



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

CONTACT: Michael Lemus 916-206-1285
Michael.lemus@csac.ca.gov

California Student Aid Commission’s “COVID-19 Student Survey” Showcases the Life of 76,000 Students During Pandemic

Survey reveals increased levels of uncertainty and worry about the future

SACRAMENTO, Calif., July 7, 2020 – The California Student Aid Commission’s (CSAC) newly released results from the Spring 2020 COVID-19 Student Survey provide invaluable data and insight directly from 76,000 students about their experiences during the pandemic and their views on issues related to college attendance in Summer and Fall of 2020.

The survey was sent to students statewide who submitted federal and state financial aid applications and who intended to enroll in college in the 2020-21 academic year. Consisting of college-bound high school seniors and existing college and university enrollees across all sectors of higher education in California, the sample size of 76,000 makes this COVID-19 survey the largest in the nation to gauge the impact of the pandemic on student populations.

The survey found that students have great concern about what the future holds, uncertainty about where they will attend, and how they will afford college and other basic needs expenses. Striking findings include:

- Over 70% of current students lost some or all of their sources of income as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Almost half of all students had their living arrangements disrupted in Spring, 2020.
- A quarter of students dropped one or more courses during the terms when COVID-19 hit.

“It was important for the CSAC team to document the student experience to further understand how they navigate attending college during a pandemic,” said Marlene Garcia, Executive Director of the Commission. “It is clear that COVID-19 didn’t start a basic needs crisis, but it exacerbated one already affecting many of California’s students.”

Student respondents were also given the opportunity to provide written comments in the survey, many of which provided specific examples of the struggles students had in the face of the pandemic:

- “COVID-19 has changed my plans for college financially and emotionally. I am currently debating whether I should drop my Fall Semester classes because I need to find a full time job to help my family.”
- “COVID-19 changed my plans for college financially, considering that my mom was working two jobs and both had to close. Now she is doing the best she can by selling “gelatinas” but is barely making enough money to put food on the table.”

- “I am concerned about being unable to pay rent or other educational expenses. This has added a lot of stress that is distracting me from my academic goals.”
- “The biggest challenges I face with pursuing my college degree are financial hardships. Because I am out of work, I’m uncertain on how I am going to move forward. My degree is important, but bills are not going to wait for me...I have to pay them.”
- “...the money that I had designated for school has been going to support my family. For me to become a full time student for fall semester won’t be a possibility this year.”

“The COVID-19 Student Survey data gives us great insight into the myriad challenges students are facing right now,” said Patrick Perry, Division Chief of Policy, Research & Data of the Commission. “Disruption to students’ income and living arrangements have contributed greatly to anxiety levels and uncertainty about their academic futures. As a financial aid providing organization, CSAC is using this information to advocate for and best support students during a time when it is imperative that they remain continuously enrolled in college.”

Perry added, “We know that once students stop attending or delay enrollment, some will never return, which will have a profound effect on the trajectories of their lives.”

As the nation’s largest state financial aid administrator, CSAC is uniquely positioned to understand the needs of students across California and can serve as a resource to help the state navigate financial needs for various student populations.

For the full “Spring 2020 COVID-19 Student Survey” report, please visit <https://www.csac.ca.gov/survey2020>.

###

The California Student Aid Commission administers the state’s \$2.8 billion portfolio of student financial aid programs and services, including the Cal Grant, the Middle Class Scholarship, and the California Dream Act Application. The Commission serves as a resource for policymakers and the public on college affordability and financing issues, and advocates for policy changes to eliminate cost as a barrier to any qualified California student pursuing a higher education. Visit our website at <https://www.csac.ca.gov> or follow us on [Twitter](#) @castudentaid.