

**A MAJOR TEST: EXAMINING THE IMPACT
OF COVID-19 ON THE FUTURE OF
HIGHER EDUCATION**

HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION AND
WORKFORCE INVESTMENT

COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
AND LABOR

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED SIXTEENTH CONGRESS

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C O N T E N T S

	Page
Hearing held on July 7, 2020	1
Statement of Members:	
Davis, Hon. Susan A., Chairwoman, Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Investment	1
Prepared statement of	5
Smucker, Hon. Lloyd, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Higher Edu- cation and Workforce Investment	6
Prepared statement of	8
Statement of Witnesses:	
Harper, Mr. Shaun, Ph.D. President, American Educational Research Association, Los Angeles, CA	52
Prepared statement of	55
Pierce, Ms. Sharon J., ED.D, M.S.N., President, Minneapolis College, Minneapolis, MN	10
Prepared statement of	12
Pulsipher, Mr. Scott, President, Western Governors University, Salt Lake City, UT	31
Prepared statement of	34
White, Mr. Timothy P., Ph.D., Chancellor, The California State Univer- sity, Long Beach, CA	18
Prepared statement of	21
Additional Submissions:	
Foxx, Hon. Virginia, a Representative in Congress from the State of North Carolina:	
The Myth of State Disinvestment in Higher Education	66
Omar, Hon. Ilhan, a Representative in Congress from the State of Wash- ington:	
Prepared statement	106
Scott, Hon. Robert C. "Bobby", a Representative in Congress from the State of Virginia:	
Prepared statement from American Council on Education (ACE)	107
Prepared statement from National Education Association (NEA)	114
Prepared statement	116
Questions submitted for the record by:	
Sablan, Hon. Gregorio Kilili Camacho, a Representative in Congress from the Northern Mariana Islands	121
Mr. Scott	118
Takano, Hon. Mark, a Representative in Congress from the State of California	118, 121, 126
Trone, Hon. David, a Representative in Congress from the State of Maryland	118, 122, 126
Walker, Hon. Mark, a Representative in Congress from the State of North Carolina	118, 122, 124, 126
Responses submitted for the record by:	
Mr. Harper	127
Ms. Pierce	130
Mr. Pulsipher	134
Mr. White	137

**A MAJOR TEST: EXAMINING THE IMPACT
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HIGHER EDUCATION**

**Tuesday, July 7, 2020
House of Representatives,
Subcommittee on Higher Education,
and Workforce Investment,
Committee on Education and Labor,
Washington, DC**

The subcommittee met, pursuant to call, at 12:00 p.m., via Webex, Hon. Susan Davis (Chairwoman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Present: Representatives Davis, Courtney, Takano, Harder, Levin, Trone, Lee, Trahan, Castro, Grijalva, Sablan, Bonamici, Adams, Norcross, Scott (ex officio), Smucker, Guthrie, Grothman, Stefanik, Banks, Cline, Watkins, Meuser, Murphy, and Foxx (ex officio).

Staff Present: Tylease Alli, Chief Clerk; Katie Berger, Professional Staff; Ilana Brunner, General Counsel; Christian Haines, General Counsel; Sheila Havenner, Director of Information Technology; Ariel Jona, Staff Assistant; Stephanie Lalle, Deputy Communications Director; Andre Lindsay, Staff Assistant; Jaria Martin, Clerk/Special Assistant to the Staff Director; Katelyn Mooney, Associate General Counsel; Max Moore, Staff Assistant; Mariah Mowbray, Staff Assistant; Jacque Mosely, Director of Education Policy; Veronique Pluviose, Staff Director; Katherine Valle, Senior Education Policy Advisor; Banyon Vassar, Deputy Director of Information Technology; Claire Viall, Professional Staff; Cyrus Artz, Minority Staff Director; Amy Raaf Jones, Minority Director of Education and Human Resource Policy; Hannah Matesic, Minority Director of Operations; Carlton Norwood, Minority Press Secretary; Alex Ricci, Minority Professional Staff Member; Mandy Schaumburg, Minority Chief Counsel and Deputy Director of Education Policy; and George Littlefair, Minority Staff Assistant.

Chairwoman DAVIS. The Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Investment will come to order.

Welcome, everybody. I note that a quorum is present.

The committee is meeting today for a hearing on a major task for higher education, how Congress can help students and institutions cope with COVID-19.

As this is a completely virtual hearing, I would ask that all microphones for Members and witnesses participating remotely be kept muted as a general rule to avoid unnecessary background noise. Members and witnesses will be responsible for unmuting themselves when they are recognized to speak or when they wish to seek recognition. And, further, per House Resolution 965 and its accompanying regulations, members are required to leave their camera on the entire time they are in an official proceeding, even if they step away from the camera.

While a roll call is not necessary to establish a quorum in official proceedings conducted remotely, whenever there is an official proceeding with remote participation, the Clerk will call the roll to help make clear who is present at the start of the proceeding.

At this time, I ask the clerk to call the roll.

The CLERK. Chairwoman Davis?

Chairwoman DAVIS. Present.

The CLERK. Mr. Courtney?

Mr. COURTNEY. Present.

The CLERK. Mr. Takano?

[No response.]

The CLERK. Ms. Jayapal?

[No response.]

The CLERK. Mr. Harder?

Mr. HARDER. Present.

The CLERK. Mr. Levin?

Mr. LEVIN. Present.

The CLERK. Ms. Omar?

[No response.]

The CLERK. Mr. Trone?

[No response.]

The CLERK. Mrs. Lee?

[No response.]

The CLERK. Mrs. Trahan?

[No response.]

The CLERK. Mr. Castro?

[No response.]

The CLERK. Mr. Grijalva?

[No response.]

The CLERK. Mr. Sablan?

Mr. SABLAN. Present.

The CLERK. Ms. Bonamici?

Ms. BONAMICI. Present.

The CLERK. Ms. Adams?

[No response.]

The CLERK. Mr. Norcross?

Mr. NORCROSS. Present.

The CLERK. Chairman Scott?

[No response.]

The CLERK. Mr. Smucker?

Mr. SMUCKER. Here.

The CLERK. Mr. Guthrie?

Mr. GUTHRIE. Here.

The CLERK. Mr. Grothman?

Mr. GROTHMAN. Here.

The CLERK. Ms. Stefanik?

[No response.]

The CLERK. Mr. Banks?

[No response.]

The CLERK. Mr. Walker?

[No response.]

The CLERK. Mr. Comer?

[No response.]

The CLERK. Mr. Cline?

Mr. CLINE. Here.

The CLERK. Mr. Fulcher?

[No response.]

The CLERK. Mr. Watkins?

[No response.]

The CLERK. Mr. Meuser?

[No response.]

The CLERK. Mr. Murphy?

Mr. MURPHY. Here.

The CLERK. Mrs. Foxx?

Ms. FOXX. Here.

Chairwoman Davis, this concludes the roll call.

Chairwoman DAVIS. Thank you very much.

Pursuant to our Committee Rule 7(c), opening statements are limited to the Chair and the Ranking Member. This allows us to hear from our witnesses sooner and provides all Members with adequate time to ask questions.

I recognize myself now for the purpose of making an opening statement.

Today, as we know, we are examining how the COVID-19 pandemic is straining our higher education system and discussing what Congress must do to support students and institutions through this difficult time. Across the country, the rush to suspend on-campus activities and switch to online learning has exacerbated preexisting systemic inequities in higher education.

For example, the on-campus resources that many students from low SES backgrounds normally rely on, like computer labs and reliable internet, are now unavailable to those students. The suspension of on-campus activities is also threatening many students' access to basic essentials like food and housing. And for these students, going to school had been their primary way of meeting these needs.

A survey from earlier this year found students of color are disproportionately suffering high rates of food and housing insecurity due to the closure of campuses. Research also indicates how most students do not perform as well in online classes. Now, imagine how students who have already started off with fewer resources are more likely to struggle and face greater obstacles—

Mr. SCOTT. My name is Robert Scott.

Chairwoman DAVIS.—under these new educational conditions.

To address these disparities, Congress secured \$14 billion in emergency relief funding for higher education in the bipartisan CARES Act, and half of this funding was allocated specifically for direct student emergency aid. Additionally, Congress provided immediate relief to student loan borrowers by suspending student

loan payments and freezing interest on all direct and federally held student loans.

Unfortunately, instead of quickly disbursing these urgent relief funds to students, however, according to the law that we had passed in March, Secretary DeVos created arbitrary eligibility requirements for students trying to access this support. These restrictions not only prevent relief funding from quickly reaching students, but they exclude several underserved groups of students who cannot apply for Title IV aid, such as undocumented students and veterans.

In response, the State of Washington and the California Community College System, which includes the San Diego Community College District, sued Secretary DeVos. Thankfully, these lawsuits have temporarily stopped the Department from denying California community college students and students across Washington access to the emergency student aid that Congress secured.

But setting aside the delays and the unnecessary restrictions created by the Department, we must also address how the CARES Act simply did not go far enough to prepare our institutions for this looming economic recession. Due to the pandemic, institutions are facing unprecedented State and local budget shortfalls that will trigger drastic funding cuts for higher education, and they are facing massive revenue losses due to decreased enrollment and suspended activities.

On top of all of this, institutions are still dealing with the residual effects of State funding cuts that were made during the Great Recession. For many educational institutions in America, these cuts and revenue losses mean severe reductions in services and programs that many vulnerable students need to complete their degree and find fulfilling careers.

We know that the worst of these consequences are going to fall on Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Tribal Colleges and Universities, minority-serving institutions, and community colleges, which have the fewest resources despite serving most of our country's low-income students and students of color.

Impending budget shortfalls are also putting many institutions under pressure to permanently reopen their campuses, even at the risk of exposing students, educators, and communities to COVID-19.

The evidence is overwhelmingly clear. Congress must do more to support our students and our institutions.

The HEROES Act would take a critical step in the right direction. It provides nearly \$1 trillion to help State and local governments avert massive budget shortfalls and cuts to education. It also provides over \$35 billion in direct relief funds for public institutions and other institutions that have suffered financially, including almost \$2 billion for HBCUs, TCUs, and MSIs.

Beyond extra funds, however, Congress must also protect students from predatory for-profit schools. These institutions have a record of using taxpayer dollars to target vulnerable students during economic downturns, often leaving them with worthless degrees and debt that they cannot repay.

Simply put, the COVID-19 pandemic is testing not only our students and our institutions, but Congress' commitment to ensuring

all students have access to safe, affordable, and quality education. Today, with the help of our witnesses—and we appreciate your being here—we will discuss whether we can live up to that commitment.

I now yield to the ranking member, Mr. Smucker, for an opening statement.

[The statement of Chairwoman Davis follows:]

Prepared Statement of Hon. Susan A. Davis, Chairwoman, Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Investment

Today, we are examining how the COVID-19 pandemic is straining our higher education system and discussing what Congress must do to support students and institutions through this difficult time.

Across the country, the rush to suspend on-campus activities and switch to online learning has exacerbated pre-existing systemic inequities in higher education. For example, the on-campus resources that many students from low-SES backgrounds normally rely on – like computer labs and reliable internet – are now unavailable. The suspension of on-campus activities is also threatening many students' access to basic essentials like food and housing. For these students, going to school had been their primary way of meeting these needs.

A survey from earlier this year found students of color are disproportionately suffering high rates of food and housing insecurity due to the temporary physical closure of campuses. Research also indicates how most students do not perform as well in online classes. Now imagine how students who already started off with fewer resources are more likely to struggle and face greater obstacles under these new educational conditions.

To address these disparities, Congress secured \$14 billion in emergency relief funding for higher education in the bipartisan CARES Act. Half of this funding was allocated specifically for direct student emergency aid.

Additionally, Congress provided immediate relief to student loan borrowers by suspending student loan payments and freezing interest on all direct and federally held student loans.

Unfortunately, instead of quickly disbursing these urgent relief funds to students, according to the law we passed back in March, Secretary DeVos created arbitrary eligibility requirements for students trying to access this support.

These restrictions not only prevent relief funding from quickly reaching students, they exclude several under-served groups of students who cannot apply for Title IV aid, such as undocumented students.

In response, the state of Washington and the California Community College system, which includes the San Diego Community College District, sued Secretary DeVos.

Thankfully, these lawsuits have temporarily stopped the Department from denying California community college students and students across Washington access to the emergency student aid that Congress secured.

But, setting aside the delays and unnecessary restrictions created by the Department, we also must address how the CARES Act simply did not go far enough to prepare our institutions for this looming economic recession.

Due to the pandemic, institutions are facing unprecedented state and local budget shortfalls that will trigger drastic funding cuts for higher education. They are facing massive revenue losses due to decreased enrollment and suspended activities. On top of all of this, institutions are still dealing with the residual effects of state funding cuts during the Great Recession.

For many educational institutions in America, these cuts and revenue losses mean severe reductions in services and programs that many vulnerable students need to complete their degrees and find fulfilling careers.

We know the worst of these consequences will fall on Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Tribal Colleges and Universities, Minority Serving Institutions, and community colleges, which have the fewest resources despite serving most of our country's low-income students and students of color.

The impending budget shortfalls are also putting many institutions under pressure to prematurely reopen their campuses, even at the risk of exposing students, educators, and communities to COVID-19.

The evidence is overwhelmingly clear. Congress must do more to support our students and institutions.

The Heroes Act would take a critical step in the right direction. It provides nearly \$1 trillion to help state and local governments avert massive budget shortfalls and cuts to education. It also provides over \$35 billion in direct relief funds for public institutions and other institutions that have suffered financially, including almost \$2 billion for H-B-C-U-s, T-C-U-s, and M-S-I-s.

Beyond extra funds, Congress must also protect students from predatory for-profit schools. These institutions have a record of using taxpayer dollars to target vulnerable students during economic downturns, often leaving them with worthless degrees and debt that they cannot repay.

Simply put, the COVID-19 pandemic is testing not only our students and institutions, but Congress's commitment to ensuring all students have access to safe, affordable, and quality education.

Today, with the help of our witnesses, we will discuss whether we can live up to that commitment. I now yield to the Ranking Member, Mr. Smucker, for an opening statement.

Mr. SMUCKER. Thank you, Chairman Davis. It is great to see you.

Before I discuss the topic of today's hearing, I just like to mention the importance of doing our work in person. I and several of the Members—

Chairwoman DAVIS. Mr. Smucker, your—
[Audio difficulties]

Mr. SMUCKER. Sorry about that, Chairwoman. Does that sound better now? Are we good to go?

Chairwoman DAVIS. Yes.

Mr. SMUCKER. So, again, before I discuss the topic of today's hearing, I just did want to talk about the importance of doing our work in person. I and several other members are here in the hearing room. Leader McCarthy had recently written in a letter to Speaker Pelosi that our Congress, which is literally a coming together of people and ideas, it works best when it happens in person, face-to-face. And while I know that we have all learned how to Zoom and Webex and all of this, I really do think that we could be operating here in person. And so I will make the same request that Ranking Member Foxx made at the start of our last hearing, which is let's return to congressional precedent and hold our hearings here in person.

Turning to the topic of today's hearing, COVID-19 certainly has disrupted nearly every aspect of American society, including our higher education. And it was back in early March, the University of Washington became the first school to cancel in-person classes. Today, over 1,000 colleges and universities have switched to online-only instruction.

From abrupt school closures to remote online learning, students and educators have faced overwhelming challenges during this pandemic, and that is why Congress and the Department of Education took several steps to ease the burden for States, for institutions, and for students. The bipartisan CARES Act, which was passed in March, included provisions to help students, schools, and State governments cope with the changes wrought by the pandemic.

In addition to regulatory relief measures for students and institutions, the CARES Act provided borrowers with temporary respite from their repayment obligations. Specifically, the legislation requires the Secretary to suspend all interest accumulation and monthly payments on federally held student loans through September 30 of this year. Most critically, the CARES Act created and

funded the Higher Ed Emergency Relief Fund, which provided billions in direct aid to students in postsecondary education institutions, including the HBCUs and MSIs.

But, of course, that is not to say our work is done. On the contrary, the pandemic has exposed serious underlying deficiencies in our education system. Government overreach and unnecessary intervention has contributed to a bloated postsecondary education sector at the expense of students. Tuition and fees have far outpaced inflation for decades. Federal requirements stifle interaction between businesses and college campuses.

And, unfortunately, rather than innovating, the Democrats' partisan HEROES Act really doubles down on what had been failed policies. This legislation forgives \$10,000 of federal and private student loan debt for some borrowers, which really does nothing to combat COVID-19 or lower college costs. I really do recognize that we want to help people struggling to make ends meet, but we have data from the Urban Institute to prove that, across the board, loan forgiveness disproportionately helps high earning, highly educated individuals. Many Americans facing the greatest financial strain as a result of the pandemic do not have student loans at all.

The bill also launches a socialist takeover of the private student loan market by forcing private student loan companies to offer income-driven repayment terms and conditions that are dictated by the Federal Government.

In contrast, committee Republicans continue to support reforms that strengthen innovation and completion, modernize Federal student aid, and promote student opportunities. By giving students the tools needed to complete an affordable postsecondary education, we can prepare them to enter the workforce with the skills they need for lifelong success regardless of their background.

However, these reforms won't matter if we don't reopen our Nation's schools and businesses safely and responsibly. We have a duty to lead this country back to the pre-pandemic economic prosperity that benefited millions of hardworking Americans.

Congress can help further unleash our Nation's economic potential by increasing pathways for Americans to succeed in the 21st century workforce. Specifically, this means permitting colleges and universities to leverage employer expertise, encouraging short-term and stackable credentials, and creating a regulatory framework for new methods of learning, like competency-based education.

These types of forward-looking reforms have been championed by the Trump administration. Just a few weeks ago, President Trump issued an executive order to prioritize skills-based hiring within the Federal Government to help strengthen and diversify our workforce. This action will take our Nation's workers and students in a positive direction as we recover from COVID-19, and Congress should follow the administration's lead on this issue.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today about how we can improve our education system to better meet the needs of students, families, and workers.

Thank you, Madam Chair.

[The statement of Mr. Smucker follows:]

**Prepared Statement of Hon. Lloyd Smucker, Ranking Member,
Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Investment**

Before I discuss the topic of today' hearing, I want to talk about the importance of doing our work in person. Leader McCarthy recently wrote in a letter to Speaker Pelosi that 'our Congress—a literal coming together of people and ideas—works best when it happens in-person, face-to-face.' I couldn't agree more, so I'll make the same request Ranking Member Foxx made at the start of our last hearing – let's return to congressional precedent and hold our hearings in person.

Turning to the topic of today's hearing – COVID-19 has disrupted nearly every aspect of American society, including higher education.

Back in early March, the University of Washington became the first school to cancel in-person classes. Today, over one thousand colleges and universities have shifted to online-only instruction.

From abrupt school closures to remote online learning, students and educators have faced overwhelming challenges during this pandemic.

That's why Congress and the Department of Education took several steps to ease the burden for states, institutions, and students. The bipartisan CARES Act, passed in March, included provisions to help students, schools, and state governments cope with the changes wrought by the pandemic. In addition to regulatory relief measures for students and institutions, the CARES Act provided borrowers with temporary respite from their repayment obligations. Specifically, the legislation requires the Secretary to suspend all interest accumulation and monthly payments on federally held student loans through September 30, 2020. Most critically, the CARES Act created and funded the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund, which provided billions in direct aid to students and postsecondary education institutions, including HBCUs and MSIs.

This is not to say our work is done. On the contrary. The pandemic has exposed serious underlying deficiencies in our education system.

Government overreach and unnecessary intervention has contributed to a bloated postsecondary education sector at the expense of students. Tuition and fees have outpaced inflation for decades. Federal requirements stifle interaction between businesses and college campuses.

Instead of innovating, the Democrats' partisan HEROES Act doubles down on failed policies. The legislation forgives \$10,000 of federal and private student loan debt for some borrowers, which does nothing to combat COVID-19 or lower college costs. The bill also launches a socialist takeover of the private student loan market by forcing private student loan companies to offer income-driven repayment terms and conditions dictated by the federal government.

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These types of forward-looking reforms have been championed by the Trump administration. Just a couple of weeks ago, President Trump issued an Executive Order to prioritize skills-based hiring within the federal government to help strengthen and diversify our workforce. This action will take our nation's workers and students in a positive direction as we recover from COVID-19, and Congress should follow the administration's lead on this issue.

I look forward to hearing from our witnesses today about how we can improve our education system to better meet the needs of the students, families, and workers.

Chairwoman DAVIS. Thank you. Thank you, Ranking Member Smucker.

All other Members who wish to insert written statements into the record may do so by submitting them to the Committee Clerk electronically in Microsoft Word format by 5 on Monday, July 21.

It is now my pleasure to introduce our witnesses. First is Dr. Sharon Pierce, Ph.D., president of Minneapolis Community and Technical College. Since 2016, Dr. Sharon Pierce has been meeting the effort at Minneapolis College to provide transformative student experiences. Dr. Pierce has dedicated her career to advancing the role of community and technical colleges, in reducing disparities, and providing underrepresented students with an opportunity to achieve academic success.

Prior to her higher education career, Dr. Pierce worked as a clinical nurse for 12 years and was appointed by Maryland's governor to serve on the State's Board of Nursing. She earned her bachelor's and master's degree from the University of Maryland and her doctorate degree in urban education from Morgan State University.

Our next witness is Dr. Timothy White, Ph.D., chancellor of California State University. Since 2013, Dr. White has been leading the California State University, the CSU system, a system comprised of 23 campuses and 481,000 students and 53,000 faculty and staff. Dr. White is a champion of exclusive excellence and student success and a proponent of bringing individualized education to scale to the expansion of proven best practices.

Prior to becoming the CSU chancellor, Dr. White served as chancellor and professor of Biology and Biomedical Sciences at the University of California, Riverside for 5 years, and was president of the University of Idaho for 4 years. Dr. White pursued his higher education through Diablo Valley Community College, Fresno State, CSU East Bay, and the University of California, Berkeley.

Next is Scott Pulsipher—I hope I have that right, sir—president of Western Governors University. Since 2016, Scott Pulsipher has served as president of Western Governors University, the Nation's first and largest competency-based university. Under his leadership at WGU, WGU has expanded access to online competency-based degree programs that serve students across the country.

Prior to joining WGU, Pulsipher gained extensive leadership and experience in technology-based, customer-focused businesses, including Amazon, Sterling Commerce, which is now part of IBM, and two successful startups. Pulsipher holds a bachelor's degree from Brigham Young University and a master's degree from Harvard University.

And last is Dr. Shaun Harper, recognizing him as a Ph.D. as well, president of the American Educational Research Association and a provost professor in the Rossier School of Education and Marshall School of Business at the University of Southern California, USC. Dr. Harper is also the Clifford and Betty Allen Chair in Urban Leadership, founder and executive director of the USC Race and Equity Center, and a past president of the Association for the Study of Higher Education.

For two decades, Harper has studied racial and gender equity in K-12 schools, colleges and university, and corporate contexts. He has been recognized in Education Week as one of the ten most influential education professors in the United States. Dr. Harper

earned his bachelor's degree from Albany State University and a master's and doctor's degree from Indiana University.

We greatly appreciate the witnesses for participating today and look forward to your testimony. I wanted to just remind you that we have read your written statements and that they will appear in full in the hearing record. Pursuant to Committee Rule 7(d) and committee practice, each of you is asked to limit your oral presentation to a 5-minute summary of your written statement. I also wanted to remind the witnesses that pursuant to Title 18 of the U.S. Code, Section 1001, it is illegal to knowingly and willfully falsify any statement, representation, writing, document, or material fact presented to Congress or otherwise conceal or cover up a material fact.

During your testimony, staff will be keeping track of the time and will use a chime to signal when 1 minute is left and when time is up entirely. They will sound a short chime when there is 1 minute left and a longer chime when time is up. Please be attentive to the time and wrap up when your time is over and remute your system.

If any of you experience any technical difficulties during your testimony or later in the hearing, you should stay connected on the platform, make sure you are muted with the mute button highlighted in red, and use your phone to immediately call the committee's IT director, Sheila Havenner, whose number has been provided.

We will let all the witnesses make their presentations before we move to member questions, and when answering a question, please remember to unmute your system.

It is now my pleasure to first recognize Dr. Pierce for 5 minutes.
Dr. Pierce.

**STATEMENT OF SHARON J. PIERCE, Ed.D., MSN, PRESIDENT,
MINNEAPOLIS COLLEGE, MINNEAPOLIS, MN**

Ms. PIERCE. Thank you.

Chairwoman Davis, Ranking Member Smucker, distinguished subcommittee Members, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. I am Sharon Pierce, president of Minneapolis College. My testimony will describe the impact of the global pandemic on community and technical colleges and our students, and the need for Congress to provide additional aid.

Our college, located in an urban setting, is the only comprehensive community and technical college in Minneapolis. We serve students who are unlikely to succeed elsewhere, provide an opportunity to complete a credential, and elevate their socioeconomic status and abilities to contribute to the economy.

Our students face multiple barriers to academic success. COVID-19 put many students out of work, leaving them unable to support families or access transportation or social services, and elevated mental health concerns. Now they must learn to navigate courses through an online platform, often using a smartphone, without reliable internet access, creating difficulties connecting to instructors, classmates, tutors, the library, and support services.

Our college received \$2.3 million in CARES funding for direct student aid. The guidance for this funding was difficult to unravel,

and distribution plans needed frequent revising, resulting in more than 2 week delays in disbursement. Ongoing eligibility rule-making by the Department of Education created uncertainty and limited our ability to direct aid to the most at-risk students.

In response to COVID-19, we transitioned over 900 classes to alternative remote delivery. Moving forward, technology investments need to be at the forefront of decisionmaking. Students need hardware, software, network access, training, and more. Faculty, especially in career and technical programs, need training to advance their pedagogy using alternative deliveries and synchronous and asynchronous formats.

Equitable access to education can only be achieved by ensuring students have the technology tools they need to persist in their academics and receive support services whether they are on campus or working remotely.

To provide a safer campus, we need to invest in facilities upgrades including contactless hardware, additional cleaning supplies, personal protective equipment, and to engineer facilities to allow for physical distancing. We will continue to reallocate and reduce expenditures as part of our effort to survive potentially significant revenue losses.

Moving forward, students who already face significant barriers must navigate a new economic reality. Additional funding from the Federal Government providing direct aid to students impacted by COVID-19 will support their continuous enrollment and aid the academic—economic recovery of our Nation.

In addition, the importance of ongoing Federal stabilization funds to help operating costs of institutions like ours during this trying time cannot be overstated. While the CARES Act provided badly needed stabilization funding, more assistance is vital for us to continue to effectively serve our students, provide remote learning, and prepare to safely reopen our campus.

According to recent estimates, community colleges face a collective revenue reduction of \$10 billion over the next year. We want to stress the importance of giving students headcount-based formula to allocate future Federal stabilization funding to institutions of higher education. This will allow us to account for the needs of all of our students, including those who attend part time.

Thank you for replacing the CARES Act formula with a head-based formula in the recently passed HEROES Act. We appreciate your recognition that part-time students need access to the same resources as their full-time peers. We are committed to providing access to the transformative power of education regardless of socioeconomic status.

As the Nation strives to recover from COVID-19, higher education will be a critical component of rebuilding the economy. Your unprecedented level of commitment to education is needed now as your decisions will directly influence students' ability to achieve their academic goals and support the viability of communities.

Thank you.

[The statement of Ms. Pierce follows:]



**U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Education and Labor
Higher Education and Workforce Investment Subcommittee Hearing
July 7, 2020**

**A Major Test for Higher Education: How Congress Can Help Students and Institutions
Cope with COVID-19
Sharon Pierce, Ed.D. M.S.N., Minneapolis College President**

Chairwoman Davis, Ranking Member Smucker, and distinguished members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today. My name is Sharon Pierce, president of Minneapolis College, a member of the Minnesota State System of Colleges and Universities. My testimony will describe the impact of the global pandemic on two-year community and technical colleges and our students; and the importance for Congress to provide additional aid.

The effects of COVID-19 were felt with significant impact among community college students across the nation. Our students attend the only comprehensive community and technical college in Minneapolis. Our urban setting allows students who are unlikely to succeed elsewhere to have an opportunity to attain their credential, elevate their socio-economic status and contribute to the economy of the region.

A third of our students are from the first generation in their families to attend college. 72 percent are from groups under-represented in higher education. Nearly half rely on Pell Grants for tuition assistance and nearly 70 percent rely on some form of financial aid. As you can imagine, these students typically face multiple barriers to their academic success even in a pre-pandemic environment. COVID-19 put many of our students out of work, unable to support their families and unable to access transportation and social services they rely upon. It also elevated mental health concerns for them as well as the family members they care for. And, even for the hardest working students with the most grit, it completely disrupted their educational journeys.

Imagine a student who already faces such barriers now suddenly trying to navigate courses through an online platform. In many cases, this means using a smart phone and having poor or no Internet access readily available. It requires additional effort and abilities to connect with instructors, classmates, tutors, the library and all the support services our campus provides to help them succeed.

In short order, over an extended spring break, our campus went to work to put as many measures in place as possible to help students complete their spring semester courses. Students, staff and faculty who lacked adequate devices to work remotely were provided with

devices and technology tools such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, a learning management system, virtual classroom labs and Office365. The devices were procured, set up, deployed and training was provided wherever it was needed over the span of a few days as we hastily prepared to move our instruction and operations to a remote environment. The support and training required to ensure functionality and collaboration in an ongoing online environment continues. We purchased and deployed hot spot devices for students without adequate internet access.

More than 900 Spring semester course sections transitioned to alternative, remote delivery and all but five percent of Summer semester courses are being delivered online. For the students who were unable to attend class and do their coursework from home because they are homeless or live in highly distracting circumstances, we modified our Academic Success Center's computer lab to provide social distancing and implemented strict and frequent cleaning protocols to allow this space to remain open as well as safe. Students taking courses that required specialized hardware and software also relied on this resource.

Dozens of videos and online tutorials have been created to assist students and employees in transitioning to off-campus work locations. Our food shelf on campus remained open to support students as long as it was allowed and, then, began providing snack packs and contact information for other food resources.

More than 500 employees were transitioned from working on campus to working in their home offices in a matter of days. This was a complete transformation of the way we work and required innovative methods to monitor and address ongoing issues such as network connectivity, training, ergonomics, workers' compensation issues, leaves of absence and employee accountability in a remote work environment.

With the uptick in cybercrimes seen through this crisis as well as an intense increase of users accessing our network and website, we increased security awareness and practices to continue to ensure the privacy of student and employee data. Data management processes and practices were refreshed to ensure data security in teaching, learning and working remotely.

To continue supporting the enrollment of new students, we created an online orientation experience and transitioned from traditional, Accuplacer testing to multiple measures assessments and a self-placement process. A virtual registration platform and labs were implemented and the Admissions content available online was significantly transformed and expanded. Virtual tabling and collaboration events are being held to continue to identify how to help students in this continually changing environment.

College policies were revised to enable prompt decision-making and to offer students expanded grading options and withdrawal periods to ensure they received credit for the work they achieved prior to the pandemic. The Minneapolis College Foundation created an Emergency Needs Fund to quickly gather and distribute support for students.

Commencement and end-of-year events transitioned to online gatherings. It is challenging to maintain a sense of community. Support services shifted to online delivery and the phone system was modified to provide continuous student support remotely, allowing employees to answer campus phones from home. With employees and students quarantined at home, we urgently built a robust COVID-19 website landing page with many links and volumes of content structured for ease of use to ensure continuity and engagement. Now our new "front door", the website hosts operational and pandemic-related communications and resources for our campus community <https://www.minneapolis.edu/covid-19-information>. This includes resources for

online learning, innovative technologies and an exhaustive list of personal and professional support references and assistance. In addition, hundreds of existing webpages were updated to reflect the changes being made to function effectively online including a new live chat feature.

On-campus events were cancelled, making it particularly challenging for our many students who rely on the support from the campus community to persevere. Like other schools and colleges across the country, we celebrated our 2020 graduates with a virtual event online using video and social media.

In addition to the extensive list of actions taken during the various stages of quarantining, a [Back-to-Campus Preparedness Plan](#) has been developed to address our multi-faceted approach to prepare students, employees and our campus itself when it becomes safe to return to campus. This includes extensive protocols, communications and training for the following:

- Social distancing and return-to-campus etiquette
- Screening practices for those exhibiting COVID-19 symptoms
- Handwashing
- Air quality
- Respiratory etiquette
- Cleaning and disinfecting

We have and will continue to provide ongoing support and referrals for mental health, food insecurities and other basic needs to encourage students and employees to persevere through the unique challenges being faced.

Minneapolis College received \$4.6 million in Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act Relief - IHE/Student Aid funding. \$2.3 million was disbursed via emergency grants as follows. Eligible students each received \$100. Pell Grant recipients received additional funds based on their credit loads directly. Students were also able to apply for additional emergency aid to meet individual need and/or change of economic status not reflected in the previous year's FAFSA application. In addition to direct grants, CARES-IHE/Student Aid funding provided eligible students up to \$1,000 each for food, housing, course materials, healthcare, childcare, transportation and technology-related expenses incurred due to disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. The guidance for the student portion of CARES Act funding was difficult for institutions to unravel and establish eligibility guidelines. Institutional plans were quickly formulated but needed frequent revising due to changing guidance received from the Department of Education. Because of these revisions, more than two weeks elapsed between when funds were available to the College and when we could disburse them to students. The ongoing rulemaking by the Department of Education to define student eligibility creates uncertainty and limits our ability to direct this aid to the most at-risk students. This includes DACA and undocumented students who make significant contributions to the economy and will play an important role in its recovery. It also includes adult basic education students who are seeking entry into the economy. Serving the needs of these students is embedded in the missions of community and technical colleges such as ours and serves the greater good.

After accounting for tuition revenue, state appropriations and federal pandemic assistance, the College will utilize approximately \$3 million of our own funding, including reserves. This is both significant and not sustainable. However, using a portion of our own funds will allow for the time needed to better assess the need for more significant budgetary changes when we know the full extent of how COVID-19 will impact our operations. Minneapolis College will continue to

reallocate and reduce expenditures as part of our ongoing efforts to prepare for potentially significant revenue losses. Determination of short-term changes versus long-term changes will be an ongoing effort in the coming months and years. We are exploring financial modelling options that will allow us to rebuild our reserves and continue rightsizing of staff and faculty to align with evolving student needs. These models include delaying asset preservation and replacement projects, reductions in personnel and services, and possible elimination of programs.

Technology investments need to be at the forefront of decision-making so that this critical backbone, which allows our students, staff and faculty to work efficiently, becomes a part of our routine operations now, as well as after our ability to return to campus is restored. Our antiquated data information structure prohibits prompt reporting, responsiveness and it handicaps effective decision-making to accurately address ongoing changing needs. Students need to be provided with ongoing, updated hardware, software, network access, training and more. A more robust and well-funded laptop lease program for students is needed. Faculty and staff need to continue teleworking to allow them to maintain proficiency and technology in their home offices. Faculty across all disciplines, especially in our career and technical education programs, need new types of training to advance their skills and nimbleness in teaching using alternative delivery in synchronous and asynchronous formats. The intensive three-week training program being provided this summer targets faculty whose classes include labs and who are just beginning to teach online.

Our Emergency Operations Team (EOT) needs more in-depth emergency preparedness training and continually improved technology tools so we can be better prepared to respond even more promptly in future crisis situations. This will require a more strategic approach to our cybersecurity and an ongoing commitment to updating devices, applications and security. Access to affordable, high-speed Internet in our neighborhoods is essential. Equitable access to education can only be achieved by ensuring all students have the technology tools they need to persist in their academics and receive support services as needed, whether they are on campus or functioning remotely. We estimate the average cost per student for two years enrollment is approximately \$1,100.

To provide a safer campus environment, we need to invest thoughtfully in facilities upgrades including contactless hardware for all faucets and toilets, additional cleaning supplies and equipment as well as personal protective equipment. We also need to engineer and install stanchions, plexiglass and other facilities equipment to allow for physical distancing. And, of course, there are many more, unknown costs that will be incurred as we reinvent our physical operations.

Like many other two-year colleges, Minneapolis College exists within a system. Our College is dependent upon state allocation. The Minnesota State 2020-21 biennial budget request to the Governor and State Legislature focused on investments that would ensure the success of students, continue our commitment to affordability and strengthen strategies that address the workforce opportunity gap. State appropriations provided less than the full request but combined that with a provision for tuition increases of up to three percent. Minneapolis College designed the operating budgets to focus resources on investments that:

- ensure the equitable success of all students regardless of race or ethnicity, economic status, or whether they are the first in their families to attend a college or university,
- continue our commitment to affordability,
- maintain programs and services that serve our current and future students, including enterprise-wide technology infrastructure and the structural capacity for innovation,

- strengthen strategies that address workforce opportunity gaps, and
- ensure long-term financial sustainability.

The arrival of the coronavirus pandemic in March significantly disrupted these plans. Significant new pressures include:

- enrollment declines that are difficult to predict and potentially disabling to our operating budget,
- financial losses beyond tuition, such as parking fees, imperiling revenues necessary to meet fixed debt service and facilities maintenance obligations, and
- uncertainty regarding future state appropriations, which are just as necessary for operating budgets as tuition revenues.

The Federal CARES Act has provided some relief to address financial problems experienced by students and institutions resulting from the pandemic. Planning for fiscal year 2021 budget, however, remains a great challenge.

Moving forward, students who were already facing significant barriers prior to the pandemic must now navigate a new economic reality. They will require greater support as they find their way back to campus to continue their education programs. Additional federal funding providing direct aid to students impacted by COVID-19 will support their continuous enrollment and, therefore, aid in the economic recovery of our nation.

In addition to direct student aid, the ongoing importance of federal stabilization funding geared towards offsetting the operating costs of institutions like ours during this trying time cannot be overstated. While the CARES Act provided badly needed stabilization funding for institutions of higher education, more assistance is vital for us to continue to effectively serve our students and keep our virtual doors open while preparing to safely reopen our physical campus. According to recent estimates, community colleges could easily be facing a collective revenue reduction of \$10 billion, which is 17 percent of current revenues, or more over the next year. This estimate excludes the cost of additional needed supports for students resulting from COVID-19.

With that in mind, we also want to stress the importance of using a student headcount-based formula to allocate future federal stabilization funding to institutions of higher education. This approach will allow us to account for the needs of all our students, including those who attend courses part-time. While well-intentioned, higher education stabilization funding authorized by the CARES Act was allocated through a formula that favored institutions with many full-time and graduate students—underestimating the needs of two-year institutions. We want to thank you and your colleagues for replacing the CARES Act formula with a headcount-based formula in the recently passed Health and Economic Recovery Omnibus Emergency Solutions (HEROES) Act. We are appreciative of your recognition that part-time students are whole individuals who need access to the same resources as their full-time peers.

We will continue to innovate to support students, employees and the broad spectrum of partners with which we collaborate across the region. We must look ahead to our long-term needs that will allow our institution to continue providing equitable, affordable and high-quality education and transformational educational pathways for our community members who face significant challenges to elevating their socio-economic status. As the nation strives to recover economically from COVID-19 disruptions, higher education will be a critical component of rebuilding thriving business communities and neighborhoods. An unprecedented level of commitment to education by lawmakers is needed now as the decisions being made will directly

influence college students' ability to achieve their academic goals and, in turn, support the viability of their communities.

Thank you



July 21, 2020

The Honorable Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
 United States House of Representatives
 Chairman, Committee on Education and Labor
 2176 Rayburn House Office Building
 Washington, DC 2-515-6100

Dear Chairman Scott:

During the July 7, 2020 U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Education and Labor Higher Education and Workforce Investment Subcommittee Hearing: A Major Test for Higher Education: How Congress Can Help Students and Institutions Cope with COVID-19, I responded to a question from one committee member regarding my institution's loss revenue. Subsequent to the hearing I became aware that the numbers I provided were incorrect.

I provided preliminary figures based upon my college's share of projected Minnesota State system-wide losses. Since those preliminary figures were made available my chief financial officer adjusted some underlying assumptions and revised the projection to more accurately reflect our college. For the record they are as follows:

Enrollment Decline	Lost Revenue (semester/annual)
-5%	\$428k, \$1.19 million
-10%	\$856k, \$2.38 million
-20%	\$1.71 million, \$4.76 million
-30%	\$2.57 million, \$7.14 million
-40%	\$3.42 million, \$9.52 million

Thank you for your service to our country.

Sincerely,

Sharon J. Pierce, Ed.D.
 President

Chairwoman DAVIS. Thank you, Dr. Pierce.
 And, now, Dr. White. Don't forget to unmute.

STATEMENT OF TIMOTHY P. WHITE, Ph.D., CHANCELLOR, THE CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, LONG BEACH, CA

Mr. WHITE. Ranking Member Smucker—I need to—am I—okay. Great.

Chair Davis, Ranking Member Smucker, and Members of the subcommittee, thank you for providing me the opportunity to address you today.

For those who may be unfamiliar with the California State University, we are the Nation's largest and most diverse 4-year univer-

sity system; 23 campuses, more than 480,000 students, and approximately 53,000 faculty and staff. One out of every 20 Americans with a college degree is a graduate of the California State University. More than half of our students are students of color, and one in three are the first in their family to attend college. 54 percent of our enrolled students, 230,000 of them, are Pell Grant recipients, and just last year alone, 63,000 of those Pell recipients earned their bachelor's degree.

This dynamic diversity, together with our sheer size and the quality of our academic programs, makes us one of America's most powerful drivers of socioeconomic ascent.

Our response to the COVID-19 pandemic has been guided by twin north stars: Safeguarding the health and well-being of our students, faculty, staff, and the communities we serve, and maintaining our students' progress to degree. In March, the CSU made the massive pivot to virtual instruction, transitioning over 70,000 classes, together with academic and student support services, to virtual modalities. We have taken great care to mitigate the pandemic's impacts to our students, especially our most vulnerable.

Measures include maintaining on-campus housing and essential services for students who have nowhere else to call home, distributing thousands of laptops and tablets, and offering safe WiFi hotspots to help address the digital divide, continuing to meet our students' basic needs with no-contact food distribution, and emergency housing services for students who are food and housing insecure. Campus counseling services are offered virtually, serving students presenting with a variety of mental health issues during the crisis, and providing necessary flexibility around academic policies for current students, and adjusting admission policies to mitigate hardships to prospective students and their families.

We are extremely grateful for the more than \$563 million in financial relief provided to our students and campuses through the CARES Act. Because Education Department guidance limited eligibility for CARES Act emergency grants, we have augmented those funds with campus resources so that all of our students in need due to COVID-19, including doctorate students and international students, could receive much needed financial emergency support.

Informed by the guidance of scientific and medical experts, along with public health officials, we are planning for a primarily virtual fall, with exceptions for critical in-person experiences that can be conducted within rigorous standards of health and safety. As we plan for the fall and beyond, the CSU confronts a grim new fiscal reality. Our campuses face soaring costs and mounting revenue losses associated with the pandemic, putting our students' well-being and success at significant risk.

The recently passed California budget cuts our appropriation by \$299 million, 4.2 percent of our operating budget, unless additional Federal relief funds are forthcoming.

So I ask for additional support in investment during this historic public health crisis. I do so on behalf of the Nation's largest and most diverse student body. Keeping these students, students from all walks of life, enrolled and graduating with a high-quality degree not only benefits them, their families, and communities, it is also a vital public good for the Nation. Supporting higher education at

this critical moment stimulates the deployment for hundreds of thousands of Americans now and into the future, spurring tax revenue while reducing reliance on social services.

America, through the economic recovery and beyond, will require an increasingly nimble, educated workforce. We need culturally competent problem solvers, comfortable and capable in the sciences and technology, climate literate and inspired to lead the world into a sustainable future. We need them to ensure a vigorous American economy in a changing world of work, and we need them for a vibrant and more equitable society. We stand ready to be a resource as you continue to explore ways to support higher education.

Thank you again for the opportunity to address you today, and I am happy to answer any questions that you would like.

[The statement of Mr. White follows:]



HOUSE SUBCOMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION
AND WORKFORCE INVESTMENT

Written Testimony
Timothy P. White
Chancellor, The California State University
July 7, 2020

BAKERSFIELD
CHANNEL ISLANDS
CHICO
DOMINGUEZ HILLS
EAST BAY
FRESNO
FULLERTON
HUMBOLDT
LONG BEACH
LOS ANGELES
MARITIME ACADEMY
MONTEREY BAY
NORTHRIDGE
POMONA
SACRAMENTO
SAN BERNARDINO
SAN DIEGO
SAN FRANCISCO
SAN JOSÉ
SAN LUIS OBISPO
SAN MARCOS
SONOMA
STANISLAUS

INTRODUCTION

Chair Davis, Ranking Member Smucker, and members of the subcommittee, thank you for inviting me to discuss the effects of COVID-19 on the California State University (CSU), the CSU response to the crisis, and the continuing need for resources and flexibility faced by CSU students and campuses. Thanks also for your continuing support of the programs in the Higher Education Act (HEA), such as Pell Grants, which are vital to our students' success, as well as the COVID-19 relief provisions in the CARES Act and other legislation that have helped us weather the storm thus far.

The [California State University](#) is the largest and most ethnically and economically diverse system of four-year higher education in the country, with 23 campuses, 53,000 faculty and staff, and 482,000 students. Created in 1960, the mission of the CSU is to provide high-quality, affordable education to meet the ever-changing needs of California. With its commitment to quality, opportunity and student success, the CSU is renowned for superb teaching, innovative research and for producing job-ready graduates. Each year, the CSU awards more than 127,000 degrees. One in every 20 Americans holding a college degree is a graduate of the CSU and our alumni are 3.8 million strong.

The CSU is an engine of access and success. As noted above, our student body is remarkably diverse, and we pride ourselves on providing a high-quality education to Californians from all backgrounds, including those from the most underserved communities in the state. More than half of CSU students are students of color, and one in three are the first in their family to attend college. The CSU grants 62 percent of degrees conferred on California's Hispanic students, 47 percent of degrees conferred on the state's African American students, 43 percent of those conferred on American Indian and Native American students in California, and 38 percent of the degrees conferred upon Asian/Asian American students in California. Twenty-one of the CSU's 23 campuses qualify as Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSI), and 14 qualify as Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions (AANAPISI). In 2017-18, nearly 39,000 Hispanic/Latino students and more than 18,000 Asian American/Pacific Islander students earned CSU bachelor's degrees.

House Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Investment
CSU Chancellor Timothy P. White
July 7, 2020
Page 2

Another key feature of the CSU is its affordability. Average annual tuition and fees for CSU undergraduates was \$7,337 in 2019-20. More than half of CSU baccalaureate recipients graduate with zero loan debt; those who do average \$17,978 – well below the California average of \$22,585 and the national average of \$29,200.

Even with our low cost and generous state and institutional aid packages, and despite the fact that many of our students work one or more jobs, financial need remains, and the majority of CSU students rely on federal grants, loans and work-study in order to pursue their studies. Fifty-four percent of CSU students (almost 230,000) receive Pell Grants, and their average award is more than \$4,500.

The CSU consistently provides an outstanding return on federal investments in our students and campuses. In 2018-19, more than 63,000 CSU bachelor's degrees were earned by Pell Grant recipients. Indeed, each year, the CSU prepares more than 127,000 new graduates ready to drive California's – and the nation's – economy in the information technology, life sciences, agriculture, business, hospitality, health care, education, public administration, entertainment and multimedia industries. Starting and mid-career salaries for students who receive their bachelor's degree from a CSU campus are at or above the national average for public universities.

The transformative power of a CSU degree is well-documented. Last fall, CollegeNET released its 2019 Social Mobility Index (SMI) – a listing of the nation's top universities for propelling students and their families into higher economic strata. Nowhere in the country is this happening on a larger scale than at the California State University. CSU campuses dominate the 2019 SMI rankings, with 22 of 23 campuses ranking in the top 17 percent and CSU campuses accounting for nearly two-thirds of the top 20 spots. While the SMI uses several variables for its methodology, it places the most significance on access, outcome and institutional capacity, reserving the highest honors for those schools that accept and graduate the largest number of economically disadvantaged students.

While we are proud of our students and their success, we are also committed to continued improvement. In 2015, the CSU launched Graduation Initiative 2025, an unprecedented effort to increase graduation rates, to eliminate vexing equity gaps in degree completion, and to meet California's workforce needs. These efforts have resulted in more students earning degrees at higher rates than ever before in CSU history. Final data from the 2018-19 academic year shows that four- and six-year completion rates for first-time students and two- and four-year completion rates for transfer students are at all-time highs.

Indeed, we have made great strides in this regard, and our work will continue in the face of the novel coronavirus pandemic. However, I am concerned that important momentum might be lost if resources needed for this important effort are reduced or diverted due to the economic impact of this public health crisis.

The subcommittee has requested that I address several specific topics related to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the CSU and our diverse community of students – and to the university's actions to mitigate these impacts.

I am pleased to provide the following testimony in response:

House Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Investment
CSU Chancellor Timothy P. White
July 7, 2020
Page 3

A MASSIVE PIVOT TO VIRTUAL OPERATIONS

In March 2020, as the pending scope and severity of the COVID-19 pandemic became evident with greater clarity, and informed by the advice of epidemiologists and infectious disease experts, as well as the guidance of local, state and federal public health officials, the CSU began to transition its campus operations – including instruction – to virtual modalities.

On March 17, these efforts were accelerated. All face-to-face instruction was paused as our 23 campuses moved all curriculum including instructional labs, small-group work and examinations to virtual delivery. Other aspects of in-person campus life were similarly paused, and campus housing communities were systematically depopulated. However, all 23 campuses continued to make on-campus housing facilities available to those students who needed a safe, secure place in which to shelter-at-home, with particular care being taken to support students most likely to experience disparate outcomes during a public health crisis, including, but not limited to foster youth and international students who had no other safe place to call home, and students who would be homeless or housing insecure without access to campus residential facilities.

To safeguard these residents' health and well-being, physical distancing guidelines were followed. A sufficient level of amenities required to support these remaining residents – such as dining and custodial services – was provided. In some cases, campuses worked in partnership with community-based organizations to offer temporary housing to CSU students who are housing insecure or homeless, both prior to and as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

It was a massive undertaking, requiring the coordinated work of campus and system leadership, faculty, staff and students. Across our 23 campuses, our institutes for teaching and learning, along with faculty development centers, took swift action to provide webinars, online resources, coaching and support to aid our faculty in quickly adapting their courses and adopting new technology to ensure effective teaching and student engagement.

In total, more than 70,000 ongoing classes were transitioned to virtual delivery and, by March 30, instruction was resumed in this new modality – preserving academic continuity and progress to degree completion for our more-than 480,000 students.

The CSU's range of academic and student support services were similarly transferred to online modalities, including, but not limited to student advising, disability accommodations and access, supplemental learning resources, financial aid, mental health services, medical health services, basic needs initiatives, the CSU's Educational Opportunity Program (EOP), veteran student services, foster youth support, IT help desks and international student support. Staff explored new ways of delivering programs and services to students, ranging from telehealth options provided by student medical services and counseling centers, to sponsoring eSports events, hosting student government meetings via Zoom and instituting virtual career fairs.

As instruction and academic and student support services have been adapted to virtual delivery, the CSU has emphasized the importance of ensuring that all instructional and co-curricular programming and activities continue to use universal design and other features to ensure access for students with disabilities. In addition, our campus chief financial officers have provided additional resources so that those campus personnel who provide services to students with disabilities could adequately support the ramp-up in demand for accessible instruction and services. Institutes of Teaching and Learning, both in the CSU Chancellor's Office and on the campuses, continue to offer professional development webinars and online training to help build capacity for accessible remote/virtual instruction.

House Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Investment
 CSU Chancellor Timothy P. White
 July 7, 2020
 Page 4

MITIGATING COVID-19-RELATED IMPACTS TO CURRENT AND FUTURE STUDENTS

Actions to Support Current Students

Addressing the “Digital Divide”

Actions taken to maintain our students' academic continuity and progress to degree are detailed in the above section. We understand and continue to be mindful that a large-scale shift to virtual learning and academic and student support modalities can exacerbate inequities associated with the so-called “digital divide” – a lack of access to computer equipment and internet connectivity that disproportionately impacts low-income students and students of color.

To mitigate these impacts, all 23 campuses have purchased and distributed laptops and tablets to students who need them. In total, some 5,500 pieces of new equipment – with a value of more than \$4 million – have been distributed. This does not include the thousands of items of equipment already on hand – in libraries, learning centers and labs – that have been loaned to students in need. In addition, campuses systemwide have established and maintain wifi “hotspots” to provide internet connectivity in areas where appropriate physical distancing can be maintained, e.g., parking facilities.

Supporting the CSU’s Most Vulnerable Students

To further reduce potential impacts of the pandemic and of our necessary actions in response, we have provided our students with additional flexibility with regard to their course grading basis for the winter and spring terms, providing, wherever feasible, the option of credit/no credit grading, and making policy adjustments to ensure that withdrawals from courses during these terms will not unfairly “count against” students.

The CSU’s basic needs initiatives have been sustained through the pandemic. All 23 campuses are providing CalFresh (California’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program that provides benefits to qualifying individuals to assist them with the purchase of healthy foods) application assistance via phone or digital platforms, taking great care in communicating the multiple programmatic and eligibility changes in the CalFresh program and using a variety of communication platforms to ensure that students understand their benefits.

Despite the increase in requests for food assistance as a result of the pandemic, campuses have shown remarkable creativity and ingenuity in adapting these services according to the demands of this public health crisis. Some campuses have developed “pop-up” no-contact food distribution services for food insecure students. Others have borrowed refrigerators from their campus dining services to expand food offerings to include perishable items. Delivery services have been developed to support students who do not have transportation or who are immuno-suppressed. One campus program provides low-income students who are parents with a backpack full of food, and then replenishes the backpack on a weekly basis. Several campuses have provided gift cards to local grocery stores as an alternative food distribution method.

As referenced above, campuses ensured that students who are housing insecure have been able to remain in on-campus housing. A majority of campuses are working with their local housing authority and the Chancellor’s Office to participate in the Emergency Housing Initiative. Under this effort, student housing is providing additional bed spaces for students who do not have other housing options. This effort will provide safe housing and meal assistance for students who qualify well into the summer, with the possibility of extension, pending available resources.

House Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Investment
CSU Chancellor Timothy P. White
July 7, 2020
Page 5

Across the CSU, students are presenting with a variety of mental health concerns. Campuses report that students are reporting increased stress, anxiety, loneliness, lack of motivation, disappointment, anger and relational challenges. Campuses also indicate an escalation in reports related to domestic violence, family violence and family substance abuse problems. In response, all campuses have changed the variety and type of services they offer to best serve students. Counseling services are being delivered remotely, with individual sessions offered via Zoom, phone or other remote modality. Strategies for providing triage in-take services include the rotation of in-person staffing and the use of third-party telephonic behavioral health services as a virtual modality.

The majority of campuses are providing virtual support groups and/or psychoeducational programming related to anti-discrimination, stress reduction, resources for physical and mental wellness, healthy relationships, strategies for grieving loss while sheltering in place and social connection while engaging in physical distancing.

Student Financial Support

Guidelines from the U.S. Department of Education and provisions of the CARES Act granted campuses permission to continue to award federal work-study funds to students receiving federal financial aid who were no longer able to work on campus due to campus closures or shifts to remote/virtual service provision that preclude student employees from performing duties. In light of this, we strongly urged campuses, whenever feasible, to continue compensation for their student employees – either by assigning alternative duties that can be performed remotely or simply by ensuring pay continuity.

Third-party vendors, including many food service vendors who provide dining services on campuses, have curtailed some or all operations and have been forced to reduce their workforces – comprised, in significant numbers, of students – in response to declines in revenue. Even in these exigent instances, we are asking campuses to find other funding sources, wherever possible, so that students can continue to receive compensation or be assigned to work in other units on campus through the spring term.

Students who have lost employment have been encouraged to contact their campus's vice president for student affairs or designee to explore options for possible job reassignment, emergency grant aid or assistance via crisis funds. Each of the 23 campuses offers emergency grants (preexisting and in addition to the CARES Act/CSU Cares relief funding described below) to students who are facing challenges meeting their basic needs. Since the start of the pandemic, there has been an increase in the number of applications submitted by students seeking this emergency support. As a result of the increase in student need, a number of campuses have increased the maximum amount that a student could receive in emergency funds.

CARES Act/CSU Cares Initiative

Of course, the most significant financial relief we have been able to provide our students has been in the form of direct emergency financial grants made available through the CARES Act – and we remain extremely grateful to Congress and the Administration for the scope of the relief and for its quick distribution.

Collectively, CSU campuses received \$262.5 million in direct student relief funding. Education Department guidance limited these CARES Act emergency grants to students who are eligible for Title IV aid. To ensure that all of our students – including DACA and international students – received relief, we complemented federal funds with CSU resources to form the CSU Cares Initiative to provide emergency grant funding for all CSU students with COVID-19-induced financial need.

House Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Investment
 CSU Chancellor Timothy P. White
 July 7, 2020
 Page 6

With broad consultation, we developed guidance for CSU Cares and for the fair and purposeful distribution of these funds, informed by: 1) our deep-seated commitment to inclusive excellence and equity in education; 2) student success, with the goal of keeping as many students as we can on the path to degree completion; and 3) administrative simplicity, with streamlined processes so that the money can be delivered into the hands of our students quickly.

To facilitate distribution of the funds, we partnered with financial institutions for the direct distribution of the grant monies to students, including those who may not have access to the US banking system.

With regard to the balance of CARES Act funding not distributed to students in the form of direct emergency financial relief, CSU campuses are prioritizing faculty development and investment in resources to continue to enhance virtual teaching and learning, informed by outcomes and persistence data, as well as shared best practices developed in the spring and summer terms. A portion of the funds will also be used to offset lost revenue in housing and parking operations and to retain CSU employees who work in these areas.

Actions to Support Prospective and Incoming Students

To mitigate impacts to prospective and incoming CSU students, the university has made extensive modifications to its admission requirements and procedures. In addition, the CSU has collaborated closely with California's PK-20 education partners to provide the clearest and most consistent guidance possible across the state's public and private education segments.

While a comprehensive guidance document regarding the CSU's admission policies and practices can be found [here](#), modifications to reduce COVID-19-related hardship to prospective students and their families include:

- Flexibility to accept grades of "Credit" or "Pass" to satisfy state "a-g" college preparatory course requirements completed during winter, spring or summer 2020 terms;
- Suspension of the use of ACT/SAT examinations in determining admission eligibility at all campuses for the 2021-22 academic year. This will impact three admissions cycles: fall 2021, winter 2022 and spring 2022;
- A reduced minimum number of credits required for transfer admission;
- Relaxation of intent-to-enroll deadlines for fall 2020 to give students and their families more time to assess their personal circumstances and make informed decisions; and
- Extension of deadlines for submission of official academic records.

Campuses are also providing virtual tours, online presentations regarding academic programs and support services, and other digital resources to help students and their families make informed choices about their academic futures. "Summer Bridge" programs have been shifted to online modalities and provide first-generation students and those from low-income or historically underserved communities academic and logistical resources to facilitate and support their transition to college. In addition, campuses have enlisted teams of academic coaches – comprised of current students and support staff – to regularly check-in with new students during their summer transition to CSU campuses.

House Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Investment
CSU Chancellor Timothy P. White
July 7, 2020
Page 7

PLANNING FOR FALL 2020

On May 12, I announced that the CSU would adopt a planning approach for primarily virtual learning in fall 2020, with limited exceptions for in-person activities that cannot be delivered virtually, are indispensable to the university's core mission and can be conducted within rigorous standards of safety and welfare.

I want to clarify a matter that was incorrectly reported in some media coverage of my announcement. No campuses have been closed; no classes have been cancelled. The California State University remains open – as it has throughout the pandemic. We are steadfast in our commitment to inclusive excellence, and we stand ready to meet California's higher education needs in the 2020-21 academic year.

This decision to plan for primarily virtual learning in the fall allows us to continue to advance the CSU's academic mission and maintain our students' progress to degree while ensuring the health and well-being of our students, faculty and staff, as well as that of members of the communities our campuses serve.

And the decision is consistent with the evolving data regarding the likely progression of the pandemic, with medical and public health experts forecasting a second wave of COVID-19 in the summer, followed by a significant surge – coupled with influenza – in the fall and an additional wave in the first quarter of 2021.

We believe it is far more prudent to plan now for mostly virtual instruction in the fall, rather than to be unprepared if the pandemic proceeds as forecast. And it is critical that we give our faculty and staff a full summer to make preparations, to take part in training and professional development, and to share and implement the best practices in virtual learning that we identified this spring. With the benefit of ongoing, data-driven planning; deep consultation with university stakeholders; and additional training and professional development over the summer, we will deliver a rich educational experience this fall, with comprehensive and robust academic and student support.

We also recognize that should the pandemic continue as projected, it might not be possible for some students, faculty and staff to safely travel to campus. We must have the option of remote learning available throughout the curriculum. In short, this virtual planning approach preserves as many options for as many students as possible.

What that educational experience will look like this fall, with specificity, will vary across the CSU. There is significant flexibility built into our approach, and there will be corresponding variability across our 23 campuses, depending on context, specific circumstances and local public health data.

The Chancellor's Office is currently reviewing individual campus plans to evaluate their repopulation policies and to determine appropriate exceptions for in-person learning experiences that meet rigorous safety standards (which may include the provision of personal protective equipment, sanitizing and disinfecting spaces, limiting the number of on-site students, and maintaining physical distance between participants).

House Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Investment
 CSU Chancellor Timothy P. White
 July 7, 2020
 Page 8

A non-exclusive, illustrative list of examples of appropriate in-person learning experiences includes:

- Essential physical and life science laboratory classes;
- Hands-on experiences and senior capstone projects for engineering and architecture students;
- Clinical nursing and allied health courses with training mannequins;
- Access to specialized studios for performing and visual arts students; and
- Access to hands-on interactive simulators and boat and ship handling exercises necessary for licensure and careers in the maritime industry.

In summary, we are finalizing plans for a rich, primarily virtual academic experience for our 480,000 students in the fall – one that will continue to transform lives, elevate communities and drive California's future prosperity. And as we do, we will remain in close consultation with epidemiologists and infectious disease experts; local, national and federal public health officials; and with our partners in Sacramento and Washington D.C., with the goal of returning to face-to-face learning as soon as we are safely able to do so.

A NEED FOR FEDERAL INVESTMENT

The impacts of this historic public health crisis and our quick and necessary actions in response, have brought about a stark new fiscal reality for the CSU. Our campuses continue to confront soaring costs and mounting revenue losses, putting the long-term well-being and success of our students and the viability of our campuses at significant risk.

We surveyed campuses on the negative economic impact that the pandemic had on the 2020 spring term. We collected information on new costs and revenue losses and arranged the information into three categories: CSU state-supported enterprises, non-profit auxiliary organizations and CSU operations. As a result of COVID-19, our campuses and auxiliary organizations estimate \$337 million dollars of unanticipated new costs and revenue losses for the 2020 spring term alone.

CSU state-supported enterprise programs have experienced \$173 million dollars of very significant, negative impacts. Revenue losses are the primary challenge in this category. For example, most students have vacated on-campus housing, and few students and employees are utilizing on-campus parking. CSU enterprise programs like student housing and parking are self-supported by user-fee revenue. We anticipate that these conditions will persist into the summer and fall because of our decision to begin each of these terms mostly in virtual mode. As a result, we anticipate additional and precipitous revenue drops in this category.

Auxiliary organizations, which are separate 501(c)(3) non-profit organizations, have also suffered dramatic revenue losses, totaling \$114 million dollars. Auxiliary organizations have been especially affected by the loss of "foot traffic" at retail locations and in-person gatherings on campuses, resulting in steep revenue losses, reduced hours and layoffs. Like CSU enterprise programs, auxiliary organization operations will continue to suffer in this way as conditions persist into the fall.

Campuses report \$50 million dollars of adverse negative impact on CSU operations with much of that in the form of unanticipated costs such as additional cleaning and overtime costs. There has also been a shift to virtual/distance instruction and work-at-home arrangements, which has associated increased technology needs for hardware, software and licenses. While the \$50 million dollars represents less than one percent of the annual operating budget, there is significant risk to operations in the near future.

House Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Investment
CSU Chancellor Timothy P. White
July 7, 2020
Page 9

California is facing a new state budget crisis. State tax revenue has suffered. With a projected budget deficit of \$54.3 billion dollars brought on by the economic impacts of the pandemic, late last month Governor Newsom signed into law a budget that will reduce state support of the university by \$299 million – a 4.2 percent contraction of our operating budget – unless additional federal relief funding is received by October 15.

In addition, given the state of the economy, we anticipate increased needs for our students and that the demand for student support services will remain high. New investments in technology to support a more robust range of tutoring, counseling and telehealth services will be needed.

Additional federal action will be necessary to allow us to continue our critical work in support of our state's and nation's future. The federal government has the sole ability to provide the type of assistance to students, their families and institutions of higher education that will not only allow colleges and universities like ours to meet the needs of our students and staff, but to continue as engines of local and regional economies. Supporting higher education at this moment is an essential component of growing the economy. It will preserve and stimulate employment for hundreds of thousands of Americans in the public and private sectors now and into the future, spurring tax revenue while reducing unemployment and the reliance on social services. It is a worthy and necessary investment in the public good – in the long-term soundness, vigor and growth of the economy and toward a healthier, more stable and more equitable society.

As noted previously, the CSU is deeply appreciative of the CARES Act, which was a critically important step toward ensuring that students, especially the most vulnerable, have their basic needs addressed. Similarly, federal funds provided to support colleges and universities will help keep institutions operating, even as we attempt to plug massive holes in our budgets. But the amount of money for students and higher education institutions contained in the CARES Act does not come close to filling the gap.

Accordingly, as you consider next steps to provide relief and spur recovery from the pandemic, we join our higher education colleagues across the nation in asking your support for an additional \$46.6 billion to help address near-term campus financial needs – including increased need-based aid for students due to declining family incomes – and revenue losses stemming from enrollment declines and closures of campus facilities that provide auxiliary services. This amount represents a conservative estimate of urgent unmet needs calculated by the higher education associations.

The allocation and distribution formula created in the CARES Act has the benefit of allowing for swift disbursement of assistance, putting resources in the hands of students and institutions as quickly as possible. We firmly believe that direct distribution to institutions is the best way to ensure that federal funds actually reach the students and schools they were intended to help.

While we share many of Congress's concerns regarding the implementation of the CARES Act, it is equally clear that using the existing federal system for providing aid to institutions is the fastest way to get support to where it is needed. By pairing this rapid disbursement of funds with statutory language that gives campuses broad flexibility and authority to use funds in ways that best match the unique needs of students and their institutions, Congress can bypass the kinds of bureaucratic limitations that hampered the effectiveness of some CARES aid. Further, we request that the Congress clarify that COVID-19 aid is available to all students with need related to the pandemic, and not solely to students who are eligible for Title IV aid. I believe the language regarding flexibility and eligibility included in the HEROES Act effectively addresses these issues, and recommend their inclusion in any future supplemental legislation.

House Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Investment
CSU Chancellor Timothy P. White
July 7, 2020
Page 10

Unfortunately, federal support for higher education has historically been used by states to supplement other areas of state budgets, leaving higher education vulnerable to massive cuts in state support and students vulnerable to tuition increases. In order to guarantee that states do not simply reduce their funding to institutions of higher education in proportion to new federal assistance, we ask that Congress include a maintenance of effort (MOE) provision as a condition of receiving funding. We recognize that state budgets are under pressure, and that many will need to make cuts, but no state should be allowed to cut higher education disproportionately to other cuts in its overall budget. Furthermore, it's critical to use an expansive definition of "higher education" that includes direct support to institutions and state student financial aid programs.

Additional Support for Minority-Serving Institutions

Numerous existing federal programs recognize the need for and value of investing targeted resources in Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Tribal Colleges and Universities, and Minority-Serving Institutions (including, among others, Hispanic-Serving and Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions). These programs seek to expand and enhance the academic quality, institutional management, fiscal stability and self-sufficiency of institutions that serve large numbers of disadvantaged and minority students. These programs are key to closing educational equity gaps. We appreciate that the CARES Act provided supplemental resources and regulatory flexibilities for such institutions and that the HEROES Act proposes additional resources for them, as well. The CSU strongly supports including additional funding for these programs in future COVID-19 relief legislation.

The Pell Grant and Other Student Aid Programs

Finally, as you work to support student success through both the supplemental and regular (FY 2021) appropriations processes, we urge you to consider significantly increased investments in the Pell Grant, as well as other student aid programs that are critical to low-income students and students of color.

The Pell Grant is the foundation of federal student aid, providing opportunity to millions of students who might otherwise be unable to attend college. Most Pell recipients come from families with incomes at or below \$40,000. The CSU strongly supports a significant increase in the maximum Pell Grant and the provision of automatic inflationary increases to the grant each year.

Even with recent increases, the purchasing power of a Pell Grant stands well below historic levels. In the 1980s, the maximum Pell Grant covered more than half of the average cost of a public four-year college. Today, it is closer to 30 percent. Pell Grants are critical for CSU students, even with CSU's relatively modest tuition and fees, and despite the fact that many students work and receive significant need-based aid from the state.

Boosting the Pell Grant will improve opportunities for low-income, working and older students (e.g., those with children) to enroll and sustain themselves financially – and succeed academically. An enhanced Pell program will help relieve growing financial pressure on students to work more hours or take additional jobs. Enabling students to focus on their education will allow them to take more courses. It will result in increased attendance, improved performance, reduced dropout rates, an accelerated path to graduation and reduced borrowing. CSU also asks that any surplus Pell funds remain in the program for use in future years when the program may run deficits, or for improvements to the Pell Grant program.

House Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Investment
CSU Chancellor Timothy P. White
July 7, 2020
Page 11

Similarly, we encourage increased investments in campus-based aid programs. The Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (SEOG) program provides up to an additional \$4,000 in grant assistance to Pell Grant recipients with unmet need. Institutions must match federal SEOG funds by providing one dollar for every three allocated by the program. SEOG helps nearly 35,000 CSU students with the greatest need to purchase items like books and supplies.

Federal work-study awards provide further support for high-need students, along with new skills to help students become more employable. In general, institutions must match federal work-study funds by providing one dollar for every three allocated by the program. More than 7,800 CSU students benefit from work-study awards.

Conclusion

The CSU has long appreciated this committee's efforts – and those of your colleagues in both houses of Congress – to support our students and our mission. And we ask for additional support and investment during this public health crisis of historic proportions. We do so on behalf of the nation's largest and most racially, ethnically and economically diverse student body in four-year public higher education, so that we can continue to be a powerful driver of socioeconomic ascent. And we do so because keeping more students – students from all walks of life – enrolled and maintaining progress toward a high-quality degree is not only beneficial to their lives, families and communities, it is also a vital public good for our country.

America – through the economic recovery and beyond – will increasingly require a nimble, entrepreneurial workforce. We need culturally competent problem solvers, comfortable and capable in the sciences and in technology and virtual environments – climate literate and inspired to lead the world to a sustainable future. We need them to ensure a sound and vigorous American economy in the changing world of work. And we need them for a healthy, vibrant and more equitable society.

The California State University welcomes the opportunity to be a resource to you as you continue to explore ways to ensure access and success in higher education.

Chairwoman DAVIS. Thank you. Thank you, Dr. White.
And now I recognize Mr. Pulsipher for five minutes. Thank you for being with us, sir.

STATEMENT OF SCOTT PULSIPHER, PRESIDENT, WESTERN GOVERNORS UNIVERSITY, SALT LAKE CITY, UT

Mr. PULSIPHER. Chairwoman Davis, Ranking Member Smucker, and Members of the subcommittee, thank you for this opportunity to share my views on the impact of COVID-19 on the future of higher education. At WGU, we are compelled by our belief in the inherent worth and ability of every individual and in the trans-

formative power of education. We believe that the pathways to opportunity should be open to everyone.

WGU is a private, nonprofit, self-sustaining institution founded in 1997 by a bipartisan group of 19 governors who saw the opportunity to use technology and competency-based education to expand access to higher education and better align with workforce needs. Today, we serve over 120,000 full-time students in all 50 States, over 70 percent of whom would be classified in one or more underserved categories. We deliver affordable, relevant, high-quality programs, combined with a student-centered instructional model entirely online, and that propels students towards completion, great jobs, and opportunity.

Recent months have seen life upended for every American and particularly for the nearly 20 million students enrolled in higher education. With their immediate and persistent challenges, students have acute needs for material support to stay on their path to opportunity, and we need to ensure access through the online world in which learning now takes place.

Over 21 million Americans, disproportionately people of color, do not have sufficient bandwidth to stream this hearing, take part in our civic fight, access education, or participate in the digital workforce.

There are also many anxious questions about the fall semester, but students also need us to look well beyond the fall and address strategic questions facing American higher education. Higher education entered the pandemic with preexisting conditions; rapidly escalating cost, widening disconnect with workforce needs, crushing student debt, unacceptable racial disparities and outcomes, and low completion rates. Now the sector is in the throes of technology-driven disruption, irreversibly accelerated by COVID-19. Near-term issues are certainly pressing, whether safely reopening campuses, enabling institutions to online shift, or the protection of displaced students due to potential closures.

We must reestablish the purpose and mission of postsecondary education and modernize the way we invest in it. We must embrace the technology first approach to teaching and supporting students. We must move swiftly and radically to not only get the 20 million currently enrolled students back on the path to completion, but also upscale many of the 40-plus million Americans who have been displaced during the pandemic and the tens of millions more whose work is being reshaped by technology.

Quite simply, we need to reimagine postsecondary education as a true lifelong model of providing high-quality, relevant pathways to both an individual's first and next opportunities. Even short-term support and accommodations should be designed to prioritize with the long term in mind.

The written testimony I have submitted includes various policy ideas that I believe address many of the challenges our country and its students face as a result of COVID-accelerated shifts. All of the ideas are based on a few simple guiding principles. First, students should be prioritized over institutions. Second, student outcomes matter more than institutional inputs, and learning or mastering rather than time should be the critical denominator of education.

In the 1930s, our Nation responded to a great economic crisis by passing a New Deal. In the 1940s, facing an unprecedented need for education as young soldiers returned from war hungry for opportunity, Congress opened the door to direct Federal investment in higher education by passing the GI Bill. In the 1960s, facing widespread protests and social unrest in response to structural racism, we saw a wave of legislation around civil rights.

Today, we find ourselves at the intersection of several similar great forces. We face a significant economic challenge of an unprecedented need for education, [inaudible] workforce, and, sadly, continue to grapple with inequities which have been both exposed and widened by the pandemic. We are living in unprecedented times, times that demand our best thinking, new frameworks, and a smart investment.

Congress can renew the pathways to opportunity for every American. We need landmark legislation on education and work, a new approach that can meet the challenges of this moment and the future that follows it, that is designed for the digital and information age and that can fundamentally modernize our approach to investing in and unlocking the potential of every individual.

Thank you for the opportunity to be here today and to be of assistance as you take on the critical questions facing America's higher education system.

[The statement of Mr. Pulsipher follows:]

**United States House Committee on Education and Labor
Higher Education and Workforce Investment Subcommittee**

A Major Test: Examining the Impact of COVID-19 on the Future of Higher Education.

July 7, 2020

TESTIMONY OF

Scott D. Pulsipher

President, Western Governors University

WRITTEN TESTIMONY**Introduction**

Chairwoman Davis and Ranking Member Smucker, thank you for the opportunity to share my views with the subcommittee about the Impact of COVID-19 on the Future of Higher Education.

My name is Scott Pulsipher, and I have served as the President of Western Governors University since April 2016. WGU is the nation's leading nonprofit, online competency-based university. We were founded in the late 1990s to boost workforce competitiveness as the United States moved into the digital age, and to provide learning opportunities to students who were underserved by current offerings: working learners, rural populations, those who had started college elsewhere and not completed, low-income students, first-generation students, and students of color. We cultivate a student-first environment by combining incredible faculty with state-of-the-art technology and data to improve learning outcomes, graduation rates, employment, and overall student wellbeing.

WGU Background

Talent is universal. Access to opportunity is not. Work, family obligations, military deployments, financial constraints, lack of college readiness, mental and emotional barriers—these are just a few of the things that keep today's would-be students from pursuing the credential that could benefit their careers, change their lives, and transform their families. WGU was built to address these needs, through its online and on-demand competency-based learning model, workforce-relevant curriculum, and personalized, student-centric faculty support.

We believe in the inherent worth and ability of every individual and the transformative power of education. WGU was created by a bipartisan group of 19 governors to expand access to education while developing programs that closely align with employer needs and a learning model that supports adult learners. WGU was built by states to complement and supplement state systems and bring innovative, flexible, and attainable educational opportunities to individuals who historically have not been well served by the higher education system.

Now in our 24th year, we have 121,000 students and over 190,000 graduates across all 50 states. WGU is providing affordable, high-value degrees to underserved learners at scale and has demonstrated the efficacy of online, competency-based learning.

WGU proudly serves a diverse student body, located in nearly every county in all 50 states and in military installations overseas, with 70 percent of our students from one or more underserved populations (first-generation students, low-income earners, students of color, or rural residents). WGU exists to help students access opportunity; our programs are focused on four highly in-demand areas: business, information technology, K-12 education, and health professions. Our students include more than 25,000 working nurses, and many of our students have been serving on the frontlines of the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, WGU is one of the nation's top providers of STEM educators and is the only institution to offer teacher licensure programs in all 50 states.

WGU's focus is on student success, attainment, and value. We work with Gallup annually to survey our alumni regarding their success and wellbeing after graduation. In Gallup's most recent survey, 77 percent of WGU alumni respondents reported that their WGU education was worth the

cost, compared to the national average of 38 percent. Of alumni who responded to a Harris survey, 97 percent reported that they have recommended WGU to others.¹ Referrals from alumni and current students are a major factor in maintaining our nearly 20 percent year-over-year enrollment growth. More than half of WGU's new enrollments come from referrals by students, employers, and other institutions.

Affordability is one of the most significant issues affecting higher education, and its impact has been magnified by the current pandemic. At WGU, we are committed to ensuring that cost is not a barrier to the opportunity that education creates. We do this by keeping our tuition and fees affordable, charging a flat rate that includes learning materials and allows students to complete as many courses as they are able for the same cost. Our model is self-sustaining on average tuition and fees of less than \$7,000 per year. We work closely with our students to encourage responsible borrowing; as a result, only 57 percent of WGU undergrads borrow to pay for their education, compared with 69 percent nationally, and among those who do take loans, their average debt at graduation is less than half the national average.

Our model is designed with the student at the center. WGU has worked tirelessly to build a structure that meets students where they are, including working to earn appropriate approvals through various governmental and accreditation processes. Competency-based education allows students to study and learn on their own schedules, moving quickly through what they know and taking more time to focus on what they still need to learn. Because it is all online and asynchronous, students can log in to study and take exams 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. While they study online, WGU students are not alone: Every student is assigned a Program Mentor, a faculty member who guides and supports them from enrollment to graduation.

A key focus for WGU today is finding ways to improve access and attainment to ensure that there are real pathways to opportunity for all. We are researching and developing best practices for serving underrepresented, underserved, and poorly served populations, not just at WGU, but across the higher education system. WGU Labs is working with other institutions to take insights from WGU data and use those to support and guide other institutions as they develop programs and protocols to support at-risk or underserved students. We will create the tools, services, access points, and personalization mechanisms necessary to adequately address the needs of underserved students as we increase the representation of those populations among WGU entrants and completers.

WGU unapologetically advocates for the transformational changes needed to build an education system that makes opportunity work for everyone. We want every learner—not just every WGU student—to have the pathways to opportunity that education provides. We have much work to do. We are committed to knocking down the barriers—physical, emotional, developmental, regulatory, or technological—that keep learners from pathways to opportunity.

¹ WGU Annual Report 2019;
<https://www.wgu.edu/content/dam/western-governors/documents/annual-report/annual-report-2019.pdf>

The Path Forward for Higher Education During and After COVID-19

COVID-19 was not built into any student's plans nor any institution's strategies for 2020. It represents an immediate crisis for higher education, creating challenges for enrolled students and traditional institutions. The pandemic is also dramatically reshaping the workforce, driving an urgent need for reskilling and upskilling, and exacerbating pre-existing equity issues. But let me be clear, COVID-19 also accelerates disruptive trends that have long been at play in higher education, the consolidation of higher education institutions, including a move to online learning, and a transition from a time-based, credit-hour approach to learning to a skills-based talent pipeline.

Our fundamental belief is that higher education policy should be student-centered. Policymakers should consider first and foremost the needs of students as they navigate pathways to opportunity in a time of economic disruption, and the barriers that exist for students in a post-COVID world. We will never return to "normal" as we knew it pre-pandemic, and it is not the job of policymakers to roll back industry transitions that have been accelerated by COVID-19 but were fundamentally in place pre-pandemic. Policymakers have a critical role to play in understanding what students need from higher education now and in the future, and to shaping policy that facilitates that future.

COVID-19 is a crisis of acute and devastating dimensions. Its impacts on students demand an immediate response to address the needs of workers and learners within our current framework, including needs for funding, digital access, reskilling, and mobility.

But policymakers should also be concerned with a longer time horizon: COVID-19 has accelerated changes that have long been at play in higher education, changes with which our current regulatory and funding framework for higher education is not prepared to cope. This moment represents a once-in-a-lifetime reshaping of the landscape of education and work, and both workers and learners need policymakers to develop a new framework for human capital investment in this country.

Immediate Impact

The pandemic has devastated businesses and left the economy reeling. Unemployment rates continue to skyrocket, reflecting the millions of families who have lost jobs and wages. The Federal Reserve reported that 19 percent of adults lost a job or had their hours reduced in March 2020. The impact was even more alarming for lower-income workers, with 39 percent of workers with incomes below \$40,000 reporting job loss in one month during the height of the pandemic economic closures.²

The COVID-19 crisis also dramatically illuminated longstanding societal inequities driving economic instability for people of color and low socioeconomic status. The CDC reports that death rates from COVID-19 are disproportionately high for Black and Hispanic populations.³ Unemployment rates disproportionately impact communities of color as well: April 2020 data from the U.S. Department of Labor shows that while the white population has a 14.2 percent

² Report on the Economic Well-Being of U.S. Households in 2019, with supplemental data from April 2020;

<https://www.federalreserve.gov/publications/report-economic-well-being-us-households.htm>

³ <https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/need-extra-precautions/racial-ethnic-minorities.html>

unemployment rate, it soars to 18.9 percent for Latinos and 16.7 percent for African Americans.⁴ The ability to work from home and weather the pandemic is also more viable for those with higher education levels: 63 percent of workers with a bachelor's degree or higher have been able to work from home, while only 20 percent those with a high school diploma or less have had the same opportunity.⁵ What was an economic and an educational divide has now translated into disparate health impacts, as those that are structurally shut out of education now bear disproportionate risk of COVID-19 infection and death.

The role of higher education has never been more essential, and it is vital that we structure policy that conforms the higher education system to this role. The effect of COVID-19 on students is also stark as the loss of family income is contributing to expected decreases in new and current student enrollment. Current students also have unique pressures such as navigating unanticipated online learning experiences, potentially without adequate broadband or sufficient support; attempting to choose fields of study that will provide them with a sound return on their investment at a time when unemployment is at a record high; and mapping out a plan of study on a fixed academic calendar at a time when they may only be able to reasonably predict their financial and time capacity a week at a time. Students need education more than ever, but the circumstances of COVID create additional barriers to many pathways to opportunity.

Immediate Response

The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the urgency and flexibility with which we must respond to students' needs. The support students need from policymakers are not necessarily different from before COVID-19, but the crisis creates urgency around the need for innovation. For example, students always deserved access to flexible and high-quality education; however, the sudden and dramatic shift to online learning necessitates strong **broadband** and **digital literacy** initiatives. Developing solutions to connect all students must be prioritized.

As COVID-19 shutdowns devastate personal finances and economies, Americans need smart, quick solutions to get back to work. Common-sense affordability initiatives like **providing aid for short-term credentials** and **degree options aligned to job opportunities** must be elevated as policy priorities. With a pre-pandemic shortage of classroom teachers, innovative pathways are vital to filling workforce gaps and meeting the needs of today's students across the educational continuum, especially as classrooms are shifting to online and blended learning to accommodate the current crisis.⁶ Nurses are also in highly in-demand in a pandemic crisis, exacerbating previously projected shortages.⁷ Essential workers such as these need flexibility and mobility to cross state boundaries to assist in the emergency response to COVID-19. **Accelerated licensure reform** is imperative to addressing the current crisis and ongoing shortages, while underscoring the bureaucratic hurdles that are out of sync with the needs of the fluid, modern workplace.

⁴ <https://www.washingtonpost.com/business/2020/05/09/jobs-report-demographics/>

⁵ Report on the Economic Well-Being of U.S. Households in 2019, with supplemental data from April 2020;

<https://www.federalreserve.gov/publications/report-economic-well-being-us-households.htm>

⁶ <https://www.epi.org/publication/the-teachers-shortage-is-real-large-and-growing-and-worse-than-we-thought-the-first-report-in-the-perfect-storm-in-the-teacher-labor-market-series/>

⁷ <https://www.aacnursing.org/News-Information/Fact-Sheets/Nursing-Shortage>

Students' finances have been massively disrupted by COVID-19 and its economic impact. The economic impacts have directly affected working adults, who are more likely to be learning online—but online learners have had limited ability to access support through the CARES Act. Policymakers should **extend emergency aid to online students**. Policymakers should be prepared to support students with simplified access to additional funding. It is also imperative that students be empowered to use **Title IV Funding for High Quality Certificates and Microcredentials** to access reskilling opportunities, many of which do not require full degree programs.

Simplifying access to financial aid, particularly at a moment when high school students aren't able to sit across the table from their guidance counselor, is essential to maintaining access to financial aid for low-income students. Policymakers should consider **FAFSA reform and simplification**.

Thinking Beyond the Fall:

How COVID-19 Accelerates Change in Higher Education & What Congress Can Do

COVID-19 accelerates three critical pre-existing trends in higher education. First, higher education has been an industry under mounting financial pressure and consolidation risk. Second, the adoption of technology and online modalities in higher education has been increasing. Third, the increasing skill intensity of the economy is driving demand for lifelong learning. Each of these trends has a long history and was well in place before COVID-19, but today each has been accelerated. The time is now for policymakers to adapt to these new realities in higher education.

At WGU, we recognize that the future of education and work that we once only talked about is now here. As we move as one, individual institution to answer the call of this critical moment and continue serving students, we believe that Congress can help guide policy to limit the impact of these disruptive trends on students and help them prepare for the significant disruption to the labor market. Students need Congress to smooth students' pathway from failing institutions to institutions where they can complete their education. As adoption of online learning grows, Congress should prioritize a policy framework that ensures quality by prioritizing student outcomes and should invest in the digital infrastructure needed to get every learner online. And as the demand for education quickens, Congress should examine how it can modernize and broaden its approach to human capital investment.

As Congress undertakes this important work, we would offer the following foundational principles: 1. It will be vital to address immediate needs during a pandemic while planning for the long-term success of learner-centered higher education. 2. Students should be prioritized over institutions and should be the focus of legislative solutions. 3. Results should be expected and measured as a part of any legislative initiatives.

1. Business model pressure and industry consolidation

Student loan volume is \$1.542 trillion as of the end of the second quarter, which represents a tripling of student debt over just the past 13 years.⁸ The Federal Reserve reports that two out of every 10 borrowers were behind on their payments prior to the pandemic.⁹ The burden of student

⁸ From the Federal Student Aid Portfolio Summary, accessed Jul 1, 2020;

<https://studentaid.gov/data-center/student/portfolio>

⁹ <https://www.federalreserve.gov/publications/2019-economic-well-being-of-us-households-in-2018-student-loans-and-other-education-debt.htm>

debt evidences significant racial disparities upon graduation that widen from there: Four years after graduation, Black students on average owe twice as much as white students.¹⁰

Despite the significant financial burden that students carry, the typical college is itself financially marginal. Prior to the pandemic, Moody's had rated the higher education sector a negative outlook, predicting a rise in the closure rate, weaker enrollments over the next 10 years, and "sluggish" net tuition revenue growth.¹¹ The traditional model of higher education is high-cost, not just high-price. The place-based model of learning is highly enrollment-sensitive, meaning that enrollment shortfalls result in big losses to the bottom line. Enrollment shortfalls were a risk pre-COVID, but they are more likely now, particularly as students hesitate to enroll given perceived health risks and the uncertainty about what fall 2020 will look like.

COVID-19 has placed particular financial pressure on place-based learning environments, exacerbating pre-existing conditions around pricing, enrollment, and financial sustainability. We have seen a rise in college closures since the pandemic, and more should be expected. Finances are a major concern for most college presidents: 96 percent of those surveyed reported that they were very or somewhat concerned about unbudgeted expenses due to COVID-19.¹² Only 11 percent believe their institution can return to normal operations within 12-18 months.¹³ College closures create massive disruptions for students' lives and livelihoods, and their likelihood of completing college.¹⁴

The Policy Response: Protect Students

We know, from the hundreds of closures our industry has seen over recent years, that our response to institutional closure is inadequate and leaves students stranded. In an environment in which we are expecting more closures, it is essential that Congress establish policies that protect students financially and make it as likely as possible that students will complete their education. Over the long term, however, the federal government should not take on the role of sustaining models that do not serve students well and that cannot sustain themselves, in a sector that was experiencing significant disruption long prior to the pandemic.

Policymakers should consider improved financial transparency for institutions to better identify struggling institutions and prepare teachout plans where they may be needed.¹⁵ Steps should be taken to ease requirements for students who are transferring from failing institutions and give them safe passage to institutions where they can complete their degrees.

¹⁰ <https://www.brookings.edu/research/black-white-disparity-in-student-loan-debt-more-than-triples-after-graduation/>

¹¹ <https://www.aascu.org/meetings/hegr19/Shaffer.pdf>

¹² <https://www.insidehighered.com/news/survey/college-presidents-increasingly-worried-about-perceived-value-degrees>

¹³ *ibid*

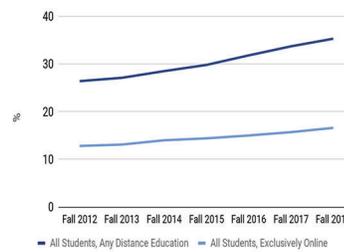
¹⁴ <https://www.chronicle.com/interactives/20190404-ForProfit>

¹⁵ <https://bipartisanpolicy.org/blog/college-closures-in-the-wake-of-covid-19-a-need-for-forward-looking-accountability/>

2. Technology Adoption Increasing and Online Modalities Becoming Dominant

Online learning initially proliferated in the 1990s, and adoption has slowly grown over time as bandwidth has improved. Online learning is a particularly critical modality for learners who are also working and caring for families. For instance, in Fall 2015, only 1.9 percent of financially dependent undergraduate students were learning exclusively online, in contrast with 27.1 percent of students who were financially independent and married with children.¹⁶

Pre-COVID Online Learning Adoption, source NCES



COVID-19 has forced nearly every institution of higher education in America to begin to offer their programs online. As place-based institutions plan for the fall with COVID cases currently on the rise, online programs are increasingly part of their plans. Six months ago, online was “increasingly mainstream” in higher education. During spring semester 2020, it was ubiquitous, and it is likely to be dominant in the fall as well.

The Policy Response: Foster Innovation and Prioritize Student Outcomes

The current policy approach to higher education leaves the industry highly regulated as to process, but unaccountable to students as to outcomes. The primary lens through which we should evaluate an institution’s quality is the value it creates for students. Taxpayers should not continue to support institutions that leave students indebted and unqualified for the world of work. We strongly advocate for *protecting student consumers and ensuring quality* by creating transparency around student outcomes.

We should also *support innovation, especially for nontraditional students*. Overall, our system is highly inefficient, graduating less than 60 percent of first-time, full-time students within six years. For nontraditional students or underserved populations, student success is even lower. It is clear that we need to embrace new models that have the potential to serve students better, *precisely because* they depart from traditional models that do not serve students well.

We should also fully authorize innovative models that are proven to create opportunities for students and address workforce needs. It is time to *encourage and incentivize competency-based education* (CBE). CBE models have been proven for decades; they propel students into workforce success with a record equal to or better than that of traditional institutions. CBE models should not just be allowed, they should be encouraged, and all institutions should be able to adopt them.

¹⁶ https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d18/tables/dt18_311.22.asp

3. Increasing Skill Intensity of the Economy is Driving Demand for Lifelong Learning

The pace of economic change has quickened in the digital age. In 2016, the World Economic Forum wrote that the pace of change was “shortening the shelf-life of employees’ existing skill sets.”¹⁷ This is true even for those individuals who don’t change jobs: the skills demanded are evolving even for the same roles. In 2018, the World Economic Forum estimated that by 2022, no less than 54 percent of employees would require significant upskilling.

This pace of change is structurally misaligned with how we have designed the interface between learning and work. The idea that a college degree prepares students for a 50-year career has long been outdated; instead, we must think of learning as a lifelong process that intersects with the workforce continually. Education cannot be taken as a vaccine, inoculating workers against change at the beginning of their careers. Instead, we must consider it to be a vitamin, taken as regularly as the skill intensity of the labor market demands.

COVID-19 has accelerated dramatically the need for mid-career re-skilling and upskilling. The pandemic has created sudden demand for education at unprecedented scale. The past 15 weeks have seen 48 million Americans file for unemployment. Survey data conducted throughout the pandemic shows that over a third of workers expect they would need to change career fields if they lost their job, and would need additional education to do so.¹⁸ But even those who have not lost their jobs—like most of America’s 3.3 million teachers suddenly grappling with how to teach online—are in desperate need of new skills to adapt to the changes that COVID has wrought. Our country’s need for education has never been greater, but this does not fit neatly into mainstream higher education offerings or policy.

The Policy Response: Facilitate the Future of Learning-to-Earning

Degrees are a powerful engine of social mobility, but they are not the solution to every upskilling or reskilling need. We must embrace a new generation of pathways to opportunity including short-duration, competency-based, earn-while-you-learn, on-the-job, and apprenticeship programs that can be expanded rapidly and stack into future opportunities.

Skills are rapidly evolving to be the currency of the labor market, and like any marketplace, the marketplace needs to have agreement on the units of measure and the rules of exchange. Congress must embrace a new framework of investment in human capital to **enable skills-based, market-aligned education**. This framework must include the development of a digital open skills system for American workers and students to align the skills and competencies needed to effectively connect education-to-work. In a time of labor market upheaval, it is of critical importance that job-seekers be able to clearly articulate the value they bring to employers, including learning and skills from both academic and work-based contexts. Congress should facilitate the development of secure, student-owned Learning and Employment Records (LERs) to translate a worker’s full education, skills, and work experience to a record of transferable skills that will open doors to opportunity.

¹⁷ <http://reports.weforum.org/future-of-jobs-2016/skills-stability/>

¹⁸ <https://www.stradaeducation.org/publicviewpoint#/dashboard>

Conclusion

In closing, WGU stands ready, willing, and eager to assist Congress as we reimagine the future of higher education and how it can align better with the needs of today's students. Thank you, once again, for the opportunity to testify before you today. I welcome any questions you may have.

APPENDIX

WGU was founded because students need affordable, flexible learning options that prepare them for careers. Those needs—affordability, flexibility, and successful onramps to careers—are even greater in the time of COVID-19. Students today need *more* affordable options, *more* flexibility to access learning, and *more* opportunities to reskill and upskill into jobs as we transition to the new economy. We will continue to be relentless in asking what students need, in continuously improving our offerings to students and in pushing for equitable policy solutions designed around today’s students as we renew the American economy and design a more prosperous, equitable post-COVID world.

The challenges we face are indeed great, but not insurmountable. We would respectfully offer the following recommendations for the committee’s consideration, as you delve into the pandemic’s numerous effects on higher education.

Equity and Access: Now more than ever, all Americans need equitable access to postsecondary education to restart or transition careers. Unfortunately, we all know that the status quo does not work for everyone. The education system that has long been plagued by racial and other inequities must be addressed and WGU is committed to doing so. Earlier this year, WGU received a grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation that will enable WGU to strive for real equity in both access and outcomes for students of color, ethnic minorities, and low-income students. We believe that these efforts should be replicated, and their recommendations implemented at scale across the higher education sector. We appreciate and support Congressional efforts to date to help close these gaps, but there is much more work to do, including investing in the research and evidence-based practices that are known to help end these inequities, revamping financial aid to ensure that students of color and other underserved populations have access to funding that meets their needs, and lead efforts to collect and share better data, transparently measuring our collective progress and informing best practices.

Bridging the Digital Divide: There is significant need for both direct access to broadband today as well as long-term solutions for the future to further education for adult learners and higher education. While broadband was once treated as a luxury, it is now critical infrastructure. The impact of COVID has exacerbated the lack of access and quality broadband within some populations and communities. Unfortunately, all too often impacting already underserved communities, which widens the gap in social mobility and economic equity. High-speed internet infrastructure is a critical foundation upon which healthy, prosperous communities are built, and yet more than 21 million Americans lack reliable high-speed internet (FCC). And of those, 14 million individuals live in rural areas. Connectivity is especially important for the 48 million Americans that are unemployed and will need tools to reskill or upskill. Broadband is critical for education, health care, and work. As an online institution, we understand well this barrier to student success and are working to break it down.

We have entered into a partnership with the National Governors Association to address the critical issue of broadband access for students, specifically adult learners and those seeking postsecondary education opportunities. This effort will identify barriers to access, provide collaborative solutions,

and inform policy makers of the necessary changes needed to close the digital divide. States, federal partners and national organizations are engaged. We support the swift enactment of policies and funding commitments necessary to expand digital access and infrastructure to meet the demands of today's students.

Enable Skills-Based, Market-Aligned Education: Lifelong learning must become the standard. Prior to the pandemic, too many Americans were met with a disconnected system as they tried to gain the credentials and work experience they need to be successful in the workforce. They were faced with student and human resources information systems that are often unable to recognize—and value—earned credit and work experience as they move across and between educational institutions and employers. The pressing need to fix this disconnect through skills-based education and aligned hiring practices can serve to remove the blockers that prevent qualified talent from accessing opportunity. COVID-related labor market disruptions, including the move to remote work, are opening labor markets geographically while placing an increased premium on skills and job readiness.

At WGU, we are working with a range of private sector partners to build out an open sourced skills framework that improves consistency of both learning outcomes and hiring practices for greater value and alignment to students. The federal government should adopt the standards and technologies needed to facilitate frictionless communication of verified skills, credentials and experiences among individuals, employers, and educational institutions, along with federal funding to facilitate this necessary transition to skills and competencies for all institutions. Lastly, students would benefit from a common narrative transcript (referred to as the Learning and Employment Record) based on learning objectives, skills, or competencies acquired and the federal government should endeavor to bring about the widest possible adoption of these types of interoperable learning records. These innovative priorities championed by the federal government would ensure that *all learning* is valued and documented for students, along with seamless transfer of skills and credits among institutions and employers.

Reimagine Financial Aid:

Provide Title IV Funding for High Quality Certificates and Microcredentials: The federal government must allow federal Title IV and other student financial aid for high-quality, short-term, market-aligned credential programs that stack into lifelong learning opportunities. Academic institutions and employers should be given greater flexibility to innovate, experiment, and improve educational delivery models through high-quality, short-term, market-aligned credential programs alongside traditional education programs.

These programs can create critical pathways to immediate opportunities and can address pressing labor force needs. For instance, prior to COVID-19, WGU partnered with SEIU to address the half-million worker shortage that the state of California is expected to face over the next ten years. Our partnership aims to graduate 10,000 students through a Medical Coding Career Accelerator Program in the state. These types of programs are even more essential now.

FAFSA Simplification: As we work to close equity gaps and bridge structural inequities for students, creating a framework and application system for student aid that is accessible for all students is incredibly important. Filling out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

is often a starting point for students to understand that financing their education is possible. Meanwhile, millions of college students do not fill out the application each year, forgoing billions of dollars in financial assistance. As COVID-19's reach continues to devastate personal finances across the board, the student struggle is clear. Nearly 250,000 fewer returning students from low-income backgrounds submitted the FAFSA this cycle, and completion rates among high school seniors have fallen as well. The federal government can provide direct student aid to millions of students, by streamlining the process to amend income levels within the application system and creating automatic triggers for student aid based on income tax information and unemployment filings. As we work to close equity gaps and bridge structural inequities for students, creating a framework and application system for student aid that is accessible for all students is incredibly important.

Student Debt Relief: As the CARES Act began to address some concerns around student debt during this time crisis, more can be done for students with ongoing needs. Congress should act to extend borrower relief from federal student loan repayment, as well as expanding emergency aid for all college students adversely impacted by the novel coronavirus.

Emergency Aid for Online Students: WGU is fortunate that our online academic delivery model was relatively uninterrupted during COVID-19. Nonetheless, these are unprecedented and challenging times for all students, including ours, many of whom are facing financial challenges and struggling to make ends meet. Unfortunately, the CARES Act Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund is not available for students who were enrolled exclusively in distance education prior to the novel coronavirus emergency. This oversight resulted in students attending institutions such as WGU from being eligible for emergency aid to meet their unanticipated life circumstances. We know this is true because we had over 11,000 applications from our students for \$500 in emergency aid to meet such basic needs as housing, food, transportation, and childcare. Not surprisingly, the demand was greater than the supply; the \$1.75 million in funds allocated from the WGU Board of Trustees were depleted in one week, funding only 32 percent of the applications we received. Our students, like their counterparts at traditional institutions, cite needs such as housing and food insecurity as their most pressing needs to continue their education. Considering the current economic uncertainties, online students have urgent needs for indirect costs of attendance, such as food, housing, technology, childcare, and healthcare, and would greatly benefit from additional gift aid, such as was made available to many other students under the CARES Act. Congress has the opportunity to right this wrong by ensuring emergency aid funds are provided to all students.

Fully Embrace Competency-Based Education: WGU advocates for full recognition of Competency-Based Education (CBE) in federal policy frameworks so that all institutions of higher learning would have the opportunity to pursue this method that allows for a more student centric focus. CBE has a long, proven record for achieving excellent outcomes for students. Now is the time for Congress to provide a clear and smooth pathway to incentivize and accelerate the use of CBE. for any institution of higher learning to pursue this method of education that aligns more closely with student and workforce needs.

While the Higher Education Reconciliation Act of 2005 provided for direct assessment programs to participate in Title IV, the implementing regulations required direct assessment programs to be approved by accreditors and then also approved by the Secretary of Education, whereas all other

programs are eligible for financial aid based solely on accreditation by a recognized accreditor. There must include a clear accreditation pathway for competency-based education (CBE) programs and eliminate barriers for new programs that measure learning rather than time. In fact, these programs should be explicitly encouraged. If these programs are approved by a recognized accrediting agency, they should be eligible for Title IV participation just as any other new program.

Support Innovation, Especially for Nontraditional Students: Around 80 percent of today's college students are considered nontraditional, meaning they are over age 25, work full time, and support families. To meet the needs of these students for flexibility and a more personalized learning experience, many institutions have developed, and are continuing to develop, innovative learning and academic delivery models. These models, including competency-based education, are expanding educational opportunities for nontraditional students, but current law and regulation restrict this innovation. The credit hour is a useful example; innovations that challenge the primacy of the credit hour (i.e., learning measured by time spent in a classroom) are subject to limited duration demonstration projects, to the forced transposition of acquired skills and abilities to credit hour equivalents in order to satisfy FSA eligibility requirements, and to other unnatural requirements such as "regular and substantive interaction" between faculty and students—all of which significantly impact the cost and motivation to innovate. We encourage the adoption of provisions that welcome and support innovation by providing a clear process for establishing the efficacy of these results-driven learning models and a clear pathway to federal financial aid eligibility.

Protect student consumers and ensure quality: In the middle of this pandemic, and unprecedented investments being made in education, it becomes critical, now more than ever, that students are protected. At WGU, we believe that programmatic-level outcomes must be reported, published, and included as part of periodic accreditation reviews so students can make informed decisions up front. These metrics include graduation rates, student debt rates, default rates, earnings, and market demand for graduates.

Western Governors University
Responsible Borrowing Initiative



Western Governors University (WGU) has an affordable tuition model in which students complete as many courses as they can per six-month term for one flat rate. Beyond the affordability of this fixed-price model, all WGU students who apply for financial aid receive a personalized Financial Aid Plan, which recommends that students borrow only what they need to pay tuition and fees rather than the total amount they are eligible for.

As part of our Responsible Borrowing Initiatives (RBI), students are presented comprehensive information at the time they need to make a decision on how to pay for college. Using our Student Loan Scenario Calculator, a personalized approach that gives students full visibility of their total student loan debt, including prior college debt, and projected debt at the time of WGU graduation, students can make an informed decision to borrow wisely. The Calculator includes estimated monthly payments for a standard repayment plan and shows the positive financial impact of accelerating time-to-degree completion. In addition, RBI provides a continuum of timely interventions to keep students on track to complete their degree with the lowest debt possible.

RBI's financial wellness tools include:

- Financial Avenue, powered by Inceptia, an online financial education program to enhance financial capability;
- Scholarship Universe, including a one-stop shop for scholarship listings, a comprehensive matching engine with nearly 10,000 vetted, trustworthy, external scholarships, and resources through WGU's partnership with CampusLogic; and
- Financial Toolbox in the WGU Student Portal that includes many useful resource links.

Since 2013, the average borrowing per year per WGU student (of those who borrow) has decreased by 30 percent. Through RBI, two-thirds of borrowers accept our recommendation to borrow direct costs only, or less, and debt at graduation has decreased annually since the program's launch.

U.S. Department of Education cohort default rates for all Title IV-eligible institutions show WGU's FY2016 student loan default rate stable at 4.2 percent, which is less than half the national average of 10.1 percent and is lower than the average of other private four-year institutions nationwide. Additionally, the average student loan debt for WGU undergraduates who borrowed for school and who graduated between July 1, 2018, and June 30, 2019, is \$14,941—a decrease of \$433 year over year and, again, half the national average. While 65 percent of graduating undergraduates across the nation borrowed for their education, according to The Institute for College Access and Success (TICAS), only 57 percent of graduating WGU undergraduates take out student loans.



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*American Public
 University System*

BYU-Pathway Worldwide

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Charter Oak State College

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 College District*

Excelsior College

Ivy Tech Community College

Miami Dade College

National University

Rio Salado College

*Southern New
 Hampshire University*

Strayer University

UMassOnline

*University of Maryland
 Global Campus*

*Wake Technical
 Community College*

Walden University

Western Governors University

*Distance Education
 Accrediting Commission*

*National Council for State
 Authorization
 Reciprocity Agreements*

Quality Matters

Strada Education Network

April 7, 2020

President Donald J. Trump
 The White House
 1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
 Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
 Speaker
 U.S. House of Representatives
 Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Mitch McConnell
 Majority Leader
 United States Senate
 Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Charles Schumer
 Minority Leader
 United States Senate
 Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
 Minority Leader
 U.S. House of Representatives
 Washington, DC 20515

Secretary Betsy DeVos
 U.S. Department of Education
 400 Maryland Avenue, SW
 Washington, DC 20202-7100

The Honorable Bobby Scott
 Chairman
 House Education and Labor Committee
 Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
 Chairman
 Senate HELP Committee
 Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
 Ranking Member
 Senate HELP Committee
 Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Virginia Foxx
 Ranking Member
 House Education and Labor Committee
 Washington, DC 20515

Dear President Trump, Speaker Pelosi, Majority Leader McConnell, Minority Leader McCarthy, Minority Leader Schumer, Secretary DeVos, Chairman Scott, Chairman Alexander, Ranking Member Murray, and Ranking Member Foxx:

Thank you for your leadership as we navigate these unprecedented times. We are encouraged by your efforts and look forward to collaborating with you to find solutions to the challenges brought about by COVID-19.

As the presidents of institutions educating millions of students and dedicated to strengthening the promise of higher education through meaningful innovation, we seek your collaboration to channel federal COVID-19 funds directed toward higher education to the highest and best uses of the higher education system. This crisis will impact learners and workers across America without respect to geography. As we consider the best ways to address the issues created and exacerbated by this crisis, we recommend that we focus on building an agile and resilient workforce and providing support to learners and workers with the greatest needs.



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We have collectively embraced the following paradigm to guide our recommendations for government action:

- 1) **Balance immediate stimulus with long-term solutions.** We seek to bridge the gulf between immediate education needs resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic and the future of learner-centric higher education.
- 2) **Solutions should be learner centric.** We seek to find solutions with the highest benefit to learners and workers. Learners should be prioritized above institutions.
- 3) **Expect and measure results.** We support accountability measures as part of any legislative packages.

Within this paradigm, we recommend the following high-impact actions:

Produce an agile and resilient workforce with a focus on skills and competencies. Too many Americans experience friction as they attempt to gain the credentials and work experience they need to build their careers. As learners and workers move across educational institutions and employers, student and human resources information systems are often unable to recognize—and value—earned credit and work experience. This disconnect can block qualified talent from accessing opportunity. Educational institutions, businesses, government organizations, and the military should adopt standards and technologies that facilitate frictionless communication of verified skills, credentials and experiences among individuals, employers, and educational institutions. This is especially critical in areas with high unemployment or talent pipeline challenges. Using federal funds to facilitate this necessary transition to skills and competencies should be prioritized.

Focus on outcomes, not delivery. As all institutions of higher education must continually reinvent learning and delivery, with online learning being accelerated in our current circumstance, it is time to eliminate unnecessary friction that exists between modes (e.g., online and classroom-based) and methods of learning (e.g., credit hour and competency-based). The regulatory framework governing modes and methods must be updated to increasingly emphasize the importance of student outcomes, while maintaining safeguards to ensure high-quality higher education.

Focus the federal student aid system on immediate workforce opportunity. Changes must be made to federal student aid to allow loans for students in short-term, high-quality programs that offer valuable workforce credentials. This federal student aid should be available for both programs measured by competency and programs measured by credit hour. Federal student aid should also be made available for postsecondary on-ramps (see below). We believe that any debt forgiveness should focus on students with the greatest needs.

Provide postsecondary on-ramps to career pathways. We must provide better access to postsecondary education pathways for all. COVID-19's broad economic impact has displaced millions of low-skilled and middle-skilled workers who need both awareness of and access to effective readiness pathways that have already been established by many of our institutions of higher learning. The nation needs legislative direction from Congress to develop, coalesce, and open-source the



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curriculum, pedagogy, delivery models, etc. for pathway programs that will allow for broad market adoption.

Pursue long-term solutions for digital equity through investment in broadband infrastructure. COVID-19 has put a spotlight on the digital divide in America. This divide impacts education acutely, as is being illustrated today by both higher education and K-12 transitions to online education. However, this inequity also has significant impacts on healthcare and almost every area of the economy. This infrastructure investment will have tangible long-term economic impacts while addressing immediate short-term stimulus needs.

Protect student consumers and ensure quality. Programmatic-level outcomes including graduation rates, indebtedness, default rates, earnings, and market demand for graduates should be reported and published on an annual basis and as part of periodic accreditation review.

We understand that urgent action is necessary. As presidents of institutions of higher education serving millions of students, we ask for your collaboration to craft solutions for America's learners and workers. Together we can bring about the economic promise that we all expect from higher education.

Sincerely,

Dr. Wallace E. Boston, Jr.
 President
 American Public University System

Clark Gilbert
 President
 BYU-Pathway Worldwide

Dick Senese
 President
 Capella University

Ed Klonoski
 President
 Charter Oak State College

Joe May
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Ward Ulmer
President
Walden University

Scott Pulsipher
President
Western Governors University

Chairwoman DAVIS. Thank you very much. Appreciate it.
I now recognize Dr. Harper for five minutes.

**STATEMENT OF SHAUN HARPER PH.D., PRESIDENT, AMERICAN
EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH ASSOCIATION, LOS ANGELES, CA**

Mr. HARPER. Thank you for including me in this important hearing. It is imperative that we devote serious attention to the numerous racial equity consequences of reopening campuses. I present 10 considerations in the written version of my testimony. I will talk only about nine of them here, as the one pertaining to student visas and travel bans is outside the purview of this subcommittee.

Here are nine critical racial equity considerations. One, disproportionately placing essential workers at risk. Custodians, food service professionals, and maintenance workers will inevitably be deemed essential workers when campuses reopen. Professionals of color are disproportionately performing these roles. Being required to come to campus and interact with other workers and students places employees of color and the family members with whom they live at greater risk of exposure to COVID-19.

Campus reopening plans must consider the health implications of employees of color and lower income essential workers. Federal aid specifically earmarked for the safety of employees who are deemed essential workers would help institutions provide PPE, cleaning supplies, contact tracing, and testing.

Two, the racialization of layoffs and terminations. Financial effects of the pandemic will force higher education leaders to make tough workforce reduction decisions. Inattention to the race of the persons being terminated and laid off will inevitably yield pronounced negative effects on employees of color, given the low-level service positions they disproportionately occupy. Hence, campus reopening plans must specify ways to avoid even more significant racialized employment inequities. Federal investments would help minimize the necessity of workforce reductions at higher education institutions.

Three, risk of violence for Asian American and Asian international students and employees. Recent studies document horrifying acts of discrimination and physical violence towards Asian Americans and Asian immigrants in the U.S. throughout the pandemic. Thus, reopening plans must include ways to protect these students and employees as they return to campuses.

Four, trauma and grief support for persons disproportionately experiencing loss. COVID-19 deaths are disproportionately affecting communities of color. Because of this, students of color and employees of color from these groups are likelier than are their White counterparts to have lost a family member, friend, or someone in their community. The reopening plans must include ways to ensure these persons have more than adequate mental and emotional support resources.

Five, sending infected students home to vulnerable families and communities. Many institutions plan to conclude on-campus living and learning by Thanksgiving in anticipation of a possible second wave of the coronavirus. Given the disproportionately higher numbers of COVID-19 infections and deaths among people of color, it is plausible that students of color returning home from college could pose an especially big risk to communities that have already been disproportionately devastated by COVID-19.

Six, placing Black football and men's basketball players at a disproportionately higher risk. In 2018, Black men were 2.4 percent of undergraduates enrolled at universities that make up the five most financially lucrative intercollegiate sports conferences, yet they comprise 55 percent of football teams and 56 percent of men's basketball teams on those campuses. Thus, participation in these two contact sports places Black undergraduate men at a disproportionate risk of COVID-19 infection.

Seven, financial support for chronically underfunded minority-serving institutions. Investing significant Federal COVID-19 recovery funds specifically into Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Tribal colleges, and community colleges would help them better serve the low-income Americans they disproportionately educate, most of whom are students of color.

Eight, addressing racialized digital access inequities. As we have seen throughout the pandemic, low-income students lack access to reliable high-speed internet. Many of them are students of color. As institutions consider reopening in phases with a fraction of courses meeting on campus and others online, plans must include strategies and investments in closing digital access gaps for students of color who continue to access courses from their homes and lower income communities.

And ninth, upskilling faculty members and teaching students of color online. Faculty development activities included in campus reopening plans cannot just focus on creative teaching tricks to keep all students engaged online. They must also pay attention to ensuring that students of color are not experiencing the same racism in virtual classrooms that they experienced in on-campus learning environments long before the pandemic.

Thank you.

[The statement of Mr. Harper follows:]

**A MAJOR TEST: EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF COVID-19
ON THE FUTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

Testimony provided to the
United States House of Representatives
Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Investment

July 2020

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COVID-19 is affecting most aspects of teaching, learning, and work at higher education institutions across the United States. College and university presidents and other institutional leaders are investing tremendous time and energy into finding ways to reopen campuses as safely and as quickly as possible. Campus taskforces are balancing public health concerns with financial considerations. Attention is also being paid to supporting faculty members in adapting to hybrid, or in many instances fully online forms of teaching. Plans are being developed to ensure physical distancing in classrooms, labs, residence halls, and campus dining facilities. Additionally, institutions with big-time intercollegiate sports programs are pursuing various ways to afford student-athletes opportunities to compete, even if doing so must occur in stadiums and arenas with no fans to cheer them on. The pandemic has left all of us in higher education with much to do and rethink. As we continue engaging in the important planning and recovery activities described thus far, it is important that we also devote serious attention to numerous racial equity threats. I present ten in this testimony.

1. **Disproportionately Placing Essential Workers at Risk** – As is the case across most industries in the U.S.,¹ the higher education workforce is racially stratified. According to a 2019 report from the American Council on Education, 73% of full-time instructional faculty members and over 80% of professionals in most leadership positions at our nation's postsecondary institutions are White.² Data from the U.S. Department of Education show that in 2018, 46% of professionals in low-level service roles were employees of color.³ Given the positions they disproportionately occupy, White employees will have more flexibility to work remotely and teach online. Custodians, food service workers, groundskeepers, and maintenance staff, on the other hand, are

¹ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics: <https://www.bls.gov/cps/cpsaat11.htm>
² Espinosa, Lorelle L., Jonathan M. Turk, Morgan Taylor, and Hollie M. Chessman. 2019. Race and Ethnicity in Higher Education: A Status Report. Washington, DC: American Council on Education.
³ National Center for Education Statistics: https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19_314.40.asp

far likelier to be deemed "essential workers" when campuses reopen. Being required to come to campus more frequently and interact with other workers and students therefore places employees of color and the family members with whom they live at greater risk of exposure to COVID-19. Campus reopening plans must consider the racial stratification of the workforce, specifically the health implications for employees of color and lower-income essential workers. Federal aid specifically earmarked for the safety of essential workers would help postsecondary institutions provide personal protective equipment, cleaning supplies, contact tracing, and testing, all of which would reduce the risk of disproportionately exposing employees of color to the Coronavirus.

2. **Racialization of Layoffs and Terminations** – Because higher education workplaces are so stratified by race, employees of color are more vulnerable to financial cutbacks. Tenure-track faculty members, as well as professional staff in mid- and senior-level roles, are less likely than are administrative assistants, workers in the aforementioned service roles, and part-time instructors to be laid off or terminated. On the one hand, roles in which employees of color are disproportionately represented are considered essential to campus operations. But on the other, they are positions with the least amount of protection; their work can be performed by lower-cost temporary workers or redistributed to a smaller number of colleagues in their units (which would also result in workload inequities). COVID-19 has exacerbated racial disparities in joblessness throughout the American economy, with rates for Black workers being highest.⁴ Financial effects of the pandemic will be felt for many years, which will force higher education leaders to make tough workforce reduction decisions. Inattention to the race of the persons being terminated and laid off will inevitably yield pronounced negative effects on employees of color given the positions they occupy. Hence, campus reopening plans must specify ways to avoid even more significant employment inequities by race. Federal and state investments would help minimize the necessity of workforce reductions at higher education institutions.
3. **Risk of Violence for Asian American and Asian International Students and Employees** – Recent studies document stigmatization, stereotyping, and discrimination, as well as acts of physical violence toward Asian Americans and Asian immigrants in the U.S. throughout the pandemic.⁵ Characterizing COVID-19 as "Kung Flu" and the "Chinese Virus" likely accelerated bias and hate crimes against these groups. During the 2018-19 academic school year, there were 1,606,688 Asian American students, faculty, and staff at postsecondary institutions across the country.⁶ Also, many international students and workers on Visas are from Asian countries. Associating them with the Coronavirus will undoubtedly continue as people return to campuses. Attitudinal stereotypes may lead to harmful behaviors ranging from

⁴ Gould, Elise, and Valerie Wilson. 2020. Black Workers Face Two of the Most Lethal Preexisting Conditions for Coronavirus—Racism and Economic Inequality. Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute.

⁵ Chen, H. Alexander, Jessica Trinh, and George P. Yang. 2020. Anti-Asian Sentiment in the United States – COVID-19 and History. *American Journal of Surgery*.

⁶ National Center for Education Statistics: *ibid*, and https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19_306.10.asp

constant racial microaggressions to physical violence against anyone who appears to be Asian. Yale University sociologists Hannah Tessler, Meera Choi, and Grace Kao suggest these threats pose considerable mental health and anxiety challenges for this population.⁷ Thus, campus reopening plans must include ways to protect Asian and Asian American people.

4. **Sinophobic and Xenophobic Travel Bans and Visa Complications** – Even though rates of infection and death are presently higher in America than anywhere else in the world,⁸ COVID-19's association with people from Asian countries broadly and China specifically could lead to implicit (or perhaps even explicit) biases in the review of Visa applications for students wishing to study at U.S. colleges and universities. If there is a second wave of the Coronavirus, there may be travel bans prohibiting students from China and other countries from entering ours. Federal regulations and oversight are needed to ensure this does not occur in sinophobic or otherwise discriminatory ways.
5. **Trauma and Grief Support for Persons Disproportionately Experiencing Loss** – COVID-19 infections and deaths are disproportionately affecting African Americans and other communities of color.⁹ Because of this, students and workers from these groups are likelier than are their White classmates and colleagues to have lost a family member, friend, or someone in their community. This then means that students of color and employees of color are much more susceptible to prolonged sadness and depression. They will be required to balance grief and perhaps trauma with academics and professional work. Reopening plans must include ways to ensure these campus community members have more than adequate mental and emotional support resources.
6. **Sending Infected Students Home to Vulnerable Families and Communities** – Most students come to college from same-race families. It is therefore reasonable to presume that many Native American undergraduates, for example, will return home to Native American families during holidays and breaks, perhaps even occasionally on weekends throughout the semester. Many postsecondary institutions plan to conclude on-campus living and learning by Thanksgiving in anticipation of a possible second wave of the virus.¹⁰ Students who become infected with COVID-19 and then return home pose a risk of infecting others in their families. Given the disproportionately higher numbers of Coronavirus infections and deaths among people of color, it is plausible that students of color returning home from college could pose an especially big risk to already vulnerable communities. Reopening plans have to consider the consequences of sending infected students of color home to communities that have already been disproportionately devastated by COVID-19.

⁷ Tessler, Hannah, Meera Choi, and Grace Kao. 2020. The Anxiety of Being Asian American: Hate Crimes and Negative Biases During the COVID-19 Pandemic. *American Journal of Criminal Justice*.

⁸ Johns Hopkins University Coronavirus Resource Center. 2020. <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/data/mortality>

⁹ Potrat, Tonia, Gregorio A. Millett, LaRon E. Nelson, and Chris Beyrer. 2020. Understanding COVID-19 Risks and Vulnerabilities among Black Communities in America: The Lethal Force of Syndemics. *Annals of Epidemiology*.

¹⁰ Hubler, Shawn. 2020, June 25. College Calendars in the Pandemic: No Fall Break and Home by Thanksgiving. *New York Times*.

7. **Placing Black Football and Men's Basketball Players at Disproportionately Higher Risk** – Football is a contact sport. In addition to tackling each other and depositing germs on balls being passed from player to player, football student-athletes and their peers who play on other intercollegiate sports teams exercise, dine, travel, and watch films together, oftentimes in extremely close proximity. Colleges and universities have begun bringing student-athletes back to campus for practices and conditioning; they are being tested regularly, in some instances daily.¹¹ Institutions, especially those with big-time sports programs, are scrambling to find creative ways to ensure crowd control and physical distancing in stadiums by the start of college football season this September.¹² There are indeed ways to bolster protections for spectators. But doing so for student-athletes is much more difficult. In 2018, Black men were 2.4% of undergraduate students enrolled at the 65 universities in the "Power Five" athletic conferences (ACC, Big 10, Big 12, Pac 12, and SEC) – yet, they comprised 55% of football teams and 56% of men's basketball teams on those campuses.¹³ Thus, participation in these two contact sports places Black undergraduate men at disproportionate risk of COVID-19 infection.
8. **Financial Support for Chronically Underfunded Minority-Serving Institutions** – Since their founding, Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) have been persistently underfunded.¹⁴ Most HBCU students are Black. Tribal Colleges are among the poorest in U.S. higher education.¹⁵ Most students who attend them are Native American. Relative to other postsecondary institutions, community colleges enroll disproportionately higher numbers of Black, Latino, Native American, Asian American, Pacific Islander, and multiracial undergraduates.¹⁶ Those colleges also are funded at lower rates than other public institutions of higher education in most states.¹⁷ Reconfiguring classrooms, labs, residence halls, locker rooms, and dining halls to ensure physical distancing costs money. Additionally, income lost from students who pay to live on campus, employees and visitors who pay to park and dine in campus facilities, and other revenue-generating sources is having an enormous impact on college and university budgets. Technological substitutions for in-person teaching and learning are expensive – so too are commercial training experiences that aim to help postsecondary faculty members teach better in hybrid and entirely online formats. Surely, institutions that were already financially stressed before the pandemic are even more so now given these and other ensuing fiscal challenges. Federal and state plans must include equitable investments of public dollars into campuses that enroll the

¹¹ Hobson, Will. 2020, June 19. Testing Troubles: Varying Policies Jeopardize College Football Season, Experts Say. Washington Post.
¹² Higgins, Laine. 2020, June 30. College Football's New Headache: Deciding Who Can Attend Games. Wall Street Journal.
¹³ Harper, Shaun R. 2018. Black Male Student-Athletes and Racial Inequities in NCAA Division I Revenue-Generating College Sports: 2018 Edition. Los Angeles: University of Southern California Race and Equity Center.
¹⁴ Harper, Shaun R., Lori D. Patton, and Ontario S. Wooden. 2009. Access and Equity for African American Students in Higher Education: A Critical Race Historical Analysis of Policy Efforts. The Journal of Higher Education.
¹⁵ Nelson, Christine A., and Joanna R. Frye. 2016. Tribal College and University Funding: Tribal Sovereignty at the Intersection of Federal, State, and Local Funding. Washington, DC: American Council on Education.
¹⁶ National Center for Education Statistics. 2020. https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19_306.50.asp
¹⁷ McKinney, Lyle and Linda Serra Hagedorn. 2017. Performance-Based Funding for Community Colleges: Are Colleges Disadvantaged by Serving the Most Disadvantaged Students? The Journal of Higher Education.

highest numbers of students of color and low-income collegians. Investing additional federal COVID-19 recovery funds specifically into HBCUs, Tribal Colleges, and community colleges also would help them serve and protect the low-income Americans they educate, most of whom are students of color.

9. **Addressing Racialized Digital Access Inequity** – Several K-12 schools and postsecondary institutions had to provide students laptops, tablets, and other technologies when instruction abruptly moved online in March 2020.¹⁸ Devices were not enough, as some lower-income students lacked access to WiFi and reliable high-speed internet.¹⁹ Given how poverty and race co-mingle in the U.S., students of color, especially those who returned home to predominantly monoracial low-income communities, have been disproportionately impacted by digital inequities throughout the pandemic.²⁰ As colleges and universities consider reopening in phases – with a fraction of courses meeting on campus and others online – plans must include strategies and investments in closing digital access gaps for the students of color who continue to access courses from their homes in lower-income communities.
10. **Upskilling Faculty Members in Teaching Students of Color Online** – Black, Latino, Native American, and Pacific Islander students are severely underrepresented in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics departments.²¹ Courses in these majors are likeliest to be among the first taught in-person because many require laboratory work that cannot be performed online. Therefore, academic programs that enroll the highest numbers of collegians of color probably will be delivered in remote formats. Many colleges and universities, including my own, are investing considerably into developing the skillfulness with which instructors teach online. Active learning, dynamic student engagement strategies, and technological fluency are often emphasized. Unless these faculty development activities also include some serious attention to race and racism, problems that existed in classrooms prior to the pandemic are likely to intensify online. College students of color have long deemed teaching practices culturally unresponsive; noted how curricula routinely failed to include their cultural histories, identities, and interests; and specified the racial microaggressions and other racist experiences they have had inside and outside of college classrooms.²² Most Black students are taught by White instructors, as Black student-to-Black faculty ratios are often incredibly imbalanced at predominantly white institutions.²³ Given all this, faculty development activities included in campus reopening plans cannot focus just on creative teaching tricks to keep all students engaged online – they also must pay

¹⁸ McMurtrie, Beth. 2020, April 6. Students Without Laptops, Instructors Without Internet: How Struggling Colleges Move Online During Covid-19. *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

¹⁹ Fisherty, Colleen. 2020, May 8. Reserved. Internet Parking. Using Wi-Fi Ready College Parking Lots is Now a Way of Life for Students with Limited or No Internet Access. *Inside Higher Ed*.

²⁰ Galperin, Hernan, Kurt Wyatt, and Thai Le. 2020. COVID-19 and the Distance Learning Gap. Los Angeles: University of Southern California, Annenberg Research Network on International Communication.

²¹ National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics. 2019. Women, Minorities, and Persons with Disabilities in Science and Engineering: 2019. Special Report NSF 19-304. Alexandria, VA: National Science Foundation.

²² Harper, Shaun R., and Charles H.F. Davis III. 2016. Reducing Racism in College Classrooms: Eight Actions for Faculty. *Academe*.

²³ Harper, Shaun R., and Isaiah Simmons. 2019. Black Students at Public Colleges and Universities: A 50-State Report Card. Los Angeles: University of Southern California, Race and Equity Center.

particular attention to ensuring that collegians of color are not experiencing the same racism in virtual classrooms that they long experienced in on-campus learning environments prior to the pandemic.

Each of these ten racial equity considerations is important, regardless of whether campuses resume in-person operations this fall or at some point in 2021. To be sure, these are not the only equity implications, racial or otherwise, to be considered when reopening college and university campuses. Nonetheless, federal and state policymakers, as well as regents and trustees, presidents and senior administrators, and faculty members, must take them seriously. Congress and higher education stakeholders should also continually engage students, faculty, and staff members of color to pursue additional insights into Coronavirus-related threats to racial equity. Negligence in doing so will result in the emergence of new disparities and the amplification of racial inequities that COVID-19 has already produced.

Chairwoman DAVIS. Thank you, Dr. Harper.

We appreciate all of you and appreciate your staying within the limits, especially. That is really helpful.

Under Committee Rule 8(a), we will now question witnesses under the 5-minute rule. I will be recognizing subcommittee members in seniority order. Again, in order to ensure that the members' 5-minute rule is adhered to, staff will be keeping track of time and will use a chime to signal when 1 minute is left and when time is up entirely. It is a little annoying charm—chime that we have, but nevertheless, it is helpful to us. They will sound a short chime again when 1 minute is left, a longer chime when time is up, so please be attentive.

If any member experiences technical difficulties during the hearing, you should stay connected on the platform. Make sure you are muted with the mute button highlighted in red, and use your phone to immediately call the committee's IT director, Sheila Havenner, whose number has been provided.

And as Chairwoman, I now recognize myself for 5 minutes.

And, again, just putting this in a bit of context as everyone has done, as evidenced by the last recession, we know that State higher education budgets are often the first to be cut during economic downturns as States look to balance their budgets. A study by the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities estimates that States will lose \$765 billion over the next 3 years. Already, States across the country have announced cuts to higher education spending.

For example, California announced a \$970 million cut for the University of California and California State University systems. These budgets drive up tuition costs that ultimately place the burden on students and their families and reduce academic quality. And, of course, we know it is not just the tuition costs that students bear, but it also is living expenses and a whole host of other needs to be successful in their studies.

Dr. Harper, what was the impact of State higher education budget cuts on students at institutions in the Great Recession?

Mr. HARPER. Thank you for that question. The impact was, for sure, disproportionate on chronically underfunded institutions like community colleges, Historically Black Colleges, and Tribal colleges. Certainly, the steep growth to recovery for them was a much steeper climb than for more highly resourced institutions. In many instances, the financial pain of that time period still remains for many of those institutions as they are seeking to catch up. It is why I am especially worried about the financial consequences of the pandemic on those institutions.

We have seen this before, you know, again, with the Great Recession, so I am hoping that Congress will pay particular attention in its investments to ensuring that those institutions don't have as steep a hill to climb in their recovery.

Chairwoman DAVIS. Thank you. And just following up on that, because I think sometimes people feel that there doesn't need to be a State—a Federal role here. So why is Federal investment critical to supporting students in institutions? And why isn't it the State governments, or in the case of other schools, enough without that kind of Federal funding? And what is likely to occur without that immediate Federal action to address these funding shortfalls?

Mr. HARPER. Well, for one, we will see tremendous unevenness across States in their investments in postsecondary education. But secondly, and I think most importantly, higher education is a public good that benefits the entirety of our Nation and our Nation's position in a global economy. Therefore, Federal investment into higher education is really an investment into the economic security, the homeland security, and the viability of the United States.

Chairwoman DAVIS. Thank you.

I want to turn to Dr. White. Dr. White, how will this multi-million dollar State budget cut impact CSU's ability to operate and serve students? And I know you addressed this somewhat, but focusing on those students already having difficulty for a variety of

reasons pre-COVID. You know, we have, I think, to deconstruct the reasons why students were having those difficulties in the past as well. Dr. White?

Mr. WHITE. So in the spring term alone across the California State University, we lost \$337 million in loss revenue and added costs to pivot these classes and do it in a healthful way. The State budget that was just approved by our governor has a \$299 million cut in our base appropriation, which is about 4.6 percent of our operating budget. Importantly, the Federal Government can play a role here. [Inaudible] by October 15 provide another financial support to the States that \$299 million will be reversed and given back to the CSU.

So it does have an effect, these numbers are real, and we will do our very best to meet the needs of our students, as many as we possibly can, going forward.

Chairwoman DAVIS. Thank you, Dr. White.

I think my time is up as well. Appreciate it.

Now I want to turn to Mr. Smucker from Pennsylvania, for the ranking member to ask his questions.

Mr. SMUCKER. Thank you, Madam Chair. I thank all the panel. Mr. Pulsipher, I have just a question for you in regards to what has already been mentioned, college affordability, which is, of course, a top priority for policymakers but certainly for students and their families. And I know Western Governors has a track record of keeping costs low, but this pandemic is adding additional financial burdens on all schools. I have certainly heard from institutions throughout my home State of Pennsylvania that COVID-19 is going to lead to increased costs on students [inaudible] harm students in order to safely and [inaudible] protocols.

So I sure would like to get your thoughts on that, including how has Federal action helped the sector so far. And what role could Congress play, what role should we play, in helping colleges open responsibly and helping them to reduce additional costs on students?

Mr. PULSIPHER. Thank you, Ranking Member Smucker. COVID-19 was surely not in any institution's strategic plan, and so the costs of adapting are definitely quite large and great for many institutions. Because of WGU's operating model, WGU itself is not experiencing any budgetary pressures like many of our peer institutions. That is primarily because much of our investments and operating expenses do not include operating buildings and campuses and many other things that also have been revenue sources from housing, feeding, or even student life activities and athletics, et cetera. So with that kind of operating model, we—our entire self-sustaining operation is dependent on tuition alone. It has allowed us to continue uninterrupted.

I think these same COVID pressures are highlighting now or exposing, if you will, the many challenges that exist with the economic model that we have in higher education in the U.S. And so I think in general we should be focused, first and foremost, with this principle on students and how do we consider the funding and supports necessary to provide the instruction, the access, the improved digital experiences that they need to continue in their progress in their programs. And so how do we ensure that students

are not so severely disrupted that they are stopping out and ends up to where they are not completing?

And so I think that can be a guiding principle as Congress contemplates how to provide the appropriate aid and stimulus so that the near-term impact of the pandemic can be managed, but also we can design for the long term and really reinvent the economic model of higher education.

Mr. SMUCKER. Thank you. I know the Department and Congress have provided institutions some temporary reprieve from regulatory burdens throughout this crisis, which I believe, we all believe, was appropriate to help institutions quickly adapt to the challenges of COVID-19, but what can we learn from that for the long term? What regulations, what guidance should Congress re-evaluate for the long term in light of what we have learned from the pandemic?

Mr. PULSIPHER. Thank you for that question. I think those were appropriate, and surely, the rapid shift from traditionally classroom or place-based instruction to a predominantly, or if not, 100 percent online instructional model, it does require the rethinking of the faculty-student interaction and requires rethinking about the time of instruction and credit hour and the pacing of learning. If you consider many eligibility requirements that are programmed in an institution, even at the student level for Federal student aid, they are constructed around a very conventional model of learning. And so now, when we are having a rapid shift to a technology-enabled model, those paradigms that we are used to are being reconstructed.

And so I think it is appropriate to have short-term accommodation for that. Now it is really informing how we should think about distance education, how we should think about pace and the learning progress, assessment of learning, et cetera, that those models should be contemplated in the future.

Mr. SMUCKER. What about—and I am sorry to cut you off. I am almost at the end of my time. But, you know, we use a number of accountability metrics, like cohort default rates, financial responsibility scores, and so on. Should we be looking at any of those and thinking about which of those we should continue and which should potentially be changed?

Mr. PULSIPHER. We should definitely be looking at primarily what I would call student success measures. I think there are elements around persistence and progress and completion rates and also attainment and placement rates that lead to things like loan repayment rates as being a good measure of accountability for the effectiveness of the educational pathways. I think that is a good example of where focusing on measures of outcomes as the quality measures of learning rather than institutional models.

Mr. SMUCKER. Thank you.

Chairwoman DAVIS. Okay. Thank you very much.

I now want to turn to the ranking chair of the Education Committee. I understand, Dr. Foxx, that you would like to go next.

Ms. FOXX. Well, thank you very much, Madam Chair. I was quite willing to wait till the next person, but thank you. I appreciate it.

Chairwoman DAVIS. You are fine. Go ahead. I am sorry. I actually was going to go to Mr. Courtney, but I just got a notice that

you wanted to be next in the queue. But if Mr. Courtney is okay with it, we will go ahead and hear from Dr. Foxx, and then we will go back to Dr. Courtney—to Mr. Courtney.

Mr. COURTNEY. I am fine. Go ahead, Virginia.

Chairwoman DAVIS. Okay. Thank you.

Ms. FOXX. Thanks, Joe. I appreciate it.

Mr. Pulsipher, thank you again for your testimony today, for the work you do to help students, and particularly one student I know you have helped, I am very grateful for.

Western Governors University has shown competency-based education, which is an educational program where students progress based on mastery of skills instead of time spent in the classroom, as a successful model for many students. CBE can benefit students by quickening time to a degree, lowering college costs, building portfolio success. Could you describe WGU's experience building CBE programs and the success of your student graduates compared to other institutions of postsecondary education? I am particularly interested in the achievement of your low-income, first-generation, and minority students and how CBE benefited their lives. And, again, I know of particularly one low-income, first-generation student that you have been a big help to.

Mr. PULSIPHER. Thank you, Ranking Member Foxx. Surely, WGU was not the inventor of competency-based education, but we are one of the pioneers of it. We today have over 191,000 graduates since founding. And the use of competency based as a pedagogical model was purely a function of our focus on the student, particularly the working learners that we serve.

And so really, competency-based approach focuses on keeping the standards for proficiency or learning constant and allowing a time to vary. And that affords us the ability to better line learning outcomes or the workforce needs, to personalize the student journey to increase the probability of individual student success, and ultimately allows them to both, you know, leverage prior learning and move at their own pace.

And, you know, for WGU, you know, we are serving students in all 50 States. We have a 45 percent 4-year graduation rate at the bachelor's level, which is significantly higher than the 32 percent nationally. We have really high employment rates at 95 percent with 88 percent in fields [inaudible]. And maybe more importantly, employers are—97 percent of them are saying our graduates meet and exceed expectations and are ready for the job.

Particularly to your question about low-income and underserved students, while we still see gaps in their attainment versus their White peers and their higher income peers, the reality is that they are achieving at a higher rate than we have seen nationally and particularly in low-income, rural, and military categories of individuals. And so we are quite proud of our ability to access and serve underserved individuals.

Ms. FOXX. Thank you.

The Higher Education Act does not have a clearly defined pathway for the CBE model. How has the flexibility of current law restrained other institutions from creating CBE programs? What recommendations do you have to reform the HEA to encourage the proliferation of high-quality CBE programs?

Mr. PULSIPHER. Thank you. Yeah, as noted in my written testimony, it is definitely—we believe it is time to fully embrace competency-based education.

If I recall, according to CBEN, the Competency Based Education Network, over 600 institutions have pilots or programs developing for competency-based education, but they are hampered, like we were, with the disparity with current regulatory definitions, meaning the design of it. And that could be trying to shoehorn program considerations into credit-hour accreditation models, regulatory criteria around full-time, and pacing, et cetera, that makes it quite difficult to rapidly innovate and expand access to these highly effective and aligned program models.

And so we do believe that legislation and regulatory frameworks should encourage innovation, not just support it. And if we also focus on student success and outcomes rather than prescribing a model, our Nation and our American workforce will be better served.

Ms. FOXX. Thank you.

You have built a strong connection between WGU and employers. Why did you [inaudible], and how did this outreach contribute to your students' success? What can other institutions do to engage employers in their academic programs?

Mr. PULSIPHER. Well, I think we simply believe that if education is to be the surest path to opportunity, then it has to be aligned with a market that presents those opportunities. And so we leverage large data sets from partners like MC or Burning Glass about workforce demands and roles, and that informs the programs and credentials that we develop and offer. And then, beyond that, we partner directly with employers and experts from those fields to design the curriculum so the learning outcomes directly map to the competencies required in the workforce.

We do believe that the future of education is based in skills and competencies, and it is a language that employers are speaking more fluently. And higher education can invest in this more workforce-employer partnership model to increase the alignment and relevancy of educational pathways to opportunity.

Ms. FOXX. Thank you very much.

Madam Chair, I would like to submit for the record facts related to funding by various entities and the growth in spending that has occurred over the years. So we will submit that separately.

[The information follows:]



TEXAS PUBLIC POLICY FOUNDATION

Policy Perspective

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Center for Innovation
in Education

The Myth of State Disinvestment in Higher Education

by Andrew Gillen
Senior Policy Analyst

Key Points

- There has been no long-term trend of state disinvestment in higher education.
- State funding for higher education is volatile but has been largely stable for almost four decades.
- Public colleges have never had more revenues than they do right now.

Executive Summary

Everyone knows that states have been cutting funding for higher education. This state disinvestment is the starting point for much of the conventional wisdom regarding higher education as well, as it feeds directly into the notion that colleges are starved for funding and that tuition rises to make up for cuts in state funding.

But it turns out the conventional wisdom is a myth.

New data from the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association's (SHEEO) annual [State Higher Education Finance](#) (SHEF) report provides a long term look at state funding and shows that:

- There is no long-term trend of disinvestment in state funding per student.
- State funding is volatile, but within a narrow range.
- Colleges have never had more total funding than they do today, thanks in large part to sustained tuition hikes since 1980.
- There is no detection of the (weak) relationship between state funding cuts and increases in tuition in the SHEF data.

Introduction

The level of state funding is a primary concern for many in the higher education community because it is one of the primary revenue sources for public colleges. The conventional wisdom holds that there has been a decades-long trend of states cutting funding—often called state disinvestment. Research reports with titles such as “State Disinvestment in Higher Education Has Led to an Explosion of Student-Loan Debt” and “Unkept Promises: State Cuts to Higher Education Threaten Access and Equity” paint a dire picture ([Baylor; Mitchell et al.](#)). News and opinion pieces routinely include phrases such as “the effects of a decades-long decline in state funding” and “state fiscal investment in higher education has been in retreat in the states since about 1980” ([Knox; Mortenson](#)). The *Chronicle of Higher Education* even has a webtool titled “25 Years of Declining State Support for Public Colleges” ([Chronicle of Higher Education](#)).

There is no doubt that there have been cuts to state funding, sometimes large cuts. For example, during the Great Recession, state funding fell by over \$2,000 per student. But what is often not acknowledged is that large cuts like these have historically been temporary as funding is increased as the economy recovers. For example, since reaching a low in 2012, state funding has increased by almost \$1,400 per student. A severely distorted picture of state funding is created when cuts receive disproportionate attention and increases are ignored.

Fortunately, new data from the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association's (SHEEO) annual [State Higher Education Finance](#) (SHEF) report allows for an examination of long term trends in state funding.

continued

The SHEF data is one of the few datasets able to examine many of these issues. It goes further back in time than many other datasets, beginning in 1980. It also focuses on the amount of funding available for teaching by subtracting out funds for other purposes such as campus construction, research, and medical schools.¹ These operating expenses account for 78.4 percent of university spending (SHEEO 2019a, 13). The main disadvantage of the SHEF data is that it tracks revenues rather than expenditures. Most of the time these two will track each other closely, but occasionally there are discrepancies. A good example is the most recent data for Missouri, where “roughly \$35 million (or 3.8 percent of appropriations) were not released until the last day of fiscal 2018, and institutions were never able to access those funds” (SHEEO 2019a, 34).

Before diving into these findings, a few quick notes to improve readability. One, all dollar figures have been adjusted for inflation using the CPI-U and are presented in 2018 dollars.² Two, all values are per full-time equivalent (FTE) student. Three, references to a year represent that fiscal year. Four, I am using the term “state funding” and variations thereof to represent what SHEEO calls “educational

appropriations,” defined as “state and local support available for public higher education operating expenses, defined to exclude spending for research, agricultural, and medical education,” and “tuition revenue” and variations thereof to represent what SHEEO calls “net tuition revenue” defined as “gross amount of tuition and fees, less state and institutional financial aid, tuition waivers or discounts, and medical student tuition and fees” (SHEEO 2019b, 11-12).³ Five, the SHEF data and this analysis focus on public higher education institutions only.

There Is No Long-Term Trend of Disinvestment in State Funding per Student

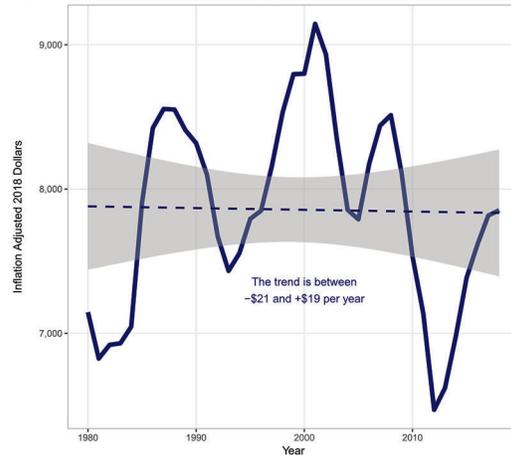
The conventional wisdom holds that there is a long-term trend of disinvestment in higher education as state funding has been relentlessly cut. It is difficult to overstate how thoroughly this notion permeates conversations about higher education.

However, there is no convincing evidence of a long-term trend of state disinvestment in the data. Utilizing the entire time period for which there is data, 1980 to 2018, Figure 1 shows state funding per student over time. Between 1980 and 2018, state funding per student varied from a low of \$6,470

to a high of \$9,145, with many ups and downs over the years.

One could cite some time periods to argue for a trend of disinvestment—from 2001 to 2018, state funding per student declined by \$1,292. But one could also cite some time periods to argue for a trend of increasing state investment—from 1980 to 2018, state funding

Figure 1. Higher education state funding per student



Note: Figures adjusted for inflation using the CPI-U. “State funding” corresponds to SHEEO’s “educational appropriations.”
Source: Texas Public Policy Foundation and SHEEO

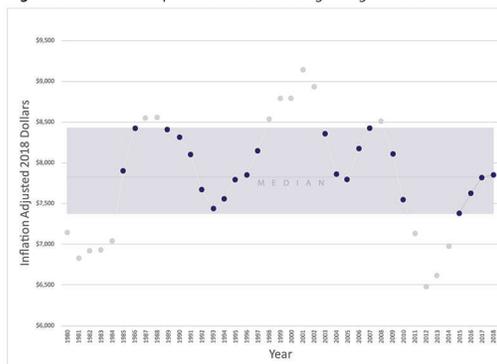
- 1 Since not all colleges have medical schools, and those that do are not uniformly distributed across the country, separating out non-medical school spending makes comparisons between schools and states more reliable and informative.
- 2 Note that SHEEO’s publications generally adjust for costs with the Higher Education Cost Adjustment (HECA) rather than inflation, but they provide the data adjusted for inflation online.
- 3 Net tuition revenue is different from the net tuition that students pay. For example, suppose a student is awarded a Pell grant. The grant will reduce the net tuition that a student pays but will not reduce net tuition revenue since the college receives the same amount of money, just with the Pell portion coming from the federal government rather than the student.

per student increased by \$707. With so many ups and downs over the years, any conclusion is usually reversed by moving the starting or ending date just a few years. To avoid overgeneralizing from non-representative (and easily cherry-picked) beginning and end points, we should worry less about year to year comparisons and focus instead on whether there is a general trend, which would show up as a general slope in the state funding line. If there has been disinvestment, then there should be a downward slope in state funding over time. But **Figure 1** does not appear to have much of a slope at all. Instead, state funding appears to be quite cyclical, falling during recessions and then climbing during recoveries.

The lack of any meaningful trend is confirmed by regression analysis. The regression coefficient on the year variable indicates the typical change in state funding each year. If there is a trend of states disinvesting in higher education, then we should expect the coefficient to be a large negative number that is statistically significant. However, when you run this regression on the historical data, the coefficient is -1.199 , indicating that states tend to disinvest in higher education at the rate of \$1.20 per student per year (this regression line is included in **Figure 1**). However, the standard error is 9.8 (p value = 0.9), rendering even this tiny disinvestment trend non-statistically significant. In other words, we cannot statistically determine if there is any trend in state funding over the past 38 years, and if so whether it indicates disinvestment or increases in investment (the 95 percent confidence interval is $-\$21$ to $+\$19$ per student per year).

Even taking a disinvestment trend of \$1.20 per student per year as our best estimate, such a trivial sum belies the disproportionate attention given to the state disinvestment story, as cyclical swings dwarf any underlying trend. For instance, state funding has fallen by an average of \$1,506 per student during the last three recessions. To match a fall in funding of that magnitude at the presumed rate of state disinvestment would take 1,256 years. Clearly, cuts to funding during recessions dwarf the minuscule and possibly nonexistent trend of disinvestment.

Figure 2. Distribution of per-student state funding for higher education



Note: Figures adjusted for inflation using the CPI-U. "State funding" corresponds to SHEEO's "educational appropriations."

Source: Texas Public Policy Foundation and SHEEO

The bottom line from the regression analysis is that, rather than getting the large negative and statistically significant finding we would expect if there was a trend of state disinvestment, we get a trivially negative and non-statistically significant result.

The distribution of state funding by year is another piece of evidence showing the lack of a trend in state funding. **Figure 2** replaces the line with dots for each year, and then superimposes a boxplot showing the distribution of state funding over the years, where the outline of the box shows the 25th and 75th percentiles. The line within the box shows the median value of state funding per student (\$7,853) meaning that in half the years state funding was higher, and in half the years funding was lower. If states have been disinvesting in higher education for years, then current funding levels should be among the lowest on record. Yet state funding per student in 2018 was \$7,853, the median value. If there is a long-term trend of states disinvesting in higher education, then how is the current funding level in the exact middle of the historical range?

State Funding Is Volatile but Within a Narrow Range

The cyclical nature of state funding apparent in **Figures 1** and **2** conceals another under-noticed fact, which is that outside of cyclical swings, state funding has been remarkably consistent for 38 years, deviating only temporarily from

a fairly narrow range.⁴ Figure 2 shows that half of all years' funding levels fell between \$7,409 and \$8,416.

Indeed, state funding per student rarely deviates by more than \$1,000 per student from the median value (\$7,853)—over the past 38 years, only two years have been \$1,000 or more above the median, and only three years have been \$1,000 or more below the median, all of which reverted toward the median within two years. While the swings in state funding during a recession can certainly be large—state funding fell by over \$2,000 per student from 2008 to 2012—we should not lose sight of the fact that state funding has been remarkably consistent for almost four decades now (though statistical tests yield inconclusive evidence on whether the trend line is completely flat).⁵

Colleges Have Never Had More Total Funding

State funding is a large component of college funding, but it is not the only one. Tuition revenue is the other major source of funding. Figure 3 adds a line showing tuition revenue per student over time to Figure 1. Tuition revenue per student has increased consistently over time, rising from \$1,889 in 1980 to \$6,788 in 2018.

The upward trend in tuition revenue over time is confirmed by statistical tests. Repeating the earlier regression analysis with tuition revenue instead of state funding yields a coefficient of 4.14 that is statistically significant (a standard error of 4.14 and a p value of < 0.01). In other words, there is a sizable and statistically significant trend of higher tuition revenue, at a rate of between \$116 and \$133 per student per year.

The combination of no trend in state funding and consistent increases in tuition revenue creates a generally rising trend in total revenues over time, as shown in Figure 4. An upward trend in total revenue is unmistakable, albeit with cyclical swings due to volatile state funding. The year 2018 had the highest total revenue in history, at \$14,641 per student, \$5,606 higher than in 1980, and even \$1,413 higher than the pre-recession peak in 2007. In other words, universities have more than recovered from the latest recession. In fact, universities have never had higher total operating revenues than they do now.

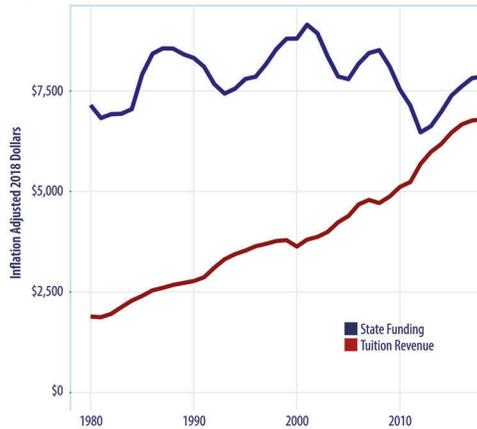
No Detection of the (Weak) Relationship Between State Funding Cuts and Increases in Tuition

Related to the belief of a long-term trend of state disinvestment is the idea that disinvestment explains why tuition

has been climbing. The SHEF data is routinely cited as providing proof that tuition rises because of cuts to state funding.

But these claims overstate the relationship between changes in tuition and changes in state funding. As we have already seen, there is no long-term trend in state funding in the SHEF data, while there is evidence of consistently rising tuition revenue. This should immediately give pause to the notion that cuts in state funding play a dominant role in explaining tuition increases. While it is true that tuition revenue rises when states cut funding, tuition revenue rises when states increase funding as well. It is generally difficult to claim that consistent increases in one variable (tuition

Figure 3. Higher education revenue per student by source



Note: Figures adjusted for inflation using the CPI-U. "State funding" corresponds to SHEEO's "educational appropriations."

Source: Texas Public Policy Foundation and SHEEO

4 Recall that state funding here refers to operating support—funding for campus construction, research, and medical schools has been subtracted out.

5 A Kwiatkowski-Phillips-Schmidt-Shin (KPSS) test indicates level stationarity (KPSS = 0.154, lag = 3, p-value > 0.1), but an Augmented Dickey-Fuller (ADF) test does not rule out a unit root (DF = -3.1233, lag = 3, p-value = 0.13).

revenue) are caused by a variable that regularly swings up and down (state funding).

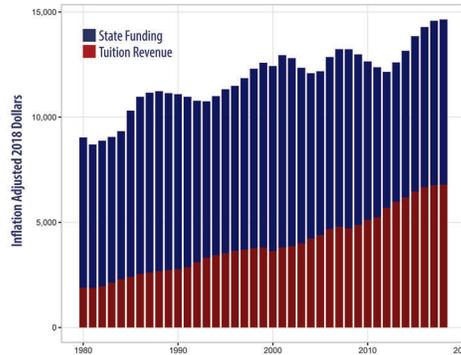
Moreover, the numbers just do not add up. How could a (non-statistically significant) decline in state funding of \$1.20 per student per year explain a (statistically significant) increase in tuition revenue of \$125 per student per year?

However, investigating the relationship between changes in state funding and changes in tuition is one of the areas where the SHEF data is not the best data available because it is so aggregated at the state and national level. A previous study of mine (Gillen 2015) uses university level data instead, controls for various other variables such as changes in faculty salaries and college funded financial aid, and allows for tuition to respond over five years. That study finds a weak relationship between changes in tuition and changes in state funding (total state funding, not just operating revenue). For example, for four-year public colleges, tuition increases by \$0.06 for every \$1 cut in state funding and the relationship is statistically significant. Over five-years, the relationship strengthens to around \$0.19. This is a quite weak relationship and is far from the \$1 for \$1 impact assumed by the conventional wisdom.

But this weak relationship is not detectable in the SHEF data. Figure 5 plots the change in state funding and the change in tuition revenue for each year. For example, the 2012 toward the upper left of the chart indicates that between 2011 and 2012, state funding fell by \$666 per student, and tuition revenue increased by \$448 per student.

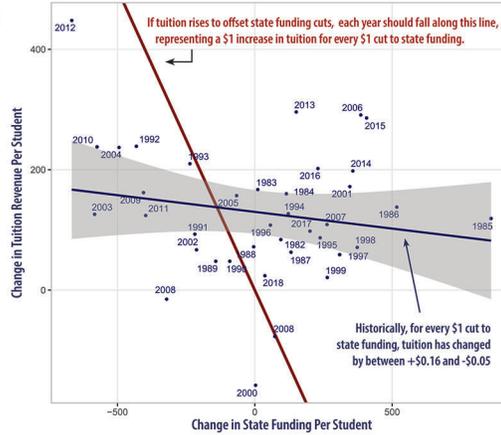
If tuition rises because of cuts to state funding, then each year should fall along the red line representing a \$1 increase in tuition revenue per

Figure 4. Higher education revenues per student



Note: Figures adjusted for inflation using the CPI-U. "State funding" corresponds to SHEEO's "educational appropriations."
Source: Texas Public Policy Foundation and SHEEO

Figure 5. Changes in higher education funding by source



Note: Figures adjusted for inflation using the CPI-U. "State funding" corresponds to SHEEO's "educational appropriations."
Source: Texas Public Policy Foundation and SHEEO

student for each \$1 cut in state funding per student. The occasional year is close to the line (e.g., 2008, where state funding increased by \$73 per student and tuition revenue decreased by \$77). But in general, the data does not fall along the line.

Regression analysis confirms the lack of a \$1 for -\$1 relationship in the SHEF data, as historically, tuition revenue has tended to increase by a non-statistically significant \$0.056 per student for every \$1 cut to state funding per student (standard error = 0.05, p value = 0.3). Moreover, the regression results include a statistically significant value of \$130 for the intercept (standard error = 17.8, p value < 0.01). This indicates that even if there was no change in state funding, we would still expect to see tuition revenue rise between \$94 and \$166 per student.

What this means is that while data at the institutional level do provide evidence that changes in state funding have a weak relationship with changes in tuition, the SHEF data is too aggregated at the state and national levels to detect the relationship.

Conclusions

The latest SHEF data clearly shows that the conventional wisdom regarding state funding of higher education needs an overhaul on several points. In particular:

- There has not been any convincing upward or downward trend in state funding of higher education over the past 38 years (the typically yearly change in state funding is between -\$21 and +\$19 per student per year).
- Any given year's value is determined more by cyclical factors (the state of the economy) rather than any underlying trend.
- Outside of recessions, state funding has typically been between \$7,400 and \$8,400 per student per year for 38 years.
- Steady increases in tuition revenue (\$116 to \$133 per student per year) combined with flat state funding (-\$21 to +\$19 per student per year) yield an upward trend in total revenues.
- Colleges have never had higher total operating revenue than they do right now (\$14,600 per student).
- Depending on the data used, there is only a weak or non-existent relationship between cuts to state funding and increases in tuition. The SHEF data do not detect a relationship. ★

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Prior to joining TPPF, Andrew spent 10 years at nonprofit and philanthropic organizations researching and trying to improve higher education, including as a program officer for the Charles Koch Foundation and in research roles for American Institutes for Research, Education Sector, the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, and the Center for College Affordability and Productivity. He also served on the U.S. Department of Education's Advisory Committee on Student Financial Assistance.

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Ms. FOXX. And thank you very much. And, again, I appreciate Mr. Courtney's consideration. Thank you.

Chairwoman DAVIS. Thank you.

I will now turn to Mr. Courtney for his 5 minutes.

Mr. COURTNEY. Great. Well, thank you, Chairwoman Davis and Ranking Member Smucker.

And, Ms. Foxx, always glad to accommodate your schedule.

So, Dr. Harper, you are correct in your testimony that our committee does not have direct jurisdiction over the State Department or the Department of Homeland Security. However, the Higher Education Act does authorize various programs that does promote

exchange students and international, you know, cross-pollination in our higher education programs with countries all over the world.

And, you know, strictly from just a pure monetary standpoint, there are about a million international students that are enrolled in the U.S. That is about \$41 billion in terms of revenue. The Department of Commerce actually treats that tuition money as an export for the purposes of our trade balance.

And, obviously, I think as you, I am sure, can attest, you know, the policies of this administration, which has pretty much shut down the visa availability for students wanting to enroll in the U.S. and then, just this Monday, announcing that ICE is going to actually deport students from this country whose schools are only offering online programs, you know, just really kind of flies in the face of what we are hearing today about the fact that we need a regulatory structure that needs to be flexible given the COVID emergency and just to also recognize that online, virtual learning, partly because of necessity but also partly because of value, as we just heard from Mr. Pulsipher, is something that we are in a place right now where we have to incorporate it.

And having these arbitrary policies that are actually now talking about deporting people, you know, really puts, I think, educators in an impossible position about sort of having to balance things like, you know, staying on the right side of the Federal Government and trying to protect their students.

So I was wondering, again, if you could touch on that number 10 point that you mentioned in your opening remarks and really how we have to look at it in the whole picture, holistically, in terms of the challenge we are facing right now for higher education.

Mr. HARPER. Sure. I really appreciate you affording me an opportunity to talk through that 10th point. It is really important.

You know, those policy actions are not only arbitrary, as you have noted, but they are also, I am afraid, sinophobic and xenophobic.

I wrote that particular consideration in my written testimony before we got the news on Monday about the ICE deportations. I somehow had a scary suspicion that this administration would find some way to target Chinese students and international students from other countries.

It is so important to note that international students make our colleges and universities better. They afford American students the opportunity to interact with people who bring diverse viewpoints. So many colleges and universities articulate in their mission statements a commitment to preparing students for citizenship in a global democracy. Well, if that is the case, we need international students here, you know, to afford our students, you know, that kind of learning opportunity.

But we also—you know, I think it is important to, you know, push against, you know, all of the, you know, xenophobic and sinophobic actions that we are seeing in this administration. And, you know, these most recent actions concerning, you know, ICE and the deportation of international students is just ridiculous. They require stronger Federal oversight.

Mr. COURTNEY. Thank you.

I mean, we have had a lot of press in Connecticut about student athletes. I think the NCAA calculates there are about 20,000 international students as part of the NCAA. Geno Auriemma, the Women's Basketball Hall of Fame coach, was in the press talking about three student athletes that are in his program—one from Croatia, one from Poland, and one from Canada—who are now basically unable to get into the country. But, to his credit, I mean, he pointed out in the press—and I am quoting him now—“Not just athletes, but kids who are enrolled here, going to school. What is the issue here? Why can't we get that resolved? So, what, because they don't make \$20 million a year and play in the NBA or Major League Baseball or the NHL?” Because, obviously, ICE has waived and allowed visas for, you know, athletes who are in professional sports but not in college sports.

So, you know, again, we are just, sort of, dealing with these contradictions that are, again, putting pressure on campuses to reopen more than maybe it is safe, given where they are located, as well as creating these different classes of people from overseas that can actually come here and enrich our country.

So thank you for your testimony.

And with that, I yield back, Susan.

Chairwoman DAVIS. Thank you very much, Mr. Courtney.

Mr. Guthrie of Kentucky, you have 5 minutes.

Mr. GUTHRIE. Thank you much, Madam Chair. I really appreciate you conducting this hearing.

And my question is for Mr. Pulsipher.

I note in your testimony you said that suddenly 3.3 million teachers were suddenly grappling with how to teach online. And I know that Western Governors University is online, and you have kind of mastered those competencies.

And I actually had the good experience of having my daughter home this semester, really second half of the semester, and watching her online. And I am not sure the—although the price didn't change much, I am not sure the quality was the same between—and she was at a traditional on-campus program.

So I guess my question, Mr. Pulsipher, is, what has Western Governors done to propel students into the workforce that is at least equal to, if not, I guess in your opinion, would be superior at least to a traditional student program? What are the things online that you figured out that other universities need to do if we move forward this way?

And, specifically, I would like you to address the minority students, the students of color, particularly with the digital divide that Dr. Harper has pointed out.

And, in Kentucky, I can tell you, with our K-12 situation, the digital divide was also rural and urban as much as anything else, and so—but it is real. It is real for people of color. It is real with more rural areas.

So, one, what areas have you guys mastered that other universities need to look for online learning? And how have you addressed the digital divide?

Thank you.

Mr. PULSIPHER. Thank you, Congressman Guthrie. I appreciate that question.

I think one of the most important things is to simply embrace the entire capabilities of the medium, if you will. And by that, what I really mean is, like, you have to have a tech-first mindset. How does technology enable all facets of the engagement of a student with the content, with the instructor, with peer students, everything else like that?

And if you truly consider all the other dynamics that we as the consumers experience, like, very few of them, if any, would you argue that the online experience is worse than the traditional place-based model, whether it is shopping, banking, et cetera. We believe the same is true for learning.

So some examples of that is, we have disaggregated the faculty model, because we realized in the teaching and learning models online, it is about one-to-one interactions as much as it is about a classroom. And so you have to think about: How are you providing access to the subject-matter experts and the instructors that really help on an individual basis? How do you change the nature of content consumption away from a lecture in a hall to what are all the videos and mediums and the virtual courses, et cetera, that you can engage with and that you could also engage with peers on? So much of the instruction and learning actually occurs asynchronously outside of the interaction with the instructor.

And I think there is another simple dynamic, by the way, that says you have to rethink the concept of time, that now an individual is in control of the time rather than an institution setting a lecture schedule and office hours for faculty, et cetera.

The last thing I would point out is that the data that then becomes available to an institution to really test the efficacy of all the different pedagogical approaches, the technology that has been deployed, et cetera, and you can actually now measure the impact on student progress and learning.

This extends to our ability to help underserved students and individuals of color, because you can actually engage with them, every student, on a one-to-one basis.

And then the last point is, I would extend what Dr. White has also said in his testimony, is that WGU in like manner has invested in providing, you know, scholarships that cover specifically technology like laptops as well as high-speed bandwidth access, things like that. We have also been [inaudible] directly invest in infrastructure to address this digital divide that now exists.

Mr. GUTHRIE. Okay.

Well, also—so my guess, though, is if you are looking at a digital model, online model, and you are on the other side of the digital divide, that you might not see that as an opportunity for you, even though, as you say, it could be a better opportunity for you.

So how does Western Governors University reach out to students that may not even view this as an opportunity for them, to make sure they know that it is there?

Chairwoman DAVIS. Thank you, Mr. Guthrie.

Mr. GUTHRIE. Oh, I am out of time?

Chairwoman DAVIS. I think you have had the second bell, so—

Mr. GUTHRIE. Oh, okay. I thought that was the first bell. I am sorry. Okay. I am sorry. I yield back then. I apologize.

Chairwoman DAVIS. Thank you very much.

Mr. Harder of California, you have 5 minutes.

Mr. Harder?

Oh, Mr. Takano. Okay. I don't have you—

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Chair?

Chairwoman DAVIS. Yes, Mr. Takano, you are next, but I hadn't had you earlier. So if you are ready to go, go ahead.

Mr. TAKANO. Thank you. Thank you, Chairwoman Davis, for convening this critical hearing on the future of higher education in our country.

During recessions, States typically fund their public education systems first when they are experiencing—well, they cut funding to their public education systems first when they are experiencing budget shortfalls. And these cuts almost always disproportionately impact low-income students and students of color. Due to these cuts, institutions will be forced to provide less resources to help these students.

The \$14 billion Congress provided in the CARES Act was an essential lifeline, but it doesn't come close to covering the full extent of the need. The American Council on Education had previously estimated that institutions and students will need at least \$46.6 billion to address the challenges and disruptions created by COVID-19. And as of last week, ACE now estimates that institutions may need an additional \$74 billion to cover just the costs of resuming in-person and hybrid instruction in the fall. In my district, the University of California, Riverside, has already experienced a revenue loss of \$22 million.

Now, my first question is for Chancellor White. It is good to see you, again, sir. Can you please tell us about the revenue losses that the Cal State system has suffered as a result of COVID-19?

Dr. White? Chancellor White?

Mr. WHITE. I just had to hit my "unmute" button.

Nice to see you again.

Yes, so just in the spring term alone, the, sort of, 2-1/2 months from March through the end—I guess 3 months, we had \$337 million in loss across the California State University. That includes the increased cost of mitigating COVID with personal protective gear, buying laptops and WiFis and giving them to students and to faculty and staff and all of that. That was just a 3-month period of time, so about \$100 million a month. We anticipate that rate to continue these next 12 months.

In addition to that, the State of California has cut our State appropriation by \$299 million, which is 4.6 percent of our operating budget for next year. However, the Federal Government can play a role in reversing that. If there is another Federal stimulus package that is received in California before October 15—it is a reverse trigger proposal that the Governor has signed—then that cut in our State appropriation would be reversed for the next fiscal year, which would be enormously helpful, as you point out, to students that are first-generation and often of low income who need a little extra support in order to stay engaged with their studies.

Mr. TAKANO. Thank you for that answer, Chancellor White. It is imperative for Congress to—for the Senate to act on, you know, future legislation that would address—and I know that we do much of that in the HEROES Act.

Dr. Pierce, what are the revenue losses at your institution?

Ms. PIERCE. Yes. Thank you for that question.

We are not a system, we are a stand-alone institution, so our numbers may sound small, but the impact is the same.

We are looking at approximately \$850,000 in just parking and auxiliary services alone. Our original fiscal year 2021 budget was based on our enrollment being flat, meaning that we didn't anticipate growth nor loss, but now we are projecting a deficit of anywhere between 10 to 20 percent in enrollment. And that would essentially mean \$4.2 million if we are down 10 percent and \$7.78 million if we experience a 20-percent loss.

So that is a significant impact on our overall budget that we would have to mitigate in ways that would be very detrimental and painful for our students, faculties, and staff and have an overall impact on our community.

Mr. TAKANO. Well, thank you for that, Dr. Pierce.

And, Dr. Harper, my question to you is, what lessons can we learn from the last recession about the impact that State budget cuts have on college access, affordability, and quality?

Mr. HARPER. Sure. We can certainly learn from the last time, taking a largely raceless approach to correcting longstanding inequities is only going to, at best, sustain those inequities but perhaps even exacerbate them.

So I think, as I documented in the 10 points in my written testimony, we have to bring a race-forward, race-salient lens to thinking about COVID-19 recovery. Because the truth is, we have way too much evidence to confirm that COVID-19 has had a racially disproportionate impact on communities of color. Therefore, it would be just really reckless of us to attempt to remedy those inequities in a largely raceless way.

I am not suggesting that class and socioeconomic status is somehow unimportant, but there is a way that race and class commingle in these United States of America to, you know, really produce disparate outcomes for people of color.

Mr. TAKANO. Thank you for that response.

I see, Madam Chair, my time is up. I yield back.

Chairwoman DAVIS. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Takano.

And now we are going to turn to Mr. Grothman, but beforehand, Mr. Guthrie, if you want to reclaim your 1 minute. And I guess I should reclaim my 1 minute too. But, Mr. Guthrie, go ahead if you need an extra minute.

Let's see. Is Mr. Guthrie there?

Perhaps Mr. Guthrie has left, so we will go on to Mr. Grothman. If Mr. Guthrie comes back later on, he can get his 1 minute again.

Mr. Grothman?

Mr. GROTHMAN. Thank you. I always love these kind of online things because we can see the beautiful decorating that we have in our Members' houses. So you do a very good job there. I appreciate looking at what is behind you. I am kind of in a boring conference room myself, but next time I will try to give you more interesting decor as well.

Mr. Pulsipher, is all of your classes online?

Mr. PULSIPHER. Yes, they are.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Okay. Do you feel, compared to a traditional college, a higher percentage of your graduates come out with a skills-based education?

Mr. PULSIPHER. Yes, we do. Based upon the surveys that we utilize from Gallup and Harris and others is that there is a pretty good indication from the employers as well as the graduate surveys that our graduates are better prepared for the workforce. Ninety-seven percent of employers say that they meet or exceed expectations. Ninety-seven percent of employers would hire them again.

I think that our alignment of the curriculum with the competencies needed in the workforce is significantly increasing the readiness of graduates.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Can you give me a comparative number, or is there a comparative number you have for other universities?

Mr. PULSIPHER. Yeah. There is, at least in our surveys, if I flip to our annual report, I would look at things like—so, in the Gallup—or, in Harris surveys, you know, if we look at graduates—you know, mentor—you know, was it worth the cost, our graduates are 77 percent versus nationally 38 percent. Did it prepare me for a job, 76 percent versus nationally I think it was below 50 percent. From an employers standpoint, you know, there is data like 97 percent of graduates from WGU exceed or meet expectations.

The other Gallup survey is that—you know, I think the numbers, I think we could provide them and submit them to testimony after the fact, but I think—specifically on Gallup, I think it is more than twice as likely that our WGU grads are performing well in all five dimensions of well-being versus nationally.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Wow. That is pretty incredible. Do you think it is because you are online, or do you just think you approach your job with a different attitude, an attitude of a student-first attitude? Do you think you could duplicate these fantastic numbers in a more traditional university if they would adopt the same interaction with their students?

Mr. PULSIPHER. You know, based upon the research from Gallup and others, there are probably three things that I do think should be considered.

One is, how do you really think about the faculty engagement with students and make it more personal in the interaction, if you will. Like, the office hours and the one-to-one interaction become vitally important because a lecture is just content online. And I could—

Mr. GROTHMAN. Do you steer your people more towards a skills-based education?

Mr. PULSIPHER. We are entirely competency-based in our design, such that as soon as you demonstrate proficiency against the learning outcomes you can progress. And so it is very clear that time now becomes a variable in most of our students' lives, versus sitting in a seat for the prescribed 15 hours a week, you know, for 4 months.

And so I think the mentoring, the faculty engagement model is highly important. And noted that if you have a faculty who encourages your dreams and aspirations, I believe Gallup noted that you are two and a half times more likely to say that your school is right for you.

I also think college affordability factors heavily into graduate satisfaction and performance.

And then, of course, designing curriculum and learning outcomes that are directly relevant and ready a graduate for success in the workforce, that also dramatically increases graduate and student satisfaction.

I think we have opportunities to advance education's design in all of these dimensions.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Okay.

I am particularly concerned with the middle-class students. You know, they don't get Pell grants, so really, in our society, we really put the middle-class students at a disadvantage.

How do you deal with student debt? Or do you feel how the amount of student debt your middle-class students come out with is higher or lower compared to a traditional university?

Mr. PULSIPHER. We know for a fact it is actually lower. So 57 percent of our students at WGU actually utilize aid in some form or receive aid in some form for their education at WGU. And, on average, you know, our graduates are graduating—I am just trying to find the specific statistics really quickly—they are graduating with just over \$12,000 in debt at graduation. That compares to nationally at \$29,000 per graduate.

More importantly, you can see that our cohort default rates and loan repayment rates among our graduates are also performing better than national averages. Our cohort default rate is just about 4 percent versus nationally at 10.8 percent.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Wow. Well, I guess what it means is we need—do you ever think about setting up an Eastern Governors University?

Mr. PULSIPHER. The nice thing is, that didn't preclude us from serving students in all 50 States, so we have more students in the East than we do in the West.

Mr. GROTHMAN. Okay.

I guess you are giving me the hook. Well—

Chairwoman DAVIS. Thank you, Mr. Grothman.

Mr. GROTHMAN.—thank you. And I would like to thank you again for letting us see your beautiful house. Very wonderful.

Chairwoman DAVIS. We are happy to hear next from Chairman Scott, chairman of the Education and Labor Committee.

Chairman Scott?

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair. And, certainly, thank you for holding this hearing.

I would like to start with Dr. White.

And you have talked about this a little bit, but can you tell us exactly what would happen if the cuts go through?

I know we are dealing with this in Virginia. Our General Assembly passed a budget when we came back for the scheduled, what we call, veto session, where we consider Governor's vetoes and amendments. We learned a new word, "unallocated." The 2-percent teacher raise was unallocated. The counselors in the schools, the aid to low-income students in community colleges, construction of colleges, all unallocated because of the reforecast in revenues.

We assume we will learn another word if the HEROES Act were to pass and the revenue were restored by Federal assistance, “re-allocated.”

So could you tell us what would happen if—who gets laid off and what effect it would have on education if the cuts actually remained?

Mr. WHITE. Yes. Thank you, Member.

I think we have done several things to decrease our costs. We immediately put in a hiring freeze across the system. We have also banned travel, initially for health reasons and now for economic reasons. So when our various constituent groups gather, they are doing it virtually, going forward.

We also have—during the last 8 years, as I have been chancellor, we have been in a position to grow, and we have put aside a reserve during that time, as has the State of California. And so we are going to be using some of that reserve, spending that down, in order to mitigate the costs. But there would also be some employee attrition issues that will lower our costs as well.

So we think, you know, we will—our enrollments are steady here in the summertime, and all indications are for the fall they will remain steady. It is going to be variable across the campuses. Some of the urban ones are going up; some of the more rural ones are going down a little bit.

But, overall, the cut from the State budget of \$299 million can be reversed if Congress acts with the next Federal bill. And that will help us continue to make access in support of our students generally of low income and middle income, to the last member’s questions, as well as to our students of color.

So we think it is a very vital role for the Federal Government to play here. Asking the State to maintain efforts, so the State doesn’t further cut us, but as these Federal dollars come in, it will make a huge difference for our students, going forward, earning their degrees.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you.

Dr. Harper, are you familiar with the new regulation from the Department of Education making it harder to get a recalculation of your financial aid if you lose your job or have other reasons to want your aid recalculated?

Mr. HARPER. No. I haven’t followed that legislation.

Mr. SCOTT. Okay. They are making it harder. So the problem there would be, if you lose your job and are not able to make the anticipated contribution, obviously, if you can’t recalculate the aid that is needed, bad things will happen. But if you are not familiar with that.

Dr. Pierce, you talked about reopening. There are a lot of things—some things you didn’t mention. How can you reopen without testing all of the students before day one?

Ms. PIERCE. Yes. Well, with us being a nonresidential campus, we would be following the guidelines provided by the CDC and the Minnesota State Health Department, which—the State of Minnesota is providing testing for those who want it and need it, and we are able to work in concert with them.

So our screening procedures follow the guidelines from the CDC, the Minnesota State Department of Health, and the Office on Higher Ed.

Mr. SCOTT. Does that include testing everyone before day one?

Ms. PIERCE. It does not.

Mr. SCOTT. What about ventilation?

Ms. PIERCE. Yes. Well, part of our reopening is to look at air quality, because we are very much aware of the fact that—it is something I recently learned, actually, is that we want to minimize any cross-ventilation, in terms of air moving from one geographic area to another. So we are looking at air quality, and we are also looking at space.

So we are looking at our HVAC system and the quality of air in our HVAC system. And I have been actually learning quite a bit about it, in terms of MERV standards, which are a way of measuring air quality versus air efficiency.

And so, as we are looking at—

Mr. SCOTT. My time has expired, but one of the things about air conditioning is that they recirculate the air, which has been identified as problematic. If they pull the air out, then send it outside and, rather than recirculate, just cool the air the best they can, you are better off.

But the ventilation has been identified as a problem. There are a lot of things about reopening that are problematic. And you are dealing with it the best you can, so I appreciate that.

Chairwoman DAVIS. Thank you, Chairman Scott.

Mr. SCOTT. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Chairwoman DAVIS. We now turn to Ms. Stefanik of New York for 5 minutes.

Ms. Stefanik?

We will go to Mr. Banks.

Mr. BANKS. Thank you, Madam Chair.

I want to start with Mr. Pulsipher.

Since many American families are above the Federal Pell grant-eligible income level, how can aid better be distributed to students who really need help to return to school in the fall?

Mr. PULSIPHER. Thank you for that question, Congressman.

I do think that there is no doubt a short-term hardship that should be contemplated in considering how to support students who need to continue on their path.

And so, even at WGU, while our institutional operational model has not been impacted, our students, given the disproportionate number that we serve in underserved categories, have been largely impacted by the economic fallout of the pandemic. And so there are considerations around, you know, supporting non-tuition-related expenses, whether that be housing, food, other necessities of life. We, ourselves, have established a \$10 million aid fund and, in just the last 6 weeks, have distributed aid to over 4,000 students.

There are those things can be contemplated as we consider both short-term and long-term considerations that would not just only be related to, you know, Pell-eligible students but individuals who are trying to advance from lower-middle-income to upper-middle-income and how do you support that investment.

One of the longer-term examples is something as simple as a lifetime learning account that can model after things like a health savings account or even, like, a home equity line of credit that just allows individuals to tap into needed aid to support their upskilling and reskilling that will be increasingly part of their life going forward.

Mr. BANKS. Very helpful.

I want to turn my focus to a subject we haven't talked a great deal about yet today, and that is liability protections. All of your institutions belong to advocacy groups who have called for liability protections.

And I want to go first to Dr. Pierce.

Can you talk about how important are liability protections to reopen your institution for in-the-classroom training in the fall?

Ms. PIERCE. Thank you for that question.

We are a State institution, so we are covered under the State of Minnesota. However, I am very much aware that institutions feel a great risk in terms of liability for opening, in terms of how they are going to be able to cover any lawsuits that may emerge as a result of students, faculty, and staff returning to campus who may come into contact with COVID-19, who may have increased hospital bills and things of that nature.

Even though the schools are following every guideline provided by the CDC, their individual State health departments, and the Office of Higher Education, the liability is there, the liability is real, and it has a chilling effect on our plans moving forward.

Mr. BANKS. Dr. White, could you weigh in on that subject as well?

Mr. WHITE. Our twin North Stars about moving to a primarily virtual fall term and, quite frankly, academic year was driven by the health and safety issues and our student progress to success, and health and safety issues not only for our students but for our faculty, our staff, and the communities. And our campuses in California are stretched over an 800-mile distance, from the north coast up in Arcadia down to San Diego State, and, you know, a lot of our students come from other parts of the State. So we are very concerned about those two things.

We did not use liability as one of our determining factors to move to an essentially virtual fall and, quite frankly, academic year.

You know, one of the issues here that I think is really important to recognize is, this pandemic is not—a lot of people are using past tense: “How did you manage the pandemic?” This is not a 2-month problem or a 6-month problem. This is, you know, a 12-, 18-, 24-month at a minimum problem. And in California we are approaching it that way.

And so the flexibility around policies can't be shortsighted. Some of the recent policies that have come out that have undone some of that flexibility seem to be tone-deaf to the reality of the biology of the disease. That is something that we are not yet able to get our hands around.

Mr. BANKS. Mr. Pulsipher, your situation is different at WGU, but can you talk about how important liability protections would be for an institution like yours?

Mr. PULSIPHER. Yeah, Congressman, as you noted, obviously, with no in-person instruction and no campuses on which students congregate, this is not a circumstance that we understand all the variables at play and have considered. And so it is a topic that I would definitely defer to my colleagues that have campuses and have broader considerations there. I am not unaware of them, but it is not something that I personally have spent the time and attention and understanding the details to give a cogent answer to.

Mr. BANKS. Understood.

Thank you very much. I yield back.

Chairwoman DAVIS. Thank you, Mr. Banks.

And I now yield to Ms. Jayapal. Is Ms. Jayapal with us?

If not, Mr. Harder, you have 5 minutes.

Mr. Harder of California?

Mr. Levin of Michigan.

Mr. LEVIN. Thank you very much, Madam Chairwoman. I am here, yes. Appreciate it. And I appreciate you convening this hearing on this super-important topic.

You know, I want to get very concrete about the difficulties of running a university or a community college during this pandemic. And, as a Michigander, I want to mention the COVID-19 outbreak in East Lansing that has been linked to a popular bar near one of our great institutions, Michigan State University.

As of July 6, yesterday, there had been 170 confirmed cases, 1-7-0, confirmed cases of COVID-19 linked to this one bar or restaurant, including 27 secondary cases, meaning people who did not visit that establishment but caught the virus from someone else who did.

The entire Lansing region has been moved back into the high-risk category of our Governor, Gretchen Whitmer's reopening plan, given the enormous impact of this outbreak. This is over just an 8-day period following that restaurant's reopening, and it has since closed again.

I bring this up because it is a cautionary tale of the risk involved in reopening college campuses this fall. We can't just think about classrooms and dorms; colleges anchor entire communities—restaurants, bars, stores, and so on. Cases of COVID-19 within a student body or faculty aren't going to stay within a campus's walls.

Many reopening plans developed by institutions center around the need to test students, test faculty, test staff to contain cases of COVID-19 on campuses. However, estimates show that the testing capacity in most States is still far below what is needed to contain the virus. And, in fact, the lack of adequate testing is the lead story in today's New York Times.

Dr. White, when you decided to remain online for this fall and, as you say, perhaps the whole academic year, did testing capacity and possible scenarios like the situation in East Lansing play into that decision at all?

Mr. WHITE. Absolutely, it did, Congressman Levin.

I mean, Jiminy Christmas, when you are having a whole—we are responsible for well over 530,000 people, with our employees and with our students, let alone, to your point exactly, what is happening in East Lansing and the communities where we are embed-

ded. We came up with a number of \$50 million a month to do testing on a routine basis, which is just not in the cards.

And, quite frankly, to your point, if you test today and you are negative and it is an accurate test, that doesn't mean you don't pick it up tomorrow, right?

Mr. LEVIN. Right.

Mr. WHITE. So we have gone to the notion of really anywhere from about 3 or 4 percent to maybe 10 percent of our courses are going to be in-person. They are the laboratories, they are the healthcare training where they work on mannequins, et cetera. But everything else will be done in the virtual space because of the cost and the inefficiency, really, of helping solve this and keeping the disease under control for our students.

But we have—like, 25 percent of our employees are in their 60s and above. We are responsible for them.

Mr. LEVIN. And you consulted with faculty and staff when you made your decision as well, I assume.

Mr. WHITE. Faculty, staff, students, local public health officials, epidemiologists, and infectious disease experts in the State government, yes. Broad consultation across the system.

Mr. LEVIN. As you say, it seems like you could easily see what is happening in East Lansing play out at any college bar in the country or even at a party, you know, on a campus anywhere.

So let me ask Dr. Pierce, if we improved testing and stood up a nationwide contact tracing program, do you think school administrators like yourself around the whole country would feel better equipped to reopen, knowing there is an infrastructure in place to contain outbreaks?

I am talking about, Dr. Pierce, you know, the Federal Government fully taking responsibility, saying, "We will have a national contact tracing and testing program in place." Would that affect your decision-making?

Ms. PIERCE. I believe it would. I think that, you know, we follow the guidelines provided for us by the State of Minnesota, the CDC, and the Office on Higher Ed, but having a robust screening and testing policy and practice in place would certainly play into our total decision-making and make us feel a lot safer about welcoming our students to campus.

You know, our whole guidelines are based on the health and safety of our employees, and so anything that would enhance that would be welcome.

Mr. LEVIN. Thank you so much.

As I hear, Madam Chairwoman—

Chairwoman DAVIS. Thank you.

Mr. LEVIN.—my time has expired. I will just say that I feel so badly, as a Member of Congress, which is supposed to govern our whole country, that we are putting these wonderful administrators of our great universities and community colleges into this position of having to deal with this pandemic when we are not providing the national infrastructure of public health that we are capable of providing that would help them so much.

And, with that, I yield back.

Chairwoman DAVIS. Thank you, Mr. Levin.

Mr. Cline?

Mr. CLINE. Thank you, Madam Chair.

Chairwoman DAVIS. Mr. Cline of Virginia, please go ahead.

Mr. CLINE. Great. Thank you, Madam Chair.

You know, as we are adjusting to this new normal, as they call it—I am not partial to that term, but some are calling it that—it is important that we evaluate how this pandemic has impacted the traditional way higher education has been delivered to students and how it will continue to transform moving forward.

Online learning is one of many approaches that has proven to be successful in its implementation, and exploring opportunities for expansion presents a promising alternative to in-person classes during this time of increased virtual connections.

You know, not only does it allow students flexibility in their individual response to COVID, it solves many of the contributing disparities to educational access that minorities and those of lower socioeconomic classes face by eliminating certain barriers. But it does create new ones, as was already discussed, in relation to the lack of broadband access.

Online learning offers more affordable options that can be customized to meet individual schedules, allowing for continued learning to be a viable option for those who are balancing other commitments like caring for family or holding a job.

Prior to the pandemic, 20 percent of student loan borrowers were behind on their payments. And this further emphasizes the importance of affordable and flexible education, particularly as student debt has climbed over \$1.5 trillion.

When I served in the Virginia General Assembly before coming to Congress, I authored a bill inspired by the Western Governors University structure that directed the Virginia Secretary of Education and the State Council of Higher Education to work with Virginia public colleges and any private colleges who were willing to develop a program for an online degree with a lower cost—at that point, \$4,000 per academic year. Virginia is blessed with many great institutions of higher education, and it is important that they are affordable and accessible to students. And I am committed to continuing to work on ways to incentivize these types of innovative paths forward while I serve in Congress.

So I will ask President Pulsipher, I know you mentioned 77 percent of WGU alumni respondents reported that their education was worth the cost, compared to the national average of 38 percent. That is a testament to the work you have put forward.

Can you—let's see. I want to ask, you know, as the COVID pandemic disrupted lives across the country, you know, you note in your testimony that many people need mid-career reskilling. But what are some barriers stopping people from seeking additional skills-based education? And how can Congress help people whose lives were disrupted by the pandemic-caused economic downturn?

Mr. PULSIPHER. Thank you, Congressman Cline, for that question.

I think one of the—there is increasing evidence for sure that learning to earning, if you will, or educational work is absolutely the loop of what adults are going to go through in the future. And some of the barriers are simply what is the program design and whether those programs are eligible for Federal aid that many of

our lower- and middle-skilled workers actually need to advance their careers and professions.

And so, for example, many such programs, whether they are apprenticeship in design or short form in duration, whether they be technical, coding bootcamp models, or short micro-credentials, as they are often referred to, these often don't meet the eligibility requirements, whether it is full-time attendance or whether it is elements related to a degree seeking a credential model that is a credit-hour-based model.

And so these aren't typically contemplated within the scope of Federal regulation that governs higher education. Higher education generally is oriented towards the notion of a first-time, full-time student who is pursuing an associate's or a degree of some sort.

And what we are seeing is that employers are now increasingly entering into this space and providing employer-led training programs, paid internships, apprenticeships, or even partnering with technical colleges that are advancing the availability of these programs.

Those are opportunities for us to address not only the first-time students but also the reskilling/upskilling students.

Mr. CLINE. Thank you. I appreciate it.

I yield back.

Chairwoman DAVIS. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Cline.

And I now turn to Mr. Sablan from the Mariana Islands.

Mr. Sablan, you have 5 minutes.

Mr. SABLAN. Thank you, Madam Chair.

And I thank the witnesses all for their participation today.

My questions are generally directed for Dr. Pierce and Dr. White, and then I have other questions that I will submit for the record.

So the CARES Act provided over, what, \$14 billion in emergency support to institutions and students to address the immediate impacts of the pandemic? Colleges are required to use at least half of the funds they receive on emergency financial aid support for students, while the other half can be spent on institution expenses associated with the change in delivery of education resulting from COVID-19.

So when distribution of other CARE funds from the administration to my districts, the Northern Marianas, were delayed, direct student relief payments became the first injection of economic stimulus for individuals in the Marianas since the beginning of the pandemic.

So I would like to hear from Dr. Pierce and Dr. White about how they have used the Federal funding that they have received to date.

Would you both speak briefly to how you approached the awarding of the emergency grants on your campuses? Specifically, I would like to hear about how you identified and prioritized the students with the most need in awarding emergency aid; how have you used the institutional share of CARES funding that you received; and what other activities and services would you fund if you could access additional Federal support, like in the HEROES Act.

Thank you.

Ms. PIERCE. Thank you for the question.

We considered the funding in terms of the intent from Congress to meet the needs of students and especially students who had higher need levels, and also students' credit load because that was part of the funding formula.

So we identified eligible students, and they each received a base award of \$100. Then Pell-eligible students received additional supplemental funds based on credits enrolled and a percent of the total share.

Then we also withheld a percentage of the total grant so that we could award additional funding based on a short application to meet additional needs, such as housing, food, basic needs, childcare, technology, transportation, and things of that nature.

And so that is how we disbursed the funds, because it was very important for us to use an equity lens in distributing the funds.

Mr. SABLAN. Thank you—

Ms. PIERCE. We used additional funds—sorry?

Mr. SABLAN. No, no. Go ahead, Dr. Pierce. Please.

Ms. PIERCE. We have used additional funds to pay for increased costs—the funds that were in the second half of the funding—that arose, such as cleaning supplies, laptop rentals for our students, access to library services and licenses and things of that nature, software licenses, internet access, additional computers, and notes for students who didn't have access to set up hotspots.

And we anticipate spending a significant amount of the COVID funds for instructional costs because of the restrictions that we must operate under because of COVID.

Mr. SABLAN. Okay.

And this may be below Dr. White's pay grade, but do you have any comments, Dr. White? Do you have anything to add to what Dr. Pierce just said, please?

Mr. WHITE. Well, we distributed \$263 million in direct student funding directly to financial institutions so our students, even those who lack documentation, could access the funds. This goes to our deep-seated commitment to inclusive excellence and equity, to student success—we wanted to make sure that students who were enrolled to make progress to degree—and administrative simplicity.

So our awards ranged anywhere from \$500 to up to over \$5,000. And we used—within the Pell student body, which is over 60 percent of our students, we used those with the least expected family contribution first and worked our way up from the bottom up until we ran out of money. Equity, ease, and simplicity and accountability were the ways in which we distributed those funds.

And on the university side, just like Dr. Pierce, we are using it for COVID-19-induced additional expenses across our 23 institutions and—

Mr. SABLAN. Yeah. And, Dr. White, you have a student population that is just as great as the district I represent in number. And I know; I have been to your institution, your system.

I have additional questions to ask, and I will submit it for the record. If you could provide a brief response to them, I would appreciate it.

Thank you.

Chairwoman DAVIS. Thank you.

Mr. SABLAN. I hate that bell.

Chairwoman DAVIS. Thank you, Mr. Sablan.

And now, I believe, Dr. Murphy? Dr. Murphy of North Carolina? I know he was here earlier. I don't see him.

Mr. Smucker, I am going to go on to the rest of the Democrats that are there. I just want to be sure that—whether or not you have someone on your side.

Mr. SMUCKER. Chairwoman Davis, Dr. Murphy does appear to be still available in the participant list.

Chairwoman DAVIS. Oh, okay. Great.

Dr. Murphy, are you there?

Well, we will come back to Dr. Murphy.

Mr. SMUCKER. Madam Chair, Mr. Watkins was on previously as well. I don't know if he still is.

Chairwoman DAVIS. Oh, okay.

. Dr. Murphy is visible.

Chairwoman DAVIS. Oh, terrific. Okay. I am going to go back to the grid, because I didn't see him.

. Dr. Murphy, you will need to unmute, sir.

Mr. MURPHY. I consider myself unmuted.

Chairwoman DAVIS. Great. Dr. Murphy, you have 5 minutes.

Mr. MURPHY. All right.

Thank you guys very much for your time.

I want to actually ask different members of the committee to answer this question. I am really concerned, and help me walk through this, because I think we have lost a little bit, in higher education, a little bit about what our purpose is, in some ways.

And I want to say that, you know, a lot of the industries and everything—obviously, the Nation has been hit with a calamity the likes of which we didn't expect this anymore. So, you know, we want to train and educate our individuals that go off to colleges and universities to lead lives of constant learning. And that is what it is. It is not technical school per se. It is allowing critical minds to think.

And I am wondering, though, that, in and of itself, though, where industry is exemplified, we have times where we have to cut our belts and, you know, trim our fat. And given the fact that money now flows very, very freely from the Federal Government to colleges and universities, really with no strings attached, I am wondering what suggestions each of you could offer that colleges and universities could tighten their belt, areas that they could.

Where, heretofore, it has been basically a blank check from the Federal Government, and now, given the shortage that is happening across every industry in the country, where colleges and universities will fall in that line.

So, if everybody could just do it in sequence, I look forward to your responses.

Mr. HARPER. Sure. I will weigh in on this one first. I want to acknowledge that so many college and university presidents, as well as campus reopening task forces, are working incredibly hard, and they are figuring out how to bring recovery plans to life, understanding that there are going to be really tight fiscal constraints.

I wonder if, instead, that energy might be better placed on figuring out how to effectively educate students in a virtual environment, at least for this fall semester, and thinking about how to do

that well. It feels to me like that is a much less expensive project in terms of both the expenditure of human and fiscal resources.

I, frankly, find it annoying that so many campuses are scrambling to figure out how to play football this fall and how to ensure physical distancing in stadiums. It just feels to me like the money would be better spent trying to figure out how to close the digital equity access gaps and, again, how to better prepare faculty to teach online, at least for this fall semester.

Ms. PIERCE. Thank you. Thank you, Dr. Harper, for your comments. I would like to just speak from the point of a community and technical college in terms of that is exactly where we are spending our time, our effort, and our resources in figuring out how to make sure that our students have the same quality level of an online experience, hybrid experience that they would have [inaudible] delivering instruction.

However, there are some career and technical programs that simply cannot be offered in an online environment. For example, Air Force—I am sorry—aircraft maintenance technicians. External accrediting bodies and the work that they must do requires that they be face-to-face with their instructors so that they can demonstrate a level that is acceptable for the FAA. So it is incumbent upon us to spend the time and the resources to make sure that we are able to deliver that type of instruction to students in a safe environment that protects the faculty and staff who work in those programs. .

For example, [inaudible] that is another career program that absolutely requires face-to-face interaction.

So we are balancing the needs of our students, the needs of other programs, the needs of an external accrediting bodies so that we can meet our mission. Those are all incredibly important things for us to do. We are balancing the need to control spending by delaying and [inaudible] or different types of instruction programs that need—

Mr. MURPHY. Thank you. I want to make sure everybody gets a chance, and I appreciate the answer. Thank you.

Mr. WHITE. Congressman Murphy, Tim White here. An educated citizenry is a public good. Equity matters. So Federal funds for Pell and for MSIs and for [inaudible] institutions matter. Education really is a matter of social justice at all times and particularly—

Mr. MURPHY. Let me ask you this. I get all the matters stuff. I get all the matters stuff. How are you going to trim costs?

Mr. WHITE. We have trimmed costs by decreasing hiring, decreasing travel, going together with other universities on procurement at better rates, and eliminating unnecessary activities that can be postponed in terms of construction and maintenance. But it is really important to recognize that the investment by the Feds is an investment in the Nation's future. Unemployment is one half if you have a college degree versus not in any given rate of unemployment. So let's not be looking just at the cost. Let's look at the return on investment.

Mr. MURPHY. I understand that. I understand that. I have a terminal degree, so I appreciate that.

One other individual. Can we get our other—our four.

Mr. PULSIPHER. Thank you, Congressman Murphy. I think to get to the heart of your question, one of the considerations should be

simply to consider what is the percent of an operating budget that is directly on instruction and advancing student outcomes and the attainment of their credentials. And then the question would be, like, for those costs that are not related to instruction, what are the revenue sources for those?

I would just echo what Dr. Harper had said, which is, you know, the emphasis and the priority, I think, should really be focusing on how does an increasing percentage of operating budgets focus on teaching and the transfer of learning to the individuals who are seeking and acquiring a credential? There is no doubt that universities have taken on many different purposes and missions, if you will. Much of that is emerging life—emerging adult experience, but that can be a very costly undertaking with a very different operating and economic model that now has been disrupted by COVID. And so I think one of the considerations is what percent of operating budgets are dedicated to instruction and is increasing probability of outcomes.

Chairman DAVIS. Thank you very much.

Mr. MURPHY. I yield the balance of my time. Thank you.

Chairwoman DAVIS. Thank you, Dr. Murphy.

I now move to Mr. Harder. Mr. Harder of California.

Mr. HARDER. Wonderful. Well, thank you so much, Madam Chairwoman.

Chairwoman DAVIS. You have 5 minutes.

Mr. HARDER. Well, thank you. Thank you so much to the panel for participating.

In my district, schools are right now announcing their efforts to resume on-campus instruction. What exactly that is going to look like this fall, clearly, it is going to be very different from what it might have been last year. And while our CSU, Stan State, will hold classes primary online, I think it is really important to make sure that our educators and their families and the students themselves are getting guidance for reopening.

I wrote a letter to Secretary DeVos, with bipartisan support, asking for guidance from the Department of Education, and I continue to hear from teachers and parents that this is their top concern, that as we are going through this reopening process, that we are making sure that we are doing it safely with the right guidance to folks on the front lines.

Dr. White, my first question is for you. Reopening is really going to be uncharted territory, whether schools choose to do so in the fall semester or if they choose to do so later on. What measures, what guidance and support would you hope to see from the Department of Education in advance of resuming on-campus classes?

Mr. WHITE. Well, I think, you know, the CDC has been helpful with their guidelines for—and they are guidelines. And the thing that I think really matters here is there is such variability across the State of California, let alone across the country, with respect to disease progression. We cannot change the biology of the disease, but what we can do is change the human behavior around that biology. And here in California, and others have commented in other States in the Union, where things have started to reescalate again.

We imagine another bump later this summer. We have a forecast that is a very strong forecast of a greater wave of this disease, cou-

pled with influenza, come October, November, and another wave coming in sort of March, April. So our planning horizon has been for the longer term rather than trying to figure out how we get through the next 2 weeks or 2 months. And I think that is a fundamental mindset that took a while through collaboration with our faculty, staff, students, and communities to go from how do we preserve in-person to how do we move to a virtual and then back away from that as the disease progression allows us to do, a fundamentally different approach.

Mr. HARDER. That is helpful. And my next question, and it actually comes from that. It is around connectivity. I think making sure that we have the right infrastructure in place is going to be really important. This pandemic has exposed the digital divide in rural areas such as my district. The president of Stan State shared with me that she is concerned by the lack of access to WiFi and internet. In the 21st century, lack of internet access for our students is simply not acceptable.

Dr. White, what can the CSU system do to help connect students in these areas to internet, and what can the Federal Government do to support you in those efforts?

Mr. WHITE. Well, I think as a university, you know, we have had a lot of our campuses create WiFi spots in their parking lots, provide security services in the parking lots so students that drive stay by themselves in their car and do their work. There is the edge of roam internet capability that perhaps a college student from Stan State could be close to an elementary school somewhere in Sacramento or down in Fresno and still get access to the internet.

The Governor's Council on Postsecondary Education that Gavin Newsom appointed myself and other heads of public and private higher education in the State has made getting rid of the broadband digital divide one of the top priorities for California. This is a place where I think Federal investment could help jumpstart that, if you will, to get more dollars into getting rid of this digital divide [inaudible] achieve for equity and social responsibility going forward is to remove that divide.

Mr. HARDER. Thank you. That is a big focus for a lot of students in our area.

Finally, Dr. Harper, I have a question for you. We know the Great Recession disproportionately impacted education in underserved communities with reduced enrollment, higher dropout rates, even students graduating with large debts and no jobs to pay back those student loans. What can we do to better support our students in this pandemic?

Mr. HARPER. I think it is important for us to get ahead of the predicted outcomes and recognizing that in prior periods, everything that you just named had a disproportionate effect on people of color and certainly lower income people of color. And response effort, we will [inaudible] in our recovery efforts.

Mr. HARDER. Thank you.

With that, I yield back. Thank you so much to our panel, and thank you, Madam Chairman.

Chairwoman DAVIS. Thank you, Mr. Harder.

And I believe Mr. Watkins of Kansas is with us. Mr. Watkins, you have 5 minutes.

Mr. WATKINS. That is right. Thank you very much. Thanks to the panel for offering your time and expertise.

Mr. Pulsipher, what are the practical ways colleges can remain affordable for students? Has the pandemic changed that or created any new changes to making schools more affordable?

Mr. PULSIPHER. I do think the pandemic has accelerated a trend towards an increasing kind of digitally native approach to things. Digitally native means how do you really leverage technology in advancing the student's ability to access, afford, and experience education. There is no doubt that when you have a digitally native approach to things, that you are going to remove a lot of elements of an operating budget that aren't necessary to that.

I think that has definitely been one of our core models is that how do you, you know, focus the largest percent of your operating budget specifically on instruction. How do you make it more interactive with faculty? How do you provide more—a higher student-to-faculty ratio? How do you make sure that the technology is accessible anytime, anywhere so that students can learn independent of time and place?

A lot of those elements that are addressing things that are not related to the acquisition, knowledge, skills, and abilities that they need in their credentials, and so you can take that out of the cost. Ultimately, we are at this point where I think we are fundamentally going to start addressing the arc of the cost curve in higher education and bending it down rather than just finding out or, you know, devising new funding and financing mechanisms to afford ever-increasing costs. So those are opportunities that are now being accelerated because of this rapid shift to digital.

And to Dr. Harper's point, I would simply add that the investment required to enable and expand the digital infrastructure necessary to cover 100 percent of our individuals in America would be far less than investing in campuses and buildings, et cetera, to try to make a campus available within 15 minutes of every person. Like, you can now bring education to every American. How to invest in making sure that, you know, the cellular networks, the high-speed internet, fiberoptic cables, whatever it may be, is fully accessible and aid programs to cover technology, you know, devices, et cetera, that are necessary for students to learn. And that hasn't typically been contemplated, but yet we are willing to afford accommodations for housing and living and other things like that can be very expensive.

Mr. WATKINS. Understood. Thank you. And you did touch on this in your answer, but I would like you to maybe think of any other mistakes institutions of higher learning are making with respect to their business models, and can those schools do better to adopt to the changing landscape in the postsecondary instruction?

Mr. PULSIPHER. Well, I think the first and most important thing is to really as an institution ask yourself the question of what is your primary purpose and how are you solving for that purpose, and let everything else become secondary to that. And if your primary purpose is fundamentally about teaching individuals and helping them achieve the credential they came to achieve, then you

are going to focus all of your faculty design, your costs in investment model, your, you know, pedagogical engagement, peer-to-peer interactions around learning. And when you do that, I think you can start to slough off a lot of investments that may remove that.

You know, quite frankly, because we were designed in the age of the internet, we view place-based classrooms, campuses constraints to access. We also view them as constraints to even advancing the quality of instruction and learning because you can now personalize in a way learning in an online, you know, digitally native environment that you can't necessarily do in a classroom of 30, 100, or even 500 students. And so I think it is just an opportunity for leaders and for the individuals like yourselves and legislators and regulators to consider how is technology shaping the future of how [inaudible] education.

Mr. WATKINS. All right. Thank you, sir, and that is all I have got. I yield back.

Chairwoman DAVIS. Thank you, Mr. Watkins.

We now turn to Mrs. Lee of Nevada. Mrs. Lee, you have 5 minutes.

Mrs. LEE. Thank you. Thank you, Madam Chair. And I would like to thank all the panelists for their insight today.

I represent southern Nevada, and we were hit, obviously, during the Great Recession, and now are impacted tremendously during this time. And what the Great Recession taught us, it was a lot that may be happening now in the higher education space and in our economy.

Following that recession, many people sought out quick opportunities to gain skills and training in order to rejoin the workforce. This trend was also coupled with loosened accountability standards which resulted in exponential growth of for-profit colleges. In southern Nevada alone, we saw 30 for-profit schools close within the last 10 years. Data suggests we are seeing this pattern again now, and we know the track record of for-profit colleges and their predatory tactics used to defraud students.

In particular, Corinthian Colleges and ITT Tech are a couple of institutions that abruptly closed their doors, leaving tens of thousands of students strapped with worthless degrees and mounds of debt. Unfortunately, Secretary DeVos' borrower defense role has made it nearly impossible for them to seek relief for this burden, setting the precedent that fraudulent bad actor schools are coddled by the government while students and taxpayers are stuck footing the bill.

I would like to ask this question of Dr. Harper, and others are welcome to chime in. What do you think Congress can do right now to prevent predatory bad actor schools from preying on students during this recession?

Mr. HARPER. I think that the Obama administration began to make some really serious traction on this, and obviously lots of those efforts have been rolled back. I think we need to restore those efforts. You know, I think about this, and I care very deeply about it, because we know that it is people of color, and more specifically, low-income women of color, single mothers, working mothers, who are really the targets of the predatory practices. We owe

it to those women of color to safeguard them from, you know, being preyed upon when they are most vulnerable.

As we see joblessness rates increase across the country, who is most affected? African Americans. So when those people are out of work and, you know, thinking about, you know, being out of work, affording them an opportunity to upskill, reskill, you know, pursue higher education, we must protect them from being preyed upon by for-profit institutions.

Mrs. LEE. I will move on to Dr. Pierce. How does the Department's failure to protect students from predatory actors hurt the ability of community colleges to serve these students?

Ms. PIERCE. It has a severe impact on our ability to serve the students. They arrive, having used up a great deal of their Pell eligibility or having used up all of their Pell eligibility. They also frequently arrive already in debt, because they have also taken on additional debt in addition to having used up their Pell eligibility. They arrive with credits or credentials that don't lead to a degree, that don't lead to a living wage, and it makes it very difficult to serve the students, and it limits what they are able to do.

So they start 10 feet behind the start line, and it is just—it makes it that much more difficult for them to move forward to get to a place where they are able to actually complete a credential and earn a living wage. So instead of a program maybe taking 12 months, it takes 24 months, and they are steadily increasing their debt. They started out with a deficit to begin with.

Mrs. LEE. Thank you.

Just one final question. The pandemic has brought obviously great uncertainty, and we have seen many choosing to delay or forego college altogether, and I am concerned that some students may never return. I am even more concerned about figuring out exactly who these students are. We know that FAFSA renewals among students of low-income families has dropped about 8 percent compared to the same time last year.

Dr. Pierce and Dr. White, have your institutions seen a decline in enrollment, and can you expound upon what type of student you have seen a decline in?

Mr. WHITE. At the California State University, we have not seen a decline in enrollment, but that is because of a massive effort by our faculty, staff, and administrators to reach out and re-create in a virtual space all the sort of things that students, first-time students as well as returning students, expect from us as some of the bridge programs, you know, courses established, et cetera, et cetera. So that is our approach. So far, so good. We will know in the fall how it works out. That is the direction of where we are headed.

Mrs. LEE. Well, that is good news. Thank you.

My time is up, and I yield back.

Chairwoman DAVIS. Thank you. Thank you, Mrs. Lee.

Mr. Meuser of Pennsylvania, I believe you are there.

Mr. MEUSER. Yes. Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you very much. To our witnesses, thank you very much for being with us and for your important information on this important topic.

Over the last 30 years, public schools costs for tuition, room and board, total costs tripled after being adjusted for inflation, and pri-

vate schools have doubled. Now, I certainly know the argument. I was on our State board of—the public schools went up and cost more because in some States, there were cutbacks in education funding from the States. But even if it is double after being adjusted for inflation, in the business world, costs largely due to technology and efficiencies remained—were cut in many cases or remained relatively neutral outside of, of course, payroll costs.

So I would just ask Mr. Pulsipher to start off with. Seeing your background as a business person, you were in the technology field. You are now head of a school—of a college, an online college. How do you explain that, the high level of increased costs over the last 10 years, 20 years, 30 years to virtually all higher education universities and colleges?

Mr. PULSIPHER. Yeah. It is a much longer answer than time allows, but maybe let me just highlight two things that I think about. One is there is an investment or an asset and operating model, the utilization of which doesn't support the total consumption. And so that when you consider that for most classroom or campus-based, residence-based models of that, you really have to dramatically increase the utilization so that you can get the long-run average cost curve to decline. Otherwise, the support and operations for the buildings, for the facilities, for the student life housing, et cetera, like, that is an ever-increasing cost, and it is very difficult to not let enrollment grow with it such that if you fix enrollment, you are not going to grow the revenue to cover that increasing cost, and there is the dynamic of that economic model.

The other important thing to note is that over the last several decades, the percentage of operating budgets that is spent on instruction has been declining over time, and the emerging expenses that are spent on student life or even research and athletics and other things, that has been growing as a percent of operating revenue.

There is one other dynamic that I don't think is often talked about, which is this notion that quality is somehow measured by scarcity or exclusivity, such that in that model that you have this perverse behavior where if you actually increase price, the perception of quality goes up such that demand goes up. And so you have this weird model in higher education that there is no constraints, if you will, on the educational institutions to raise their price and having no impact on demand. I can go on unbridled.

Mr. MEUSER. Well, what is more of a concern is a student comes in, whether the university costs \$25,000 a year or \$60,000 a year, and what seems to be—and I don't get good answers on this in previous testimony. When you review their major, how much guidance is received? You take their major into consideration. You take the level of loans that they are taking out, the student's feedback on whether or not they are on track to achieve that major in a 4-year period, you know, loans outstanding. So there is no big surprises at the end that they can't get a job for more than \$38,000 a year, say, in many cases, and yet they have \$60,000 in loans.

Now, it doesn't seem to me, I am going to ask you all, is that type of feedback strong [inaudible] feel a responsibility to be providing that feedback to the students?

Mr. WHITE. Congressman Meuser, this is Tim White. Our tuition and fees is \$7,300 a year. More than half of our students graduate without debt, and those that do have debt, it is well below the national average; we're about \$17,000 in debt. With the analytics, we provide a lot of advice as students pursue their dreams, keeping them on track to degree. We have had a graduation initiative in place now for several years, and we are having all-time highs in any way you calculate graduation rates.

Finally, in terms of bending the cost curve, it is just not the online colleges that can do that. During the last 8 years, at this CSU, we raised tuition one time for \$237 in 9 years. And we were certainly—before COVID, we had returned and had a post-recession budget, and yet we were serving 40,000 more students every year and graduating 35,000 more students every year than we did before. So there are ways of bending the cost curve and keeping costs down to the States, [inaudible] but you have to be intentional about it. We have been [inaudible]

Mr. MEUSER. Thank you, and congratulations. Those are good stats. Appreciate it. Thank you.

I yield back, Madam Chair.

Chairwoman DAVIS. Thank you, Mr. Meuser.

And, Ms. Bonamici, you now have 5 minutes.

Ms. BONAMICI. Thank you so much. And thanks to the chair and ranking member and to all the witnesses.

Just to follow up on the comment from my colleague and Chancellor White's response, the value that people contribute to our communities and to our society is not necessarily measured in the amount of their salary, which is exactly why we have things like the Public Service Loan Forgiveness Program.

But I want to start by saying that technology and online learning have a place, especially during a global pandemic. I would be very concerned if we are having a conversation about the trend of higher education moving to online learning. Portland State University here in Oregon just did a survey of their students. 70 percent responded that they had a challenge with the transition to remote learning. 82 percent had difficulties focusing on remote instruction and prefer face-to-face learning. Importantly, 50 percent said they don't have access to reliable internet service. And a third of the students with accessibility accommodations said they had very serious challenges with accommodations. So we know that there are a lot of inequities in higher education even before the pandemic, and the pandemic has exacerbated so many of those.

I have spoken with college students pre-coronavirus about the challenges of housing, of food insecurity, child care for students who are parents. And now with most classes moving online or moved online and most campus housing and dining halls closed, students are really facing these sudden emergency expenses. And we know historically underrepresented students have been underrepresented, have been disproportionately affected, as Dr. Harper talked about. A recent Hope Center survey found a 19 percentage point gap in basic needs insecurity between Black students and their White peers.

So, Dr. Harper, can you talk more about the nontuition expenses and how those contribute to gaps? And I really want to get in time for another question, but I would like your input on that, please.

Mr. HARPER. Sure. I will be concise. It is really important to think about the important work that colleges like Compton College do to ensure that students have their transportation needs met, that they have access to food and so on, and that we don't have a solution for that, necessarily, if we go too far online. I do think that Compton College really stepped up and, you know, in a really impressive way during the pandemic to, you know, partner with GrubHub and with other institutes to get meals to students and their families, but I am not sure that kind of model necessarily is scalable.

What I think is more scalable is what Compton College was doing before the pandemic, where they were centralizing those resources. So we need more of that as we return to campuses, at some point. We need a serious strategy to continue to meet students' basic needs.

Ms. BONAMICI. I appreciate that. And I also very much appreciate, Dr. Harper, your statement that higher education is a public good, and I think certainly Chancellor White established that with his comments about what is happening in the California system.

I was a State legislator during the Great Recession and know how hard it can be to balance the budget. But I am also a graduate of a community college, a public university, and a public law school, and recognize the value of these institutions and the detriment to students when education budgets are cut. So we did provide some funding in the bipartisan CARES Act, but I know that is not enough, as Mr. Takano discussed.

What specifically—and this is to Dr. Harper and Dr. Pierce and Chancellor White, if there is time. What specifically is needed to make sure that higher education institutions can continue to provide academic programming? And I want to emphasize that is to all students, and close those equity gaps that are so, so critical. And maybe we will start with Dr. Pierce and see if there is time for Dr. Harper and Chancellor White.

Ms. PIERCE. Yes. We are really committed to making sure that students continue to have access to those basic services, and so funding to help us meet those needs is critical. Students need transportation. They need child care. They need access to affordable healthcare. They need access to mental health counseling. They need access to collegiate recovery programs. They need access to peer mentoring and tutoring, and they need access to their learning communities.

For some of our students, the act of coming on campus and being on campus is what inspires them to persevere. Being disconnected from the campus is very difficult for them. Everyone doesn't have a quiet, stable environment in which to learn at home, so we need to be able to maintain access on campus for specialty labs, computer labs, specialty software, career and technical programs where students have to perform skills that must be done on campus [inaudible].

Ms. BONAMICI. My time has expired—is expired, but I will ask that Dr. Harper and Chancellor White on the record to respond to that question.

Thank you, and I yield back.

Chairwoman DAVIS. Thank you, Ms. Bonamici.

And I believe, Mr. Smucker, can I just ask you, as far as you know, is there anybody on the line that—I looked through here. I don't see anybody waiting.

Mr. SMUCKER. I think you are correct, Madam Chair. I think we are through all the Republicans.

Voice. Ms. Adams?

Chairwoman DAVIS. Okay. I will get to Ms. Adams, absolutely. I just wanted to double-check in with Mr. Smucker. Okay. Great. Dr. Adams is next, followed by Mr. Norcross, if he is available and in the room.

But Ms.—or Dr. Adams, you have 5 minutes.

Ms. ADAMS. Thank you, Madam Chair. Thank you to the ranking member as well. Thank you for convening the hearing today. And to the witnesses, thank you for your extraordinary testimony.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities, Tribal Colleges and Universities, minority-serving institutions, and community colleges are primarily public institutions that serve many of our country's low-income students and students of color. However, these institutions are chronically underfunded. They have fewer resources to support their students.

So, Dr. Harper, how will State budgets cut disproportionately impact HBCUs, TCUs, MSIs, and community colleges and their ability to operate effectively and continue to serve their students?

Mr. HARPER. As a proud graduate of Albany State University, a public historically Black university, I especially appreciate this question. State budget cuts will affect those institutions in the ways the State appropriations have affected them. They have been inequitable for far too long. And therefore, you know, when there are cuts, those cuts are going to have, you know, an exceptionally deep impact on those chronically underfunded institutions.

I really appreciated Chancellor White's earlier response to the question where he named the price of what it costs to be a student at the California State University. You know, so many HBCUs, Tribal colleges, and community colleges effectively educate students of color with far too few resources. It is quite remarkable, as a matter of fact, how they make so much out of so little. Just imagine if we were able to finance them appropriately. They could, in fact, together, they could help us close racial equity gaps across all industries if only we would invest in them equitably.

Ms. ADAMS. Absolutely. Well, certainly, thank you for your question [sic]. I am a proud two-time graduate of North Carolina A&T State University, the largest public HBCU in the country right now, and I am a 40-year retired professor from Bennett College in Greensboro, which is a private school. But I have been reading that some of our Nation's HBCUs could face enrollment drops of up to 20 percent in the fall due to the nature of this pandemic and the impact that it is going to have on low-income students.

So, Dr. Harper, schools like HBCUs are heavily tuition-driven. These schools rely heavily on tuition for revenue. How should Con-

gress support them at this time? And how do we prevent what we saw during the 2008 recession where many of our schools, in particular HBCUs, faced enrollment drops and, therefore, fiscal calamity down the road? So is there a way to change that tuition-based model, in your opinion?

Mr. HARPER. Sure. I think that Federal investments that are specifically earmarked for bolstering enrollments at HBCUs will be incredibly helpful. Just 6 months ago, I concluded a project that was funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in which I was looking at HBCU enrollments. The good news is that enrollments actually have not declined over time; they have flatlined. I think with some specific Federal funding, that those institutions could, in fact, invest in the very expensive technologies that my university and others like it use to recruit students and to yield students, but, you know, those institutions don't have the money.

When you have to make a choice between repairing a sidewalk to assure that students are safe or investing in technologies that are going to allow you to, you know, really bolster your enrollments and attract more students, most presidents are left with[inaudible] with the choice of having to repair the sidewalk.

Ms. ADAMS. Okay. Well, thank you for your question [sic]. I really want to get some input from the other panelists in terms of the importance of the meticulous Department of Education oversight over how CARES Act funds were disbursed and used by institutions. And you may have to send me this in writing, but I think we have got like one more minute. So, Dr. White or Dr. Pierce, if you could respond.

Mr. WHITE. Yeah. You know, we believe in inclusive excellence for all of our students, whether they have documentation or not, whether they are international students, whether they are from Florida or from California. So we supplemented the CARES Act with our own money, you know, to make anybody who had a COVID-19-induced added expense was able to be supported. But it seemed incomprehensible to me that the Department of Education would exclude those students because they are part of a fabric of public higher education, bringing perspectives from around the world and around the country to all of us.

Ms. ADAMS. Okay. Well, I am out of time. Thanks to all. Thanks to all of our panelists for your responses and for your participation today.

I yield back, Madam Chair.

Chairwoman DAVIS. Thank you. Thank you, Dr. Adams.

And I want to go back now to Mr. Norcross. Is Mr. Norcross available? And then Mr. Castro.

Mr. Castro, you have 5 minutes. Mr. Castro from Texas.

Mr. CASTRO. Yeah. Thank you, Chairwoman. And thank you to the panelists for your testimony today.

I had a few questions about what you believe the long-term impacts of COVID-19 will be on higher education, and let me preface my question with this. When the pandemic broke, I had conversations with both superintendents in my district, K-12 institutions, and also leaders of the higher education institutions, our 2-year colleges, community colleges, and our 4-year universities, and they all expressed some similar experiences and some different ones but,

for example, many of the 4-year universities said that they were seeing students drop off of plans to enroll in their institutions in favor of community colleges simply because of fear that they wouldn't be able to afford to go to those 4-year institutions any longer. You know, we have seen that the pandemic, especially in certain States like mine in Texas, has stretched on longer and longer.

And given that in higher education there is often this inverse relationship between cost and completion, in other words, the places that are cheapest to go to often have the lowest completion rates, what is the long-term impact of COVID-19 on where students go to college, their ability to complete, and also the support that our colleges and universities are able to offer for them? And I open that up to any of the panelists.

Mr. PULSIPHER. Thank you, Congressman, for that question. I will just go ahead and offer perspective on it. There is little doubt that individuals and their families are consumers of higher education and what we offer. When you have something like a pandemic create real disruption in the value proposition that was previously contemplated, that is going to change how the consumers of education think about it.

And so simply being the father of two children who are currently in a traditional model of higher education as well as a graduate of it, but also being the leader of an online competency-based education, I think the dynamic is such that if many of the, you know, really beneficial emerging adult experiences, social aspects, student engagement, if those things are not part of the value proposition because of longstanding or long-tenured effects of something like a pandemic, then the return on investment for the costs asked to be paid is going to be a challenge, such that many individuals I do think will start focusing more specifically on how can I still acquire the learning and credentials I need to advance towards the opportunities I require, and what is the more affordable ROI I could get for that if many of the values that I previously had available to me are not available.

The other thing I do anticipate is that you will see an emerging number of, you know, employers and alternative pathways that will start emerging as you also consider the 40-plus million adults and 10 million workers that are going to be displaced because of either technology pandemic that need to be reskilled and upskilled, and a 4-year degree pathway is not going to be fast enough. And so you will see emerging credentials and alternative pathways serving not just the first-time, full-time student but the working learners and adults who need to find pathways to their next job.

Mr. CASTRO. Thank you. I don't know if any of the other panelists have—

Ms. PIERCE. If I may, Congressman. I will be very quick and say that exactly what you have described is exactly the mission of community and technical colleges meeting the needs of students as they emerge. We will anticipate over time you will see an increase in enrollment in community colleges as people come back to seek short-term credentials, long-term credentials, transfer programs, as well as opportunities to fill up and transfer into different areas of growth. Community and technical colleges are affordable, they are

a value proposition, and they offer excellent opportunities to retool our economy.

Mr. CASTRO. Thank you.

Mr. WHITE. Congressman Castro, one thing that [inaudible] conversation for a different day, but I think this learning deficit that is appearing in our K-12 system where the interruptions and disruptions are happening in public schools and in private schools that will lead to a disproportionate across the spectrum of race and ethnicity and income level, that those students, when they do finally get to a community college or a 4-year university or an online college, will have a different set of preparation. And there will be some learning deficits there that the colleges and the universities are going to have to deal with. We may not be causing the problem, but it is going to be ours to resolve at the end. That is going to fundamentally change, I think, the relationship of public higher education in particular in the years and decades ahead.

Mr. CASTRO. Thank you. I appreciate it.

And I yield back, Chairwoman.

Chairwoman DAVIS. Thank you very much. I appreciate that.

And I believe that we have come to the end of members who are ready for questions. I am going to just check our grid again to be sure.

Anybody that we didn't see? Okay.

Then I wanted to just remind my colleagues that pursuant to committee practice, materials for submission for the hearing record must be submitted to the Committee Clerk within 14 days following the last day of the hearing, so that would be by the close of business on July 21 of 2020. The materials submitted must address the subject matter of the hearing, and only a member of the subcommittee or an invited witness may submit materials for inclusion in the hearing record. Documents are limited to 50 pages each. Documents longer than 50 pages will be incorporated into the record by an internet link that you must provide to the Committee Clerk within the required timeframe, but please recognize that years from now, that link may no longer work.

Pursuant to House Resolution 965 and the accompanying regulations, items for the record should be submitted electronically by emailing submissions to edandlabor.hearings@mail.house.gov. Member offices are encouraged to submit materials to the inbox before the hearing or during the hearing at the time the member makes the request. The record will remain open for 14 days per committee practice for additional submissions after the hearing. And, without objection, I would like to enter those following reports into the record.

I want to thank our witnesses certainly for their participation today. It has been outstanding, and we know that there are many more questions out there. We are all anxious and worried, quite honestly, about what is going to happen, and so we know how important it is that the your remarks have been today. Members of the subcommittee may have some additional questions for you, and we ask the witnesses to please respond to those questions in writing, and that hearing record will be open for 14 days in order to receive those responses.

I want to remind my colleagues that pursuant to committee practice, witness questions for the hearing record must be submitted to the Majority Committee Staff or Committee Clerk within 7 days, and the questions submitted must address the subject matter of the hearing.

I now want to recognize the distinguished Ranking Member for his closing statement, Mr. Smucker. Thank you for being with us today, and we would welcome your comments.

Mr. SMUCKER. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

I agree this was a great discussion. I appreciate you scheduling this hearing. I want to thank the witnesses as well for all of your testimonies, for your insight, your perspectives, and for the great work that each of you are doing in your institutions.

We have heard from all of you about the challenges that schools have faced in the spring as the coronavirus forced institutions to quickly shift to virtual learning environments. We also learned that there will be further obstacles that schools have to grapple with in the fall.

The pandemic accelerated the underlying trends that are shaping postsecondary education. Increasingly, students are demanding a better return on investment. They are demanding on-demand education and the ability to fluidly transition between the classroom and the workforce. Simple fact is that the pandemic exposed what members on our side have been asking for some time, that Congress must really pass real HEA, or higher ed authorization reform. We need to get beyond just doubling down on the failing status quo which, unfortunately, is what the HEROES Act does. And Congress instead should come together in a bipartisan manner to pass—we did come together, I should say, in a bipartisan manner to pass the CARES Act. We provided billions of dollars in relief to institutions and to students that have been impacted by the coronavirus. And, unfortunately, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle are insisting on spending billions more in taxpayer money without first understanding the full effect and impact of the CARES Act.

As Congress discusses additional relief, we should broaden the conversation beyond simply just more money for the sector. We should be judging our success by how well we enhance opportunities for students to seek education and to improve their station in life.

Over several decades, the Federal Government has played an increasingly larger role in our higher education system and with some pretty dismal results. Just over half our Nation's college students are graduating within 6 years, and those who do graduate are finding themselves woefully unprepared for the workforce. So Congress must work together in a bipartisan manner to pass legislation that encourages universities to innovate and adapt and meet the needs of today's students.

Our focus should be on reopening responsibly. We cannot lose sight of doing what is best for students. Congress can help all students, regardless of their background, succeed by encouraging proven methods of learning such as competency-based education, including workforce participation in the college classroom, and allow-

ing for innovative and stackable credentials. The time for substantive HEA reform is now.

Again, I want to thank the witnesses for your testimonies today. I look forward to working with my colleagues to reform the HEA in the best interests of the students, institutions, and taxpayers.

Madam Chairwoman, thank you, and I yield back.

Chairwoman DAVIS. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Smucker.

I now recognize myself for the purpose of making a closing statement.

And I certainly want to thank, once again, our expert witnesses for joining the subcommittee's first virtual hearing and for your compelling testimony today. Our discussion certainly offered an important reminder that Congress still has much work to do from providing institutions with additional relief to protecting vulnerable students from fraud and ensuring that all students can access and complete a college degree.

You know, I think if—we would love to have had students in the room as well to share for us how devastating for a number of students this has been to try and make some adjustments, to anticipate, and to even inquire and ask themselves and their families, is it good to try and continue with my higher education at this time? What should I do? For freshmen who are just entering, for those who have been—maybe they had a year of school behind them, and now, they are really troubled about what the next step is. And I am sure that you all could have offered some advice about that, but our role here is to try and understand what can we do? What can the Congress do? What should we be doing? And so again, we have a lot of work to do in that regard.

We are well aware that there are a number of alternative pathways. In fact, the Committee on Higher Ed has been working hard on workforce investment, looking at how we scale up apprenticeships more. How do we help young people who maybe are looking for alternatives to be able to access those, and especially at a time like this when things are so uncertain? But at the same time, we have to be sure that those institutions and those programs are highly accountable, not just to the people that they serve, of course, but also to the taxpayers. And so that is a keen interest of ours, and we are working very hard on that.

We also know that there are a lot of reasons why young people are not able to profit from their education as well as they should. And I think as we look at how we can reimagine, how we can think differently about higher education, that we need to be certain that we understand what are those reasons for them not being able to achieve in the way they wanted in the past, and how do we work or how do we adjust our higher education system to respond to that and, again, look at our workforce investments.

So again, I thank you very much for being here, and we know that we must advance the HEROES Act. I think a little differently than my colleague, Mr. Smucker. I think that we need to have that support there in order to do what needs to be done to create this reimagining within our communities. If we don't have that, then those students who benefit from that support, that mentoring, all that we have been able to do in the past, will not have that in school, and they will probably leave the system and maybe never

return, even though they have the great potential to be able to have made those contributions as individuals in the future. We can't let that happen. So we ought to be certain that we are thinking ahead about the support that is needed.

And there is no question that COVID has impacted the ability of each and every school to prepare their students and to be able to deliver in the way that they need to deliver. So I hope that we can come together on behalf of the HEROES Act and overcome this pandemic and excel into the future.

Thank you again. We really benefited from your expertise today.

And with that, if there is no further business, without objection, the subcommittee stands adjourned. Thank you all.

[Additional submission by Ms. Omar follows:]

**Statement for the Record- Rep. Omar
House Committee on Education and Labor
July 7, 2020
12:00 P.M.**

**Higher Education and Workforce Investment Subcommittee Hearing:
*"A Major Test for Higher Education: How Congress Can Help Students and Institutions Cope with COVID-19"***

While I was not able to attend the Higher Education and Workforce Investment Subcommittee Hearing entitled, "*A Major Test for Higher Education: How Congress Can Help Students and Institutions Cope with COVID-19,*" I would like to take this opportunity to recognize and Dr. Sharon Pierce. She is a constituent of my district who is spearheading the excellent work at Minneapolis Community and Technical College to create transformative change and guiding students to success.

Dr. Pierce is a key community leader, engaging with students, faculty, staff and the surrounding community to ensure that Minneapolis Colleges is a welcoming and safe space for all who step foot on campus. She is a champion for students I commend her efforts to eliminate equity gaps and improve student outcomes.

Her background in healthcare has proved critical in responding to the global coronavirus pandemic and ensuring that the campus community remains safe. I was impressed by the comprehensive plan Minneapolis College put forth to protect students, faculty, and staff as it considers how to approach instruction in the fall. I want to thank Dr. Pierce for sharing her expertise with the Subcommittee and representing Minneapolis College at this important hearing.

Lastly, it is imperative that additional funding is provided to community colleges like Minneapolis College, so these institutions have the resources they need to continue to serve students well in response to the COVID-19 and in the future.

[Additional submissions by Mr. Scott follow:]



July 2, 2020

The Honorable Lamar Alexander
Chairman
Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Patty Murray
Ranking Member
Committee on Health, Education,
Labor and Pensions
U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20510

Dear Chairman Alexander and Ranking Member Murray,

On behalf of the American Council on Education and the undersigned higher education associations, I am writing in response to questions that arose at your recent hearing regarding the costs involved in safely reopening college campuses this fall.

Colleges and universities were among the first segments of our society to close in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and we are keenly aware of the unique symbolic, economic, and educational value of opening our campuses. As Chairman Alexander recently said, the "surest step back toward normalcy in our country is when 70-75 million college and high school and elementary school students go back to school." Our institutions are committed to reopening in the fall and have previously submitted a request to Congress to help offset the financial challenges that students and colleges are facing. Bolstered by assistance from Congress, we will work to provide a quality education as safely and as expansively as possible.

Doing this will not be easy for institutions. As you know, colleges and universities face a complicated, constantly-shifting environment as they plan for the fall semester. Presidents and their staff are making decisions based on factors such as state and local requirements, local health conditions, and the unique circumstances of their students and campuses. Irrespective of the manner of instruction for the fall, all institutions are implementing measures to reopen physically when it is safe to do so.

In order to provide your committee with a better understanding of the scope of this challenge, we requested that our member institutions share their anticipated reopening costs. Dozens of institutions, collectively enrolling over 1.1 million students and including two-year and four-year; public and private; religious and secular; and rural, suburban, and urban locations responded. After analyzing that data, we estimate that colleges and universities will spend approximately \$74 billion to prepare for the fall semester.

The detailed financial information institutions provided covered eight categories of costs specific only to reopening safely in this environment. It did not include items that will

Letter on Costs of Reopening Campuses
July 2, 2020

undoubtedly have significant impacts on institutions, such as declining state support, loss of charitable donations, enrollment declines, and financial need for students given the difficult financial environment. As a result, these estimates are conservative in nature and likely underestimate the actual financial challenge facing campuses.

Chairman Alexander recently noted that “when we go back to college...the country will begin to move back toward normalcy.” Colleges are similarly anxious to reopen for “normal” operations for the fall semester, and some schools have already announced plans to do so. But these openings will be unlike any others in the history of American higher education. All institutions will be adjusting to a new normal as a result of public health concerns necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic. These changes will force campuses to spend money to alter and modify virtually every aspect of campus operations. In general, these expenses will fall into a few broad areas such as testing, tracing, cleaning, personal protection, and distancing. But even those categories fail to do justice the huge array of steps that schools are taking to make the educational experience as safe as possible. After consultation with our member institutions, we have compiled a list of at least 70 separately identifiable actions that schools are taking, which is appended to this letter.

Given the vast array of colleges in our country and the diversity of their campuses, it is understandable that each school’s circumstances are unique. Some institutions are so massive in size and physical plants that their individual costs can run into the tens of millions of dollars. Indeed, Mitch Daniels, president of Purdue University, recently testified before your committee that Purdue had purchased over a mile of plexiglass and estimated reopening costs would exceed \$50 million. These costs are no less onerous for smaller schools which, while responsible for fewer students, staff, and facilities, may not be able to leverage resources like larger institutions such as comprehensive medical centers can that could make testing and quarantining more affordable and accessible, as just one example of how these costs vary across institutions.

While residential institutions often face higher costs because they must prepare for students living on campus full-time, even institutions that adopt an online or hybrid approach will face significant additional expenditures. Schools expanding their online programs report significant new expenditures to upgrade campus IT systems; distribute laptops so that all students have sufficient access to courses; provide tutoring and health services remotely; convert library materials into online formats; retrofit classrooms for virtual instruction; and buy additional video equipment for live streaming. Other new expenses are far less obvious. For example, some schools have reported purchasing anatomage tables for their science programs, which allow students to engage in virtual dissections without a cadaver. These tables cost \$100,000 each.

No less important than the problems institutions are grappling with, it is critical to note that without adequate financial aid, many students will not be able to return to campus in the fall regardless of measures taken by institutions or the federal government.

More than 40 million Americans have lost jobs, and many of their families must soon decide whether they can afford to start or return to college in the fall. A recent National

Letter on Costs of Reopening Campuses
July 2, 2020

Bureau of Economic Research study found that “(w)orking students suffered a 31% decrease in their wages and a 37% drop in weekly hours worked, on average. Moreover, roughly 40% of students lost a job, internship, or a job offer, and 61% reported to have a family member that experienced a reduction in income.” The study also found that “lower-income students are 55% more likely to delay graduation due to COVID-19.” A substantial amount of research has documented that low-income and first-generation students are the most likely to interrupt their educations during a severe economic downturn. For too many of these students, it is the end of their hopes and dreams for a postsecondary education.

Ensuring the safety of all members of our campus communities while reopening will be extraordinarily difficult. While presidents, faculty, and staff are committed to meeting the serious and unprecedented challenges before them, we know that those efforts will necessarily be limited by the dire financial circumstances schools are operating under. We hope this information will help inform your deliberations.

Thank you for your continued support of American higher education, and we look forward to working with you and your colleagues to help colleges and universities recover from this pandemic.

Sincerely,



Ted Mitchell
President

On behalf of:

Achieving the Dream
ACPA-College Student Educators International
American Association of Collegiate Registrars and Admissions Officers
American Association of Community Colleges
American Association of State Colleges and Universities
American Association of the Colleges of Nursing
American College Health Association
American Council on Education
American Dental Education Association
American Indian Higher Education Consortium
APPA, Leadership in Educational Facilities
Association of American Colleges and Universities
Association of American Universities
Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities

Letter on Costs of Reopening Campuses
July 2, 2020

Association of Community College Trustees
Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges
Association of Jesuit Colleges and Universities
Association of Public and Land-grant Universities
Association of Research Libraries
College and University Professional Association for Human Resources
Common App
Council for Advancement and Support of Education
Council for Christian Colleges & Universities
Council for Higher Education Accreditation
Council of Graduate Schools
Council of Independent Colleges
EDUCAUSE
NAFSA: Association of International Educators
NASPA - Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education
National Association for College Admission Counseling
National Association of College and University Business Officers
National Association of College Stores
National Association of Colleges and Employers
National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities
National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators
National Association of System Heads
Phi Beta Kappa Society
State Higher Education Executive Officers Association
UPCEA

Letter on Costs of Reopening Campuses
July 2, 2020

Examples of Costs Incurred by Institutions

Personal Protective Equipment (PPE)

- Disposable masks (for guests)
- Washable cloth masks (for students and employees)
- Disposable gloves (medical and other staff; cleaning and lab use)
- Safety glasses (science classes)
- Face shields (for music students and instructors, studio students and instructors, some nursing labs)
- Gowns and coveralls
- Laundry charges to clean cloth masks
- Non-contact thermometers
- Keychain and lever tools

Cleaning and Sanitation Supply Costs

- Hand sanitizer, sanitation stations, and dispensing equipment
- Disinfectant wipes
- Gel soap and sanitizers
- Disinfectant spray and misters
- Disinfectant cleaning supplies
- Microfiber towels, paper towels, and other absorbents
- Residential clean kits with wipes, spray sanitizer, and gel hand sanitizers
- Sanitation tools

Testing Costs

- COVID-19 testing kits (both self-administered saliva and administered swab tests)
- Antibody tests
- Temperature check stations
- Forehead scanners
- Rapid volume scanners
- Symptomatic response testing for suspected COVID-19 cases

Contact Tracing Costs

- Software for COVID-19 symptom tracking and alert platforms
- Software for mobile apps
- Additional camera installation
- Keycard access points and other protocols to be utilized in contact tracing plans

Quarantine Protocol Costs

- Costs of housing for quarantined students, faculty, and staff
- Essentials for displaced students
- Housing for international students

Letter on Costs of Reopening Campuses
July 2, 2020

- Thermometers, disposable food containers, and other materials
- Increased shipping and delivery costs for course materials, supplies and technology to students in dorms and off-campus
- Vehicles, drivers, and cleaning costs for transportation to quarantine sites

Technology Costs

- Distribution of laptops or other devices
- Touchless appliances and surfaces
- Bandwidth and connectivity stabilization
- Increased cyber security support
- Retrofitting classrooms for virtual instruction
- Webcams and microphone systems
- Additional virtual meeting platform licenses and additional virtual classrooms
- Remote support for students, faculty, and staff
- Video equipment for lecture capture and live streaming of events
- Academic equipment rentals
- Exam proctoring software
- e-tutoring services
- Library materials purchased for online format
- Additional data cabling and electric wiring

New Labor Costs

- Sanitation labor and dining overtime labor charges
- Enhanced custodial costs, including additional housekeepers
- Additional faculty
- Temperature takers
- Staff and training to perform safety and health checks
- Consultant and legal support
- Staff time to prepare documentation and consent forms for students to return to campus; addendums to housing contracts; addendums to Student Codes of Conduct; and updates of HR policies

HVAC and Air Filtration Improvement Costs

- HVAC labor and materials
- Filters and air handling equipment
- Air filtration stand-alone systems

Social-distancing Protocol Costs

- Sneeze guard materials and labor
- Plexiglass barriers, partitions, and stanchions
- Dining hall reconfiguration
- Residence hall reconfiguration, including retrofitting houses, clubs, and residence halls for single occupancy
- Renovations to common areas (including bathrooms) to accommodate social distancing

Letter on Costs of Reopening Campuses
July 2, 2020

- Classroom reconfiguration
- Recreation and athletic reconfiguration
- Reconfiguring entrances and exits, including adding touchless doors
- Materials and furniture moving and storage costs
- Mobile desks for social distancing
- Additional card access to buildings
- New campus signage for mask reminders, COVID-19 symptoms, elevator capacity, temperature screening notice and instructions, etc.
- Increase in number of vehicles and drivers to insure social distancing
- Mobile flu and health clinic services

July 6, 2020

The Honorable Robert C. Scott
U.S. House of Representatives
1201 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-4603

Dear Congressman Scott:

On behalf of the 3 million members of NEA who are dedicated to teaching and supporting students from K-12 through higher education, thank you for the opportunity to provide comments for the subcommittee's July 7 hearing, "A Major Test: Examining the Impact of COVID-19 on the Future of Higher Education."

Since the COVID-19 crisis began, NEA members have shifted gears quickly to provide opportunities and resources that would keep students learning and engaged during the pandemic. Education support professionals (ESPs) working in financial aid, student housing, student counseling, and other crucial areas are assisting students and helping them make difficult, but necessary, transitions. Custodians and other higher education ESPs responsible for the physical plant are continuing to maintain facilities, sometimes at great risk to themselves.

NEA members share the goal of reopening campuses, but believe health and safety must be paramount. Therefore, all efforts to reopen should be guided by four principles:

Health expertise

The pandemic has highlighted the important role institutions of higher education play, and that means we must prioritize safety and provide adequate staffing as campuses reopen; not doing so will only prolong this crisis. We believe that Centers for Disease Control cleaning guidelines are helpful for maintaining classrooms, residence halls, and other campus buildings. However, we are also concerned that much of the federal government's guidance lacks the specificity needed for campuses, where interaction occurs on a scale that is far different from what occurs, for example, in a grocery store.

Educator voice

All levels of decision-making about how and when to reopen campuses should include faculty and staff members. They have the expertise in teaching and supporting students; any decisions must be made collaboratively, with their full participation.

Access to protection

All members of campus communities must have funded access to personal protective equipment (PPE), as well as disinfecting supplies. Institutions of higher education, already underfunded, should not be forced to pay for PPE by redirecting funds intended for other purposes.

Lead with equity

Decisions and resource allocations must prioritize racial and social justice, so that regardless of where a campus is located or students' ethnicity, race, socioeconomic status, or disability status, resources and opportunities are provided that will meet their needs. In addition, we must make sure that disease prevention and mitigation on campuses does not isolate or stigmatize students in ways that foster injustice and inequity and deny students of opportunities they deserve.

We must also prioritize mental health and social and emotional support for students and staff members. Many people have experienced devastating losses and are now struggling with anxiety and other serious issues. We cannot reopen campuses without dealing with these issues.

It is crucial to note that reopening campuses requires additional assistance from Congress. The CARES Act moved us much closer to providing the funding institutions of higher education need, and NEA members were pleased that the House passed the HEROES Act, which called for \$101.15 billion for the Education Stabilization Fund, including targeted funds for public institutions of higher education, and \$915 billion in relief for states, localities, territories and tribes to pay vital workers, such as educators at risk of losing their jobs due to massive budget shortfalls.

Faculty and staff members want students to return, but they need assurances that as campuses reopen, we are doing everything possible and providing the funding necessary to keep campus communities healthy and safe. Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments for the record.

Sincerely,

Marc Egan
Director of Government Relations
National Education Association

**Statement for the Record- Chairman Scott
House Committee on Education and Labor
July 7, 2020
12:00 P.M.**

**Higher Education and Workforce Investment Subcommittee Hearing:
*“A Major Test for Higher Education: How Congress Can Help Students and Institutions Cope
with COVID-19”***

In order to reopen, institutions will need to invest heavily in personal protective equipment (PPE), cleaning supplies, and sanitation and disinfection equipment to mitigate the spread of the virus on campus. Purchasing these supplies can be cost prohibitive, particularly for under-resourced institutions. In fact, the American Council on Education (ACE) estimates that it will cost \$74 billion to provide for PPE, cleaning supplies, testing, contact tracing, quarantine and social distancing protocols, technology, HVAC filtration, and new labor costs. This estimate does not account for other costs to colleges such as declining state support, enrollment declines and increased financial need of students, indicating that even more funding is needed across the board to support students and institutions. I am submitting ACE's letter for the record.

[Questions submitted for the record and their responses follow:]

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COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION AND LABOR
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
2176 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6100

July 15, 2020

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Mr. Shaun Harper, Ph.D.
President
American Educational Research Association
2555 Sundown Drive
Los Angeles, CA 90065

Dear Dr. Harper:

I would like to thank you for testifying at the July 7th Higher Education and Workforce Investment Subcommittee hearing entitled "*A Major Test: Examining the Impact of COVID-19 on the Future of Higher Education.*"

Please find enclosed additional questions submitted by Committee Members following the hearing. Please provide a written response no later than Wednesday, July 29, 2020 for inclusion in the official hearing record. Your responses should be sent to Claire Viall of the Committee staff. She can be contacted at 202-225-3725 should you have any questions.

I appreciate your time and continued contribution to the work of the Committee.

Sincerely,

ROBERT C. "BOBBY" SCOTT
Chairman

Enclosure

Higher Education and Workforce Investment Subcommittee Hearing
“A Major Test: Examining the Impact of COVID-19 on the Future of Higher Education”
 Tuesday, July 7, 2020 12:00 p.m.

Chairman Robert C. “Bobby” Scott (D-VA)

In the wake of massive revenue losses and budget shortfalls, some colleges are already turning to furloughs, layoffs, and hiring freezes. I fear that many of the employees being let go are among the lowest-paid and most financially vulnerable workers on college campuses. These workers are also more likely to be people of color than the senior faculty and administrators who benefit from more job stability and tend to have more in savings. Dr. Harper –

- What can you tell us about the front-line staff on college campuses who are being furloughed or laid off?
- As a faculty member yourself, what can you tell us about the impact that furloughs and layoffs have on the quality of higher education?
- For the faculty and staff who keep their jobs, what sort of risks does resuming on-campus operations pose to their health and safety and that of their families?

I am submitting the National Education Association’s letter from July 6, 2020 for the record.

Representative Mark Takano (D-CA)

As concerns about the spread of COVID-19 increased, so did reported incidents of bullying, racism, and xenophobia towards the Asian, Asian American, and Asian Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities on college campuses across the country. Consequently, individuals from these communities report being afraid to engage in basic day to day tasks like going to the grocery store or walking alone in their neighborhoods.

- Dr. Harper – What can colleges and universities do in order to ensure that AAPI students feel safe in their classes and as valued members of their campuses?

Representative David Trone (D-MD)

- How does the overnight transition to online instruction affect students? And are there any lasting ramifications this transition will have on persistence and completion?

Representative Mark Walker (R-NC)

- This virus will not be here forever. We will get back to normal again. After we come out of this pandemic situation, what does the future look like for higher education? What areas will we see lasting change as a result of COVID-19?
- COVID-19 affects us all, and the entire nation is being impacted. You hear stories about higher education institutions being pushed to the breaking point. If you could elaborate, which policies coming out of Washington have been most helpful to higher education institutions during COVID-19, and which policies have missed the mark.

- I have the great fortune of having the largest HBCU, North Carolina A&T, in my district. And I am proud to call Congresswoman Alma Adams a dear friend and a champion for HBCUs. As you know, in Congress it is not a matter of having the will to get something done, but rather a matter of agreeing to get something done. Dr Harper, given your expertise and knowledge of HBCUs, where do you see areas for Congress to work in a bipartisan fashion to support HBCUs during the COVID-19 pandemic?



COMMITTEE ON
EDUCATION AND LABOR
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
2176 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
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July 15, 2020

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Ms. Sharon J. Pierce Ed.D., M.S.N
President
Minneapolis College
1501 Hennepin Avenue
Minneapolis, MN 55403

Dear Dr. Pierce:

I would like to thank you for testifying at the July 7th Higher Education and Workforce Investment Subcommittee hearing entitled "*A Major Test: Examining the Impact of COVID-19 on the Future of Higher Education.*"

Please find enclosed additional questions submitted by Committee Members following the hearing. Please provide a written response no later than Wednesday, July 29, 2020 for inclusion in the official hearing record. Your responses should be sent to Claire Viall of the Committee staff. She can be contacted at 202-225-3725 should you have any questions.

I appreciate your time and continued contribution to the work of the Committee.

Sincerely,

ROBERT C. "BOBBY" SCOTT
Chairman

Enclosure

Higher Education and Workforce Investment Subcommittee Hearing
"A Major Test: Examining the Impact of COVID-19 on the Future of Higher Education"
Tuesday, July 7, 2020 12:00 p.m.

Representative Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan (D-MP)

In crafting the CARES Act, Congress recognized that college students across the country were in a state of financial emergency, so we required institutions to use at least half of their allocated CARES funds for emergency student aid. We also made sure to provide institutions the flexibility necessary to disburse the aid expediently to students who were most impacted. Instead of quickly disbursing the emergency aid as Congress intended, however, Secretary DeVos established confusing and unwarranted restrictions that limit eligibility for CARES-funded emergency aid to only those students who qualify for federal grants and loans under the Higher Education Act. This made it difficult for institutions, including Northern Marianas College in my district, to get CARES-funded emergency aid to students and denied support to many of the students with the greatest needs.

- Dr. Pierce, you testified that the Department of Education's changing guidance on emergency aid eligibility made it more difficult to quickly get emergency grants to students. Can you tell us more about the confusion and uncertainty created by the Department of Education's repeated shifts in guidance?
- Can you tell us about the students who are denied access to emergency aid as a result of these unauthorized and warranted restrictions?

Representative Mark Takano (D-CA)

As concerns about the spread of COVID-19 increased, so did reported incidents of bullying, racism, and xenophobia towards the Asian, Asian American, and Asian Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities on college campuses across the country. Consequently, individuals from these communities report being afraid to engage in basic day to day tasks like going to the grocery store or walking alone in their neighborhoods.

- How have your institutions ensured that students feel safe and welcome in your campus communities?

According to a recent survey from Student Veterans of America (SVA), 90% of respondents expressed concern that COVID-19 will affect their educational goals. Student veterans are more likely to be older, have families, and often have unique needs related to their years in service.

- How has your campus worked to assist student veterans with the transition to an online format?

Representative David Trone (D-MD)

In your testimony, you mention that since the onset of COVID-19, there is an increased demand for mental health services on your campus.

- How has your campus managed this increased need?
- If Congress does not act soon to provide more funding to institutions to mitigate budget shortfalls, how will this affect your ability to provide mental health services to your students?

I'm concerned by the rapid transition to online instruction, which left many students without access to on-campus supports like computer labs, reliable high-speed internet, and quiet places to study. Additionally, research conducted prior to the pandemic found that students perform worse in online classes and that barriers are even greater for less academically prepared students or students who do not have access to these resources.

- How much of a factor has a lack of high-speed internet and technology been in preventing students from reliably participating in online learning?
- What steps have you taken to ensure that students have access to the technology and supports they need to take classes online?
- How could additional funding help ensure student success?

Representative Mark Walker (R-NC)

- This virus will not be here forever. We will get back to normal again. After we come out of this pandemic situation, what does the future look like for higher education? What areas will we see lasting change as a result of COVID-19?
- COVID-19 affects us all, and the entire nation is being impacted. You hear stories about higher education institutions being pushed to the breaking point. If you could elaborate, which policies coming out of Washington have been most helpful to higher education institutions during COVID-19, and which policies have missed the mark.



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Mr. Scott Pulsipher President Western Governors University 4001 South 700 East, Suite 700 Salt Lake City, UT 84107

Dear Mr. Pulsipher:

I would like to thank you for testifying at the July 7th Higher Education and Workforce Investment Subcommittee hearing entitled "A Major Test: Examining the Impact of COVID-19 on the Future of Higher Education."

Please find enclosed additional questions submitted by Committee Members following the hearing. Please provide a written response no later than Wednesday, July 29, 2020 for inclusion in the official hearing record. Your responses should be sent to Claire Viall of the Committee staff. She can be contacted at 202-225-3725 should you have any questions.

I appreciate your time and continued contribution to the work of the Committee.

Sincerely,

ROBERT C. "BOBBY" SCOTT Chairman

Enclosure

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Representative Mark Walker (R-NC)

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GREGORY T. HARRITY, NORTH CAROLINA
JEFFERSON VAN DREW, NEW JERSEY

Mr. Timothy P. White, Ph.D.
Chancellor
The California State University
401 Golden Shore
Long Beach, CA 90802

Dear Dr. White:

I would like to thank you for testifying at the July 7th Higher Education and Workforce Investment Subcommittee hearing entitled "*A Major Test: Examining the Impact of COVID-19 on the Future of Higher Education.*"

Please find enclosed additional questions submitted by Committee Members following the hearing. Please provide a written response no later than Wednesday, July 29, 2020 for inclusion in the official hearing record. Your responses should be sent to Claire Viall of the Committee staff. She can be contacted at 202-225-3725 should you have any questions.

I appreciate your time and continued contribution to the work of the Committee.

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Chairman

Enclosure

Higher Education and Workforce Investment Subcommittee Hearing
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Representative Mark Takano (D-CA)

As concerns about the spread of COVID-19 increased, so did reported incidents of bullying, racism, and xenophobia towards the Asian, Asian American, and Asian Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities on college campuses across the country. Consequently, individuals from these communities report being afraid to engage in basic day to day tasks like going to the grocery store or walking alone in their neighborhoods.

- How have your institutions ensured that students feel safe and welcome in your campus communities?

According to a recent survey from Student Veterans of America (SVA), 90% of respondents expressed concern that COVID-19 will affect their educational goals. Student veterans are more likely to be older, have families, and often have unique needs related to their years in service.

- Considering that veteran resource centers are often the main source of information and community for student veterans on campus, how is the CSU planning to virtually maintain these resources for student veterans in the fall?

Representative David Trone (D-MD)

I'm concerned by the rapid transition to online instruction, which left many students without access to on-campus supports like computer labs, reliable high-speed internet, and quiet places to study. Additionally, research conducted prior to the pandemic found that students perform worse in online classes and that barriers are even greater for less academically prepared students or students who do not have access to these resources.

- How much of a factor has a lack of high-speed internet and technology been in preventing students from reliably participating in online learning?
- What steps have you taken to ensure that students have access to the technology and supports they need to take classes online?
- How could additional funding help ensure student success?

Representative Mark Walker (R-NC)

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[Mr. Harper response to questions submitted for the record follows:]

**A MAJOR TEST: EXAMINING THE IMPACT OF COVID-19
ON THE FUTURE OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

Written responses to Member questions provided to the
United States House of Representatives
Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Investment

August 2020

Shaun R. Harper, Ph.D.
President

American Educational Research Association

Provost Professor of Education and Business
USC Race and Equity Center Executive Director
University of Southern California

What can you tell us about the front-line staff on college campuses who are being furloughed or laid off?

It is too early to tell. To my knowledge, data on the characteristics of workers at higher education institutions across the United States who have been furloughed or laid off have not yet been officially collected, published, or otherwise made publicly available.

As a faculty member yourself, what can you tell us about the impact that furloughs and layoffs have on the quality of higher education?

This is an opinion response, not something I have studied: my sense is that furloughs and layoffs will be disruptive to campus operations, thereby hindering institutional efforts to ensure the quality delivery of services to students.

For the faculty and staff who keep their jobs, what sort of risks does resuming on-campus operations pose to their health and safety and that of their families?

As noted in my written testimony, custodians, groundskeepers, food service professionals, and maintenance workers are at greater risk of being infected by the virus because they are more likely than are others to be deemed "essential workers." Employees of color disproportionately occupy these roles. After spending time interacting with infected students and co-workers on campuses, these professionals will have to return home to their families.

What can colleges and universities do in order to ensure that AAPI students feel safe in their classes and as valued members of their campuses?

Reopening plans should include sessions on implicit bias, with a particular emphasis on the ways Asian and AAPI students, faculty, and staff have been implicitly and explicitly associated with COVID-19. Higher education administrators should strongly message to members of their campus communities that Asian and AAPI students and employees are not responsible for the Coronavirus, and that acts of violence, discrimination, and stereotyping will not be tolerated on campuses. Leaders and faculty members should also invite Asian and AAPI students to advise them on actions and institutional policies they believe will engender stronger feelings of safety and protection. Serious attempts should be made to employ those efforts.

How does the overnight transition to online instruction affect students? And are there any lasting ramifications this transition will have on persistence and completion?

To my knowledge, this has not yet been studied. Notwithstanding, I can confidently predict that the digital access inequities noted in my written testimony will exacerbate longstanding racial inequities in student persistence, academic achievement, and college completion. Threats of violence against Asian and AAPI students pose serious threats to their persistence, classroom success, and graduation. Pre-pandemic funding inequities that disadvantaged Historically Black Colleges and Universities and other minority-serving institutions are likely to stifle campus efforts to retain and graduate students in a period of post-pandemic financial recession.

After we come out of this pandemic situation, what does the future look like for higher education? What areas will we see lasting change as a result of COVID-19?

The future of higher education will be even more inequitable than it presently is for students of color if the racial disparities that COVID-19 is producing are not properly handled by Congress, the U.S. Department of Education, and leaders of postsecondary institutions across the country. I suspect that more institutions will embrace hybrid and fully online teaching and learning options long after this pandemic ends. These will not replace traditional models of instruction. But the technological possibilities that became known over these past several months will inspire more institutions to offer virtual learning options.

Which policies coming out of Washington have been most helpful to higher education institutions during COVID-19, and which policies have missed the mark.

Many college and university leaders have told me they found the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act helpful. Also helpful was the July 6 United States Department of Homeland Security reversal of a policy directive that would have led to mass deportations of

international students who had no choice but to take their courses fully online during the pandemic. The lack of presidential leadership on controlling the spread of COVID-19, President Trump pressuring colleges and universities to reopen for in-person instruction this August, and his advocacy for college football to be played this fall have been unhelpful.

Given your expertise and knowledge of HBCUs, where do you see areas for Congress to work in a bipartisan fashion to support HBCUs during the COVID-19 pandemic?

As noted in my written testimony, investing additional federal COVID-19 recovery funds specifically into Historically Black Colleges and Universities would help them serve and protect the low-income Americans they educate, most of whom are students of color. Additionally, Congress can and should work in a bipartisan fashion to help HBCUs recover from decades of federal funding inequities. Put differently, emphasis should not be placed only on equitably funding these institutions now and into the future – corrective action is required to redress historical inequities that have long disadvantaged HBCUs.

[Ms. Pierce response to questions submitted for the record follows:]



**U.S. House of Representatives Committee on Education and Labor
Higher Education and Workforce Investment Subcommittee Hearing
July 7, 2020**

**A Major Test for Higher Education: How Congress Can Help Students and Institutions
Cope with COVID-19 Additional Questions
Sharon Pierce, Ed.D. M.S.N., Minneapolis College President**

Representative Gregorio Kilili Camacho Sablan (D-MP)

In crafting the CARES Act, Congress recognized that college students across the country were in a state of financial emergency, so we required institutions to use at least half of their allocated CARES funds for emergency student aid. We also made sure to provide institutions the flexibility necessary to disburse the aid expeditiously to students who were most impacted. Instead of quickly disbursing the emergency aid as Congress intended, however, Secretary DeVos established confusing and unwarranted restrictions that limit eligibility for CARES-funded emergency aid to only those students who qualify for federal grants and loans under the Higher Education Act. This made it difficult for institutions, including Northern Marianas College in my district, to get CARES-funded emergency aid to students and denied support to many of the students with the greatest needs.

- Dr. Pierce, you testified that the Department of Education's changing guidance on emergency aid eligibility made it more difficult to quickly get emergency grants to students. Can you tell us more about the confusion and uncertainty created by the Department of Education's repeated shifts in guidance?

All the presidents, CFO's and our System Office personnel had multiple conversations regarding the guidance we received from DOE and how to disburse the money in an equitable manner accounting for need. For, example should every student receive a minimal amount or only those students with need documented via FAFSA applications and should course load play a role in the disbursement formula since institution awards were based on FYE. Ultimately each institution had to develop a dispersal formula that fit their student demographic and needs. Once the formula was identified student aid was calculated based upon eligibility. I appreciate the DOE left the actual calculation of dispersal amounts to our institutions. However, each time the definition of eligible student was changed a new data set needed to be identified and verified, then student awards adjusted accordingly.

- Can you tell us about the students who are denied access to emergency aid as a result of these unauthorized and warranted restrictions?

Some of our most at-risk students were deemed ineligible; this includes DACA and undocumented students who make significant contributions to the economy and will play an

important role in its recovery. It also includes adult basic education students who are seeking entry into the economy. Serving the needs of these students is embedded in the missions of community and technical colleges such as ours and serves the greater good.

Representative Mark Takano (D-CA)

As concerns about the spread of COVID-19 increased, so did reported incidents of bullying, racism, and xenophobia towards the Asian, Asian American, and Asian Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities on college campuses across the country. Consequently, individuals from these communities report being afraid to engage in basic day to day tasks like going to the grocery store or walking alone in their neighborhoods.

- How have your institutions ensured that students feel safe and welcome in your campus communities?

We communicated with our community the importance of remembering implicit bias may play a role in these incidents. It was an opportunity to emphasize Minneapolis College's commitment to equity and inclusion. Our College community has long understood that excellence is not possible without equity and inclusion. We start by sharing accurate information. Avoid spreading misinformation. Address and work on our personal biases and staying informed about COVID-19 through reputable, trusted sources.

Our equity statement promotes the work of diversity, social justice, and inclusion. In the wake of the two pandemics, COVID-19 and racism, Minneapolis College reaffirmed its commitment to equity, inclusion and supporting the success of all our community members by:

- Addressing individual acts of racism, overt or veiled and working across society to dismantle and rebuild systems that perpetuate privilege for some while disadvantaging the majority of those whom we serve.
- Recognizing and acknowledging that we do not share the same experiences nor perspectives as one another.
- Continuing to ensure our pedagogy, policies and services reflect and embrace the diversity of our community to thwart the harm caused by color-blind racism.

We also declared Minneapolis College an Anti-Racist Institution. We understand this requires that we make this stance operable by committing to:

- Creating venues for underrepresented voices.
- Undergoing anti-bias training and self-reflection.
- Ensuring our measures of success are, in part, crafted by those we serve.
- Providing multicultural services and approaches, seeking parity in outcomes.
- Improving intercultural capacity.
- Centering process improvements on the student experience and undergoing rigorous efforts to dismantle institutional practices with deleterious racial impacts.
- Ensuring equity in all aspects of employment.

Some of the ways we are operationalizing this are as follows:

- Hosting of virtual Living Room conversations open to students and staff
 - exploring a documentary about the 13th Amendment and the new Jim Crow, microaggressions, vulnerability and authenticity, and intersectionality-LGBTQ+ in the BLM Movement.
- Workshops on anti-racist pedagogy, and individual intercultural development plans.

This is just the tip of the iceberg of the work we are committed to doing in support of our students and community.

According to a recent survey from Student Veterans of America (SVA), 90% of respondents expressed concern that COVID-19 will affect their educational goals. Student veterans are more likely to be older, have families, and often have unique needs related to their years in service.

- How has your campus worked to assist student veterans with the transition to an online format?

As a Yellow Ribbon College, we have a long, proud history of supporting veteran students. There are an overwhelming number of resources available to veterans. We understand how hard it can be to find the specific resource, therefore we provide a simplified list with links to the most common resources, one specifically for remote learning that includes quick tip videos. And to our Veterans & Military Services staff.

Representative David Trone (D-MD)

In your testimony, you mention that since the onset of COVID-19, there is an increased demand for mental health services on your campus.

- How has your campus managed this increased need?

Even before COVID-19 we struggled to meet the mental health needs of our students. We continue to offer on-campus primary and mental health services via a contract with an external provider with reduced hours and by appointment. In addition, our Student Support Center offers services, limited counseling and referrals remotely.

- If Congress does not act soon to provide more funding to institutions to mitigate budget shortfalls, how will this affect your ability to provide mental health services to your students?

We are not able to meet current demand.

I'm concerned by the rapid transition to online instruction, which left many students without access to on-campus supports like computer labs, reliable high-speed internet, and quiet places to study. Additionally, research conducted prior to the pandemic found that students perform worse in online classes and that barriers are even greater for less academically prepared students or students who do not have access to these resources.

- How much of a factor has a lack of high-speed internet and technology been in preventing students from reliably participating in online learning?

Students who lacked adequate devices to work remotely were provided with devices and technology tools such as Zoom, Microsoft Teams, a learning management system, virtual classroom labs and Office365. The devices were procured, set up, deployed and training was provided wherever it was needed. We also purchased and deployed hot spot devices for students without adequate internet access.

- What steps have you taken to ensure that students have access to the technology and supports they need to take classes online?

Dozens of videos and online tutorials have been created to assist students. We revised our website to include resources for online learning, innovative technologies, personal and professional support references and assistance.

- How could additional funding help ensure student success?

We need additional funding to provide this level of support and service to a larger population of students, with devices matched to the student's learning program.

Representative Mark Walker (R-NC)

- This virus will not be here forever. We will get back to normal again. After we come out of this pandemic situation, what does the future look like for higher education?

Higher education will play a significant role in the economic recovery as people try to reskill to meet a changed job market and emerging industries. Employers and students will be seeking increased flexibility in how they receive instruction and services. Institutions of higher learning will need to demonstrate increased flexibility and agility. Specifically, recognition of prior learning, use of competency-based learning, synchronous and asynchronous delivery of instruction and services, hours of operation, and recognition of the role of basic needs in student success.

- What areas will we see lasting change as a result of COVID-19?

There will be a greater appreciation for and deployment of technology to provide remote learning, competency-based learning, and service delivery. The use of placement testing will be replaced by use of multiple measures.

- COVID-19 affects us all, and the entire nation is being impacted. You hear stories about higher education institutions being pushed to the breaking point. If you could elaborate, which policies coming out of Washington have been most helpful to higher education institutions during COVID-19, and which policies have missed the mark.

Policies that provided flexibility in the timing, delivery, credit hour definition and grade assignment have been most helpful. Including the calculation of SAP. Policies designed to limit student access to online instruction creates unnecessary barriers.

Thank you

[Mr. Pulsipher response to questions submitted for the record follows:]



Scott D. Pulsipher
President

Chairman
Dr. Charles W. Sorenson
*President and CEO Emeritus,
Intermountain Healthcare*

Chairman Emeritus
Michael O. Leavitt
Governor, Utah 1993-2003

Member Governors
Governor Dunleavy

Alaska

Arizona

California

Colorado

Connecticut

Delaware

Florida

Georgia

Idaho

Illinois

Indiana

Iowa

Kansas

Kentucky

Louisiana

Maine

Maryland

Massachusetts

Michigan

Minnesota

Mississippi

Missouri

Montana

Nebraska

Nevada

New Hampshire

New Jersey

New Mexico

New York

North Carolina

North Dakota

Ohio

Oklahoma

Oregon

Pennsylvania

Rhode Island

South Carolina

South Dakota

Tennessee

Texas

Utah

Vermont

Virginia

Washington

West Virginia

Wisconsin

Wyoming

July 28, 2020

The Honorable Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Chairman
Committee on Education and Labor
U.S. House of Representatives
2176 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515-6100

Dear Chairman Scott:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify before the Higher Education and Workforce Investment Subcommittee on July 7, 2020 as a part of the hearing entitled, "A Major Test: Examining the Impact of COVID-19 on the Future of Higher Education." I greatly appreciate the subcommittee's thoughtful consideration of my testimony, as well as the follow up questions your office recently provided from Representative Mark Walker.

I have enclosed my responses to Representative Walker's questions with this letter. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss my comments in greater detail or answer any additional questions you or the committee members may have as you consider the important impact of the pandemic on our nation's higher education landscape and how to move forward in the weeks and months ahead.

Sincerely,

Scott Pulsipher

Higher Education and Workforce Investment Subcommittee Hearing
 “A Major Test: Examining the Impact of COVID-19 on the Future of Higher Education”
 Tuesday, July 7, 2020 12:00 p.m.

Question from Representative Mark Walker (R-NC)

- *This virus will not be here forever. We will get back to normal again. After we come out of this pandemic situation, what does the future look like for higher education? What areas will we see lasting change as a result of COVID-19?*

Response from Scott Puslipher, President, Western Governors University:

I would like to outline three disruptive trends in higher education that have been accelerated due to the COVID-19 pandemic. These trends have the potential to reduce costs for students, increase the value of degrees by improving workforce alignment, and address issues of equity and access. Congress has a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to build for the long-term, redesign higher education with students at the center, and reinvent the economic model of higher education by creating a legislative framework to invest in innovation and address the disruptions COVID-19 has offered.

First, higher education has been an industry under mounting financial pressure. The place-based model of learning is highly enrollment-sensitive, meaning that enrollment shortfalls result in big losses to the bottom line. That was a risk before COVID-19, and shortfalls are more likely now as students hesitate to pay for on-campus amenities that they are unlikely to experience. We have seen an increase in college closures since the pandemic, and we must ensure that our policy response to institutional closure does not leave students stranded and less likely to complete their education.

Second, COVID-19 has forced nearly every institution to move their programs online. Six months ago, about a third of higher education students were enrolled in one or more online courses. After decades of slow and steady adoption in higher educational settings, online education has become more and more mainstream. During spring semester 2020, it became ubiquitous, and it is likely to be dominant in the fall as well. We should expect a flurry of innovation as institutions take a tech-first approach to adapt to student needs and to improve their offerings, and we need a legislative and regulatory framework that will not only allow for innovation, but encourage it. We must invest in our students and the programs that lead them to solid outcomes. This must include transitioning to more affordable, high quality higher education options and pathways to bolster educational and economic success for every individual.

The third disruptive trend is the transition from a degree-based talent pipeline to a skills-based talent pipeline. The idea that a college degree singularly prepares students for decades of work has long been outdated; instead, learning is a lifelong process that intersects with the workforce continually. In the future, degrees will continue to hold value because of the many skills and competencies included in the degree that are valued by employers. COVID-19 has accelerated dramatically the need for mid-career reskilling and upskilling. It has created sudden demand for education at unprecedented scale. Our country’s need for education has never been greater, but this does not fit neatly into mainstream higher education offerings or policy. Survey data conducted throughout the pandemic shows that over a third of workers expect they would need to change career fields if they lost their job, and would need additional education to do so.¹ But even those who have not lost their jobs—such as most of America’s 3.3 million teachers suddenly grappling with how to teach online—are in desperate need of new skills to adapt to the changes that COVID-19 has wrought.

Question from Representative Mark Walker (R-NC)

¹ <https://www.stradaeducation.org/publicviewpoint/#dashboard>

- *COVID-19 affects us all, and the entire nation is being impacted. You hear stories about higher education institutions being pushed to the breaking point. If you could elaborate, which policies coming out of Washington have been most helpful to higher education institutions during COVID-19, and which policies have missed the mark.*

Response from Scott Puslipher, President, Western Governors University:

Our fundamental belief is that higher education policy should be student-centered. Policymakers should consider first and foremost the needs of students as they navigate pathways to opportunity in a time of economic disruption, and the barriers that exist for students in a post-COVID world. While short-term accommodations for students have been necessary, we must rethink the higher educational framework to allow for more innovation that will serve students both in this time of crisis and well into the future.

Congress has acted quickly to alleviate some immediate needs through the CARES act and other legislative packages. I am grateful for the support for students provided, and would encourage future acts to also prioritize the needs of distance education students. Students who were enrolled exclusively in distance education prior to the novel coronavirus emergency were explicitly excluded from the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund. This oversight barred students attending institutions such as WGU from being eligible for emergency aid to meet their unanticipated life circumstances. Any future package must be provided to all students equitably, regardless of their mode of learning.

Congress must take advantage of this critical moment to reimagine higher education, framing policy objectives around successful student outcomes, rather than anchoring on how best to shore up existing models. The rapid shift from traditional classroom to online learning requires us to rethink faculty and student interaction, time of instruction, pace of learning, and student aid eligibility requirements constructed around a conventional model of learning. We need to allow and encourage technology enabled models of education and innovative practices. The paradigms we are accustomed to are being reconstructed in this current crisis, and we must shift policy in order to set students on a pathway for a successful future.

We need to fully embrace and incentivize competency-based education (CBE), which allows students to progress toward completion outside of place and time requirements. CBE models have been proven for decades; they propel students into workforce success with a record equal to or better than that of traditional institutions. CBE models should not just be allowed, they should be encouraged, and all institutions should be able to adopt them. Regulatory and legislative frameworks must allow for rapid innovation rather than prescribe a model.

Finally, we need accountability metrics for institutions that primarily measure student success, in areas of persistence and progress, completion and attainment rates, and loan repayment rates. These metrics measure the effectiveness of educational pathways, and are more effective for students than examining institutional models.

[Mr. White response to questions submitted for the record follows:]



BAKERSFIELD July 29, 2020

CHANNEL ISLANDS

CHICO The Honorable Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Chairman

DOMINGUEZ HILLS Committee on Education and Labor
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

EAST BAY

FRESNO Dear Chairman Scott:

FULLERTON Thank you for the opportunity to respond to additional questions related to the
Higher Education and Workforce Investment Subcommittee hearing held on July
HUMBOLDT 7, 2020, "A Major Test: Examining the Impact of COVID-19 on the Future of
Higher Education."

LONG BEACH

LOS ANGELES Enclosed are responses to questions posed by Subcommittee members. I would be
happy to provide further information at your request.

MARTIME ACADEMY Please view the California State University as a resource as you tackle the critical
MONTEREY BAY issues facing our nation during the 116th Congress.

NORTHRIDGE Sincerely,

POMONA 

SACRAMENTO Timothy B. White
Chancellor

SAN BERNARDINO

SAN DIEGO Enclosure

SAN FRANCISCO

SAN JOSÉ

SAN LUIS OBISPO

SAN MARCOS

SONOMA

STANISLAUS 401 GOLDEN SHORE • LONG BEACH, CALIFORNIA 90802-4210 • (562) 951-4700 • Fax (562) 951-4986

House Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Investment
CSU Chancellor Timothy P. White
July 29, 2020
Page 1 of 5

Supplemental Questions from Representative Mark Takano (D-CA)

As concerns about the spread of COVID-19 increased, so did reported incidents of bullying, racism, and xenophobia towards the Asian, Asian American, and Asian Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities on college campuses across the country. Consequently, individuals from these communities report being afraid to engage in basic day to day tasks like going to the grocery store or walking alone in their neighborhoods.

- *How have your institutions ensured that students feel safe and welcome in your campus communities?*

The post-pandemic rise in xenophobic, hateful and unlawful acts against Asians, Asian Americans and Asian Pacific Islanders – on college campuses and off – is abhorrent and reprehensible, and it runs counter to the CSU’s core commitments to inclusive excellence and to ensuring that all individuals within our diverse campus communities are safe and have the right to participate in our vibrant learning and discovery environments free from harassment, bullying and unlawful discrimination. We will uphold these commitments in our virtual, as well as on-campus learning environments.

While the CSU’s 23 campuses remain largely unpopulated at this time, our campus police forces continue to ably protect the safety, security and well-being of students, faculty, staff and visitors on our campuses. In addition, this summer, CSU’s police chiefs systemwide announced their commitment to implementing the recommendations of The President’s Task Force on 21st Century Policing, reported to President Barack Obama in May 2015 – becoming the first major university police force to do so.

These recommendations are designed to help communities and law enforcement agencies build trust and collaboration, while continuing to reduce crime and promote safety and security. They are organized around six key pillars: Building Trust and Legitimacy, Policy and Oversight, Technology and Social Media, Officer Wellness and Safety, Community Policing and Crime Reduction, and Training and Education.

This action underscores our officers’ unwavering commitment to maintaining a safe campus environment by being student-focused and community-oriented.

In addition, to safeguard our students’ mental and emotional health and well-being, all campuses have adapted the variety and type of services they offer to best serve students through the pandemic. Counseling services are being delivered remotely, with individual sessions offered via Zoom, phone or other remote modality. Strategies for providing triage in-take services include the rotation of in-person staffing and the use of third-party telephonic behavioral health services as a virtual modality.

House Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Investment
CSU Chancellor Timothy P. White
July 29, 2020
Page 2 of 5

The majority of campuses are providing virtual support groups and/or psychoeducational programming related to anti-discrimination, stress reduction, resources for physical and mental wellness, healthy relationships, strategies for grieving loss while sheltering in place, and social connection while engaging in physical distancing. Also, student affinity groups continue to provide virtual programming and activities to foster engagement and connection among the students they serve. Our vice presidents of student affairs and our senior diversity and inclusion leaders regularly share communications and engagement strategies related to these topics on their respective campuses.

- *Considering that veteran resource centers are often the main source of information and community for student veterans on campus, how is the CSU planning to virtually maintain these resources for student veterans in the fall?*

As with nearly every aspect of our student support programs and services, services for veteran and active duty military students have also transitioned to virtual or telephonic modalities. These services include direct outreach conducted by our veterans services staff and current student veterans, as well as incoming and continuing military-affiliated staff.

We also continue to host informal opportunities to build community among our veterans. For example, the Veterans Center at CSU San Marcos, located in San Diego County near Marine Corps Station Camp Pendleton, hosts weekly “RendeZooms” as a way for student veterans to informally and virtually check in with one another, bridging physical distance gaps. These types of activities are also being complemented by scheduled advising appointments, the coordination of certification requirements, and the disbursement of housing allowances, all conducted via videoconferences, phone calls and emails.

Supplemental Questions from Representative David Trone (D-MD)

I'm concerned by the rapid transition to online instruction, which left many students without access to on-campus supports like computer labs, reliable high-speed internet, and quiet places to study. Additionally, research conducted prior to the pandemic found that students perform worse in online classes and that barriers are even greater for less academically prepared students or students who do not have access to these resources.

- *How much of a factor has a lack of high-speed internet and technology been in preventing students from reliably participating in online learning?*
- *What steps have you taken to ensure that students have access to the technology and supports they need to take classes online?*

House Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Investment
CSU Chancellor Timothy P. White
July 29, 2020
Page 3 of 5

We continue to be mindful that a large-scale shift to virtual learning and academic and student support modalities can exacerbate inequities associated with the so-called “digital divide” – a lack of access to computer equipment and internet connectivity that disproportionately impacts low-income students and students of color.

To mitigate these impacts, all 23 campuses have purchased and distributed laptops and tablets to students who need them. In total, some 5,500 pieces of new equipment – with a value of more than \$4 million – have been distributed. This does not include the thousands of items of equipment already on hand – in libraries, learning centers and labs – that have been loaned to students in need. In addition, campuses systemwide have established and maintain wifi “hotspots” to provide internet connectivity in areas where appropriate physical distancing can be maintained, e.g., parking facilities.

Our campuses have also communicated to students about the availability of free and accessible wifi available to them at other educational institutions through EduRoam, an international roaming service for users in higher education, providing easy and secure connectivity at member institutions. In some cases, another EduRoam-participating college or university may be physically closer to a CSU student’s home, offering an additional, secure, local access point.

- *How could additional funding help ensure student success?*

As we have shifted our instruction, academic support and student services to virtual modalities, we have recognized the need for an approach that is simultaneously high-tech and high-touch. This requires frequent proactive outreach by faculty and staff to continuing, new and prospective students. Additional resources would allow for the implementation of increasingly sophisticated technology, but would also ensure that we are able to maintain – and in some cases increase – staffing support to successfully keep students engaged. Such resources would also allow us to develop additional, innovative ways to financially support students – such as expanded work-study programs – that employ peer mentoring and coaching as strategies to improve retention while mitigating students’ financial impacts resulting from lost employment opportunities.

Supplemental Questions from Representative Mark Walker (R-NC)

- *This virus will not be here forever. We will get back to normal again. After we come out of this pandemic situation, what does the future look like for higher education? What areas will we see lasting change as a result of COVID-19?*

House Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Investment
CSU Chancellor Timothy P. White
July 29, 2020
Page 4 of 5

There will be lasting impacts, inside the classroom and beyond. We may see a permanent shift toward greater hybrid and online learning. With the benefit of the early announcement of our decision to plan for a primarily virtual fall 2020 term, thousands of CSU faculty have been able to participate in online professional development throughout the summer. This has been beneficial not only in understanding the pedagogy shift needed for online and hybrid instruction, but also in allowing faculty to become online learners themselves – developing a more comprehensive and personal understanding of the student experience of virtual learning. We will closely monitor outcomes and persistence data from online and hybrid classes to assess their efficacy and determine their appropriate role in future academic programming.

The CSU – and other colleges and universities nationwide – will likely experience shifts in student enrollment trends, as well. While it may be difficult to discern whether these shifts are driven by the long-term impacts of the pandemic itself or rather by the economic toll of the pandemic, we expect that students and families may favor enrollment at public colleges and universities. Similarly, these impacts may portend students electing to enroll at colleges and universities closer to their homes.

In addition and for the foreseeable future, on-campus residence halls and residential life in general may look very different, as institutions balance health and safety concerns with student social development considerations.

- *COVID-19 affects us all, and the entire nation is being impacted. You hear stories about higher education institutions being pushed to the breaking point. If you could elaborate, which policies coming out of Washington have been most helpful to higher education institutions during COVID-19, and which policies have missed the mark?*

The most significant financial relief we have been able to provide our students has been in the form of direct emergency financial grants made available through the CARES Act – and we remain extremely grateful to Congress and the Administration for the scope of the relief and for its quick distribution.

Collectively, CSU campuses received \$262.5 million in direct student relief funding. Education Department guidance limited these CARES Act emergency grants to students who are eligible for Title IV aid. To ensure that all of our students – including DACA and international students – received relief, we complemented federal funds with CSU resources to form the CSU Cares Initiative to provide emergency grant funding for all CSU students with COVID-19-induced financial need.

With regard to the balance of CARES Act funding not distributed to students in the form of direct emergency financial relief, CSU campuses are prioritizing faculty development

House Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce Investment
CSU Chancellor Timothy P. White
July 29, 2020
Page 5 of 5

and investment in resources to continue to enhance virtual teaching and learning, informed by outcomes and persistence data, as well as shared best practices developed in the spring and summer terms. A portion of the funds will also be used to offset lost revenue in housing and parking operations and to retain CSU employees who work in these areas.

The Department of Education and the CARES Act also provided significant regulatory flexibilities related to student aid that were important benefits to our students and institutions in light of our rapid pivot to online instruction as well as the hardships brought on by COVID-19. We welcome the extension of these flexibilities as the pandemic continues to disrupt learning environments.

Similarly, I want to emphasize that the fast action by Congress and the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs to preserve education benefits for students whose academic programs have been transitioned to virtual modalities due to the pandemic has been extremely helpful and much appreciated – and it has positively impacted our more-than 20,000 military-affiliated students across our 23 campuses.

As for policies that have “missed the mark,” we were disappointed at the exclusion of certain student populations – including DACA and international students, who are such a vital part of the CSU’s teaching, learning and discovery experience – from eligibility for CARES Act emergency grants; we respectfully request that all our students be eligible to participate in any future programs. Similarly, the CSU was strongly opposed to U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement guidance that would have barred international students from entering or remaining in the country if they took fully online course loads – even as colleges and universities, including the CSU, had transitioned courses to virtual modalities to protect their students’ health and maintain their progress to degree during the COVID-19 pandemic. We were pleased at the quick rescission of the guidance and strongly urge the Administration to refrain from taking similar action against future international students.

[Whereupon, at 2:53 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]

