

# Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund

Overview of 2022 Annual  
Performance Reports



U.S. Department of Education

April 2024



## Overview of 2022 Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund Annual Reports

April 1, 2024

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# Overview of 2022 Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund Annual Reports<sup>1</sup>

## Introduction

Congress provided more than \$76 billion in total to eligible institutions of higher education (IHEs or institutions) to prevent, prepare for, and respond to the coronavirus pandemic through the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF), including \$40 billion through the American Rescue Plan. This report details HEERF spending in calendar year 2022 based on data provided in the annual performance reports submitted by IHEs to the U.S. Department of Education (Department).<sup>2</sup>

These funds were awarded quickly, were flexible in their use, and the data reported shows that these funds were used to support both the IHEs and the students they serve, and provided a critical benefit to those who received them. The institutions' reporting of their 2022 spending, and a review of how some schools used their funds, confirmed that these funds made a difference for the students most in need during an emergency situation and that the majority of emergency aid went to underserved students. The reporting also demonstrates the important role that emergency Federal funding can continue to play in postsecondary education success and completion, especially for underserved students.

## Status of the Funding

On April 10, 2023, the national emergency related to the COVID-19 pandemic ended, and, on May 11, 2023, the public health emergency declaration ended. By the end of 2022, all HEERF funds were obligated and \$63.7 billion (84 percent)<sup>3</sup> was reported as expended.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> We include examples in this report from institutions and researchers to demonstrate how these funds were spent. The inclusion of non-Federal examples in this report is not intended to be an endorsement of any views expressed, initiatives, or products or services offered by the institutions. Any opinions expressed in the institutions' materials do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the U.S. Department of Education or the Federal government. The U.S. Department of Education does not control or guarantee the accuracy, relevance, timeliness, or completeness of any outside information.

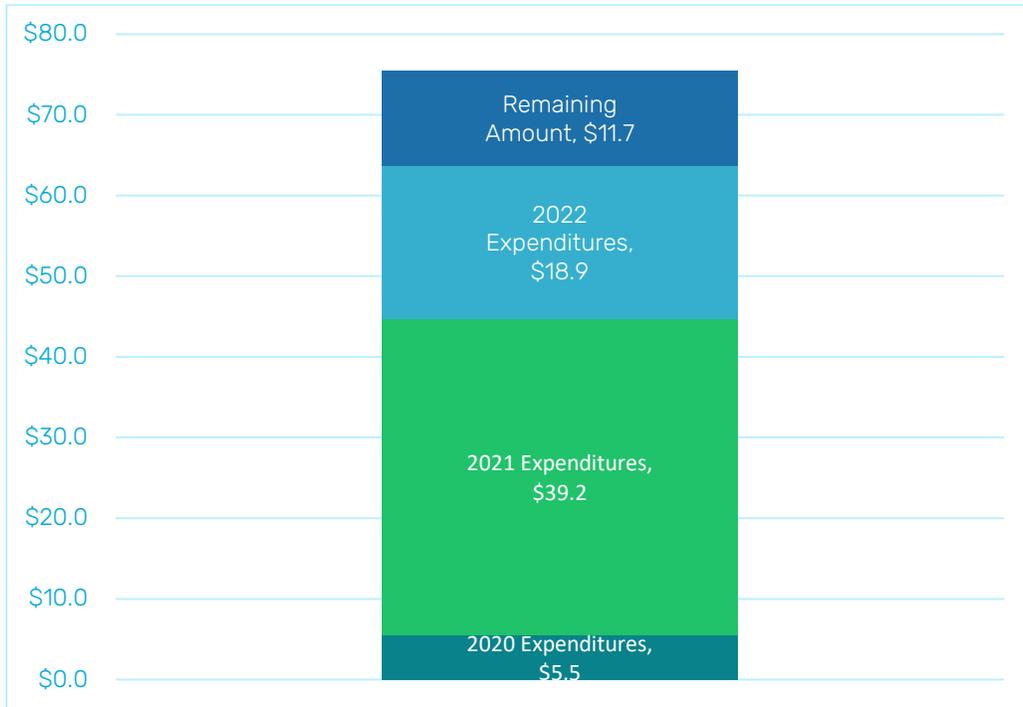
<sup>2</sup> The Department received 3,518 annual performance reports from HEERF grantees for 2022 expenditures.

<sup>3</sup> At the time this report was issued, 98.5% of obligated funds was expended.

<sup>4</sup> Includes only expenditure amounts for institutions submitting an annual report for HEERF funds reported through annual reporting (e.g., excludes HEERF Institutional Resilience and Expanded Postsecondary Opportunity (IREPO) grants). The total expenditure differs from the sum of expenditure values in the subsequent table due to rounding.



### HEERF Funding to IHEs: 2020-2022 Reported Expenditures and Remaining Funds as of December 21, 2022 (amounts in billions)<sup>5</sup>



### HEERF Funding Supported Students’ Critical Basic Needs

Institutions distributed a total of \$7.9 billion in Emergency Financial Aid Grants to more than seven million students in 2022. This is in addition to the \$19.5 billion in Emergency Financial Aid Grants that was distributed to 12.7 million students in 2021, prior to institutions expending the majority of their HEERF funds.

Emergency Financial Aid Grants were allowed to be used for any aspect of a student’s cost of attendance or for emergency costs that arose due to the coronavirus, such as food, housing, child care, and health care, including mental health care.

Of the nearly 200,000 students surveyed by Hope College in 2020, parenting students reported that they used the HEERF emergency aid provided to finance a range of basic needs, including educational materials for children (46 percent); transportation (46 percent); back rent or anti-eviction measures (32 percent); child care (29 percent); and finding alternatives to unsafe living situations (11 percent).<sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Includes only expenditure amounts for institutions submitting 2020, 2021, and/or 2022 annual performance report for HEERF program funds reported through annual reporting.

<sup>6</sup> The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice. (October 2021). Five lessons for supporting parenting students with emergency aid during the pandemic.



In 2022, Fort Lewis College in Colorado used \$200,000 in HEERF funds to hire a case manager and create a program to help students with basic needs, including food and shelter. This included the launch of a rapid rehousing program, with the goal of helping students find housing within 30 days. The program helped 111 students with emergency housing at hotels and financial assistance for moving, rent, and utilities.<sup>7</sup>

North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University used HEERF funds to implement the First Day textbook program to pay for students' textbooks for two years through a partnership with their bookstore provider. The institution implemented this program with the goal of ensuring that students had their textbooks on the first day of class to enhance student success.

Tarleton State used their HEERF funds to implement a counseling app to address the mental health needs of their students. The app is free for students and provides 24/7 support in five languages.

Connecticut State Community College used HEERF funds to provide virtual mental health services to students by working with a virtual health care provider and providing access to licensed counselors 24 hours a day.

## Students with the Greatest Financial Need Benefited from HEERF Emergency Funds

In 2022, the majority of emergency aid went to Pell Grant recipients. Of the \$7.1 billion of grants awarded to undergraduate students in 2022, 63 percent went to Pell grant recipients. Furthermore, students who were Pell grant recipients received, on average, more funding in emergency aid, with an average amount of \$1,380 for each Pell grant recipient, compared to an average of \$890 for each non-Pell grant recipient.

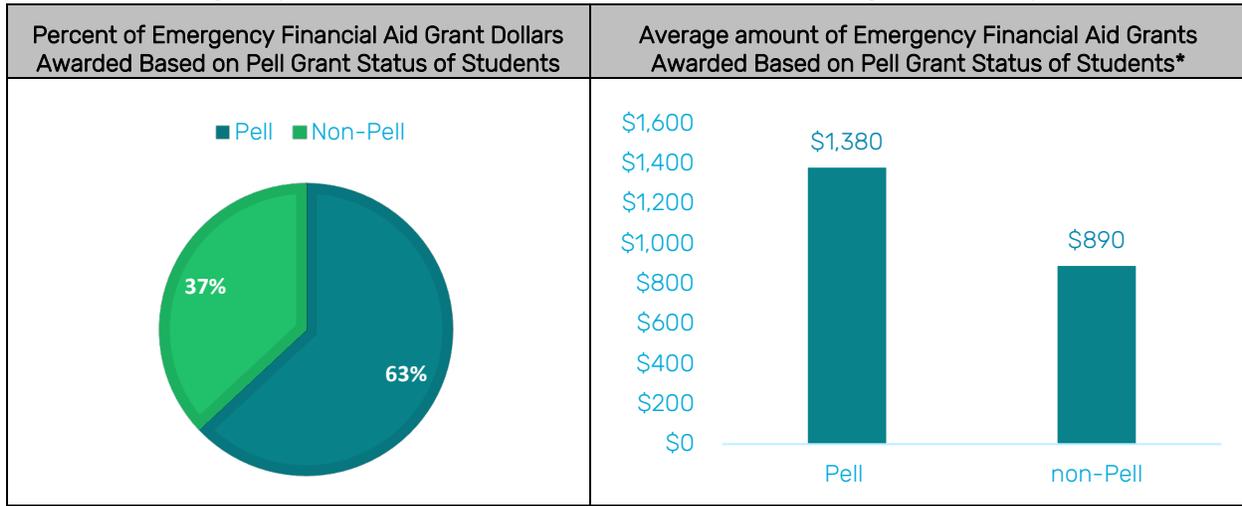
According to the 2022 annual report data, a third of institutions stated that they prioritized needs related to food or housing to determine the amount of the student's award, and more than a quarter of the schools stated that they prioritized needs related to child care or transportation to make that determination.

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<sup>7</sup><https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2023/10/02/colleges-covid-relief-programs-impact/>



### 2022 Emergency Financial Aid Grant Distribution to Undergraduates by Pell Status



\*Average amounts are based upon the students who received Emergency Financial Aid Grants.

Among community colleges in six states that participated in a survey of pandemic recovery spending, 43 percent indicated that they targeted supports to students with the greatest needs. Of those, 50.8 percent indicated they targeted HEERF funding to supports for students experiencing homelessness and 46.2 percent noted they targeted HEERF funding to support students experiencing food insecurity. More than 90 percent of California community colleges surveyed indicated that they targeted support to students with financial need.<sup>8</sup>

### Underrepresented Students Benefited from HEERF Emergency Funds

In 2022, most of the emergency aid grants awarded - 62 percent - went to students of color.<sup>9</sup> Furthermore, emergency aid recipients who were students of color received, on average, more emergency aid funding.

#### 2022 Emergency Financial Aid Grant Distribution by Race/Ethnicity

Race/Ethnicity	Percent of Emergency Aid Grant Dollars*	Average Amount of Emergency Financial Aid Grants Awarded**
American Indian   Alaska Native	1%	\$1,230
Asian	7%	\$1,120

<sup>8</sup> Klempin, S. C., Griffin, S., Monahan, T. J., & Anderson, M. N. (forthcoming). Pandemic relief spending and recovery strategies: Findings from a survey of community colleges in six states. Accelerating Recovery in Community Colleges Network and Community College Research Center.

<sup>9</sup> Students of color refers to students of races other than White and excludes the following categories: race/ethnicity unknown, race/ethnicity not categorized, and nonresident alien.



Race/Ethnicity	Percent of Emergency Aid Grant Dollars*	Average Amount of Emergency Financial Aid Grants Awarded**
Black or African American	22%	\$1,300
Hispanic   Latino	27%	\$1,140
Native Hawaiian   Pacific Islander	<1%	\$1,220
Two or more races	5%	\$1,140
White	38%	\$980

\*Percent of dollars is based on recipients for which race/ethnicity is known (i.e., excludes race/ethnicity unknown, race/ethnicity not categorized, and nonresident alien). Percentages sum to more than 100 due to rounding.

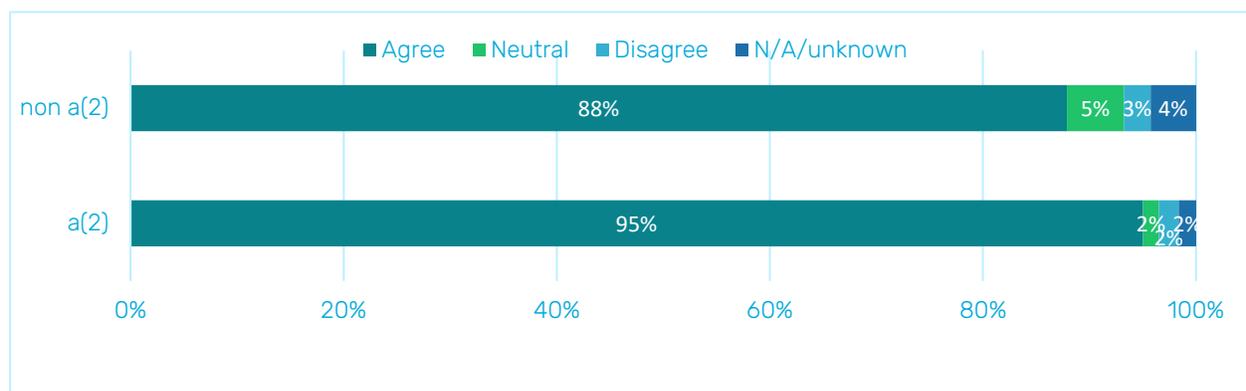
\*\*Average amounts are based upon students who received Emergency Financial Aid Grants.

### HEERF Funds Supported Increases in College Retention

Institutions reported that they expended HEERF on strategies to support student retention. More than 90 percent of institutions indicated that HEERF enabled them to keep students who were at risk of dropping out due to pandemic-related factors enrolled at their institution. Seventy-three percent of institutions indicated that HEERF enabled them to keep students enrolled by providing them with electronic devices and internet access.

HEERF was reported to be particularly helpful for under-resourced institutions that received HEERF (a)(2) funds, which were provided to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities (TCCUs), Minority-Serving Institutions (MSIs), and Strengthening Institutions Program (SIP) institutions. For example, 95 percent of HEERF (a)(2) recipients stated that HEERF enabled their institutions to keep students who were at risk of dropping out due to pandemic-related factors enrolled by providing direct financial support to students, as compared to 88 percent of non (a)(2) institutions.

#### IHEs reporting whether HEERF enabled the institution to keep students who were at risk of dropping out enrolled





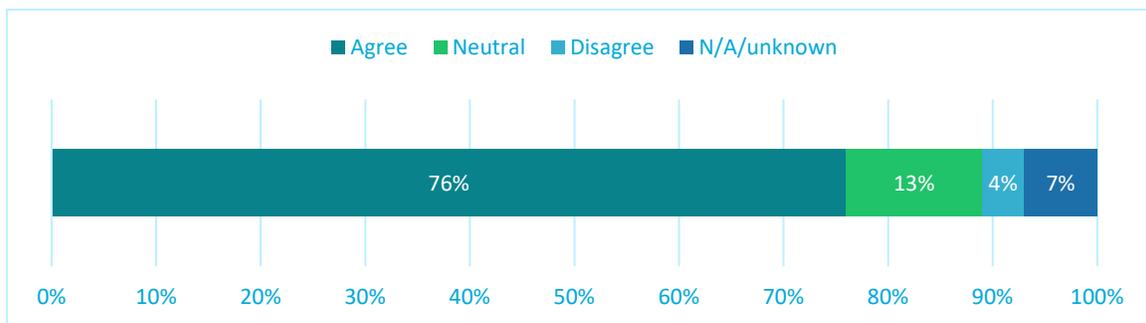
At Western Governors University, among students eligible for the institution-wide aid distribution, there was nearly an 11.2 percentage point increase in the graduation rate relative to students who just missed the eligibility threshold. The institution also reported that distribution of basic needs funding improved students’ sense of institutional belonging and support – both important factors in postsecondary student success and persistence.<sup>10</sup>

At Southern New Hampshire University, students receiving HEERF grants reported the top three expenses they used the funds for were housing, food, and transportation; and those students were as much as 15.5 percent more likely to stay enrolled the following semester.<sup>11</sup>

### HEERF Funds Helped Control the Cost of College

In 2022, more than 75 percent of institutions reported that HEERF enabled them to keep student prices similar to pre-pandemic levels.

#### IHEs reporting whether HEERF enabled the institution to keep student net prices similar to pre-pandemic levels



At community colleges, HEERF student aid was \$4.5 million, representing 24 percent of all student aid. The funding added \$1,120 to average student aid. HEERF also increased federal support per community college by \$4 million, and total revenue per college rose from \$81 million to \$84 million.<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup> WGU Labs (July 2023). Help to Stay the Course: The Impact of HEERF III Unrestricted Aid Support at WGU.

<sup>11</sup> The Center for Higher Education Policy and Practice (2023). Does Basic Needs Funding Improve Persistence Among College Students? Finding on How HEERF Dollars Impacted Student Persistence at SNHU.

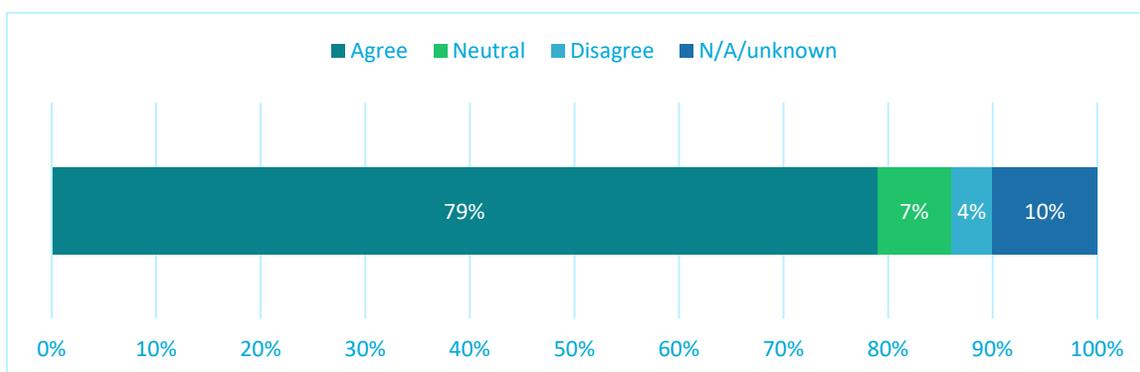
<sup>12</sup> Belfield C., Brock T., Fink, J., and Jenkins, D. (March 2024). How HEER Funding Rescued Community Colleges From the Pandemic. Accelerating Recovery in Community Colleges Network and Community College Research Center.



## HEERF Funds Helped Keep Students Safe

In 2022, nearly 80 percent of institutions indicated HEERF helped in the purchase of COVID tests and enabled them to provide health screenings and health care, including vaccines.

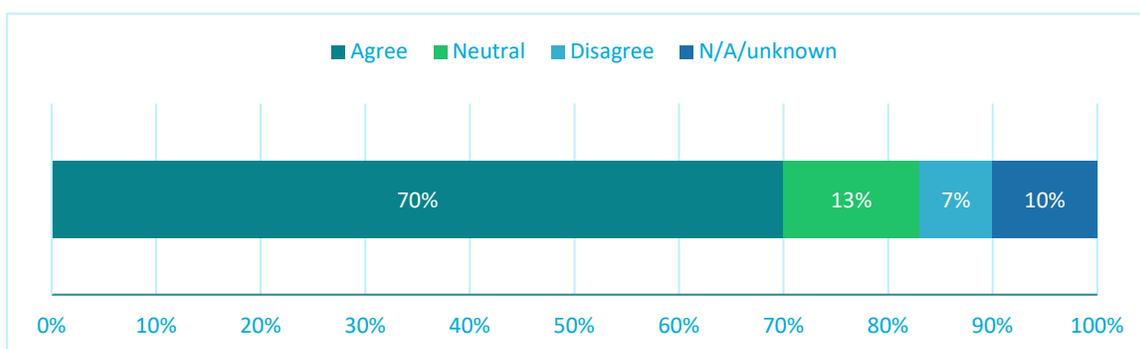
### IHEs reporting whether HEERF enabled the institution to purchase COVID tests and provide health screenings and health care



## HEERF Funds Helped Sustain College Programming

In 2022, 70 percent of institutions reported that HEERF enabled them to continue offering planned programs that were at risk of discontinuation due to pandemic-related factors. In addition, almost 70 percent of institutions indicated that HEERF enabled them to retain faculty, staff, employees, and contractors at full salary levels.

### IHEs reporting whether HEERF enabled the institution to continue planned programs that were at risk of discontinuation



## Conclusion

HEERF funds were critical to student success throughout the pandemic. The emergency funding awarded to students provided support for critical basic needs to bolster



postsecondary education retention and completion. By targeting the funds to those students who needed it most, while allowing those funds to be used in a flexible way with a wide range of allowable emergency uses, institutions reported increases in retention and were able to contain college costs despite the challenges and consequences resulting from the pandemic.

The Biden-Harris Administration remains committed to finding ways to provide college students from diverse and underserved backgrounds with the resources and supports they need to complete their postsecondary programs and find career success.