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COVID-19's Impact on Entering Community College Students

AUSTIN, TX –

A new report released by the Center for Community College Student Engagement (the Center), *The Impact of COVID-19 on Entering Students in Community Colleges*, shows the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the most vulnerable community college students.

- More than 1 in 4 (26 percent) older students (25+) said they were struggling to pay for college as a result of the pandemic, compared to less than 1 in 5 (16 percent) traditional-age students.
- For female students with children living with them depending on them for their care, more than 4 in 10 (43 percent) reported that their financial situation was worse than before the pandemic, compared to 34 percent of male students in similar circumstances.
- Native American students, Black or African American students, and Hispanic students were more likely to report having trouble keeping up with their coursework due to a lack of childcare than were White students.

“COVID-19 has exacerbated the already typical struggles that community college students face in juggling classes with work and family obligations. Now, more than ever, these students need our support,” said Linda García, Executive Director of the Center.

In addition to financial and childcare challenges, attending college remotely was problematic for some students: Almost 3 in 10 (29 percent) respondents reported having unreliable Internet access or no Internet access at home.

The pandemic has undoubtedly brought about new stresses for many students and exacerbated existing stresses for others. However, almost 6 in 10 (57 percent) students reported being unaware of services their college had to help them cope with such stress.

The data in the report are based on a survey administered in fall 2020 to 5,193 entering students across 38 colleges.

Thirty-three colleges administered the survey online and five colleges administered the survey in person, in the classroom. While most surveyed students’ plans about the college they attended, whether they attended part-time or full-time, and their chosen pathway of study did not change as a result of the pandemic, the report does not offer any insights about the students who decided to forgo college as a result of COVID-19.

The Center for Community College Student Engagement is a service and research initiative in the Department of Educational Leadership and Policy in the College of Education at The University of Texas at Austin.