



Summer 2020 CARES Act Survey

Philadelphia Futures conducted a survey of students in the College Success Program regarding access to and utilization of CARES Act funding through their colleges and universities. The survey covered: ease of access to funding, needs experienced by students as a result of the sudden shift to remote learning, needs met by CARES Act funds and anticipated needs if schools continue to operate remotely.

What is the CARES Act funding for college students?

In addition to guidelines for school loan repayment and direct aid for colleges and universities, the CARES Act provided federal funds for emergency, one-time assistance to help respond to COVID-19 impacts on students. These funds were channeled through the colleges and universities, and how they were disbursed to students varied school to school.

Demographics of Survey Respondents

All students in the program are first generation to college and PELL-eligible. There were 88 respondents to the survey, representing about a third of all collegians in the program. Respondents spanned the range of years in college (see Figure 1) and were about equally divided between students attending private and public institutions (48 private and 40 public). All respondents are residents of Philadelphia, but about a third (32) attend school in Philadelphia and two thirds (66) attend an institution outside of Philadelphia.

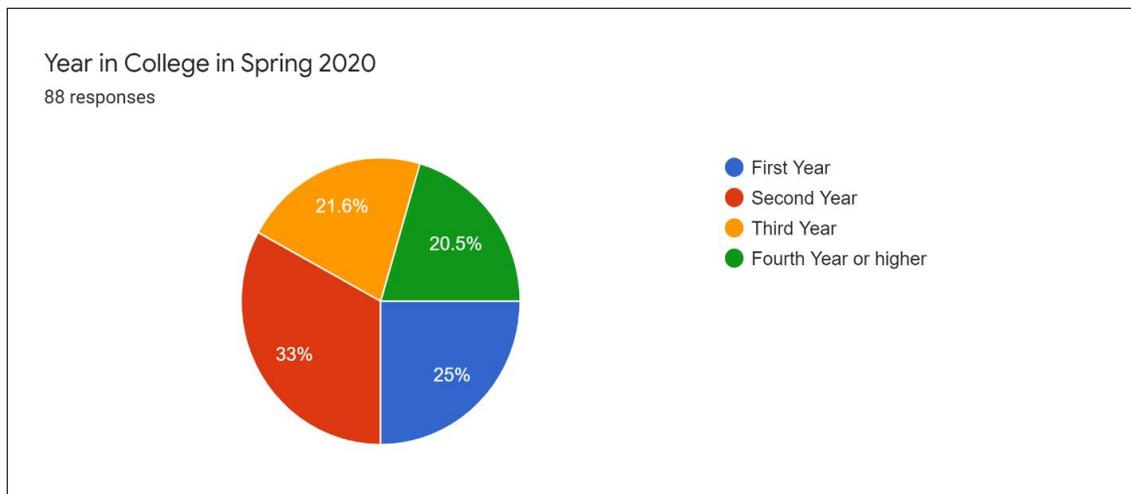


Figure 1

Access to CARES Act funding

Nearly 80% of students reported that their institution provided them with CARES Act funds (see Figure 2). Of the 20% who reported that they did NOT receive funds, 16 (18% of total) indicated that they had not applied for funding, and 2 (2%) indicated that they had applied, but did not receive funds.

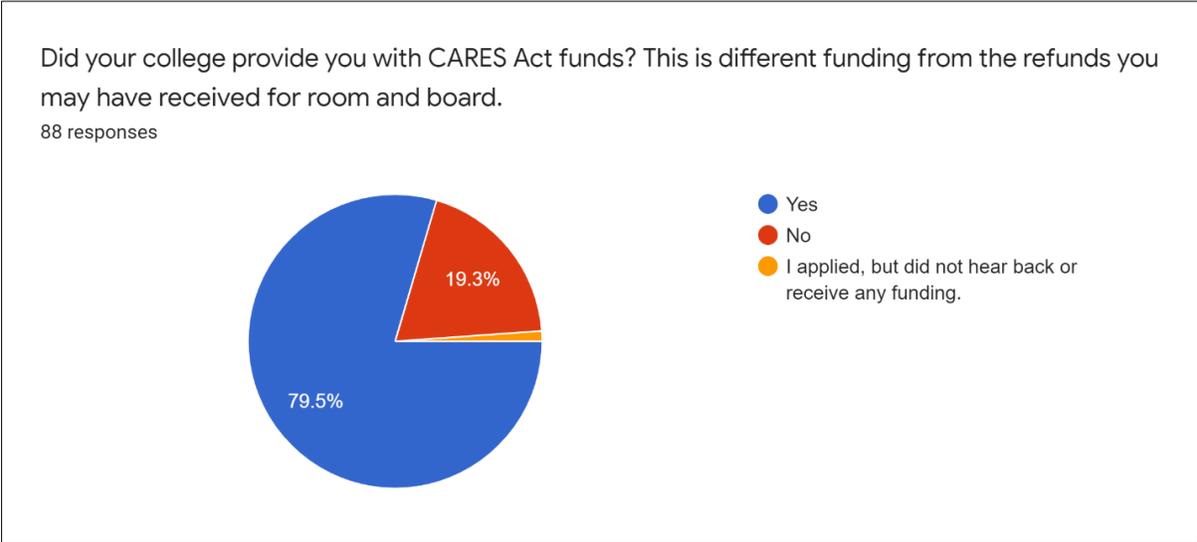


Figure 2

Communication: When asked about the ways in which they were informed of the opportunity for funding through the CARES Act, 77% indicated that they heard directly from their college/university, 26% heard it by word of mouth and 27% reported learning about it from Philadelphia Futures.

Process: When asked about the process of applying and receiving funds, most students indicated that the process was not complicated. In fact, 28% of students responded that there was no application process at all, and that the school simply disbursed a pre-determined amount to each student (see Figure 3). Other students described a detailed application process in which they were required to itemize the costs of their needs during the shift to remote learning. **Notably, none of the respondents indicated that the process was too complicated to navigate.**

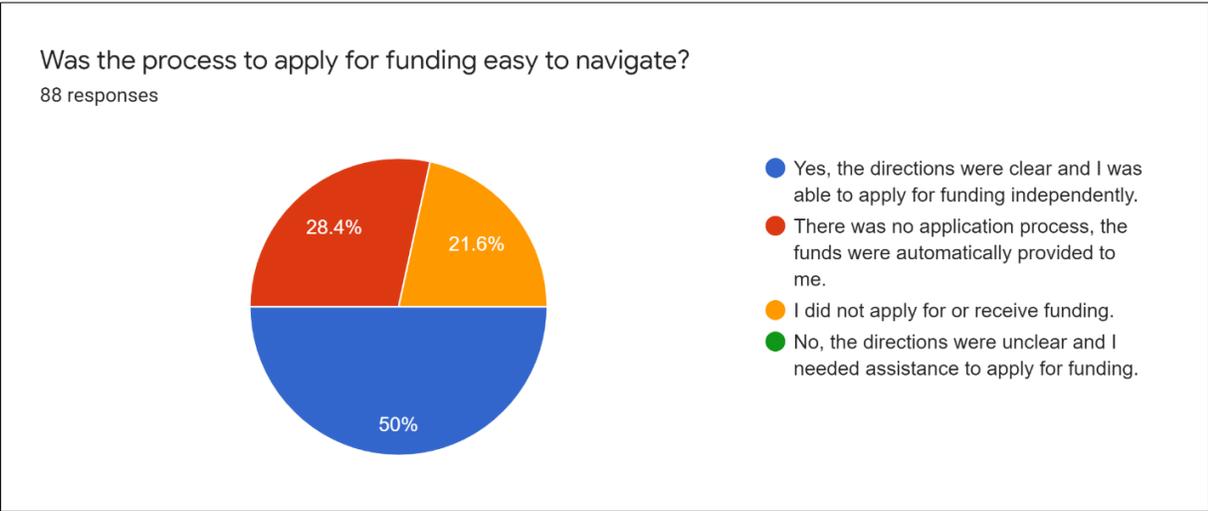


Figure 3

Need and impact of funding

The top three needs of students during the shift to remote learning were food, housing and technology. Other needs included academic (such as taking a summer course), healthcare, child care and transportation expenses. Students were asked both what needs they experienced, as well as which needs the CARES Act funding was able to assist with. **In every category, more students indicated need than students who indicated assistance sufficient to cover the need** (see Figure 4).

Need existed and CARES funds assisted

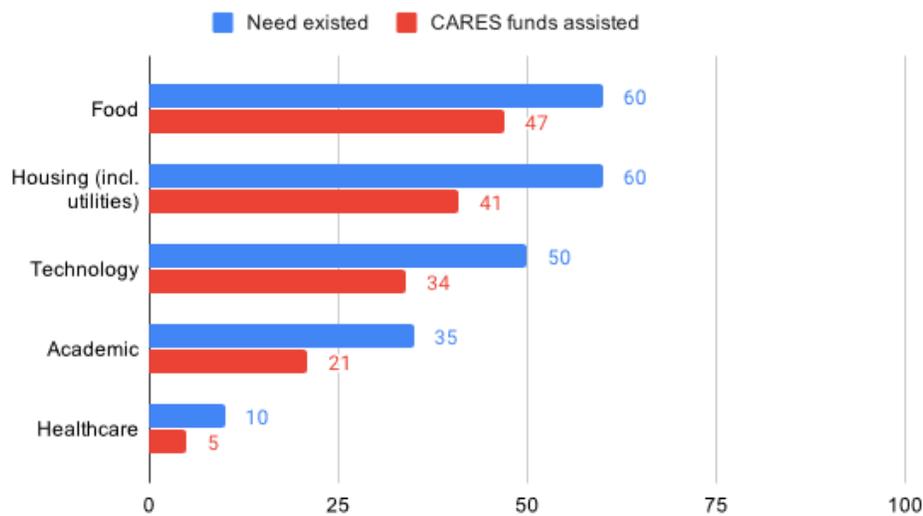


Figure 4: Number of students with need vs. number with need met by CARES Act funding

Resources from Colleges and Universities beyond CARES funding

Students were also asked if their college provided resources other than CARES funding after the shutdown. Most students were not aware of any other resources, though many noted gratitude for refunded room and board charges. One student noted that their college continued to offer mental health services and another recalled receiving links to various resources in an email. When asked if there were needs for which the college was unable to provide, the responses were the same as the needs noted above: food, housing, internet access and computers.

Future needs as remote learning continues

Students expect that the same needs will continue to be present. When asked to anticipate what their financial needs will be if the fall semester is remote, 72% responded that food insecurity would continue to be an issue. 56% indicated continued need related to housing and utilities, and 59% foresee a financial need related to technology.

Summary

Overall, colleges and universities represented by survey respondents communicated effectively about CARES funding and created efficient processes to get funds to the students. However, the financial assistance provided was not sufficient to meet the need. Furthermore, as schools continue to operate remotely, students will continue to experience food insecurity, needs related to housing, and insufficient technology for success in college. Many Philadelphia Futures students, like first-generation low-income students nationwide, rely on the housing, food and technology resources that are provided on college campuses. While CARES Act funding was helpful, it was a one-time emergency assistance plan that ended along with the Spring 2020 semester. Moving forward, additional resources must be leveraged to support the college success of first-generation and low-income students.

For questions or more information regarding this report, please contact Amy Perez, Director of College Success at Philadelphia Futures: amperez@philadelphiafutures.org