our students normally live on campus, about 1,390 students. Xavier, nonetheless, is fortunate not to have had layoffs. However, we did maintain the hiring freeze, which we just released recently. Xavier will fully repopulate the campus for fall 2021, with students, faculty, and staff resuming the forms of instruction and interactions that were common to us before the pandemic.

Nonetheless, will have modified public health policies and behavioral policies on campus. We can speak to those at another point. I would be remiss if I did not thank the Congress, including Members of this Committee, for passing last year's Congressional H.R. 1748, the Coronavirus Aid Relief and Economic Security Act, and also H.R. 133, the Consulting Appropriations Act of 2020, and also H.R. 1319 passed by this Congress, the American Recovery Act. Because of the CARES Act, Xavier has access to a total of \$37 million

in direct allocations from Section 18004(a)(1) and Sections (a)(2) of the bill.

Noting that our students are enduring tough economic times that present unique challenges, most especially students of color, many of the economic activities of our students have changed in the past November 2019 because of family situations. With that being said, I would like to thank Congress especially for providing additional allocations of \$1.054 billion, \$1.7 billion, and \$2.98 billion to historically Black colleges and universities, tribal colleges and universities, and also minorities serving institutions. Additionally, I would like to thank the Congress for targeted debt relief to institutions through the HBCU Capital Finance Program of 2020, through the Consolidated Appropriations Act.

Many schools benefited, but I would note, I would say that Xavier along with nine other HBCUs benefited only in a marginal way because the funds—the relief was predicated upon funding already obligated at the time of the signing of the bill. I am also grateful of the funding which benefited our students population directly that has helped. The majority of our students are Black Americans. Black Americans are disproportionately affected by the pandemic. If the majority of our students are disproportionately affected, so is a university like ourselves, and many of my sister HBCUs.

Last, I have three recommendations that I would raise to the Committee, provide permanent relief for the HBCU Capital Finance Program for the remaining HBCUs which were not eligible in the December 2020 action. Two, clearly doubling Pell is very important for those who are struggling with the cost of the higher education and coming from low income families and backgrounds.

Third, support school administration plans which include HBC priorities such as those of the jobs and infrastructure, family plans in the president's budget, especially the \$409 million line item in the Title III strengthening the HBC programs. I want to thank you. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Verret follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF REYNOLD VERRET

### **Introduction**

Chair Murray, Ranking Member Richard Burr, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is C. Reynold Verret, and I serve as the 6th President of Xavier University of Louisiana (Xavier). Xavier was founded by Saint Katharine Drexel and the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. My institution is Catholic and a historically Black college and university (HBCU).

The ultimate purpose of Xavier is to contribute to the promotion of a more just and humane society by preparing its students to assume roles of leadership and service in a global society. This preparation takes place in diverse learning and teaching environments that incorporate all relevant educational means, including research and community service.

I was asked to testify before the Committee today on how Xavier, as an HBCU, has employed and utilized the Federal relief funds passed by Congress as a result of the novel coronavirus, COVID-19. As you know, HBCUs were created as early as 1837 to provide African Americans access to higher education. Noted for their contributions in educating “Black, low-income and educationally disadvantaged Americans,” the 101 HBCUs today constitute the class of institutions that satisfy the statutory definition of the term “HBCU” as defined in the *Higher Education Act of 1965* (HEA).

Under my leadership, Xavier continues to be the No. 1 feeder school in the country in producing Black doctors, according to the Association of American Medical Colleges (AAMC). Xavier educates a major portion of Black students heading to medical school, with Howard University as our nearest competitor, and dwarfs efforts of the Ivy League and large state, research intensive universities. From 2013 to 2018, 147 Xavier African-American graduates completed medical school. In the past 4 years, again under my leadership there has been an almost 21 percent increase in first-year students and retention grew by 3 percent. Xavier is indeed exemplary, but it is also an example of what HBCUs can and have been doing. Structurally, we educate a much larger fraction of African-American talent. We are producing talent that the Nation needs.

### HBCU History and Statistics

Before I share how Xavier is preparing to reopen in the Fall semester and the unique challenges caused by the virus named “SARS-CoV-2” causing a disease named “coronavirus disease 2019” (COVID-19),<sup>1</sup> it is imperative that we all understand the history of HBCUs to better understand how COVID-19 impacts these institutions exponentially.

HBCUs were created as early as 1837 to provide African Americans access to higher education. Noted for their contributions in educating Black, low-income, and educationally disadvantaged Americans, the 101 accredited HBCUs today constitute the class of institutions that satisfy the statutory definition of the term “HBCU” as defined in the *Higher Education Act of 1965* (HEA).<sup>2</sup>

HBCUs disproportionately enroll low-income, first-generation and academically underprepared college students—precisely the students that the country most needs to obtain college degrees. In 2018:

- Nearly 300,000 students attended HBCUs;<sup>3</sup>
- More than 75 percent of HBCU students were African Americans; and
- Over 60 percent of undergraduate students at HBCUs received Federal Pell Grants, and over 60 percent of these students received Federal loans.<sup>4</sup>

HBCUs comprised 3 percent of all two-and four-year non-profit colleges and universities, yet they:

- Enroll 10 percent of African American undergraduates;
- Produce 17 percent of all African American college graduates with bachelor’s degrees; and
- Graduate 24 percent of African Americans with bachelor’s degrees in STEM fields.<sup>5</sup>

A 2015 Gallup survey confirms that HBCUs are providing African American students with a better college experience than African American students at other colleges and universities.

- 55 percent of African American HBCU graduates say their college prepared them well for post-college life versus 29 percent for African American graduates of other institutions.<sup>6</sup>

HBCUs attained these results at an affordable price for students—that is, the cost of attendance at HBCUs is about 30 percent lower, on average, than other colleges—

<sup>1</sup> U.S. Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2020). *Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID 19)*. Retrieved from <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/covid-data/covidview/index.html>.

<sup>2</sup> The definition of an HBCU can be found in Section 322(2) of the HEA.

<sup>3</sup> U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. (2020). *Digest of education statistics 2019* [Table 313.20]. Retrieved from <https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19-313.20.asp>.

<sup>4</sup> UNCF Public Policy and Government Affairs calculations using 2018 data from the U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System. Data shows that out of 257,451 total undergraduate students at HBCUs, 159,101 students were receiving Pell Grants and 162,179 students were receiving Federal loans.

<sup>5</sup> AUNCF Patterson calculations using U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System.

<sup>6</sup> Gallup, Inc. (2015). *Gallup-USA funds minority college graduates report*. Retrieved from UNCF Website: <https://www.uncf.org/wp-content/uploads/PDFs/USA-Funds-Minority-Report-GALLUP-2.pdf>.

despite limited operating budgets and endowments that are roughly half the typical size of other four-year public and private non-profit colleges and universities.

Since our founding, HBCUs have been, and continue to be, under-resourced institutions. An issue brief produced by ACE (American Council on Education) and UNCF (United Negro College Fund, Inc.) revealed the following:

- Public HBCUs rely more heavily on Federal, state, and local funding in comparison with their non-HBCU counterparts (54 percent of overall revenue vs 38 percent);
- Private HBCUs depend somewhat more on tuition dollars than their non-HBCUs counterparts (45 percent compared with 37 percent);
- Private gifts, grants, and contracts constitute a smaller portion of overall revenue at private HBCUs compared to their non-HBCU counterparts (17 percent vs 25 percent);
- Public and Private HBCUs experienced the largest declines in Federal funding per full-time equivalent student between 2003–2015; and
- In both the public and private sectors, HBCU endowments lag behind those of non-HBCUs by at least 70 percent.<sup>7</sup>

Despite being under-resourced institutions, HBCUs have a large economic impact that often goes unnoticed by most. In 2017, UNCF released a report detailing the economic impact of HBCUs. The report revealed that in 2014, the impact of HBCUs on their regional economies included:

- \$10.3 billion in initial spending, which includes spending by the institution for personnel services, spending by the institution for operating expenses, and spending by students;
- An employment impact of 134,090 jobs, which approximately 43 percent were on-campus jobs and 57 percent were off-campus jobs;
- \$10.1 billion in terms of gross regional product, which is a measure of the value of production of all industries;
- A work-life earnings of \$130 billion for the Class of 2014, which is 56 percent more than they could expect to earn without their 2014 certificates or degrees; and
- A total economic impact of \$14.8 billion.<sup>8</sup>

In regard to Xavier University of Louisiana specifically, my institution had the following economic impact on its regional economy according to the UNCF report:

- \$200,000,000 in annual economic impact;
- 1,715 jobs supported annually; and
- \$1.7 billion in lifetime earnings for one graduating class.
- \$95 million in labor income impact.<sup>9</sup>

In addition to the positive impact HBCUs make on the overall economy, HBCUs also have a strong impact academically when observed at the state and local level. An upcoming report to be released by UNCF shows that:

<sup>7</sup> Williams, K.L. & Davis, B.L. (2019). *Public and private investments and divestments in historically Black colleges and universities*. Retrieved from American Council on Education Website: <https://www.acenet.edu/news-room/Pages/Public-and-Private-Investments-and-Divestments-in-HBCUs.aspx>.

<sup>8</sup> Humphreys, J.M. (2017). *HBCUs make America strong: The positive economic impact of historically Black colleges and universities*. Retrieved from UNCF Website: <https://www.uncf.org/programs/hbcu-impact>.

<sup>9</sup> (1) Total initial spending accruing to the institution's regional economy is the combination of three types of spending: spending by the institution for personnel services (wages, salaries, and benefits), spending by the institution for operating expenses, and spending by that institution's students. (2) The output impact was calculated for each category of initial spending, based on the impacts of the first round of spending and the re-spending of these amounts—the multiplier effect. (3) Value-added (gross regional product) impacts exclude expenditures related to foreign and domestic trade, thus providing a much more accurate measure of the actual economic benefits flowing to businesses and households in a region than the more inclusive output impacts. (4) The labor income received by residents of the cities that host HBCUs represents 72 percent of the value-added impact. (5) For the employment impact, on average, for each job created on campus there were 1.3 off-campus jobs that existed because of spending related to the HBCU. For all HBCUs combined, 13 jobs were generated for each million dollars of initial spending in 2014.

- HBCUs comprised 8.5 percent of the four-year institutions across the 21 states and territories in the analysis;
- Across the 21 states and territories in the analysis, HBCUs enrolled, on average, 24 percent of all Black undergraduates pursuing a bachelor's degree in a college or university in 2016;
- Across the 21 states and territories in the analysis, on average, 26 percent of all Black bachelor's degree recipients graduated from an HBCU in 2016; and
- In North Carolina, HBCUs are 16 percent of the four-year institutions, but enroll 45 percent of all Black undergraduates and award 43 percent of all Black bachelor's degrees in the state.<sup>10</sup>

### **Xavier's Plans for Possible Pandemic**

On January 23, 2020, as we received reports of the emergence of SARS-CoV-2 from China to neighboring countries, I called for the first meeting of my executive team with associated support staff to prepare for possible pandemic. The scenario-planning team met for a daylong tabletop exercise, the team responded to the question: if the virus arrived on our shore and necessary public health measures were implemented, including lockdowns and sending home students and non-essential personnel, how would Xavier sustain high quality education, continue serving its students, and protect all concerned. Their task was to assess forthrightly our preparedness, our capabilities and deficits. In doing so, we identified the immediate need to reinforce in all faculty an already burgeoning capacity to teach well online. We considered our ability to address physical and emotional needs of students and personnel, and to serve those who might become ill.

On the morning of Saturday, March 7, 2020, as I returned to Xavier from a UNCF meeting, Xavier continued its moment-to-moment response to the novel coronavirus that would be declared a pandemic in a precious few short days. On March 13, 2020, Xavier implemented its decision to move to remote instruction, initially allowing students the option to shelter in place. One week later, Xavier sent all students and non-essential employees home. One concern at the time is that travel might be restricted, and students might lose the possibility of returning home.

Throughout this long emergency, my fellow college and university presidents, locally in the New Orleans region and among sister HBCUs, exchanged ideas and worked collectively for the safety of our students and personnel and to sustain our educational missions. Many a Zoom meetings were spent exchanging thoughts and considering best approaches.

### ***Facing the COVID-19 Storm: Initial Responses***

I subsequently established a planning team derived from academic and student affairs, our health personnel, and specialists from our School of Pharmacy and our Public Health faculty. This group was charged to plan for the longer term, to plan for the return in whatever fashion and determine how we could offer instruction while maintaining the well-being of students, faculty and staff. I joined at times in their engaged discussions. One operant question that they were asked to test was how we could assure greater safety on campus, than in our surroundings or the home localities of our students, if we allowed students, faculty, and staff to return.

It is because they were able to propose a plan that satisfied this condition of greater safety that we could ethically embark on a return in-person for Fall 2020. The taskforce recommended a plan with detailed timeline and behavioral requirements for repopulating campus, with mixed modalities of instruction. Due to the uncertainties of the evolving pandemic, the team offered three scenarios: face-to-face instruction in Fall 2020, Xavier all online courses in Fall 2020, and a hybrid of both online courses and face-to-face instruction in Fall 2020.

The plan relied on masking, which the science showed to reliably and profoundly reduce transmissibility of the virus. It required social distancing, reducing occupancy of housing facilities to single occupancy per room. It required surveillance testing and decision points that might require a return to fully remote instruction. It called for redoubling efforts for academic and emotional support, attending to students physically present and those who remained at home. The team also proposed

<sup>10</sup> Saunders, K. & Nagle, B.T. (2018). *HBCUs punching above their weight: A state-level analysis of historically Black college and university enrollment and graduation*. Washington, DC: UNCF Frederick D. Patterson Research Institute.

guidance that students would shelter in place in the event of a surge. They should not be sent home to spread illness elsewhere. The plan recognizes the urgency of the situation and the necessity to persevere.

The university contracted space in a nearby hotel at a cost of several million dollars per semester so as to transition all residences to single occupancy. Forty-four percent of the student body (1390 students) resided on campus. Masking and distancing would be required of all persons on campus.

The leadership team also implemented deep cleaning of all facilities with an anti-microbial agent. Finally, while Xavier never closed, we met and exceeded all Federal, state, and local orders, including the closing of the campus and allowing access only to essential employees and a few remaining residential students. Initially, approximately 150 students remained on campus during their spring break. As the second week of spring break expired, in response to the extension of the Federal social distancing guideline through April 30th, Xavier decided to close residence halls on Friday, March 26th, and required all students to vacate the premises, except for international students, and those students deemed food and housing insecure. Each of the 1390 residential students' accounts was credited an average of \$1800.00 in housing refunds, for a total of \$2.4 million. Forty-four (44) percent of the student body resided on campus prior to the pandemic closure. Fortunately, Xavier did not have to lay off any employees due to the pandemic, but hiring and spending freezes were imposed. Superlative education continued and 571 students graduated on May 8, 2021. These graduates are our gift to the world.

#### ***Facing the Storm: Suppressing Transmission***

The measure of success experienced at Xavier in sustaining education and in suppressing transmission of the virus in our campus community is due largely the charm of "service to other" that infuses this community of learners. Students know that their learning will find its meaning when applied to service of others, whether as teachers, physicians, artists or scientists. As Xavier deployed behavioral measures, e.g. masking, social distancing, wiping one's desk when leaving it, the Xavierites responded so as to endanger fellow students, faculty or staff. The Xavier community followed these measures, resulting in no greater than 1.6 percent seropositivity on campus throughout the pandemic. Responding to the teaching of Leviticus 19:34 and Mark 12:31, this community lived its calling to love ones neighbor at all times. In adhering to care of other, there was care for all.

#### ***Facing the Storm: Faculty and Staff Innovative and Flexible***

COVID-19 has disrupted learning and life at Xavier, but it has not, and will not, defeat us. Like the eagle, Xavier faced the storm winds and soared above COVID-19 to complete the spring 2020 and 2020-2021 academic years remotely and hybrid, respectively, with faculty and students teaching and learning from their homes. We learned that, yes, we can deliver distance education, and, yes, to my staff's great delight, I can even complete a full Zoom meeting in 30 minutes. This storm has given us a new perspective and language for our employees and while there was never any doubt, we affirm anew that the faculty of our institution are essential. In addition, the residential staff, security officers, chefs, cooks, servers, the Team Clean custodial workers, and the controller's staff are essential as well.

Today, I celebrate Xavier faculty for their flexibility; the essential staff who braved the virus to come to campus daily; those who worked remotely and learned how to conduct Zoom classes and meetings; our precious students; and everyone who faced the storm and soared above with vigilance, patience, and prayer. The entire Xavier family responded well to the challenge to recruit, retain, and remove barriers for students.

Xavier's administrative staff, directors, chaplains, and faculty all joined together to email, text, and communicate with new or prospective students. Faculty and staff have committed to removing the barriers to graduation and registration, and COVID-19 has taught us that some of the things we thought were important and necessary are neither important, necessary, or really needed.

#### ***Facing the Storm: Our City and Our State***

Situated less than one mile from downtown New Orleans, we pay close attention to developments in our city, surrounding parishes, and the State of Louisiana. As of March 26, 2020, the state of Louisiana declared a state of emergency; ordered bars to close and restaurants to limit capacity; ordered grocery stores and pharmacies to reserve the first hour of each day for seniors; and canceled events for the

next 30 days. In New Orleans, a majority African American city with a population of 390,849, the number of COVID-19 cases began spiking in late March 2020. On February 25, 2020, Mardi Gras—a uniquely New Orleans festivity—took place. On April 2nd, there were 745 new cases of COVID-19 in our community on that one day alone. Health disparities which have for centuries afflicted African American communities were noticeably exacerbated in pandemic, especially in the early months of the emergency. Frontline workers, disproportionately people of color experienced greater exposure. Working class African Americans, who make our city hum with excitement and hope, bore a greater disease burden.

With this being said, Xavier is challenged to serve, sharing expertise with city and community, with many Xavierites serving on city and state taskforces and committees. The university was most fortunate to have UNCF and the 37 member institutions as thought partners. Webinars and convenings allowed for collective thought and reflection. The university also owed a debt of gratitude to ThermoFisher and the Gates Foundation for enabling the establishment of a high thru-put testing laboratory on campus. This facility afforded surveillance testing for our campus and other HBCUs in our region.

My institution continues to rely heavily on the following sources in our evolving response.

- CDC,
- UNCF,
- American College Health Association Considerations for Reopening Institutions of Higher Education in the COVID-19 Era,
- Louisiana Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (LAICU),
- Louisiana Board of Regents,
- Louisiana Department of Health,
- Louisiana Economic Recovery Group (ERG),
- City of Public Health Taskforce
- City of New Orleans Health Department, and
- The city, parish, state and Federal guidance and orders.
- National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (NAICU),
- National Collegiate Athletics Association (NCAA) Core Principles of Re-socialization of Collegiate Sport

Xavier was able to quickly establish a COVID-19 Team with a strategy team to lead. The Xavier crisis team is made up of the head of student health, experts from Public Health and Pharmacy, from Student Affairs, with participation of the President as needed. This team is charged with offering overall leadership and guidance, including tracking seropositivity and recommending responses and communication to the community, and also coordinating the weekly COVID-19 Team Meeting. As president, my role is to keep the team focused on valid science in its assessment of the situation and its recommendations to maintain safety.

Due to the fluid developments of COVID-19 pandemic, Xavier prepared for three scenarios: face-to-face instruction in Fall 2020, all online courses in Fall 2020, and hybrid of online courses and face-to-face instruction in Fall 2020.

When Xavier students returned for face-to-face instruction in Fall 2020, it was during a more aggressive COVID-19 season. The institution's response mirrored the response of the Spring 2020 semester and consisted of the following:

- Protocols established across the campus, particularly the academic and student affairs COVID-19 protections, to keep students safe and healthy on campus prior to their departure;
- Faculty prior experience in delivering and moving instruction from face-to-face to online;
- Strict adherence to COVID-19 safety protocols for students, faculty, staff, and visitors to include washing their hands, wearing their masks, social distancing, and self-checking for COVID-19 symptoms;
- Surveillance testing for COVID-19 infection.
- COVID-19 restrictions and recommendations by local, state, and Federal entities;
- Frequent and routine virtual recruiting, admissions, financial, orientation, and athletic presentations;
- The re-recruitment of majors by departmental leaders; and

- Preparations to see a decrease in overall enrollment and revenue.

While small and independent, Xavier primed itself to deliver responsive and creative programmatic and curricular solutions. The institution used Federal support to source digital devices, platforms, texts, course material, and office applications to support Xavier. Xavier implemented BrightSpace Virtual Platform, eliminating face-to-face instruction and moving all classes to a remote format for over a semester before carefully returning to campus. However, that did pose its own unique set of challenges for Xavier:

- About 55 percent of Xavier students receive Pell grants. Thus, more than half of our students do not have the funds, equipment, or Internet access to receive instruction remotely;
- Many students arrive on campus having endured food and housing insecurities at home. For some, the University is the most safe and secure place; and
- The College had to rapidly deploy, at cost, online resources to support secure virtual testing administration or the delivery of science lab instruction.

#### **Use of Funds**

The following outlines how Xavier has used its CARES, CRRSAA, and ARP allocations to date.

- HEERF I & HEERF II Student Aid—The University was awarded a total of \$3.2 million in student aid and to date has disbursed \$2.9 million emergency student aid grants as follows:
  - HEERF I—Emergency student aid grants—\$1.4 million
  - HEERF II—Emergency Aid Grants—\$1.5 million
- HEERF I Institutional Aid—The University was awarded \$1.6 million and has expended \$1.3 million on the following:
  - Distance learning training for faculty
  - Computers for students, faculty and staff for loaner program
  - IT software purchases necessary due to COVID-19.
- HEERF II Institutional Aid—University was awarded \$3.9 million to date we have not expended any of these funds.
- CARES Act Title III—The University received an award of \$7.0 million and expended \$5.8 million the funds as follows:
  - \$1.8 million in need based scholarships to students.
  - \$2.4 million reimbursement of housing refunds paid to students due to campus closure in March 2020.
  - \$1.6 million reimbursement for payments made to the Hilton for offsite housing due to a need for additional housing to reduce density (single occupancy housing).
- CARES Act Title III (Second Allocation)—The total award is \$12.4 million of which the University has expended \$5.1 million reimbursement for payments made to the Hilton for offsite housing due to a need for additional housing to reduce density (single occupancy housing). Please note the University paid a total of \$6.7 million to the Hilton.
- American Rescue Plan ARP—Total award is \$9.6 million (\$4.8 million student aid and \$4.8 million Institutional aid), the University has not expended any of these funds to date.

#### ***Facing the Storm: Requests for Consideration***

I would be remiss if I did not thank Congress and those of this Committee for passing H.R. 748, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. Your time, energy, and effort does not go unnoticed, and I also want to thank the President for signing this bill into law. Because of the CARES Act, Xavier to a total of \$3.79 million in direct allocations from Section 18004(a)(1) and 18004(a)(2) of the bill. Of this total, we have received the allocation for the emergency grant aid for students and the allocation for the institutions in Section 18004(a)(1) of the CARES Act equaling \$2.9 million. My institution used the institutional funds to reimburse

ourselves for COVID-19 related expenses and disseminated the emergency grant aid to students. Xavier established two dispersal tactics:

**HEERF I:**

- Increased financial aid packages of new and continuing students (\$3 million)
- Provided \$1.8 million in emergency grants to over 1100 students; an application process was used to address breadth and depth of individual student needs

**HEERF II:**

- Provided \$1.8 million in additional emergency grants to continuing students, prioritizing students with highest need (based on Federal financial aid guidelines)

Xavier, with her 756 full-time equivalent employees, was ineligible for the Small Business Administration (SBA) Paycheck Protection Program loan because of the university's size. We are also currently participating in the HBCU Capital Financing program deferral of principal and interest payments during this emergency. We received an HBCU Capital Financing loan in 2020 of \$100,000,000. This deferral allows us to direct these payments toward sustaining the needed and necessary operations of our campus.

Please know, Xavier reflects the diversity of private, nonprofit higher education in the United States. With over 5 million students attending 1,700 independent colleges and universities in all 50 states, and more than 1 million employees, the private sector of American higher education has a dramatic impact on our Nation's larger public interests. On behalf of UNCF-member institutions, HBCUs, and small nonprofit colleges, I ask that you do the following:

On behalf of UNCF-member institutions, HBCUs, and small nonprofit colleges, I ask that you do the following:

(1) Forgive balance of HBCU Capital Finance Program debt for remaining HBCUs: The long-term impact of the Federal Government providing permanent relief the HBCU Capital Finance institutions in December 2020 will be felt for generations. Xavier knows this impact having survived the impact Hurricane Katrina. However, the provisions of the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2020 state that only obligated funds borrowed from the Department of Education's program were eligible for relief. When Xavier, undertaking an opportunity to finally tackle a backlog of deferred maintenance, borrowed \$100,000,000 from the HBCU Capital Finance Program, the subsequent permanent relief proved to have little to no institutional impact. As an issue of fairness for similarly situated institutions, the remaining (and existing) HBCU Capital Finance Program loans should also undergo permanent relief. We at Xavier understand that this relief should not be routine; however, there are numerous measures in the 117th Congress which include this permanent relief, including the Institutional Grants for New Infrastructure, Technology, and Education for (IGNITE) HBCU Excellence Act.

(2) Double Pell Grants: As much as institutions which have been historically underfunded—such as HBCUs—so have the students that they serve. As aforementioned, 70 percent of Xavier students are Pell Grant eligible. That means those students come from low-to-moderate income backgrounds. Yet, they persist. Unfortunately, too many of them take out loans which saddle them with a financial burden so heavy that they struggle to repay for much of their adult life despite a strong career. Doubling the maximum Pell Grant, and restoring the purchasing power of the program, allows for our students who need the most help to have it at their disposal. To me and my colleagues everywhere in academia, this is a “no-brainer.” I encourage this Committee, the Committee of jurisdiction, to do all it can in this very Congress to double the Pell Grant.

(3) Support Biden-Harris plans: Whether it is the budget put forward by President Biden for Fiscal Year (FY) 2022, the Jobs and Infrastructure plan, or the American Families plan, HBCUs are prominently supported. Sure this elevates institutions like Xavier in the public discourse, but it also proves that my institution and all of them like it are worthy of investment not just because they are HBCUs or a historic lack of investment. Instead, we are worthy of transformative infusions by the Federal Government because of our product: graduates who exactly the ones the country needs to

pursue its goals and objectives. Sure Xavier graduates provide diversity, but they also provide ingenuity, a hard-working spirit, and a level of intelligence and know-how that proves the old adage that it is not where you start but instead where you finish.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, Xavier is an institution that not only has a history of contributing to society, but is an institution that also provides transformative education for our students, especially our students who are low-income and first generation. In promoting social mobility of students and their achievement, Xavier not only benefits the individual, but families, communities, cities and states. Social impact is indeed great.

It is an honor to be asked to present this testimony, and I commend you for your service and for addressing these important issues.

Thank you.

---

[SUMMARY STATEMENT OF REYNOLD VERRET]

Chair Murray, Ranking Member Richard Burr, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

My name is Dr. C. Reynold Verret, and I serve as the 6th President of Xavier University of Louisiana (Xavier). Xavier was founded by Saint Katharine Drexel and the Sisters of the Blessed Sacrament. My institution is Catholic and considered a historically Black college and university (HBCU).

The ultimate purpose of Xavier is to contribute to the promotion of a more just and humane society by preparing its students to assume roles of leadership and service in a global society. This preparation takes place in a diverse learning and teaching environment that incorporates all relevant educational means, including research and community service.

I was asked to testify before the Committee today on how Xavier, as an HBCU, has employed and utilized the Federal relief funds passed by Congress as a result of the novel coronavirus, COVID-19. As you know, HBCUs were created as early as 1837 to provide African Americans access to higher education. Noted for their contributions in educating “Black, low-income and educationally disadvantaged Americans,” the 101 HBCUs today constitute the class of institutions that satisfy the statutory definition of the term “HBCU” as defined in the *Higher Education Act of 1965* (HEA).

On January 23, 2020, I called together a daylong scenario planning session consisting of my cabinet and key administrators within academic and student affairs, facilities, and marketing and communications. This table-top planning group met on January 29th to respond to this question: “if this new airborne virus that had recently migrated from China to other Southeast Asian countries were to reach our shore such that major public health measures are required and students sent home, how could we continue high quality education and protect all concerned”. Furthermore, the group was to assess what was required to assure our readiness, identify what was in place and what was lacking.

As a result of this vigilance, Xavier determined to begin remote instruction on March 16, 2020, allowing students the option to shelter in place. One week later, Xavier sent all students and non-essential employees home. Instruction continued by online modalities for the duration of the Spring semester.

Once the campus was depopulated, I established a planning task force of academic, student affairs, and health personnel to plan for the longer term, and determine how we could offer instruction while maintaining the well-being of students, faculty and staff. If we were to return in person, how could we assure greater safety on campus, than in our surroundings or the home localities of our students?

As a result of their deliberation, the taskforce recommended a plan strategy with detailed timeline for reopening as is further articulated in my written testimony, and due to the uncertainties of the evolving pandemic, the team offered three scenarios: face-to-face instruction in Fall 2020, Xavier all online courses in Fall 2020, and a hybrid of both online courses and face-to-face instruction in Fall 2020.

The Administration established to move to mixed modality instruction and service delivery for the Fall 2020 semester. The majority of instruction took place in person with a significant component via remote or hybrid means, which allowed students to choose their preferred mode of instruction. The university redoubled its effort for

academic and emotional support, attending to students physically present and those who remained at home.

The university contracted hotel space nearby to transition all residences to single occupancy. Forty-four percent of the student body (1390 students) resided on campus. Masking and distancing would be required of all persons on campus. Xavier was fortunate in that the pandemic did not result in layoffs; however hiring and spending freezes were imposed.

Situated in Orleans Parish, Xavier pays close attention to the current developments in the city, surrounding parishes, and the State of Louisiana. As of March 11, 2020, Louisiana Governor John Bel Edwards declared a state of emergency; ordered bars to close and restaurants to limit capacity; ordered grocery stores and pharmacies to reserve the first hour of each day for seniors; and canceled events for the next 30 days. In Orleans Parish, with a population of approximately 390,849, the number of COVID-19 cases began spiking as of late March 2020. On February 25, 2020, Mardi Gras—a uniquely New Orleans festivity—took place. On April 2nd, there were 745 new cases of COVID-19 in our community. Further, I began to note anecdotally what we would belatedly have empirical evidence to prove: the health disparities which have for centuries existed and ravished African American communities were not only being further exposed but rather exacerbated. The working-class African Americans, which make our city hum with excitement and vigor, were the most impacted and bore the burden of disease.

I would be remiss if I did not thank Congress, including those of this Committee, for passing last Congress' H.R. 748, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act; H.R. 133, the Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2020; and this Congress' H.R. 1319, the American Recovery Act. Your time, energy, and effort does not go unnoticed, and I also want to thank President Trump for signing the first two into law, and then President Biden whose leadership was the catalyst for the ARP.

Because of the CARES Act, Xavier has access to a total of \$37.9 million in direct allocations from Section 18004(a)(1) and 18004(a)(2) of the bill. While I am thankful for this, I would be remiss if I did not share with you all that Xavier has been bracing for revenue losses that would impact our ability to operate. Also, our students are enduring difficult economic times that presents unique challenges, most especially for students of color.

With this said, I would like to firmly thank Congress, specifically, for providing an additional allocations of \$1.054 billion, \$1.7 billion, and \$2.98 billion in funding for HBCUs, Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) and Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs). Additionally, I would like to thank Congress for targeted debt relief for institutions in the HBCU Capital Finance Program in the 2020 Consolidated Appropriations Act. Many HBCUs benefited, and I must say that Xavier benefited from that relief to a minimal effect, because the relief was predicated on funding that was already obligated at the time the bill was signed into law. I am also grateful for funding which benefited our student population directly. The majority of my students are Black Americans and Black Americans are disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. If the majority of my students are disproportionately impacted, then my institution is disproportionately impacted as compared with other colleges and universities. All of us at Xavier, including faculty, staff, and students, needed additional resources to survive this pandemic and ensure that we are able to successfully survive this pandemic.

For more information and details regarding my remarks, I ask that you read my written testimony submitted for your review.

---

The CHAIR. Thank you. We will turn to Mr. Harris.

**STATEMENT OF ANTHONY HARRIS, STUDENT, BALDWIN  
WALLACE UNIVERSITY, BEREA, OH**

Mr. HARRIS. Good morning.

[Technical problems.]—but good morning, Chair Murray, Ranking Member Burr, and Members of this Committee. It is an honor to be testifying before you today. I am a senior at Baldwin Wallace University and also a proud mentee at College Now Greater Cleveland, an organization who without I would not be sitting before you today as a college student. To begin, I would like to thank you all

for the opportunity to speak on behalf of higher education students from all over the country who benefit from Federal funding and who have also been impacted in many ways by this devastating pandemic.

I would also like to think I speak on behalf of students who could benefit from Federal funding and support, but for whatever reason don't have access to the necessary means in order to reap in their benefits. Like many students across the country, I have had an unorthodox college experience, to say the least. It began by being accepted at High Tech Academy, an Ohio College Credit Plus Program that offers high school students the opportunity to take college level courses at Cuyahoga Community College in order to get a head start in their collegiate endeavors.

It was through High Tech Academy that I gained not only college credit, but the imperative knowledge about higher education that I would use for the rest of my college career. I was also motivated by peers and introduced into leadership programs like the Rotsky Foundation, Key Club, and Circle K that encouraged students and prepared them for college readiness. With all of that in mind though, the harsh reality is individuals can't go to college if they can't afford it. That is where College Now came into play for me. This unique organization provides students with personalized scholarship opportunities and a wealth of additional support services designed to aid students in their transition to higher education.

Through College Now, I was offered assistance in filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, also known as FAFSA, an application form that I knew nothing about. After learning about this form and getting access to the support that I needed, I discovered that I was eligible to receive Pell Grant funding that offered students just like me thousands of dollars toward their education. This Federal funding was life changing, but once aspirations of attending college became more attainable for students who are at a financial disadvantage, this funding in particular also made it available for me to transfer universities, to offer me a peace of mind to both my family and myself, because we knew that this Federal funding would follow me to whatever university I went to.

It was in part because of this funding that I was able to transfer to Baldwin Wallace with such ease and financial comfort. These programs and funding became even more imperative when the news of the COVID-19 pandemic became public during spring break of all times, all the while the students that had left campus to go home were asked to stay and the trajectory of our semester changed dramatically. Professors and instructors were either given one week, just one week, to redesign their entire syllabus—their entire syllabi to meet the needs of distance learning. Where this change was hard for faculty and staff, it was also very difficult for students as well.

I had no access to a personal computer or a laptop. It was College Now that pulled together resources and provided students like me with the computers they needed to transition to this new distance learning. As a resident assistant, I was tasked to keep in contact with all of my residents from home, and it was then that I re-

alized how this pandemic had affected all of them. From our correspondents, I found that many students struggled with a wide variety of problems. Some students didn't have access to computers like myself. Others had no access to the Internet at all.

Some didn't feel that they had a safe place to study, get work done, or even call home. I also interacted with some students who lived off campus and out of the country who were stuck on campus and could not make it home to see their families. Things seemed very bleak until students got word of the CARES Act funding that they were being offered. This funding was very well received and used for a wide variety of things. Personally, I use the funding to get books and for Internet access. Other campus wide uses include transportation, food, tuition and savings. Even as the next disbursement of the CARES Act funding was released, students were continuing to find creative ways to continue attending school at all costs. When students returned to campus in the fall though, things were still not back to normal.

Baldwin Wallace had adopted a newer and more complex blended learning platform. So now students were being asked to attend classes both online and in person based on classroom size and their professor's discretion. I applaud still the way Baldwin Wallace has handled this new way of education. All students were given a COVID test before returning to campus and masks for the entire semester. Furthermore, the university also conducted random testing and told students at random to be tested for the coronavirus and also offered vaccines.

All of these measures turned out to work because we were able to remain on campus for the entire academic year without a surplus number of positive cases on campus. The thing I find most important now is that the access to Federal funding continue to go out to organizations like College Now that are helping students, and they continue to students and universities alike as the world continues to evolve. I believe the world of higher education would benefit from a doubling of the Pell Grant and also from the continued support of COVID relief funds.

I thank you all for your time and attention and also for listening to my long stories. And it has been an absolute honor. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Harris follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF ANTHONY HARRIS, JR.

Good morning, Chair Murray, Ranking Member Burr and Members of this Committee, it is an honor to be testifying before you all today. My name is Anthony Harris, JR., and I am a graduating senior at Baldwin Wallace University with a BFA in Acting and a proud mentee of College Now Greater Cleveland, an organization who without I would not be sitting before you as a college student today.

To begin, I would like to thank you all for the opportunity to speak on behalf of higher education students from all over the country who benefit from Federal funding and who also have been impacted in many ways by this devastating pandemic. I also like to think that I speak on behalf of students who could benefit from Federal funding and support but, for whatever reason, don't have access to the necessary means in order to reap in the benefits.

Like many students across the country, I have had an unorthodox college experience to say the least. It began with being accepted into High Tech Academy, an Ohio College Credit Plus program that offers High School students the opportunity to take college level courses at Cuyahoga Community College in order to get a head start in their collegiate endeavors. It was through High Tech that I gained not only college credit, but the imperative knowledge about higher education that I would

use during the rest of my college career. I was also motivated by peers and introduced to leadership programs like the Rotsky Foundation, Key Club, and Circle K that encouraged students and prepared them for college readiness.

With all of that in mind though, the harsh reality is individuals can't go to college if they can't afford it. That's where College Now came into play for me. This unique organization provides students with personalized scholarship opportunities and a wealth of additional support services designed to aid students in their transition to higher education. Through College Now, I was offered assistance in filling out The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)—an application form that I had never heard of before. After learning about this form and being given access to the support I needed, I discovered that I was eligible to receive Pell Grant funding that offers students just like me thousands of dollars toward their education. This Federal funding was life changing. The once aspirations of attending college become more attainable for those students who are at a financial disadvantage. This funding in particular was also needed when I was forced to transfer universities. It offered a peace of mind to both me and my family to know that I had Federal financial support that would follow me to whatever university I attended. It was, in part, because of this funding that I was able to transfer to Baldwin Wallace with such ease and financial comfort.

These programs and fundings became more imperative than ever when news of the COVID-19 Pandemic became public during spring break. Baldwin Wallace students that had left campus for the break were asked to stay home and the trajectory of the semester changed dramatically. Professors and instructors were given a week to redesign their syllabi to meet the needs of distance learning.

Where this change was hard for faculty, it was also very difficult for students. I had no access to a personal computer or laptop. It was College Now that pulled resources together and provided students like myself with the computers they needed to transition to this new distanced learning. As a Resident Assistant (RA), I was tasked to keep in contact with all of my residents from home and it was then I realized the impact the pandemic had on all of them. From our correspondence, I found that many students struggled with a wide variety of problems. Some students did not own laptops, others had no access to the internet, and some didn't feel they had a safe place to get work done or even call home. I also interacted with some students who lived out of the state (or country) who were stuck on campus and couldn't get home to their families.

Things seemed very bleak until students got word of the CARES act funding that was being offered to them. This funding was well received and was used for a wide variety of things. Personally, I used the funding for books and internet. Other campus wide uses included transportation, food, tuition and savings. Even as the next disbursements of the CARES Act funding was released, students were continuing to find creative ways to continue attending school at all cost.

When students returned to campus in the Fall though, things were still not back to normal. Baldwin Wallace had adopted a newer and more complex blended learning platform. Now, students were attending classes both online and in person based on classroom size and the professor's discretion. I applaud the way BW handled this new way of education. All students were asked to get tested before returning to campus and all on campus students were given a set of masks to use during the semester. Furthermore, the university also conducted randomized student testing where students were chosen at random during the semester to be tested for COVID-19. In addition to this, the University did not release students for Spring Break. Instead, we were all given selected days off in order to reduce students' interaction with members of the community at large who may have been exposed to the virus. All of these measures turned out to work and we were all able to remain on campus for the entire academic year without a surplus number of positive cases on campus.

The thing I find most important now, is that the access to Federal funding continues to go out to organizations such as College Now, students and universities alike as the world continues to evolve. I believe the world of higher education would benefit from a doubling of Pell Grant Funds and the continued support from COVID relief funds.

I thank you all for time and attention and also for allowing me to speak before you all today. I would be happy to answer any questions you might have. My name is Anthony Harris JR and this has been an honor. Thank you.

The CHAIR. Thank you very much, Mr. Harris. We really appreciate your personal perspective today. Thank you. President Pumariega.

**STATEMENT OF MADELINE PUMARIEGA, PRESIDENT, MIAMI DADE COLLEGE, MIAMI, FL**

Ms. PUMARIEGA. Good morning, Madam Chair, Ranking Member Burr, and Members of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee. Thank you for inviting me here today to testify regarding CARES and HEERF funding for community colleges. My name is Madeline Pumariega. I am the President at Miami Dade College. I must say that since the first day that I arrived on campus, my priority has been to ensure not only the physical safety of our students, but also the physical safety of our organization.

I must say that on behalf of the over 1,100 community colleges across America, I know that we serve as the economic and workforce engines for our community. Miami-Dade College, known as democracy's college, is the Nation's most diverse institution of higher education, with a student body representing 167 nations and one of the largest, if not the largest community college and university across the country, serving 120,000 students. Very few institutions have had a greater impact on regions they serve like we do here in Miami-Dade County, which has more than 2 million of our students alumni, we probably touch every household in our community.

Offering more than 300 distinct career pathways, Miami-Dade College is at the cutting edge of technology and innovation, with hundreds of strategic workforce partnerships—with partnerships that include both global companies and right here, our local workforce. In Miami-Dade County, 85 percent of our businesses employ less than 50 employees, so we serve as that conduit for workforce training. Since the beginning of the pandemic, Miami-Dade College's aim has been to remain open. For a brief two week period our faculty and staff went to work on redesigning courses that we can put up in virtual platforms for our students.

We did that and we turned. We have remained open. We have provided support for our students, whether it is mental health counseling in person or virtually, academic advising virtually or in-person. By last summer, all of our courses were being taught in multiple platforms, not only in person but also hybrid, telepresence, and this past January, we launched MDC Live, learning interactively in a virtual environment so students like just in this format can interact with each other and interact with their faculty.

The Coronavirus Aid Relief and Economic Security, the first round of CARES was signed March 28, 2020 and provided almost \$14 billion that went directly to higher education institutions to support the cost of shifting classes online and for emergency financial aid grants for food, housing, technology, and any other component related to the students' cost of attendance, and for emergency costs that arose due to the virus.

With additional funding announced earlier this year, Miami Dade College has received more than \$50 million during the first round, which went to students. We provided aid to thousands of students, not only in scholarships, but also in emergency grant

funding, housing insecurity dollars, as well as opportunities for re-training. Of an important note MDC role, MDC played a very important role in the greater Miami area in terms of recovering from the pandemic by not only offering many free and low cost courses and programs in emerging industries and helping those who had been displaced retool and get back into the workforce, but also serving as a Federal vaccination site.

Today we administered over 350,000, vaccines leading the Southeast United States. Miami-Dade College took a proactive approach to prepare and respond to the pandemic. In early January, the college already had a robust emergency management program that supports the continuity of operations. Quite frankly, today we have seen our enrollment bounce back, aligning our mission, people centric mission to the workforce programs that we know our community needs and that our workforce partners need as well.

Just like the Hope Center research shows, many of our students are food insecure, housing insecure, and the dollars have helped support our students. We have also aligned the dollars to ensure that we have provided PPE, the right security and safety measures for all of our campuses, and have returned everyone back to work, and offering in-person, online, and virtual courses.

Thank you for this time and for allowing me to share the way that Miami-Dade College has supported our community, our students, the way that our colleges are working together so that we secure a promise toward the future that helps students find a path to prosperity through the power of education, and by aligning our programs to those areas that our workforce partners need, and to support university transfer pathways as well. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Pumariega follows:]

PREPARED STATEMENT OF MADELINE PUMARIEGA

Good morning, Chair Murray, Ranking Member, and Members of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee. Thank you for inviting me to testify at today's hearing.

My name is Madeline Pumariega and I am the President of Miami Dade College. I was elected the 5th President of Miami Dade College during the pandemic. My first day as President was January 4th and my No. 1 priority was and still is to ensure the safety of everyone in our college community and ensure a strong economic recovery.

Known as "democracy's college," Miami Dade College is the Nation's most diverse institution of higher education with a student body representing 167 nations and one of the largest with more than 120,000 students. Changing lives through accessible, high-quality teaching and learning experiences, MDC embraces its responsibility to serve as an economic, cultural, and civic leader for the advancement of its diverse, global population. Very few institutions have had a greater impact on regions they serve than MDC, which has more than 2 million alumni. Its employees, students, alumni, programs and events contribute more than \$3.3 billion annually to Miami-Dade County's economy. Offering more than 300 distinct career pathways, MDC is at the cutting-edge of technology and innovation with hundreds of strategic workforce partnerships with global companies and organizations. We put community at the center of everything we do, and this was evident during our COVID 19 response and reopening.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, Miami Dade College's aim has been to reopen as soon as possible while keeping the safety, health, and security of our students and employees as our top priority. In keeping with national, state, and local guidelines, we pivoted to virtual learning at the onset of the pandemic in under 2 weeks and immediately established a taskforce to review issues and adjust operations on a day-to-day basis. Following CDC recommendations and social distancing guidelines, we brought back select face-to-face classes last summer that could not

be replicated in a virtual environment. Following a detailed 3 phase plan, we brought back additional classes in the Fall 2020 term, with more in-person classes added in Spring 2021. We also introduced new learning modalities such as MDC LIVE to better serve students and their evolving needs. As we work through our phased approach in a deliberate and strategic way, we hope to return to normalcy and a full class resumption in Fall 2021.

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act signed into law March 28, 2020, provided almost \$14 billion that went directly to higher education institutions to support the costs of shifting classes online, and for emergency financial aid grants for food, housing, technology, and any component of the student's cost of attendance or emergency costs that arise due to coronavirus. With additional funding announced earlier this year, MDC received more than \$50 million during the first round of awards, which went almost entirely to students through student aid to ensure they enrolled and remained enrolled. The funding recognized the unprecedented financial burden that colleges, universities, and their students faced from the impacts of the pandemic. CARES dollars additionally provided regulatory relief and flexibility to ensure institutions had the necessary resources to keep everyone safe and continue to deliver high quality instruction.

Of important note is the role MDC has played in helping Greater Miami recover from the pandemic by not only offering many free and low-cost courses and programs in emerging industries since the outset of the pandemic but also serving as the largest and most successful COVID-19 vaccination sites in the southeast U.S., administering more than 350,000 shots to date.

### **How MDC responded**

Miami Dade College took a proactive approach to prepare for and respond to the coronavirus pandemic as early as January. The College already had a robust emergency management program that supports the continuity of operations by incorporating a comprehensive emergency management plan that ensures we leverage all our resources in an interconnected way that treats the College as a whole.

We stayed focused on our people-centered mission as it was important for us at Miami Dade College to cultivate a true sense of safety and preparedness in all our key decisions as they would impact thousands of students and employees.

MDC is a large and complex organization. That is a fundamental consideration as to how we respond to emergencies. We activated our collegewide crisis management team, which included key institutional leadership, and activated the district emergency operation center. This core team streamlines the decision-making process and coordinates all efforts across our 8 campuses and centers. It was important for Miami Dade College to cultivate a true sense of safety and preparedness in all our key decisions as they would impact thousands of students and employees.

To that end, we implemented an enhanced cleaning protocol at the very beginning of the pandemic and trained hundreds of our environmental staff to promote a healthy and safe campus by cleaning frequently touched surfaces and encouraged the entire MDC community to practice good hygiene practices such as proper hand washing and sanitation of work areas.

A crucial part of this transition was our faculty. Miami Dade College faculty rose to the COVID-19 challenge that required a transition of thousands of classes to remote instruction. In a period of 2 weeks we transitioned 4,000 in-person courses to various remote learning platforms while training our faculty to transition to new deliveries of learning in a remote environment to support our students and finish. The immediacy of the situation necessitated a level of flexibility and agility not known before in higher education. With a speedy activation of faculty professional development on remote and online delivery, we were able to provide just-in-time training to hundreds of full-time and adjunct faculty. Considering MDC had just over 2000 faculty, managing change at this scale sparked mobilization of the entire academic enterprise and I believe has accelerated positive change.

Expanding our online offerings became a long-term strategy by increasing the use of blended or hybrid modalities with the goal of leveraging them to meet future College, faculty, and student needs. It was felt that to maintain efficacy as the educational landscape changes, an academic support system prioritizing instructional technology and faculty development was necessary.

### **Student Support**

With tens of thousands of certificate and degree seeking students, the transition to remote learning was a massive undertaking, particularly considering the student

population MDC serves. Students at Miami Dade College are traditionally underserved; nearly 60 percent low-income and almost 50 percent were non-native English speakers. Knowing that our students had challenges beyond academic ones, we quickly mobilized to address financial and technology needs. As well documented in the research by the Hope Center regarding students enrolled in community college identifying as food and housing insecure, MDC students also face those same challenges. The college provided thousands of students emergency grant funding and expanded our food pantries. We partnered with community agencies to host food distribution events on each campus that served our students and community. In addition, we partnered with Single Stop to connect students with additional Federal resources.

After deploying a student survey to assess needs, we acquired 5000 laptops and set up a distribution protocol to distribute laptops. We also forged a partnership with Comcast to offer free internet access on the Xfinity WiFi Hotspot Network across the community and encouraged eligible low-income students to sign up for 60 days of free “Internet Essentials” home internet service at increased speeds. Additionally, our IT infrastructure was fortified to accommodate exponentially more students in a remote environment, including technical and real-time assistance capacities.

### **Financial Support**

Financial assistance was also a major component of our student support efforts. We waived and paid fees, expanded our emergency aid, and provided stipends, tuition waivers, and books to ensure all our students had continuity of instruction. We also were committed to ensuring their basic needs were met, knowing that our population was disproportionately impacted by the panic. We also hosted various food distribution events at many of our campuses and encouraged students to seek mental health counseling through various resources available through MDC.

Like most institutions, MDC continued to realize increased expenses due to the pandemic as online instructional delivery had many costs associated with it with the adoption of many new software platforms and technology. The CARES Act funding provides us the relief necessary to ensure we were able to provide high quality instruction. The College bought thousands of laptops for students so that they could continue to remain engaged via remote learning.

Beyond education, we also had the physical requirements that the “new normal” compelled us to adapt to—which also brought on costs. To keep our employees and students safe and comply with CDC, Federal, and State guidelines, the College invested in significant resources into plant, property, and equipment, as well as updated operational processes. This included physical barriers such as the glass shields and other barriers and changes that were needed to ensure the safety and health of our students and employees and the increased and enhanced cleaning protocols that remain with us until today. Additionally we had screening protocols and temperature checks to ensure the safety of everyone in our community.

Even with all the financial help we provided, students still had a difficult time staying enrolled and engaged. During this unprecedented time, education was no longer the priority as students switched into survival mode. Instead of learning, focus was on keeping a roof over their head and serving as caregivers for their families. Many of our students come from households that are multigenerational. As family needs shifted and the possibility of COVID infections became a reality, many students stayed away to protect their families.

### **The Future**

As we look to the Fall, we are putting measures in place to ensure we are fully operational in a better, more resilient normal. What the last year has shown us is the need to be adaptable and agile. It has taught us that our student population and the community count on us to keep them safe and lead in moments of uncertainty. They are also counting on us to support them in the economic recovery. We continue to see the impact of the pandemic during our recovery, like so many minority and low-income individuals across the country. Many did not have the ability to transition to remote work and lost jobs and wages. We are committed to leading the post-pandemic economic recovery of our community to ensure everyone has the skills, credentials and degrees to meet the changing needs of work. The pandemic accelerated the way we must teach but it also accelerated the future of work. As one of the largest colleges in the country and one of the largest employers in Miami-Dade County, it is vital that we take the lessons learned from the pandemic and build for the future.

My optimism for the future is possible because of the support provided by the state and Federal Government. The support our students and institution received to ensure we remained operational with the proper tools and resources through the CARES Act played a large part. I also remain optimistic because our students count on us.

---

[SUMMARY STATEMENT OF MADELINE PUMARIEGA]

Good morning, Chair Murray, Ranking Member, and Members of the Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions Committee. Thank you for inviting me to testify at today's hearing.

My name is Madeline Pumariega and I am the President of Miami Dade College. I was elected the 5th President of Miami Dade College during the pandemic. My first day as President was January 4th and my No. 1 priority was and still is to ensure the safety of everyone in our college community and ensure we have a strong economic recovery.

Known as "democracy's college," Miami Dade College is the Nation's most diverse institution of higher education with a student body representing 167 nations and one of the largest with more than 120,000 students. Changing lives through accessible, high-quality teaching and learning experiences, MDC embraces its responsibility to serve as an economic, cultural, and civic leader for the advancement of its diverse, global population. Very few institutions have had a greater impact on regions they serve than MDC, which has more than 2 million alumni. Its employees, students, alumni, programs and events contribute more than \$3.3 billion annually to Miami-Dade County's economy. Offering more than 300 distinct career pathways, MDC is at the cutting-edge of technology and innovation with hundreds of strategic workforce partnerships with global companies and organizations. We put community at the center of everything we do, and this was evident during our COVID-19 response and reopening.

Since the beginning of the pandemic, Miami Dade College's aim has been to reopen as soon as possible while keeping the safety, health, and security of our students and employees as our top priority. In keeping with national, state, and local guidelines, we pivoted to virtual learning at the onset of the pandemic in under 2 weeks and immediately established a taskforce to review issues and adjust operations on a day-to-day basis. Following CDC recommendations and social distancing guidelines, we brought back select face-to-face classes last summer that could not be replicated in a virtual environment. Following a detailed 3-phase plan, we brought back additional classes in the Fall 2020 term, with more in-person classes added in Spring 2021. We also introduced new learning modalities such as MDC LIVE to better serve students and their evolving needs. As we work through our phased approach in a deliberate and strategic way, we hope to return to normalcy and a full class resumption in Fall 2021.

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act signed into law March 28, 2020, provided almost \$14 billion that went directly to higher education institutions to support the costs of shifting classes online, and for emergency financial aid grants for food, housing, technology, and any component of the student's cost of attendance or emergency costs that arise due to coronavirus. With additional funding announced earlier this year, MDC received more than \$50 million during the first round of awards, which went almost entirely to students through student aid to ensure they enrolled and remained enrolled. The funding recognized the unprecedented financial burden that colleges, universities, and their students faced from the impacts of the pandemic. CARES dollars additionally provided regulatory relief and flexibility to ensure institutions had the necessary resources to keep everyone safe and continue to deliver high quality instruction.

Of important note is the role MDC has played in helping Greater Miami recover from the pandemic by not only offering many free and low-cost courses and programs in emerging industries since the outset of the pandemic but also serving as the largest and most successful COVID-19 vaccination site in the southeast U.S., administering more than 350,000 shots to date.

As we look to the Fall, we are putting measures in place to ensure we are fully operational in a better, more resilient normal. What the last year has shown us is the need to be adaptable and agile. It has taught us that our student population and the community count on us to keep them safe and lead in moments of uncertainty. They are also counting on us to support them in the economic recovery. We continue to see the impact of the pandemic during our recovery, like so many minority and low-income individuals across the country. Many did not have the ability

to transition to remote work and lost jobs and wages. We are committed to leading the post-pandemic economic recovery of our community to ensure everyone has the skills, credentials and degrees to meet the changing needs of work. The pandemic accelerated the way we must teach but it also accelerated the future of work. As one of the largest colleges in the country and one of the largest employers in Miami-Dade County, it is vital that we take the lessons learned from the pandemic and build for the future.

---

The CHAIR. Thank you very much. Thank you to all of our witnesses today for your important testimony. We will now begin a round of 5 minute questions. And I again ask our colleagues to keep track of the clock and stay within those 5 minutes. We do have votes beginning at 11:30 a.m.

Ms. Copeland-Morgan, I want to start with you. Students have faced unprecedented challenges over the past year, as you know, in a year and a half actually from the pandemic and the economic recession. With a lot of our students experiencing significant financial harm, according to Hope Center study released this March, 60 percent of college students did not have what is called basic needs security during the pandemic because of lack of access to nutrition, insufficient food, safe, secure, inadequate housing, health care to promote sustained mental and physical well-being, technology, and transportation resources for personal hygiene, childcare, and other related needs.

That study also showed these challenges are more severe for Black students. In fact, the gap between Black students and their peers in basic needs insecurity was 16 percentage points, further confirming disparities we have long known to be true. Additionally, a May 2021 survey released by the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators showed students continued to make increased requests for professional judgment. Professional judgment allows financial aid administrators to make changes to a student's FAFSA during unusual circumstances on a case by case basis. So, Ms. Copeland, I want to ask you, can you share how UCLA used its Federal funding to make sure students' financial and basic needs were addressed?

Ms. COPELAND-MORGAN. Thank you for the question. First of all, I should mention that it as a public institution, our responsibility and our mission is to make sure that we are serving all students across the State of California. That means we have a disproportionate number of students who were first generation college students who are outstanding and are graduating from the university in rates that are not seen enough across our country.

The first appeals that we got was all about technology. We said that students were safer at home, and you can study from home, but that was not true for so many of our students. And so we spent a lot of money paying for computers and Internet service, giving WiFi and other kind of technologies, particularly for graduate students, for example, who were at the end of their graduate work, whose studies required that they be in laboratories and conduct complicated scientific research.

We reached out broadly across our graduates and undergraduate and professional students to ensure that they had what they needed. Food insecurity, as I have stated, is a huge problem in our Nation, in our cities, and certainly in the city of Los Angeles. These

students were struggling prior to COVID-19. And the funds that we received could not have been more timely across the University of California system. My colleagues who oversee financial aid, we all got together and got those funds out quickly so that students would not drop out of college because that presents another problem should they drop out and stay out.

Again, I just want to emphasize how important these funds are. And if I may take a moment to share with you. In the 70's, I was one of those first generation college students. I got into this profession because of Federal work study job that I had for 3 years. I know the plight that our students face and the investment in students now will relieve the obligation of us investing in them in the future.

The CHAIR. Thank you very much. Mr. Harris, thank you again for your testimony. In addition to the financial challenges, I am concerned about the mental health challenges that students have faced throughout this pandemic. A recent study found that first year students reported significantly higher levels of depression and anxiety in the wake of the pandemic, and Black students were more likely to report concerns related to isolation. You served as a resident assistant, spent a lot of time with first year students. Can you speak to us about some of the challenges you have seen students experience as they return now to campus?

Mr. HARRIS. Yes. Thank you for the question. Students on Baldwin Wallace's campus in particular found themselves at a disadvantage because they were disattached from the people who they are typically able to interact with, like their fellow peers. And then also because we weren't able to interact with one another during the pandemic, they couldn't speak to their advisers and teachers more actively and in person. And I think part of that affected them in a very negative way.

As a resident assistant, I had to work with a lot of students over the past year who had suicidal ideation because they felt alone and felt disattached from the university and from their peers. So I think that we could benefit from more access to one another and the resources. I think our students need more access to the resources that are provided on campus so that they can overcome these challenges on campus. Thank you.

The CHAIR. Thank you very much for that response. I appreciate it.

Senator Burr.

Senator BARR. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Mr. Harris, when do you graduate?

Mr. HARRIS. Actually I should have graduated this past spring, but because of that disattachment that I spoke about just a moment ago, I was postponed and now I have to graduate this spring.

The CHAIR. What is your major?

Mr. HARRIS. I am an actor.

The CHAIR. Well, let me tell you, you are going to be successful at whatever you choose to do. I can tell it. Keep it up.

Mr. HARRIS. Thank you.

Senator BARR. President Verret, as I understand it, Xavier will require students, faculty, and staff to be vaccinated before you re-

turn this fall. What led you to implement this requirement? Turn on your mic, if you will.

Dr. VERRET. We have learned many things through the pandemic. We have really optimized what we were able to do remotely when we had to be fully remote. We also learned that also our students benefit from the collegial interaction, not only with the faculty and with their peers that need to be in the laboratories, and the in-person interactions were very important for our students. We have an opportunity with the vaccines, that now we know that vaccine protect individuals significantly who are vaccinated, that we can return—if we have maximally vaccinated our campus, we can return to full in-person activity.

Xavier produces more African-Americans who go on to doctoral programs in the life sciences and physical sciences and have been doing that for decades. To be able to do that, they have to be in laboratories. They have to play and practice at being scientists. The same with historian practices, being a historian in the archives, or musician in the conservatory. So being in person is very important for the success of our students. Vaccination will allow us to do that, so that we are asking that all students be vaccinated and also all employees be vaccinated. We are also allowing for the exceptions that the law requires.

But in doing so, we also have to make sure that we also do not allow those who are not vaccinated to be a danger to those because of whatever medical reasons cannot be protected by the vaccines. There are some—there is a small percentage of people who will not be immune. Protection means that we do not expose them to others who can contact infect them. Therefore we would have to have special conditions for those who cannot be vaccinated on campus, because of safety reasons.

Senator BURR. You have a unique background because you are an immunologist, I guess by practicing.

Dr. VERRET. By experience, training and research, yes.

Senator BURR. You are a university president. Help us understand how you explained this policy to your faculty, to your students, to their parents?

Dr. VERRET. Well, I can tell you that we have had conversations because many people have questions. You have to respond to their questions. For example, even at the early days when I and my colleague at Dillard University, we were both in one of the clinical trials. There was somebody that asked, how could you actually give the example of encouraging people to be in clinical trials? And we explained to them we had to have meetings, explain to them why it was important that some people, 0.1 percent of the population, has to be in the trials that others can benefit, and therefore old men like me have to roll up their sleeves. So we explained that.

Senator BURR. What advice would you give other colleges and universities as they plan for the fall when they are faced with the decisions that you have been faced with and you have made? What would be your advice to them?

Dr. VERRET. Tell the truth. Have venues to answer people's questions. Let them know what they—what we are facing. For example, one of the simple facts is that—and Washington State is a clear example. Washington State publish the data for the death rates of

unvaccinated versus vaccinated people. It allows you to make a simple calculation. It was quite simple. That allows you to see that basically the risk of death for unvaccinated people is about 17 to 20 times higher than for vaccinated people. Anything like that to explain to people that this is very serious.

We will begin to see, especially with a new variant like the Delta variant coming ashore, much more transmissible, the unvaccinated people will suffer a great toll. So we have to tell people the truth that we are here to protect you. The other piece that we have at Xavier because of our carriers, and what I say is that were founded by Katherine Drexel with a mission to serve not just the Nation, but also each other. So the conversation is that we do not want to be a risk to each other.

In other words, you are doing this so as not to endanger your neighbor. That mentality reverses the notion that is purely what is in it for me.

Senator BURR. It has shocked me through this pandemic and through the transition that higher ed has gone through, that it seems that the faculty members that thought pre-pandemic online education as a new avenue are the ones today that only want to teach online. What a transformation we have gone through. But I commend you and the other institutions that have looked at the challenge in front of us and designed a structure to go forward. And I think it truly is, because you are focused on your customer which is the student out there, and the value of what they get from Xavier or from any other school. I thank all of our witnesses. Thank you, Madam Chair.

The CHAIR. Thank you.

Senator Kaine.

Senator KAINE. Thank you, Chair Murray and Ranking Member Burr. This is a very important hearing and the testimony of all the witnesses is appreciated. Chair Murray, you asked the question of our wonderful student about mental health, and I want to direct that to the educators and administrators as well. The Department of Education, in the updated guidance about the higher education relief fund that they issued on May 11, clarified that HEERF funding can be used for additional mental health support systems for college students.

I would like to hear you talk about how you are grappling with providing appropriate mental health services to deal with the isolation, financial pressures that kids are facing, their worries about their own health, the health of the parents, and of their parents and people that they care about. If you could each address that, that would be great. Thank you.

Ms. COPELAND-MORGAN. Thank you for your question, Senator. As you all know, mental health has been a growing concern in higher education for the last 20 years. And we are seeing more and more of our students coming to us needing services. That said, with the pandemic, everyone has—if we are honest, everyone has suffered during this pandemic. And so our institution used a portion of the CARES and HEERF I and HEERF II funds to put moneys into mental health services for our students.

We encouraged students to reach out, even in a normal year when they are suffering anxiety or feeling depressed or feeling iso-

lated, because we know that students cannot focus on their studies if they are dealing with those issues. So these funds, again, were critical in both our ability to say to all students, we have the resources to serve you, call us. Our mental health folks across the system made telephone appointments so students could have easy access to these services and not have to come on campus, of course.

We would not have been able to do that. Higher education has suffered immensely financially. And so these funds are making a huge difference. And the thing that I really appreciate about students reaching out and getting these services is they become peer advocates for others to do that, because when one student steps out and says, I am having difficulties managing home and work, I am having difficulties as a parent and a student, our former foster youth who make up a large portion of our students in the UC system, they didn't have anyone to go to help them understand and navigate the challenges of COVID-19.

We use those funds not only for mental health services, but for other services, for our returning vets, for our parenting students, and for those students from rural communities, who, again, I think has from our experience, the greatest impact on them because of the lack of technologies.

Senator KAINE. Thank you. Dr. Verret and then President Pumariega.

Dr. VERRET. If I may, I have to agree with my colleague that mental health needs have increased from COVID. But even before COVID, we also already had been dealing with the increasing need. We had—we were establishing already—we had established what I call students at risk committees to begin to see not only that students would come when needs arise, but to be able to have many eyes on campus to see exactly when the need comes in.

For example, for students' behavior performance in class is creating flags, that student is discussed in committee because many eyes, the residential counselors can bring in to make sure that we are proactive in meeting that. In the COVID period, that need has increased. We clearly increase our reliance upon telehealth services, contracting and expanding our capacity to have these outside providers available to students so that we can provide services that were much more diverse and much wider. And that is something I can say much that we have learned during the pandemic. Some of this we will keep to be able to make that accessible.

There is also training not only in the student affairs side of the campus, but also in the academic staff, in giving the fundamental tools to faculty to be able to recognize and be able to call fouls and get information to the right people. Those resources are clearly needed. I think we also have issues were using our academic support, because many of the, what I call anxieties of being a student may not be clinically considered, but also having the academic support staff to give students the wherewithal to understand that this can pass and here is a pathway to resolve this academic need, which is creating a burden, is important as well.

Senator KAINE. Great. My time has expired. But possibly one of my colleagues might ask President Pumariega a similar question and let her offer—

The CHAIR. We will let her have a minute to respond.

Senator KAINE. Okay, thank you, Madam Chair.  
President Pumariega.

Ms. PUMARIEGA. Thank you, Senator. That is a wonderful question. We at Miami-Dade College augmented mental health counseling services by adding more mental health specialists on the ground, helping students, faculty, and staff. The second thing that we did is we partnered with our county 211 helpline so that we could ensure that we had 24/7. And the third is we added telehealth services so that students could get to a counselor, both virtually and in person.

Then last, we have added an early alert system where our faculty members, who are the first really to sometimes see the change and pattern in a student or that withdrawal, be able to give our mental health counselors an early alert so we can provide those interventions. Thank you for the question and the opportunity to answer it.

Senator KAINE. Thank you. Thank you, Chair Murray.

The CHAIR. Thank you.

Senator Cassidy.

Senator CASSIDY. I thank you all. Again, Mr. Harris, I echo what Senator Burr said. Man, good job. And what a great story. So just to say that. And I think what Mr. Harris also said is that some of his peers, because of the pandemic, are facing mental health challenges. I would argue that one way to treat this is to recreate the community, which is not created over zoom, but rather is created by people actually sitting next to each other, going to baseball games, and otherwise participating in life. Zoom atomizes. Schools bring people together. Now, Dr. Pumariega, are you all requiring immunization for your students and faculties, as is UCLA and the gold rush at Xavier?

Ms. PUMARIEGA. No, sir.

Senator CASSIDY. Now, first, why not, and then I have a follow-up. So first, why not?

Ms. PUMARIEGA. We want to make sure that we provide access to vaccinations, but that we don't put any barriers to individuals being able to come back to college, to retool, get the skills that they—

Senator CASSIDY. Now, let me ask you—let me ask you. I have limited time. I am sorry to interrupt. Would you—I gather a little bit from Dr. Verret's testimony that if you are vaccinated, you have greater freedom, and if not, perhaps you are going to be required to wear a mask. He didn't say that, but he implied that there is going to be something. With your school knowing that people coming back reconnects community, improves educational experience, will those who are vaccinated have extra freedom as opposed to those who are not?

Ms. PUMARIEGA. That is what we have implemented right now. If you are fully vaccinated on campus, you do not have to wear face coverings. We are asking you if you are not fully vaccinated, that you continue to wear face covering on campus today.

Senator CASSIDY. Now, you have also been very successful, 350,000 people vaccinated through your programs. And it appears that you have a fair amount of those who would be thought of as vaccine skeptics, think anybody less than 25, particularly men,

since they tend to think themselves invulnerable. So how did you—how were you so successful at implementing this vaccine program?

Ms. PUMARIEGA. I think with the support. It was several sites that came out, ran the vaccination center, along with the state emergency management. But because Miami-Dade College is so trusted in the community, I believe that we had that type of success. Because of the trust that we garnered, we have probably impacted every household in Miami-Dade County, and then we have continued pop up vaccine sites on every campus as well.

Senator CASSIDY. I am hearing something similar to what Dr. Verret said, which is that you have trust, you built communication, but you also have a long track record of being involved in the community and so the trust is already there. Mr. Harris, I am a doctor. I am very sensitive to personal health information. You can plead the fifth if you want, but have you been vaccinated?

Mr. HARRIS. Yes, I would first like to tell you, I do not take offense to the invulnerability comments. We can take all of the world. But yes, I have been vaccinated.

Senator CASSIDY. What about your peers? Are your peers open to immunization or not?

Mr. HARRIS. Many of my peers are open to immunization. And that is because a lot of these top—

Senator CASSIDY. Let me stop you. Many is an elastic word. You see what I am saying? And so would you say—give me a percent? You say 10 percent or 90 percent?

Mr. HARRIS. I would say 80 percent.

Senator CASSIDY. What is the message that gets them vaccinated? Because I do find that those below a certain age tend to be, a little bit less concerned about getting things such as immunizations.

Mr. HARRIS. Well, let me just say one, hearing from your peers and being almost pressured by your peers to do things is one thing. So me being like a member of their community, they want to get a vaccine because they see me get a vaccine. And two, because of people who are young, want to live their lives believe it or not. So with restrictions and people not being able to do as much or to have more restrictions, people want to get the vaccine—

Senator CASSIDY. What I think I am hearing from you, Mr. Harris, that requirements such as Xavier or UCLA are placing actually is a positive and it is not coercive, but it is a kind of signal that you can live life more freely if you are completely immunized?

Mr. HARRIS. It is an encouragement, and really would encourage people to get vaccinated.

Senator CASSIDY. It is one thing to speak about these kind of small schools, Ms. Copeland-Morgan. But UCLA is huge. I can't imagine how many students UCLA has. So if you are putting in this mandatory vaccine policy, how is that being received by the tens of thousands of people who attend?

Ms. COPELAND-MORGAN. I will say, Senator, that it is being received well. There are a couple of things. One is we try to be honest, open, and transparent to all of our constituents. We have great partners in the community. And the University of California system has the benefit of a world class health system. And so we have called upon those professionals in our health area to help us to get

the right messages out to our students, to communicate with parents. And I should say that we have a history of requiring students to be immunized against certain—

Senator CASSIDY. That is an important point. You can't enroll in higher education without being immunized against hepatitis B, meningococcal and other things, right?

Ms. COPELAND-MORGAN. Exactly.

Senator CASSIDY. It is kind of a paradigm we have already adopted.

Ms. COPELAND-MORGAN. Exactly. And our student body, our student leaders have endorsed this. They are part of everything that we do, including the distribution of our HEERF funds.

Senator CASSIDY. Can I ask you one more thing? Now, typically, hepatitis B is included in the, what is called vaccine immunization system. So someone is vaccinated at birth, they enroll in college, and then they can log on that school and say, oh, yes, you have been vaccinated for hepatitis B, you don't need to be vaccinated. Are you all putting that information regarding a student's immunization history into your California vaccine immunization system?

Ms. COPELAND-MORGAN. We are indeed. Again, we spent about three to four years educating students on this requirement, gave students an opportunity to self-sort of comply with those, and then made it mandatory the year after that. And it is a culture. Students want to be safe. They want to hang out with their peers. They want to have the freedoms that come with that. And parents as well. And so we found that a very thoughtful communication plan across the University of California system that has over 200,000 students, that students—and as Mr. Harris said, that along with that campaign and their peers, students have been quite willing to get vaccinated. And of course, we do respect the rights of others who choose not to be vaccinated.

Senator CASSIDY. I am going to stop you there because the Chair is about to shoot me for going so long over.

The CHAIR. I always learn from you, Senator Cassidy.

Senator CASSIDY. Thank you, Madam Chair.

The CHAIR. Alright. Thank you.

Senator Lujan.

Senator LUJAN. Thank you, Madam Chair and Ranking Member, for holding this important hearing to discuss how COVID has impacted higher education and students, and how the \$40 billion provided in the American Rescue Plan has helped colleges to reopen safely. And I want to thank each and every one of the witnesses for being here today as well. President Pumariega, as the President of Miami Dade College, you know full well the needs of your campuses, including those that are Hispanic serving institutions.

The three rounds of higher education emergency relief funds have totaled \$77 billion, much less than the \$183 billion in estimated cost incurred by colleges during the pandemic. I understand that your institution received more than \$50 million during the first round of awards, which went almost entirely to student aid. Yes or no, has the funding from the COVID-19 recovery packages covered all of the costs incurred by your Hispanic serving institution campuses?

Ms. PUMARIEGA. Yes, sir. What we have done is, as you said, put the aid out to students and help students be able to come back, stay in college, finish their degree or earn that credential to be able to go to work.

Senator LUJAN. President Pumariega, the question I asked was, did the recovery package cover all the costs incurred by your Hispanic serving institution campuses? You pointed to student aid.

Ms. PUMARIEGA. Correct, and so I think there is three buckets of the Federal aid dollars that come in. One, the student aid that goes directly to students are intended to help them with emergency funds. And the second aspect of it is the institutional aid in which Miami-Dade College, we used much of that institutional aid to help students, to support students with their educational costs. And then the other aspect of it, utilizing it for technology infrastructure, utilizing it for revenue replacement, utilizing it for PPE and the safety protocols.

Senator LUJAN. Were there class that exceeded the money you received from the Federal Government?

Ms. PUMARIEGA. Sir, I would have to—right now, what we have done, that would say we would be operating at a deficit and the college and our position with our board is not to operate in a deficit. We, in turn, have not only had a freeze in positions at the college, but also taken many steps to reduce our budget and our cost to balance our budget.

Senator LUJAN. You have got to make decisions to reduce services because of the increased costs, that way you can meet your mandate of not operating in a deficit?

Ms. PUMARIEGA. Yes, sir.

Senator LUJAN. Would you agree that Hispanic serving institutions need more funding to counter the effects of the pandemic and the years of chronic underfunding?

Ms. PUMARIEGA. Absolutely. When you think about Miami-Dade College, 74 percent of our students are Hispanics. When you think about just in Miami-Dade County, the percentage of students that hold the postsecondary credential, which we know is a path to prosperity to compete for that life sustaining job, we see where there is a lag among our Hispanic community and especially in areas in Miami-Dade County, South Homestead area, more rural than, maybe in the heart of urban downtown.

Senator LUJAN. There are currently 569 Hispanic serving institutions nationwide, 24 in New Mexico. Loan agencies continue to face financial burdens, and these burdens have been exacerbated by COVID-19. While HSI's are experiencing a declining enrollment revenue, they are working hard to bring the students safely back to campus in the aftermath of the pandemic.

For example, Northern New Mexico College, an HSI in my state, had to transform its approach to student services offering financial food, hygiene, and broadband assistance over the past year. How can the Federal Government and our support further assist Hispanic serving institutions to ensure that they are adequately and safely serving the 5.4 million undergraduate and graduate students who are returning to their campuses?

Ms. PUMARIEGA. Senator, that is an excellent question. I think it is a multi-pronged approach. In terms of looking at financial sup-

port, expanding Pell Grant and Pell Grant eligibility, I think that looking at short term Pell is also an important aspect. Some of our students want to come back and level up, if you will, retool with a rapid response credential or stack that up against maybe an associate of arts that they may have. Strengthening seamless transfer pathways is another important aspect.

80 percent—a Georgetown study demonstrates that 80 percent of Latinos across the country enroll in open access institutions like our community colleges and then require to transfer to a university to finish that baccalaureate degree. So anywhere we can strengthen those transfer pathways I think is very important for us to accelerate student success outcomes among Hispanic students across the country, and also looking at aligning pathways to work and making sure that our promise programs also have an element of aligning our degree programs to those workforce into the jobs that are there.

Those are just a couple of areas that I think our policies would help enhance and accelerate student outcomes and success.

Senator LUJAN. Mr. Harris, I had a question for you. I apologize. I could not get to it. I will file it into the record. I want to thank you for lifting up your voice here and especially with your leadership with the Black Student Alliance as well. So thanks for being here today, sir. And look forward hearing back from you. And with that, I yield back.

The CHAIR. Senator Hickenlooper.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Yes, thank you, Madam Chair and Ranking Member Burr. I want to thank all of you for being here. I always find these panels so illuminating. We have seen in this pandemic a number of innovative breakthroughs in technology to try and track the COVID-19 outbreaks, the variants, the vaccination rates. In the Western Slope area of Colorado, Colorado Mesa University entered into a very successful partnership with the Road Institute at MIT and Harvard to develop an app called Skout to track symptoms and possible outbreaks on campuses as they are happening in real time.

I thought Dr. Verret, I would ask you and maybe President Pumariega, is this type of partnership between a research institution and a university system something that you guys have considered on your campuses? And I mean, how are you going to go about monitoring any possible flare ups when you reopen this fall?

Dr. VERRET. We have had a number of collaboration with lab research institutions, not only in our cities, but also through our Center for Health Disparities are monitoring disease in our city and region. What I would say is that the key that we have had on our campus is to have surveillance testing, meaning we are testing routinely monthly anywhere from 6 to 10 percent of our campus population of students and faculty members to see what the prevalence of infection on campus was.

The major collaboration for us was funded through initiatives with Thermo Fisher, one of the large testing on device manufacturers in Massachusetts, and so with funding from the Gates Foundation to establish a laboratory where we had three high throughput machines. Those machines provided testing not only for Xavier campus, but for several institutions in our region, including several

HBCUs in both Southern—in both Texas and in our region as well. So samples were being shipped to us and the results were being returned for those samples sets, several hundreds, within 48 hours.

They allowed us to actually track the illness and be able to make decisions. For example, one of the decision points we would have is that if prevalence rose above a certain levels, are we returning to remote instruction? One of the other reasons why we had students in single occupancy dormitories is that we were not sending them home because we know we would not send them home to infect their communities. So they would remain unfilled until the surge had passed.

We were tracking to make sure that we were not becoming a danger not only to our community in New Orleans, but also to large communities as well. But ongoing surveillance testing was very important. Our data was being shared with the state and also with other organizations as well.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Alright. Got it. And President Pumariega, similar?

Ms. PUMARIEGA. Senator, that is a great question. We, in partnership with Florida International University, they—many of our universities in Florida launched COVID apps. So it was much better to leverage those partnerships. But I do think that one of the things that we did is really add COVID testing on our campuses. That really does help in terms of what the doctor just said, monitoring the, the positivity rate alongside with the county.

Work closely with the county and with our sister institutions. Because our colleges are commuter campus, average age is 26. Our students are working while they study, not living on campus. We have to really rely on the partnership with the county positivity rate and work in concert with them.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Got it. Well, I appreciate that. And actually, I don't think I have to ask Ms. Copeland-Morgan, just because you already are a major research institution. I guess all of you are in your own ways. I do think that the scout application that came out of the Road Institute—I mean, it does help follow who they have talked to and allows you in real time if someone does come out with symptoms and then turn out to be COVID positive, that you can track very quickly the impact and I think really tamp down, a flare up. Real quickly, in terms of serving adverse students, another thing in Colorado Mesa University that they tried with, I think, great success to keep students on campus. And this is a school with a majority of kids of color, all low income, and that any missed campus experience would be an impediment.

Again, Dr. Verret and President Pumariega, your institutions have so many of these students as well, how have you prioritized the campus experience while still making sure that you ensure their safety? Certainly there is more at the Federal level—there is more at the Federal level we could be doing or what could we be doing to make sure that we are not letting kids fall through the cracks?

Dr. VERRET. It was—the campus experience is crucial. It is a great value to our students, so it was important to bring them back. Making sure that everyone was masking was an important way of keeping transmission from occurring. But they benefited

from working with each other and also working with our faculty. It is important to do that. But keeping the campus safe so that the campus quality was safer than where they were come from was important. So we have to make sure that we are not creating a problem.

Once we are in compliance with masking and now with vaccination, we were actually able to carry on in campus. And as I mentioned, the prevalence of the virus on campus never exceed 1.6 percent. So we kept—we kept by not being able to transmit the virus on campus.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Yes, President Pumariega.

Ms. PUMARIEGA. Thank you, Senator. What we have done is, one, follow the guidelines in terms of the physical distancing, the mask, and also have, temperature checks and other preventive measures so that we can, maybe if someone is coming on and has a temperature, doesn't come into our learning support labs. But what we did do, once we implemented those preventive measures, we have and have remained open all of our learning support, our student life centers. We launched an early college summer program where our high school students just graduated this past week.

On Monday, we will be offering where they can begin college early on campus, take six credits toward their associates of arts program. And so, again, alongside with the preventive measures, the CDC guidelines, the mask requirement, we have to continue to bring our students on campus and provide those in-person support services that we know are critical to the majority of our students at Miami Dade College, which are first in their families to attend college.

Senator HICKENLOOPER. Great. Well, thank you so much. I appreciate all your work. And Mr. Harris, good luck to you. I didn't have a question for you. Ms. Copeland-Morgan, thank you so much for your service as well. I yield back.

The CHAIR. Thank you very much.

Senator Burr, your final comment.

Senator BURR. Thank you, Madam Chair. Let me once again say thank you to all the witnesses who have come before us today. I would be remiss if I didn't say that I think as we plow through the summer, every institution is going to be faced with this decision of how do we go into the fall and what are going to be the requirements? Should we do what Xavier has done, require vaccinations of students, faculty, staff? Let me just note at this time that all three buckets that we talked about, they are already vaccinated.

If they entered an education system in the United States in kindergarten, they were required to be vaccinated. The current vaccination requirements in L.A. County, a child can't enter the system without diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio, measles, mumps, rubella. A student can't enter Miami-Dade without diphtheria, tetanus, pertussis, polio, measles, mumps, rubella, hepatitis B, and chickenpox. For some reason, the older we get, we think that is not important.

If we all had to go back to the beginning of COVID in its first 90 days, if a vaccine had been available, we all would have taken it. And as time goes on, our memories become, to use Dr. Cassidy's elastic. We sort of forget some of the things. So, I say this for the

record, I already said it to the folks, but I saved it for the record, because I want other presidents and chancellors and faculty to realize we are not asking something that is unreasonable. We ask you in education right at the beginning of the process for things that we have known for years.

We don't want those things to come back or we don't want it to infect a population of students. It is not unreasonable for us to consider whether we require it in higher education, whether we find a modification from that, but for goodness sakes, don't look at this and say this isn't something we shouldn't consider. We have already done that as a Nation. And we do it today and the requirements are much greater than what we are applying with vaccination of COVID. Thank you.

The CHAIR. Thank you, Senator Burr. That will end our hearing today. And I really want to thank all of our colleagues and our witnesses. All of you gave great testimony. It was a very thoughtful discussion. I really appreciate everybody's input.

For any Senators who wish to ask additional questions, questions for the record will be due in 10 business days at 5 p.m. The hearing record will remain open until then for Members who wish to submit additional material for the record.

This Committee will meet next on Tuesday, June 22nd, at 10 a.m. in Dirksen 430 for a hearing on how we can help people get the information they need to get vaccinated so we can end this pandemic. With that, the Committee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 11:23 a.m., the hearing was adjourned.]