



**2SHB 1893
STUDENT EMERGENCY
ASSISTANCE GRANT (SEAG)
PROGRAM**

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Contacts

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Table of Contents

Contacts	2
Table of Contents	3
StudentEmergencyAssistanceGrant (SEAG) Program	5
State of PostsecondaryStudent Basic Needs	5
Hope Survey results	6
Community and technical college students	6
Program Design and Implementation	6
College selection process	7
Learning community	7
Coordinated data collection	8
Model Emergency Assistance Programs	8
Trust students	8
Be timely	8
Create a network of support.....	8
Be free from bias or discrimination	9
Track outcomes/Provide follow-up	9
Leverage available resources.....	10
Organizationally structure to enhance access and student support	10
Program DeliveryModel	10
Widespread and targeted outreach	10
Accessible and low-barrier request process.....	12
Equitable review and decision processes	12
Timely notification	14
Efficient disbursement.....	15
Personalized follow-up and referrals	15
Types of Emergency AssistanceRequestedand Provided	17
Housing.....	18
Food	18
Transportation	18
Childcare.....	18
Health care	18

Utilities	18
Books	18
Fees and fines	19
Other	19
Students Served	22
Impacts of COVID-19	24
Conclusion	25
Appendix A – ApplicationApproval Criteria	26
Appendix B – College SelectionProcess Results.....	27
Appendix C – SEAG Data CollectionPlan.....	28
Student Information.....	28
Program Information.....	28
AppendixD – ProgramAdministration	29

Student Emergency Assistance Grant (SEAG) Program

The Washington State Legislature established the Student Emergency Assistance Grant (SEAG) Program in the passage of 2SHB 1893 during the 2019 legislative session and appropriated funds through HB 2158 for the 2019-21 biennium. The SEAG Program, administered by the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (SBCTC), allows community and technical colleges (colleges) to provide monetary assistance to students experiencing unforeseen emergencies or situations that affect the student's ability to attend classes. The SBCTC is required to submit this report to the appropriate committees of the legislature beginning Dec. 1, 2020 and each Dec. 1 thereafter.

In order to be eligible for SEAG Program funding, colleges were required to demonstrate need, which included demographic data on student income levels, students experiencing homelessness or food insecurity, and resources already in existence at the college.

Additionally, all colleges administering SEAG Program funding must:

- ensure that students' access to emergency aid funds will be as low barrier as possible;
- allow flexibility in who may apply for funds and include students who may not necessarily meet the definition of "needy student" but who may be experiencing emergency situations and;
- indicate how the colleges will prioritize the disbursement of emergency aid funds.

SEAG funds are to be used to provide monetary aid to students to assist them in, for example, purchasing food and paying for transportation, childcare, or other goods or services needed in order for the student to continue attending classes.

This report will begin with an overview of postsecondary students' basic needs in Washington. A detailed description of SEAG program design and implementation will then be presented, including findings from ongoing formative evaluations by the colleges. Program outcomes will be shared related to the program model, types of emergency assistance, and students served. Student and staff voice are included throughout the report and impacts from COVID-19 are also addressed.

State of Postsecondary Student Basic Needs

The current health and economic crisis are having serious and racially disproportionate impacts on Washington college students' basic needs. Yet, long before this crisis, it was apparent that food insecurity, housing security, transportation, mental and behavioral health and access to childcare, among other basic needs and financial emergencies, had been impacting students' success in postsecondary education.

Hope Survey results

In 2019, 28 of the 34 colleges participated in the #RealCollege survey⁴. As a result, a total of 13,550 students responded indicating a significant level of basic needs insecurity.

- 41% of respondents were food insecure in the prior 30 days
- 51% of respondents were housing insecure in the previous year
- 19% of respondents were homeless in the previous year

The rates of basic needs insecurity varied more than 20 points across Washington state community and technical colleges. Furthermore, the data showed that marginalized students are often at greater risk of basic needs insecurity while attending Washington state community and technical colleges. These groups include American Indian or Alaskan Native students, Black or Indigenous students, students who identify as nonbinary or transgender, and students who are former foster youth or returning citizens.

While the #RealCollege report shows room for continued improvement, rates of public benefits utilization in Washington are a bit higher than the averages observed for community colleges nationwide.

Community and technical college students

The most recent system-wide data available from the 2018-19 academic year indicates that 65,245 students or 38% of those in an aid-eligible program, received need-based aid, 47% of students were employed and 24% of students had children or dependents.⁵ Additionally, 31,408 students were enrolled in one of the following student support programs: Basic Food and Employment Training (BFET), Early Achievers Grant (EAG), Opportunity Grant (OG), Passport for Foster Youth Promise Program, TRiO, WorkFirst, and Worker Retraining (WRT).⁶

Once [SEAG] funding was announced, 100% of funds were awarded within 48 hours, indicating a significant need for resources. Funding requests exceeded funding allocation by over \$96,000.

~SEAG College Staff

Program Design and Implementation

In designing the SEAG program, the SBCTC followed the directives outlined in the legislation and lessons learned from the Minnesota Office of Higher Education's Emergency Assistance for Postsecondary Education Grant (EAPS) program⁷. The EAPS program is one of the only other state

⁴ Washington State Community and Technical Colleges #RealCollege Survey Report

⁵ Washington State Community and Technical Colleges Field Guide

⁶ Source: SBCTC Data Warehouse

⁷ The Office of Higher Education administers the Emergency Assistance for Postsecondary Students (EAPS) Grant Program to foster postsecondary attendance and retention for low-income students by providing funding and resources to Minnesota colleges and universities with a demonstrable homeless population. Grant funds are intended to meet immediate student needs related to housing, food, and transportation that would

level investments in emergency assistance for postsecondary education in the nation. Details about the college selection process, the SEAG learning community, data collection, and the model emergency assistance program are outlined below.

College selection process

The legislation directed the SBCTC to administer a competitive grant program and all Washington state community and technical colleges were encouraged to apply. At minimum, successful college applications demonstrated need based on student income levels, food or housing insecurity, identified “students who demonstrate financial need” as defined by RCW 28B.92.030 or provided other student demographic or resource use information. In addition, applicants were required to demonstrate their ability to implement a low-barrier process for students to access support and a commitment to connecting students in need to other college and community resources (see Appendix A).

The SBCTC was charged with accepting applications by Dec. 1, 2019 and was able to finalize the entire competitive application and selection processes prior to this date. Twenty-eight (28) colleges applied for funding and sixteen (16) colleges were selected to administer the SEAG program. Appendix B identifies all colleges that applied and the funding amounts awarded. Colleges selected to administer SEAG programs were funded from Dec. 1, 2019 through June 30, 2021.

Learning community

Although not a legislative requirement, the SBCTC also initiated a formal Learning Community space for the SEAG colleges to come together on a monthly basis to guide program implementation and advance emergency assistance efforts. During the first seven months of implementation, six sessions were held and topics included program design and implementation, a deep-dive into financial aid requirements regarding administration of emergency assistance and year-end reflections and learning regarding program implementation and administration. The SEAG Learning Community webinars also provided space for colleges to discuss both challenges and opportunities regarding:

- SEAG Program vs. other emergency assistance funding student eligibility and application requirements
- Coordination of data collection efforts via SEAG reporting process
- Impacts on timely distribution of SEAG funds while administering additional sources of emergency assistance during pandemic and remote operations
- Financial Aid barriers to emergency assistance and other forms of student basic needs support
- Time constraints and staff needs for conducting meaningful follow-up with students who received SEAG funding.

otherwise prevent students from completing their term. The Minnesota Legislature established the EAPS Grant Program in May 2017.

Coordinated data collection

Minimum reporting requirements for this program, as identified in the legislation, include identification of the selected colleges and their award amounts and a summary of the distribution of funds to students. The distribution of funds to students must include the number of students, the amount of funds, and the emergency conditions for which funds were granted. In order to provide the legislature with a better understanding of student emergency needs, the SBCTC incorporated the collection of additional metrics (see Appendix C). The additional metrics are in alignment with the core values of the SEAG program and the program delivery model presented below.

Model Emergency Assistance Programs

Colleges were asked to integrate the following principles in the design of the SEAG Program at each college: 1) Trust Students, 2) Be Timely, 3) Create a Network of Support, 4) Be Free from Bias or Discrimination, 5) Track Outcomes and Provide Follow Up, 6) Leverage Available Resources, and 7) Organizationally Structure to Enhance Access and Student Support. In addition to these principles outlined below, administration of the program was conducted in alignment with other administrative requirements identified in Appendix D. These requirements were directives from the legislation or identified as critical to ensuring equitable access to emergency assistance for all students.

Trust students

Granting money to students without requiring documentation to verify need requires a significant amount of trust. Colleges will need to actively listen to and validate the experiences of students. Students who are systemically disadvantaged and choose to seek assistance from a college are also being challenged to display a level of trust that may be perceived as a risk. Trust in students and their autonomy is essential in building student trust with the college.

I work full time in order to pay all of my bills and support my son on my own. So, it is hard to juggle working full time and classes.

~Student

Be timely

Financial crises can derail a student's future in a matter of days. A key component to the SEAG Program is creating a process that works quickly and efficiently, so there is not a disruption in the student's learning or academic progress. This may mean thinking creatively to streamline interdepartmental processes that may normally require more time.

This will help out tremendously in my current situation! I'm in tears of joy. This is coming in right at the right time for the needs of me and my family.

~Student

Create a network of support

Creating a network of support for students in need is one of the most important goals of the SEAG Program. Financial assistance is just one aspect of retention. The intention of this program is to

provide immediate financial support to students who are experiencing an emergency that may impact their ability to attend classes, focus on studies or even remain enrolled in college; it may not solve the student's underlying situation or additional needs. Colleges need a plan to support students beyond this financial assistance to help remedy underlying causes of need and to support the students' resilience and persistence in college. This may mean collaborating with social service agencies, nonprofits, school districts, or other community-based programs in addition to services already offered within the college. In addition to providing students with funds to address immediate needs, colleges should connect these students to other supportive services and programs.

The student emergency financial assistance program positively affected my academic experience ... by giving a strong sense of community and care about education. I would not be where I am today in college if not for the help. Keeps me going.

~Student

Be free from bias or discrimination

College SEAG Program staff should demonstrate a commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion, cultural competency, and a dedication to students' rights to be treated fairly and humanely without discrimination of race, sex, gender identity/expression, sexual orientation, disability, ethnicity, religion, political affiliation, etc. Grant decisions should be fair and free from bias or discrimination. Staff should be dedicated to preserving the dignity of students who access these funds.

I was worried about being judged. I know I will not be ... thank you ... for encouraging people to reach out that actually need the help.

~Student

Track outcomes/Provide follow-up

Colleges will be required to report on a minimum set of data elements related to student and program information. Colleges should consider additional data collection elements that will be beneficial for formative evaluation to direct program redesign needs and summative evaluation to guide program outcomes reporting and recommendations to the legislature. Consideration should be given to the process of data collection in a way that maintains the low-barrier intentions of this program. Building relationships with students and connecting them to other support service staff at your college may increase your ability to collect follow-up information to ensure the student's emergency has been resolved and provide outcomes data for the effectiveness of the program.

I really appreciated the follow up connection during this uncertain time.

~Student

Leverage available resources

Colleges should leverage available college and community financial resources to most effectively impact student success. Colleges are also encouraged to connect students in need to college and community support services and programs to provide ongoing or additional support.

Organizationally structure to enhance access and student support

Colleges should design placement of dedicated SEAG Program staff in a way to ensure equitable access and enhanced connection to other student supports and services. Opportunities to access the SEAG Program should include additional options to face-to-face/on-site options, including online, phone and satellite campus access points. Dedicated staff should work as a team to create and implement streamlined processes for accommodating student needs. Staff should be committed to working across departments, be passionate about issues of student retention and success, have the ability to connect students to other student services and support programs, and have the capacity to work on the SEAG Program.

We implemented SEAG at the beginning of the pandemic ... Students were better able to manage their situations after receiving funding, but many expressed concern and stress about their financial situations. Many were still requesting housing assistance and support, as well as help with filing for Unemployment, SNAP, TANF, or other state benefits.

Students requesting additional support were referred to the Benefits Hub, CARES Act funding, and external resources. Students that were denied SEAG funding were among the first to receive CARES Act funding outreach from the college to make sure they still received the funding they needed.

Overall, most students were exceedingly grateful for the opportunity to get emergency funding from the college.

~SEAG College Staff

Program Delivery Model

The following program delivery elements were recommended for program delivery: 1) Widespread and Targeted Outreach, 2) Accessible & Low-Barrier Request Process, 3) Equitable Review and Decision Process, 4) Timely Notifications, 5) Efficient Disbursement, and 6) Personalized Follow-up and Referrals.

Widespread and targeted outreach

Students will most likely approach a faculty member, academic advisor, or other staff when a crisis first occurs. Colleges must have a plan in place to create a student-centered, proactive “frontline” to identify and refer students to the SEAG Program. This “frontline” cannot be centralized into one role; multiple supportive staff across departments must be able to refer students to this program when

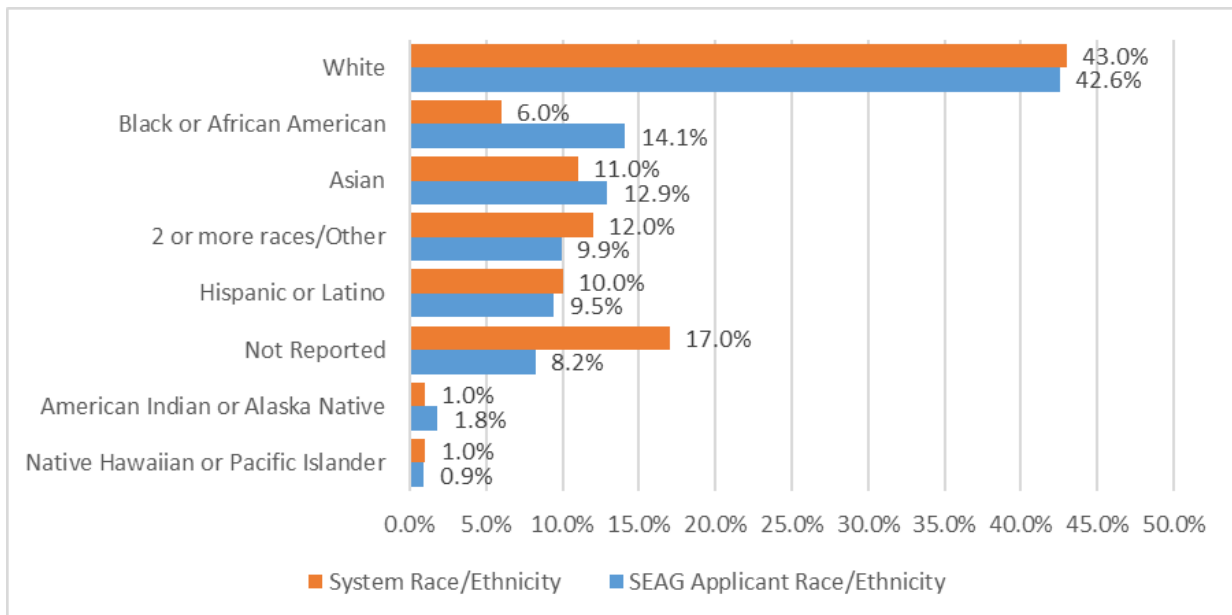
there is potential for these funds to benefit them. Dedicated SEAG Program staff should be placed where they are best equipped to connect the student to additional college and community resources. Ideally, students will be walked or “handed off” to the appropriate office where they can receive services.

In addition to a frontline response plan, colleges must also develop and employ an outreach plan that includes both general and targeted efforts. General outreach includes such efforts as providing flyers or identifying the program on the college website. Targeted outreach includes identifying and notifying individual students who may need support in the future, including students already receiving other funding and direct service support, at a certain income level, or those experiencing food or housing insecurity, or homelessness.

Preliminary evaluation findings

Based on college formative evaluations, colleges applied various outreach efforts during the first seven months of program implementation. The majority of the colleges conducted widespread outreach and a few provided both widespread and targeted outreach. Colleges posted information about the SEAG program on their websites. A couple posted information directly on the homepage, while many posted on a financial aid or resource webpage. The majority of colleges provided SEAG program information to students through all-campus emails. A few colleges also utilized electronic newsletters, Canvas, intranet or social media to promote the SEAG program. Many of the colleges utilized staff, and some used faculty as well, to notify students about the SEAG program. However, the majority of colleges ensured staff and faculty were aware of the SEAG program and how to assist students with applying.

Chart 1. Percentage of SEAG Applicants by Race and Ethnicity



Student application data, for the SEAG program, as presented in Chart 1, shows reach to students closely aligned with the race and ethnicity demographics of the system. It also shows Black or African American students requesting assistance at a much higher percentage. The majority of students

requesting assistance were either between the age of 20 to 29 (37%) or 30 to 39 (24%). Although most applicants did not disclose family status, at least 31.3% had dependents.

Accessible and low-barrier request process

The application process must be as low barrier for the student as possible. Multiple access points should be developed to increase equitable access to SEAG funds. Although the most beneficial access point is an in-person conversation, students should also be able to submit a written request online, at off-campus locations, or begin the process with a phone call.

College staff should also be available to assist students with the request process.

Preliminary evaluation findings

Colleges are primarily providing online application access and very few paper applications have been requested or submitted. This is likely a result of the closure of campuses that creates fewer opportunities to access paper applications. Based on the colleges' formative evaluations, there was much less application assistance provided than planned, also likely as a result of virtual operations and online application access. Many colleges have integrated their SEAG application into a combined emergency assistance application process with other fund sources, such as foundations and CARES funding. As a result of this merger, several are requiring the collection of documentation as proof of need based on a financial aid requirement. It is also acknowledged that requiring documentation as proof of need is an obstacle in processing requests for emergency assistance. Yet, although some access barriers remain to be resolved, many students have provided feedback commenting, "The process was seamless and quick."

Equitable review and decision processes

The college must establish an application review process. The process must define who will make the decision (a single person or a committee), include a decision-making rubric or criteria, and identify how often a student can reapply or any award limits. Emergencies can escalate quickly, so the review and decision process should ensure a timely response to students. This process should also not be hindered in the absence of key personnel, so a back-up plan is required.

Preliminary evaluation findings

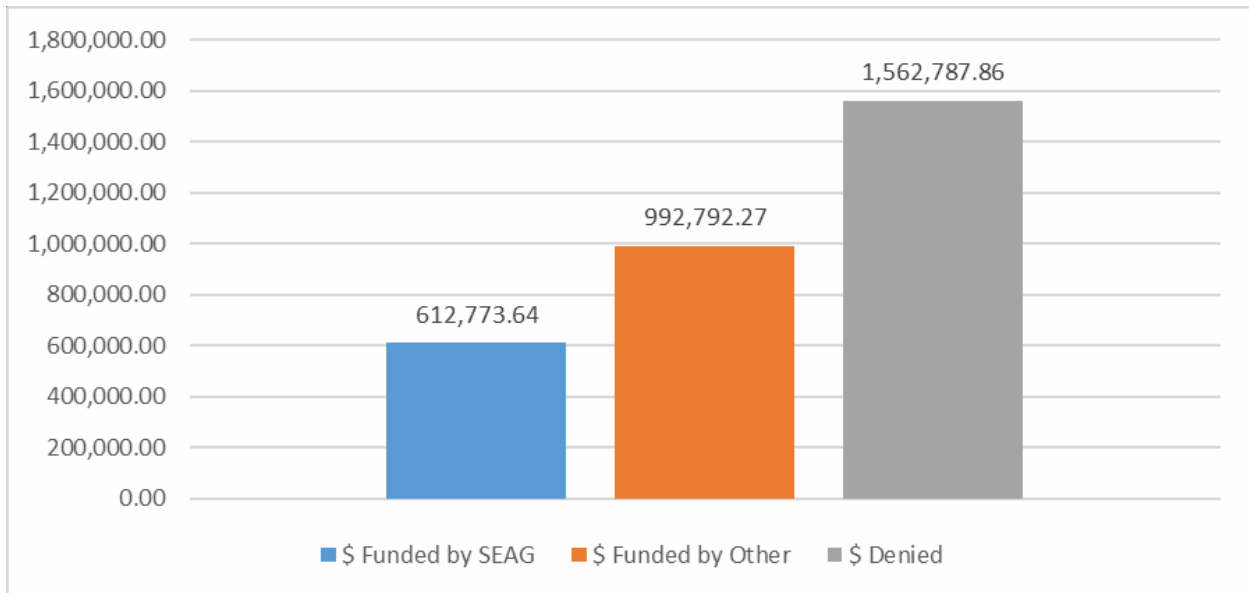
Most colleges awarded funds solely on a first-come basis and screened requests to identify if they were able to be funded by other sources first in order to extend SEAG funding. Most colleges used a review team, instead of a single reviewer, or included a secondary reviewer for large or uncertain requests. Some colleges evaluated requests based on emergency status, type of need and impact on attendance. They also followed up with students if they needed further information to make an award decision. Most colleges disqualified a student for emergency assistance if they had no unmet need available in their financial aid award. Some colleges identified a maximum award amount limit or limit on number of requests, but some of those with a limit also allowed for exceptions on a case-by-case basis.

I was able to pay my PUD bill and am so thankful that I don't have to worry about the electricity getting shut off.

I did receive the grant aid for purchasing a new laptop so that I could finish my Revit final project, which helped me Immensely (sic).

~Students

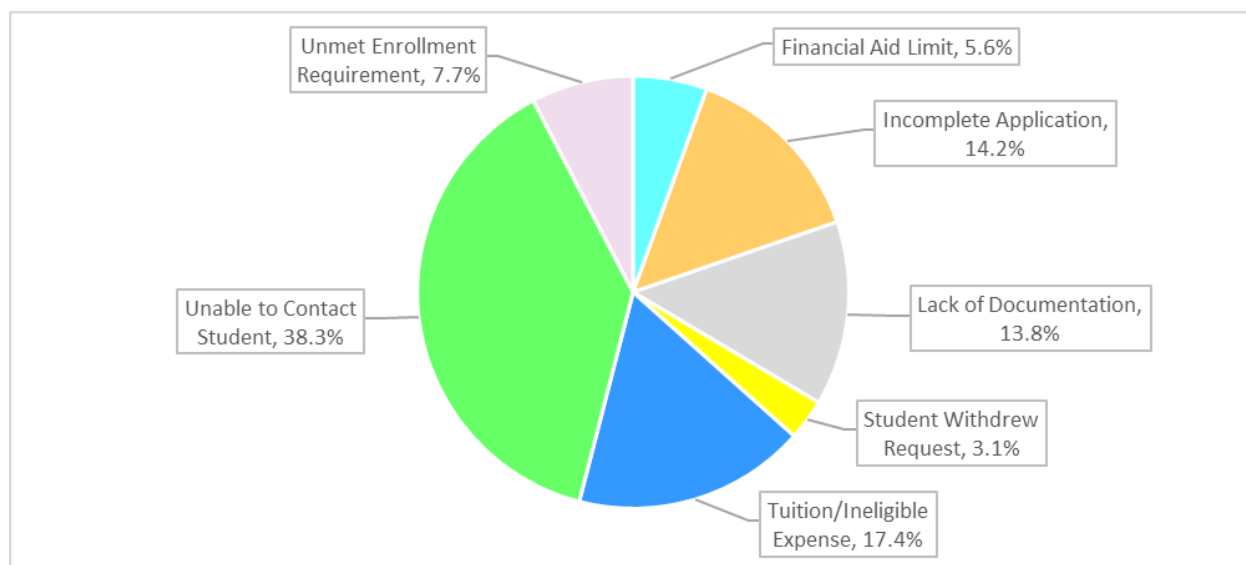
Chart 2. Funded versus not funded requests in dollars



In the first seven months of implementation, colleges received 2,503 requests for SEAG funding and 59% of requests were funded. Of funded requests, 885 were funded by SEAG and 592 requests funded by other support programs. Chart 2 shows the dollar amount for requests funded by the SEAG program compared to those funded by other sources. It also shows the dollar amount of additional requests that were not funded for numerous reasons.

Of the 1,026 requests not funded, 371 denials were due to exhausted SEAG funds. Only 44 requests were deemed not an emergency and not funded. The remaining 597 denials were for various other reasons, displayed in Chart 3 below.

Chart 3. Other reasons requests were not funded by SEAG



Together, the inability to contact students after application and incomplete applications accounted for more than half of the “Other” reasons that requests were not funded by SEAG. Tuition was not an allowable expense funded by the SEAG program and accounted for the majority of the 17.4% of other denied requests that were considered ineligible expenses.

Another large portion of denied requests was due to lack of documentation or “proof” of expenses at 13.8%. This was despite SEAG Program guidelines emphasizing that no additional documentation was required beyond students’ written request for assistance.

Timely notification

Students must be notified of SEAG funding approval or denial. Notifications must clearly identify next steps. If the student was not recommended for the SEAG funds, the notification must include an explanation of the decision and referrals and resources that may help alleviate the situation.

Preliminary Evaluation Findings

During the first seven months of implementation, colleges had to adjust notification processes as they transitioned to virtual working environments. Based on formative evaluations, colleges are attempting to connect to students by phone when possible, but many of the notifications are occurring by email to increase timeliness.

Just got off the phone with a student who I was letting them know that I paid their internet bill and a couple other items. They began to cry and expressed their thanks. They shared that they had been so worried about failing out of college for the third time because they wouldn't have internet.

She shared it was a choice between internet and food this month. She was very thankful.

~SEAG College Staff

Efficient disbursement

Colleges must establish a disbursement process that ensures students will receive SEAG awards within a maximum of four (4) business days of the submission of the application (a shorter timeframe is preferred and could be critical to addressing the emergency). Sample forms of disbursement included a check written directly to the student, a check written to a third-party vendor, or a gift card/pre-paid credit card.

It was granted so quickly and saved me from having to drop out.

~Student

Preliminary evaluation findings

The majority (59%) of SEAG awards were processed and disbursed to students in less than four days and seven percent (7%) were processed the same day. Learning Community discussions identified in most cases SEAG funds were disbursed directly to students by check or to third-party vendors on behalf of the students. College formative evaluations highlighted the importance of notifying the third-party of intended payment on behalf of the student to prevent additional penalties. BankMobile student checking accounts were also utilized for direct funds deposits to students. Some colleges used department purchase cards to pay bills on behalf of students to expedite payment. Most colleges used prepaid cards to provide low-barrier, immediate disbursement of smaller amounts for emergency expenses such as food or transportation, while reviewing and processing larger requests. Many colleges were unable to disburse funds to students without documentation of need, such as a bill, eviction notice or an estimate.

Personalized follow-up and referrals

Colleges must follow up with the student at least once within ten (10) days, and then again within forty-five (45) days. Follow-up should include a comprehensive referral to campus and community resources in addition to ensuring the student received their funds. A key aspect of this follow-up is to collect information around whether or not the emergency was addressed and the funds alleviated the immediate barrier to college attendance.

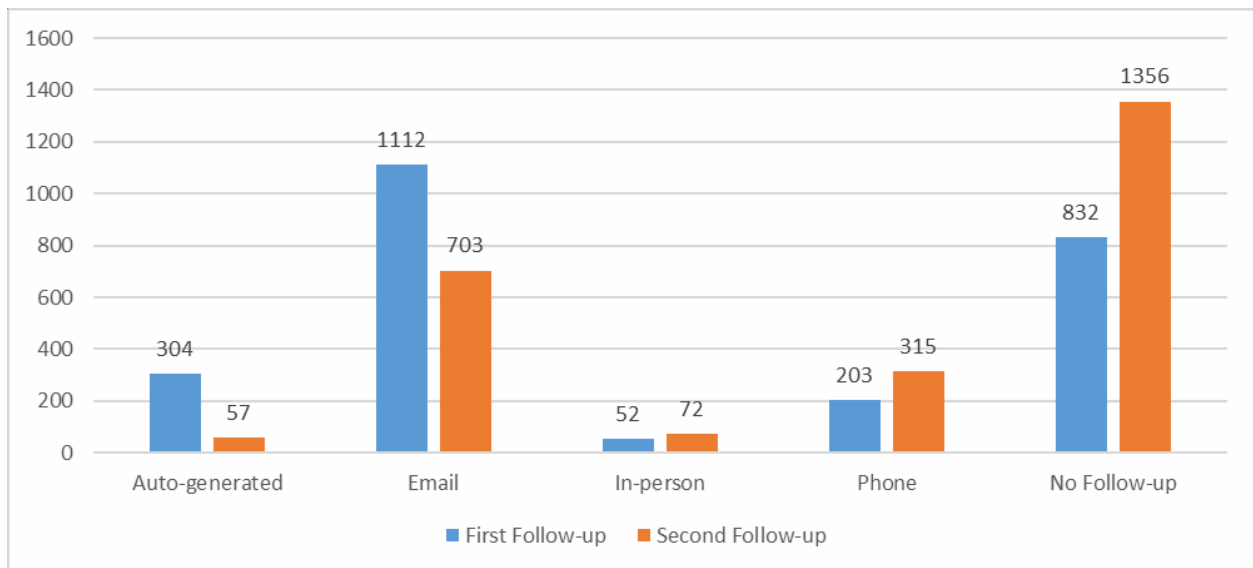
If a student is not approved to receive an emergency grant, the office must still follow up within ten (10) days of sending the denial notification. This is also a good time to refer the student to other programs within the college or in the community, if those referrals have not already been made.

I received a lot of support and resources to help with places to live.

~Student

Preliminary evaluation findings

Chart 4: Types of follow-up with SEAG applicants



Based on college formative evaluations, many SEAG college staff felt they had limited capacity to effectively manage follow up with students. Regardless of the challenges, the majority of students requesting SEAG funds received follow up, as demonstrated in Chart 4.

Student recipients of SEAG emergency funding were also connected to other college support programs in high numbers, as shown in Chart 5. In addition, 444 SEAG recipients were referred to community food pantries, 34 to the Housing Authority and 99 to other community support resources.

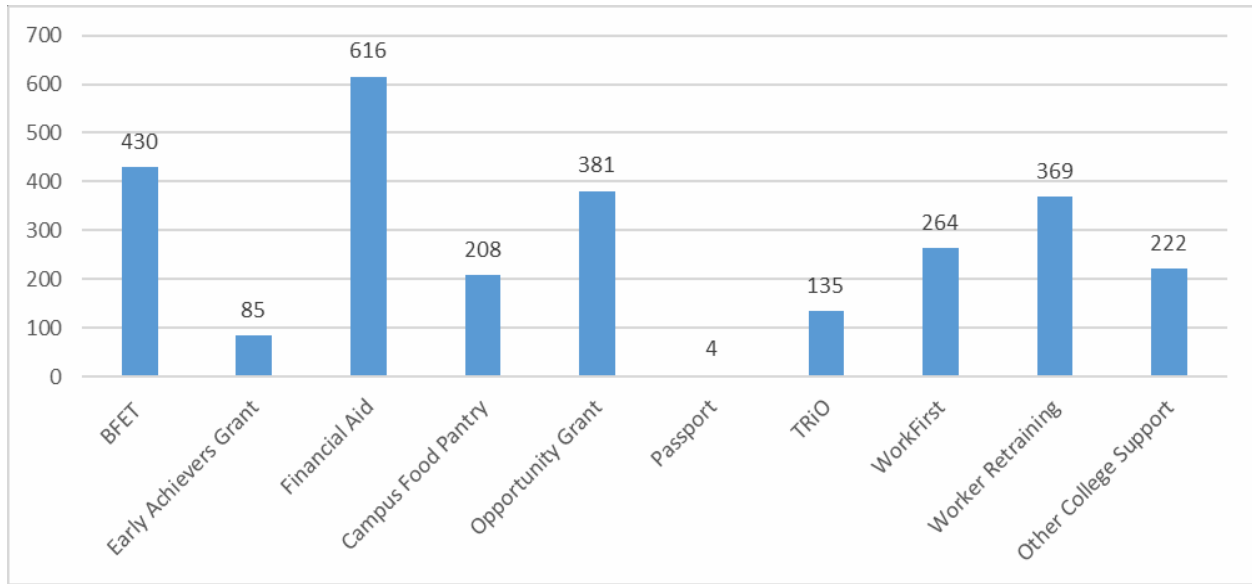
I received 1-1 assistance with creating a budget, figuring out how much I could spend on rent each month, and was provided guidance to search for stable housing.

I appreciated the additional resources I was given and the guidance I received to help get a lower interest rate on my car.

I knew someone was there to help when I needed it most.

~Students

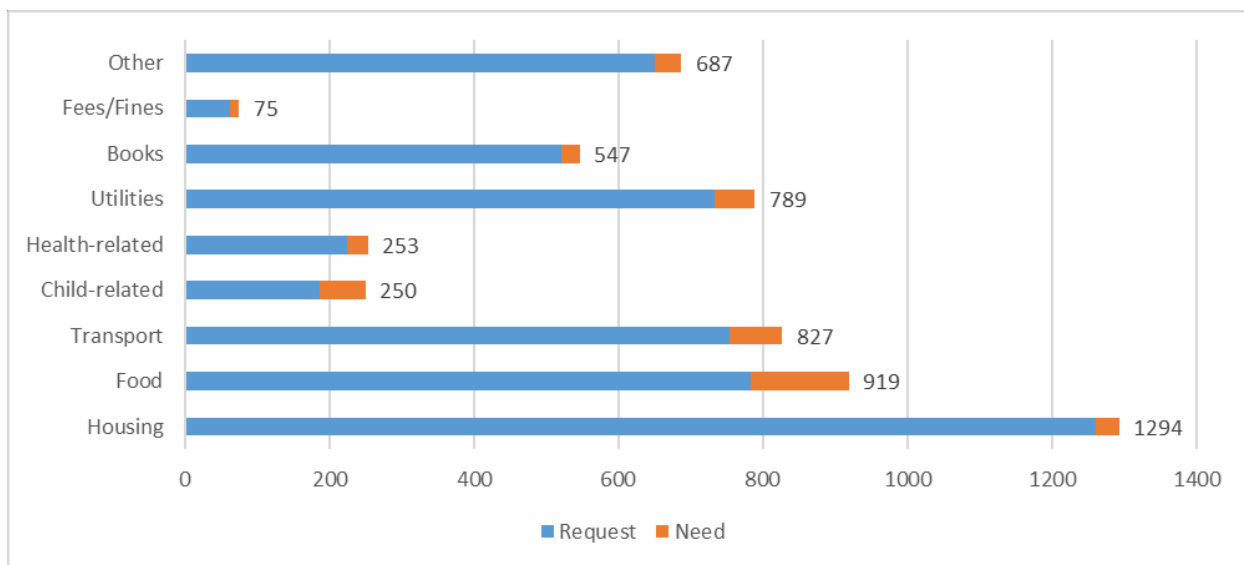
Chart 5: SEAG recipients connected with additional college support programs



Types of Emergency Assistance Requested and Provided

Colleges received requests for emergency assistance for a variety of non-tuition, allowable expenses that are presented in Chart 6 and described in detail below. Often, college staff would discover through communication with students that although they had requested assistance for one or two types of expenses, the students had additional emergency expenses not identified in their original request. For reporting purposes, those additional emergency expenses were tracked separately and marked as “needs.”

Chart 6: SEAG requests by type of emergency assistance



Housing

The housing category refers to any expenses related to housing or shelter, which may include paying for a hotel room, rent, and/or mortgage if student is at-risk of foreclosure without resources to remain housed.

Food

The food category refers to any food and nutrition related expense.

Transportation

The transportation category refers to any expenses related to travel to attend classes including auto repair, gas, or public transportation.

Childcare

The childcare category refers to any child-related expense including childcare provider payments, emergency care or child health care.

We were able to supply a student with enough funding so they could come to Auburn from the Tri-Cities for one week to attend a training through our Continuing Education program. The student was homeless and had been unable to get reliable work for nearly five years. However, upon completion of the certification course, he was going to be able to get a job working for the city. Green River was the only college in the state that was still holding the training so coming for a week was the only option. By providing this student with the money to stay in a hotel for five nights, we were able to assist him in completing his program and attaining the training he would need to completely change the course of his life.

~SEAG College Staff

Health care

The health care category refers to any health-related expense or bills including medical, dental, or vision.

Utilities

The utilities category refers to any expenses specifically related to electricity, water, sewer or garbage.

Books

The book category covers printed and online books, access codes, or study and exam costs as long as all other funding sources have been exhausted.

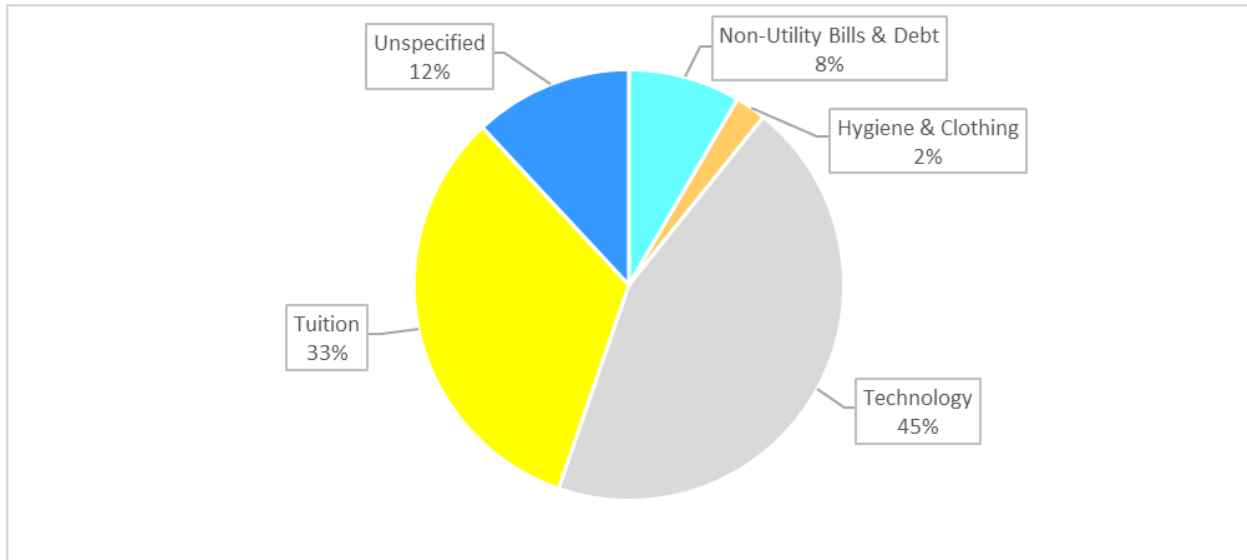
Fees and fines

The fees and fines category refer to any non-tuition related fees and fines that inhibit the student's ability to continue in classes, including non-utility or non-housing related bills or debts.

Other

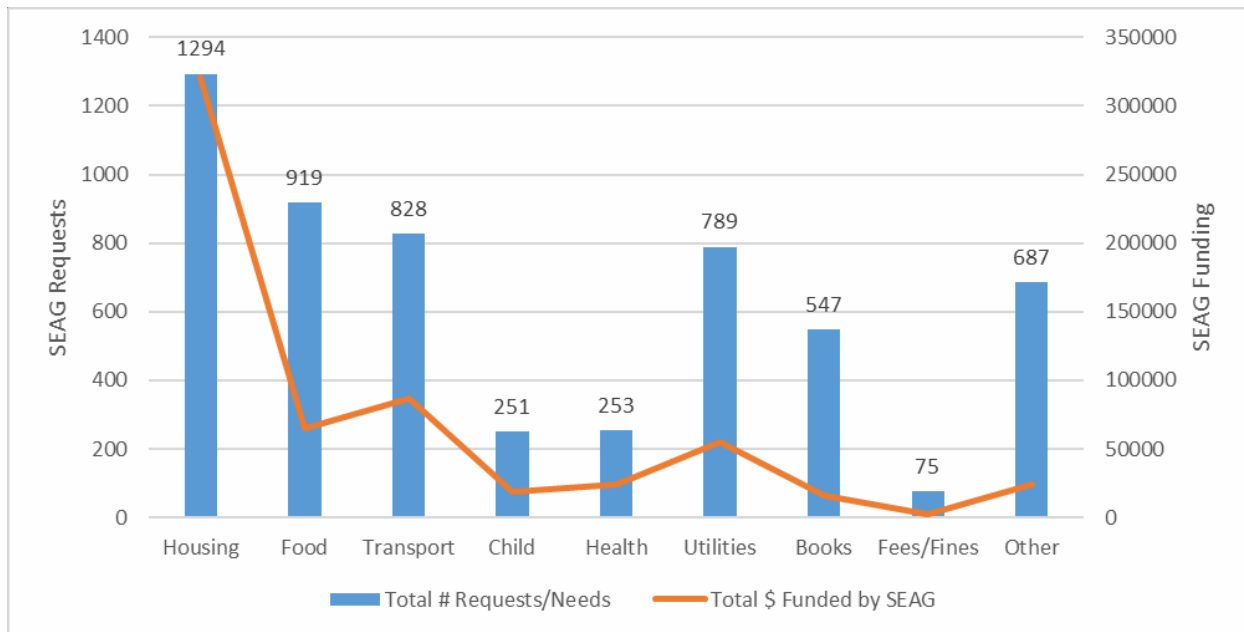
The 'other' category collected any emergency expenses that did not fit in the defined categories.

Chart 7: Other request types by percentage



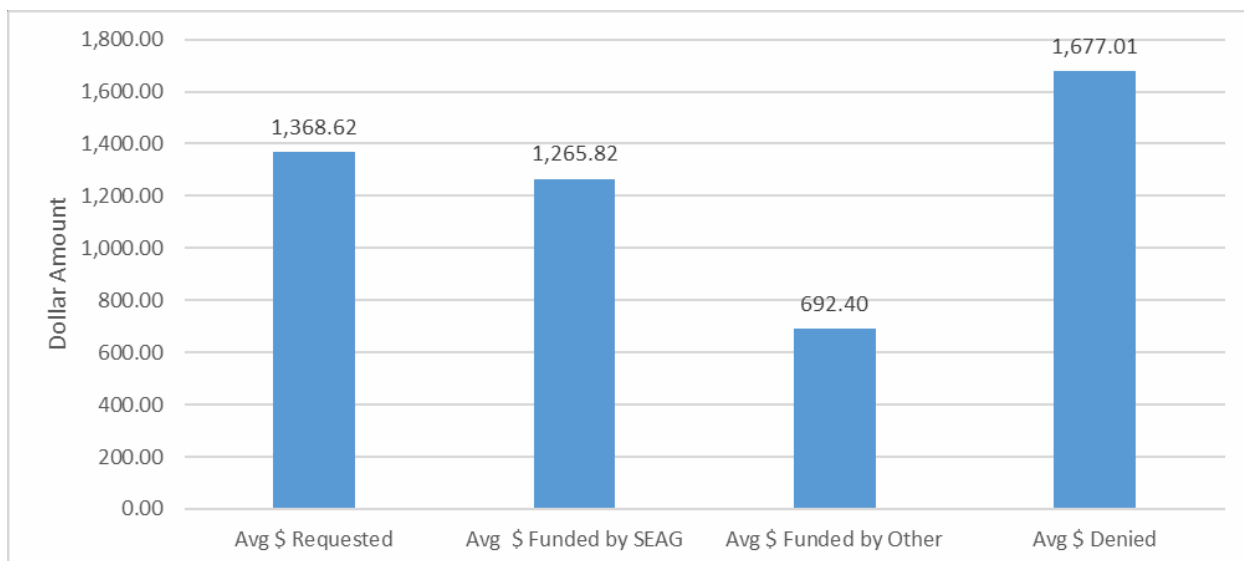
Other types of requests included: non-utility bills or debts, hygiene and clothing, technology, tuition and requests unspecified by students. Technology expenses related to attending remote classes during campus closures accounted for the largest portion of allowable other expenses at 45% or 306 requests. Technology expenses included computer, cell phone, Wi-Fi connection and devices, printer, headphones, cables and cords, or other expenses necessary to access online classes. Tuition was the second largest other request type at 33% or 225 requests. However, tuition was not an allowable SEAG expense due to other available funding. Unspecified requests were the third largest other type of request at 12% or 82 requests. This was due to a large number of incomplete applications and an inability to contact those students to specify their needs.

Chart 8: Requests versus awards by type



The largest request in both number of requests and amount requested was housing at 1,294 requests and funded by SEAG for a total of \$320,930.20. The most prevalent types of emergency requests besides housing were: food at 919 requests and funded by SEAG for a total of \$65,097.66; transportation at 828 requests and funded by SEAG for a total of \$86,681.33; and utilities at 789 requests and funded by SEAG for a total of \$55,193.08. Other types of requests that did not fit within the eight original request types accounted for 687 requests and funded by SEAG for a total of \$23,936.00. A description of these other types of requests are provided in Chart 8.

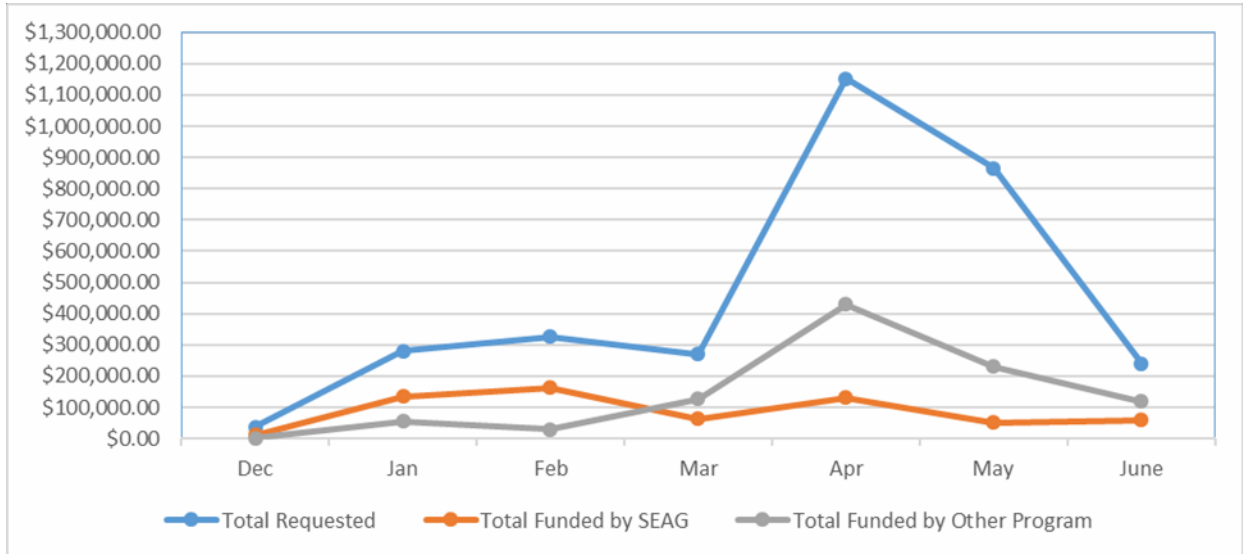
Chart 9: Comparison of average dollar amounts



The average dollar amount for all SEAG requests received was \$1,368.62, within roughly \$100 of the average amount funded by the SEAG Program. However, the average request funded by other

programs skewed smaller at \$692.40 and the average request not funded was larger at \$1,677.01. From this data, the amount requested appears to be a factor in whether a request was funded through another program or denied entirely.

Chart 10: Total dollar amount requested versus funded by month



A timeline of requests versus funded requests shows there was a significant increase in requests during spring quarter that corresponds with the timeline of the broader COVID-19 crisis. In SEAG formative evaluations, some colleges reported that they had started releasing SEAG funds in December and had nearly exhausted their SEAG funding by the beginning of spring quarter. Other colleges reported that it took longer to implement internal policies and procedures to administer SEAG funds, which allowed them to utilize SEAG funding in conjunction with other types of emergency assistance, while the previously mentioned colleges were much more reliant on other types of funding to assist students through some of the earliest and most challenging months of the pandemic.

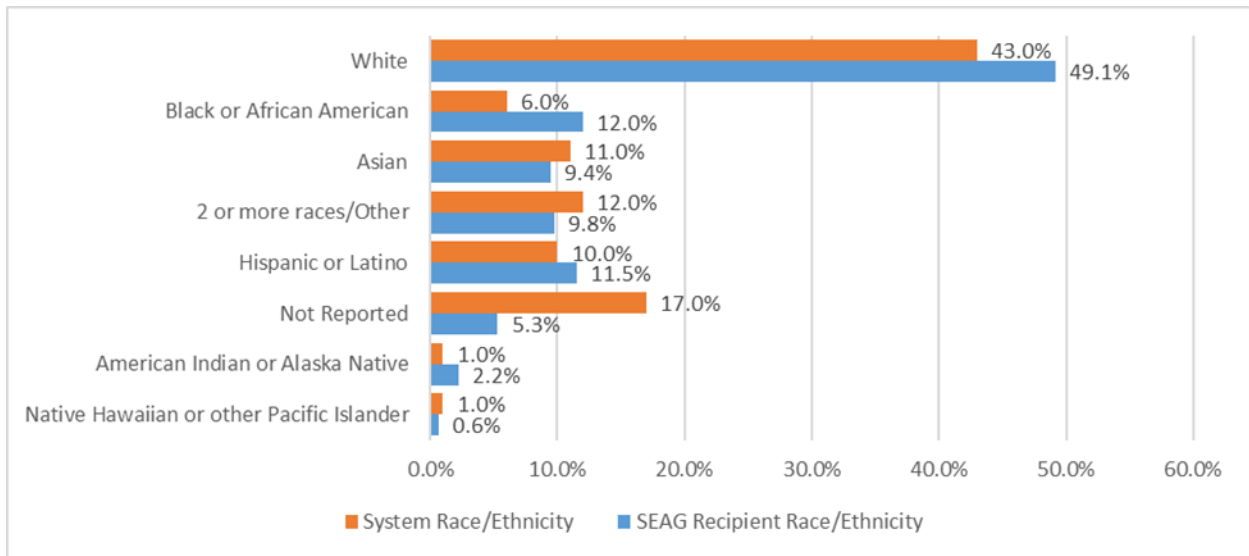
Students Served

I didn't have to sleep in my car. I was so happy to get the funds. I would have been homeless with my two young children.

It has helped me and my son tremendously! I was able to get him immediate drop off care to work on and complete my assignments.

~Students

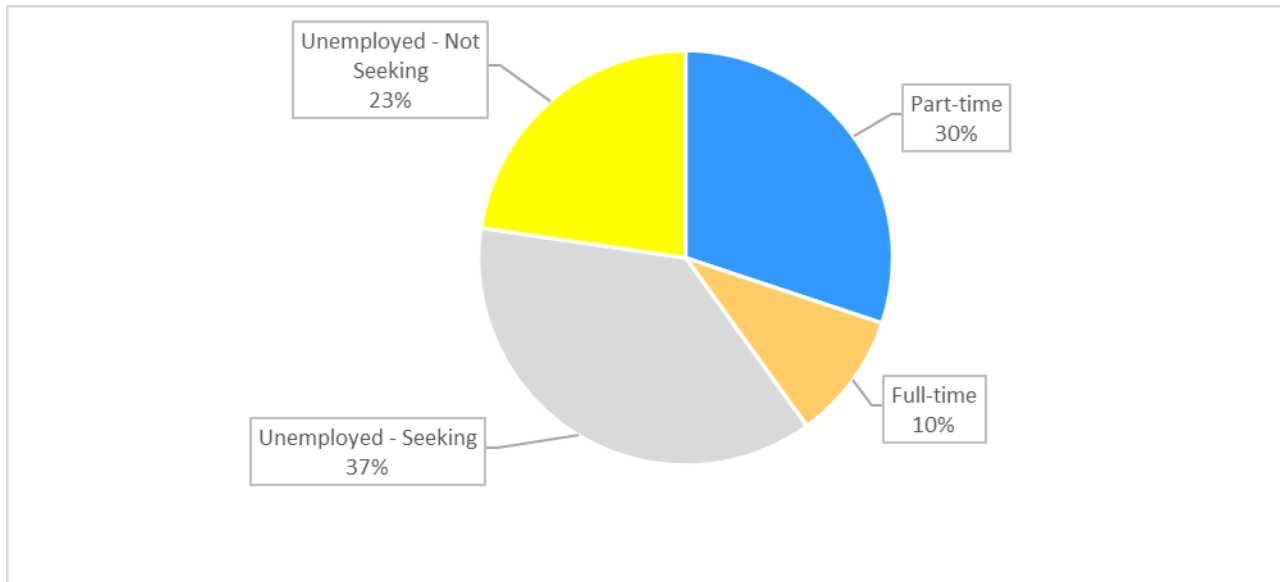
Chart 11: Percentage of SEAG recipients by Race and Ethnicity



While the race and ethnicity of SEAG applicants was comparable to system-wide data for most races, the race and ethnicity of SEAG recipients skewed slightly higher for students identifying as white and Hispanic or Latino. Black or African American students continued to represent a higher percentage of SEAG recipients 12% as compared to system-wide percentage of 6%. However, the percentage of Black or African American students who received SEAG funding was two percentage points lower than the 14% of Black or African American student who applied for SEAG funding.

In terms of gender, a larger portion of system-wide students identify as females 52% than males 40%, and an even larger percentage of students who applied for SEAG funding identified as female at 67.5% versus 32.2% males. Additionally, a slightly larger percentage of students who applied for SEAG funding indicated having children or dependents at 31.3% versus 19.9% of system-wide students.

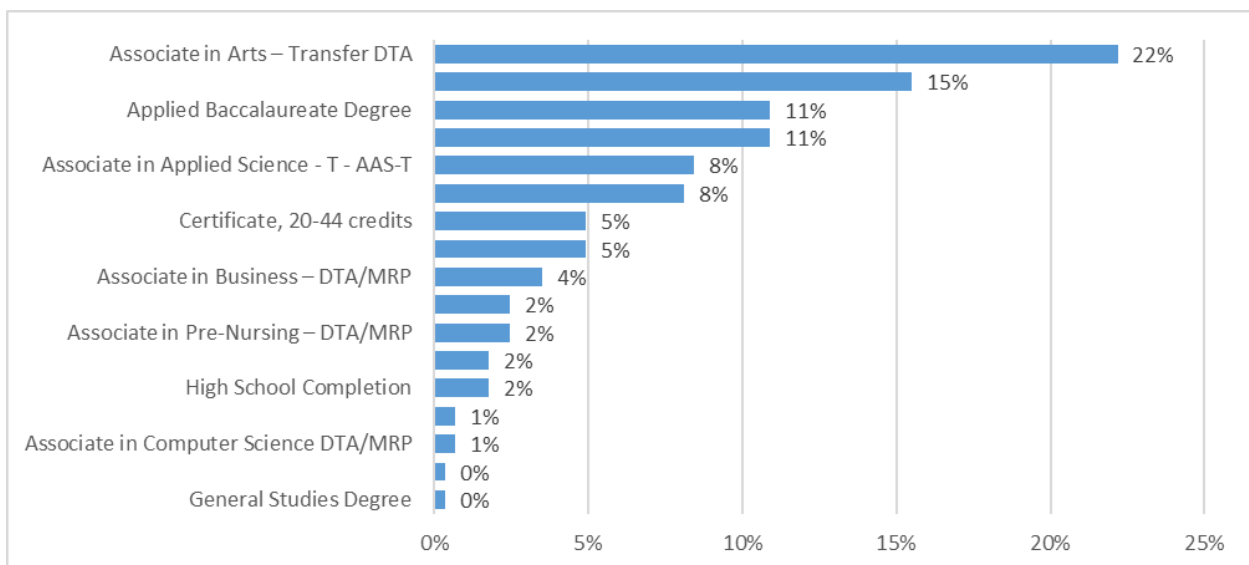
Chart 12: Employment status of SEAG applicants



A large percentage of students who requested SEAG funding did not indicate their employment status at the time of SEAG request (45%). However, of the students who did indicate their employment status, 37% of SEAG applicants reported being unemployed but seeking employment and 40% reported they were employed at least part-time. During learning community meetings, colleges reported an increase in students that had lost employment or had employment hours reduced due to the pandemic.

A total of 858 of students who received SEAG funding were engaged in other college support programs at the time. The number of students receiving other supportive services include: Worker Retraining (379), BFET (312), WorkFirst (100), Opportunity Grant (43), Passport to College (17), and Early Achievers Grant (7).

Chart 13: Percentage of all credentials earned by SEAG recipients



Of the 284 students who received SEAG funding and completed a degree in spring 2020, 22% earned an Associate of Arts-Transfer degree, 15% earned a workforce degree other than AAS-T, 11% earned an applied baccalaureate degree and 11% earned a certificate of 1-19 credits. The remaining 25% of students with completions during spring quarter were spread between 13 other credentials as pictured in Chart 13.

Impacts of COVID-19

“I am an ESL student. I usually study on campus. Now, I have to study online. I don't have a computer to do my classwork. I was using my wife's computer, but I can't use it during the week because she works from home. I usually work on campus as a student worker, but I can't now either, so I don't have money to buy a computer. It is also difficult to pay for my house.”

~Student

Through the learning community conversations and college formative evaluations, it is clear that the COVID-19 crisis has increased student basic needs, accelerated the exhaustion of SEAG funds, and required SEAG programs to shift processes and connections with students to a virtual environment. In addition, the influx of CARES Act funding⁸ for student supports helped to fill the gap in need, but also challenged the low-barrier access model of the SEAG program as application processes are merged to manage the large influx of requests for assistance.

I was able to continue with school. It took stress off of me that allowed to me to focus on my academics.

It allowed me to continue having a roof over my head and keep my car. They have made my life so much easier.

The assistance made it possible for me to still attend school. It was a huge help and took a lot of stress off of me.

~Students

It is also very clear from student statements that this health and economic crisis is adding layers of challenges to their success in college. In one student's application for SEAG funding as a result of losing employment due to COVID-19, she stated, “It's making me so overwhelmed and not able to finish anything.” This student was supported with SEAG funds for food and rent until her unemployment insurance was available. Many other students were assisted in this way and they repeatedly say, “This program allowed me to be able to pay rent and bills and to be able to buy groceries during the pandemic while my work study hours were reduced...” We also heard from students about how difficult it was to stay enrolled when they had to shift to online learning in addition to other financial challenges.

⁸ Governor Inslee awarded the community and technical colleges \$44 million in one-time funding from the Governor's discretionary pool of CARES Act appropriations.

Thank you! Yes, that funding will safely get me through the summer quarter! I will be transferring to WWU in the fall ... I'm very grateful for the [funding] to help me stay on the path to graduation despite the unpredictable circumstances.

~Students

Conclusion

This report covers initial implementation of the SEAG Program from December 2019 to June 2020. During this timeframe, college students, faculty and staff experienced unprecedented challenges as a result of the public health and economic crisis caused by COVID-19. Most SEAG Program colleges had just begun to establish policies and procedures for the distribution of SEAG funding to students and were required to quickly pivot to remote operations. As a result of rapidly changing circumstances, it is difficult to determine a baseline for student emergency needs prior to the pandemic and accurately project what student emergency needs will look like in the coming months.

What is known, however, is that many students have continued to struggle with a variety of emergency expenses that impact their ability to remain enrolled in classes. These emergency expenses have outpaced the emergency funding currently available through SEAG, CARES and local resources. Administering emergency assistance in response to the crisis has overwhelmed college staffing capacity due to the volume of requests. This has also slowed some of the more ambitious systems change efforts required to fully implement the SEAG Program in alignment with the principles outlined in this report.

Looking forward to this next year, these report findings will be used by the colleges to make course corrections. Some topics to be addressed in future learning community meetings include: 1) identification and removal of barriers to emergency assistance; 2) timeliness of review and disbursement process; 3) targeted outreach to student populations; 4) conducting meaningful follow-up with students to ensure holistic support.

This grant allowed my family and me the security to navigate through a challenging time. It allowed me the peace of mind to finish my last quarter strong, and I am very grateful.

~Student

The SEAG program was implemented at a critical moment in Washington and supported numerous students as they transitioned to the COVID-19 social and economic environment.

The continuation of the funding and systems change efforts with this program will greatly support the state's efforts to ensure an equitable economic recovery by increasing access to postsecondary education.

Appendix A — Application Approval Criteria

Selection for the SEAG program is a competitive funding process and required applicants to address the following minimum criteria to be considered:

- Demonstrated student need — The college includes demographic data on student income levels, students experiencing homelessness, food insecurity and/or other unmet basic needs;
- Equitable student access — The college ensures students' access to SEAG funds will be as low barrier as possible and demonstrate a commitment to equity and diversity;
- Inclusiveness — The college provides access for all students needing emergency assistance including those who may not necessarily meet the traditional definition of "needy student";
- Disbursement — The college demonstrates a commitment to an efficient review and decision process that ensure a minimum lapse of time between application and disbursement and indicates how the college will prioritize disbursement of emergency assistance funds;
- Commitment to Support beyond SEAG funds — The college demonstrates plan to connect student in need, regardless of SEAG funding, to additional campus and community support services and programs;
- Evaluation plan — The college details the plan to record student and program data, follow up with students and document effectiveness of the SEAG Program;

Appendix B — College Selection Process Results

SBCTC received applications from 28 of the 34 community and technical colleges in Washington state. Funding is for Dec. 1, 2019 through June 30, 2021.

College	Request	Funding
Bellevue College	\$100,000	\$0
Bellingham Community College	\$100,000	\$0
Centralia College	\$100,000	\$100,000
Clark College	\$100,000	\$100,000
Clover Park Technical College	\$100,000	\$0
Columbia Basin College	\$100,000	\$0
Edmonds College	\$100,000	\$96,000
Everett Community College	\$100,000	\$0
Grays Harbor College	\$100,000	\$82,000
Green River College	\$100,000	\$96,000
Highline College	\$100,000	\$0
Lake Washington Technical Institute	\$100,000	\$100,000
Lower Columbia College	\$59,000	\$65,000
Olympic College	\$100,000	\$0
Peninsula College	\$100,000	\$100,000
Pierce College District	\$100,000	\$82,000
Renton Technical College	\$100,000	\$0
Seattle Central College	\$100,000	\$100,000
North Seattle College	\$100,000	\$62,000
South Seattle College	\$100,000	\$0
Shoreline Community College	\$100,000	\$100,000
Skagit Valley College	\$50,000	\$59,000
South Puget Sound Community College	\$100,000	\$0
Spokane Community College	\$100,000	\$0
Spokane Falls Community College	\$100,000	\$0
Tacoma Community College	\$100,000	\$100,000
Walla Walla Community College	\$85,000	\$90,000
Whatcom Community College	\$100,000	\$90,000
Totals	\$2,694,000	\$1,422,000

Appendix C — SEAG Data Collection Plan

SEAG Program colleges were required to collect the following information to assist SBCTC in evaluation of student need and fulfillment of the reporting responsibilities outlined in 2SHB 1893 to, “Summarize how the community and technical colleges distributed funds to student, and provide the number of students, the amounts, and the emergency conditions for which funds were granted.”⁶

Student Information

- Student Identifier (SID)
- Gender
- Date of Birth
- Family Status
- Number of Dependents
- Race/Ethnicity
- Employment Status
- Veteran Status
- Foster Care Status at the age of 18
- SNAP Recipient (yes/no)

Program Information

The following data elements were collected and included in quarterly reports submitted by SEAG Program Colleges:

Program Data:

- Number of requests
- Number of approved requests
- Number of denied requests
- Total amount of SEAG funds requested
- Total amount of SEAG funds awarded
- Average SEAG award amount
- Number of requests by need type
- Total amount of other emergency assistance funds awarded by source
- Number of students connected to other support services by program Request and Award

Data by Student:

- Student Information (noted above)
- Amount requested
- Amount disbursed
- Need category
- Disbursement method (check, gift card, vendor payment, etc.)
- Time Lapse between application and decision
- Time lapse between decision and award disbursement

⁶ Washington State Legislature, HB 1893 2019-20 Providing assistance to certain postsecondary students.

Appendix D — Program Administration

The following policies and procedures are requirements for the SEAG Program:

- Access to SEAG funds will be low barrier and not require students to complete the FAFSA application
- Ensure all students needing emergency assistance are eligible for SEAG funding including students that may not meet the traditional definition of “needy student”
- Students must submit SEAG requests in writing and be supported in completing their written request
- Processes must be established to collect at least the minimum student and program data elements required for monthly and year-end reporting
- Colleges must engage in meaningful follow-up with students to document whether the emergency was resolved or not, etc.
- A plan for prioritization of fund disbursement must be identified
- Must ensure access to SEAG funds at all times, even in the absence of key personnel
- Must ensure equitable access to SEAG funds by employing targeted and general outreach efforts and allowing for multiple access points
- SEAG funds cannot go towards a students' college tuition and fees
- SEAG funds may be used for book expenses only when other funding sources are exhausted
- Emergency aid must be considered a grant and students must not be required to reimburse college
- Must continue to accept SEAG requests after funds are exhausted, include unfunded requests in program reporting and connect unfunded students to other resources



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Washington State Board for Community and Technical Colleges