



The Hope Center is Thrilled By Biden Administration's New Funding to Support Student Basic Needs

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Today, U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona and First Lady Dr. Jill Biden [announced new resources and updated guidance](#) for colleges and universities to address the [crisis of student basic needs insecurity](#) and to connect [#RealCollege](#) students to public benefit programs that will help them afford, persist, and complete their degree or credential.

Dr. Sara Goldrick-Rab, President & Founder, The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice was honored to be invited to Bergen County Community College for this exciting announcement. Bergen County Community College participated in the very first [#RealCollege](#) survey in 2016 (and again in 2019) and has led the way in addressing student basic needs insecurity, especially the financial barriers to child care for student parents.

“This is a significant milestone in the [#RealCollege](#) movement, and every student and activist who has fought for it should be proud. I want to thank President Biden, First Lady Dr. Jill Biden, and the U.S. Department of Education for recognizing that students are humans first and addressing their basic needs,” said Dr. Sara Goldrick-Rab. “Our extensive research done by The Hope Center shows [numerous students](#) are experiencing food insecurity, housing insecurity, or homelessness—which have been exacerbated by the pandemic. I’m delighted to see our research leading to amazing policy results.”

[#RealCollege](#) students will immensely benefit from the additional \$198 million in pandemic relief funds to support institutions serving students with the greatest needs, including community colleges and rural institutions. We urge all institutions, including Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), Urban Serving Universities (USUs), and Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs) to apply for funds and use them to address barriers to student success, such as food and housing insecurity, child care, transportation, technology, and more. This funding is a substantial investment—a crucial first step toward permanent funding to address basic needs insecurity.

[Updated guidance](#) from the Department of Education (ED) provides examples and models for institutions looking to use Higher Education Emergency Relief Funds to meet student basic



needs, which largely reflects our recent [recommendations](#), and our work with institutions over the course of the pandemic.

We would also like to congratulate the six institutions awarded federal grants to develop programs that address student basic needs. Five of the six award winners – Montgomery College (MD), Los Angeles City College (CA), Rio Hondo College (CA), McLennan County Junior College District (TX), and Passaic County Community College (NJ) – are longtime #RealCollege partners and champions, and these new grants will help them scale promising initiatives that can be replicated across the country.

The Department of Education’s announcement comes at a particularly important time for The Hope Center. Also today, we are launching the [#RealCollegeHBCU](#) coalition as a culmination of years of data gathering and resource compilation for the unique needs of our country’s long-overlooked HBCUs. [Our latest report](#) found that two-thirds of HBCU students are experiencing basic needs insecurity. To address enrollment declines and enhance student and institutional well-being during the pandemic, #RealCollegeHBCU will build capacity and support for 10 HBCUs, including 6 Historically Black Community Colleges. As the Department of Education highlighted today, Grambling State University in Louisiana—a member of our [#RealCollegeHBCU](#) coalition— and other HBCUs have used HEERF grant funds to cancel \$1.5 million in institutional debt (i.e., unpaid institutional balances) for students. Over the next six months, each #RealCollegeHBCU institution will receive data-driven training in strategies for ensuring students’ basic needs are met.

Moving forward, we encourage ED and Congress to continue to invest in students whose academic and family lives are disrupted by the pandemic and reduce barriers for those who have been unable to access public benefit programs, as well as financial and emergency aid. The Hope team has long seen addressing students’ financial needs as essential to their academic success and well-being. Today’s announcement is a substantial step toward building a higher education system that truly reflects the experiences of #RealCollege students, and Hope looks forward to continuing to work with policymakers toward the ultimate goal of sustainable funding to address basic needs insecurity.