

# Caring Through Crisis

How Emergency Aid Improves Completion & Financial Sustainability

- 1 Introduction to Panelists
- 2 Unmet Need & Impact of Emergency Aid
- 3 Emergency Aid Programs in Texas
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# Today's Speakers

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Vice President of  
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# Unmet Need & Impact of Emergency Aid

# Higher Ed Affordability Challenges

- **Unmet need:** The amount a student still needs to pay for college after all financial aid, work-study, and expected family contributions have been accounted for
- Texas students face significant levels of unmet need, **averaging \$11,682 at two-year institutions**
- **Non-tuition expenses** such as food, housing, transportation, and childcare represent roughly 80% of the total cost to attend a Texas community college

## Texas Undergraduate Students' Financial Challenges



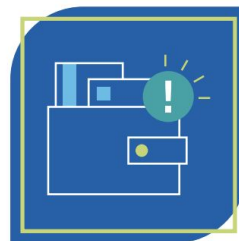
**4%**

were able to rely on their savings  
and/or wages to pay for school



**73%**

reported running  
out of money at least once

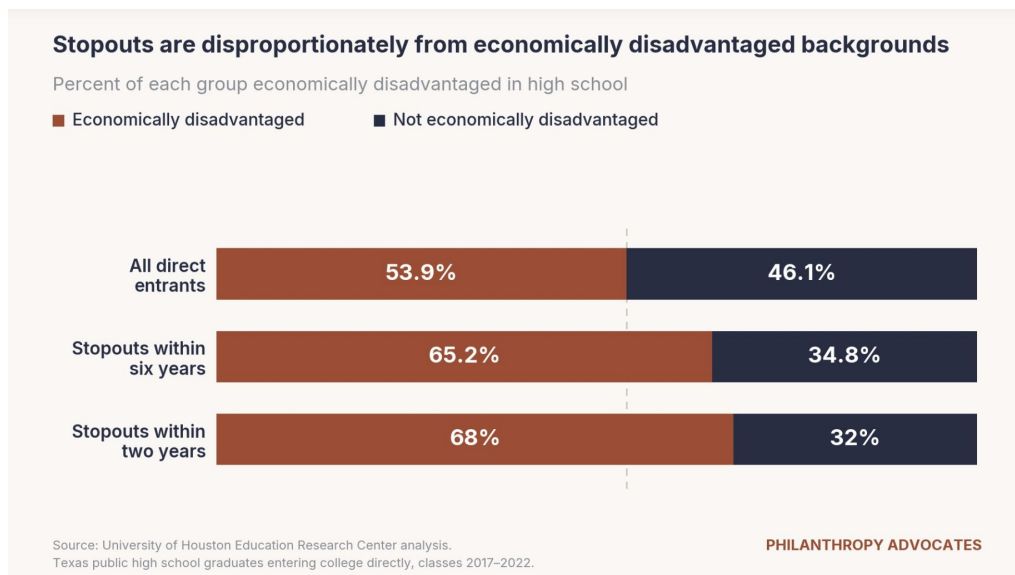


**58%**

would have trouble getting \$500 for an  
unexpected expense

# Unmet Need and Student Completion Gaps

- **35% of students with \$10,000 or more in unmet need graduate within 6 years**, compared to 62% of students with no unmet need
- Most students who stop out (78%) **leave in the first two years** and two-thirds begin at a community college
- Among students who stop out or consider doing so, **79% cite basic needs insecurity or financial challenges** as the underlying reason



# Emergency Aid and Its Impact

- **Complements and does NOT replace** investments in need-based financial aid programs, which serve as fundamental levers to reduce anticipated unmet need
- Research consistently points to program design as the key differentiator, with the strongest results occurring when aid is **delivered quickly and paired with wraparound services or case management**



Reos Partners

## The Roadmap to Effective Emergency Aid

Across a cohort of 10 Texas colleges that implemented comprehensive programs, **76% of students who received emergency aid persisted to the next academic year or graduated**

# Emergency Aid Programs in Texas

# Texas Emergency Aid Landscape

## THECB Emergency Aid Network

Unique learning community of institutions implementing emergency aid, advocating for EA through practices analysis, and producing best practices to support implementation.



## Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF I) Passes

More than \$6.5 billion distributed to Texas institutions, with \$2.5 billion required as direct emergency aid to students.



● 2018 ● — — — — — ● Early 2020-2021 ● — — — — — ● MARCH 2020 ● — — ● POST 2021 & BEYOND

## THECB Foundation Provides Funding

Raised \$1.25M from funders and board members; provided grants to 86 institutions for direct aid (1,713 students) and indirect services (9,099 students).



## Ongoing Philanthropy & Technical Assistance

Over 50% of institutions rely on philanthropy. Multiple philanthropic-funded communities of practice providing technical assistance focused on EA and completion strategies.



# Texas Emergency Aid Survey: Methodology

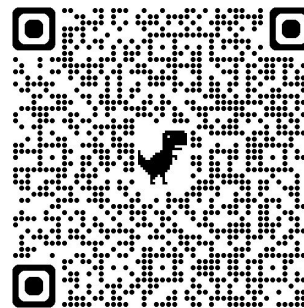
- The survey was disseminated to all public two-year and four-year institutions in Texas.
- A total of 35 institutions/systems completed the survey, yielding approximately a 33% response rate. While not representative of all public institutions in Texas, respondents reflected diversity across institution types, such as two-year and four-year institutions and urban, suburban, and rural.
- Survey findings are supplemented with focus group findings across 11 institutions that expressed interest and accepted invitations to participate.

**edtrust**  
IN TEXAS



## **Invest To Finish:**

Policies To Improve Emergency  
Aid and Boost Postsecondary  
Completion in Texas



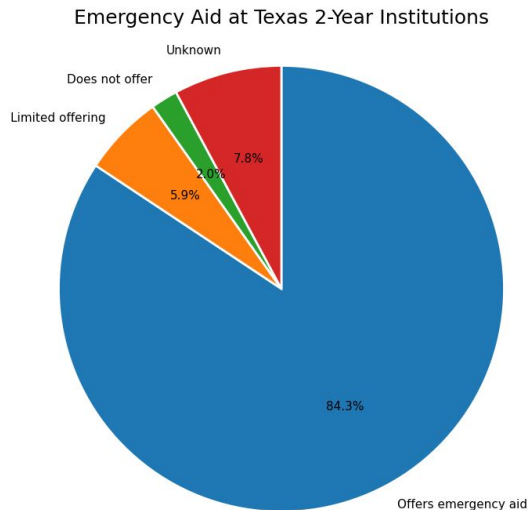
# What is Emergency Aid?

For the purposes of our survey, emergency aid was defined as **"an immediate assistance to students facing unexpected expenses or basic needs insecurities with the goal of supporting their continued enrollment."**



# Texas Emergency Aid Survey: Key Findings

**90% of two-year institutions offer some type of emergency aid**



**66% reported not being able to meet demand** for emergency aid compared to 75% of 4-year institutions.

**83% reported that philanthropy, foundations, and private donations** supply the majority of their emergency aid funding; **11% utilize state funding.**

# Eligibility for Emergency Aid

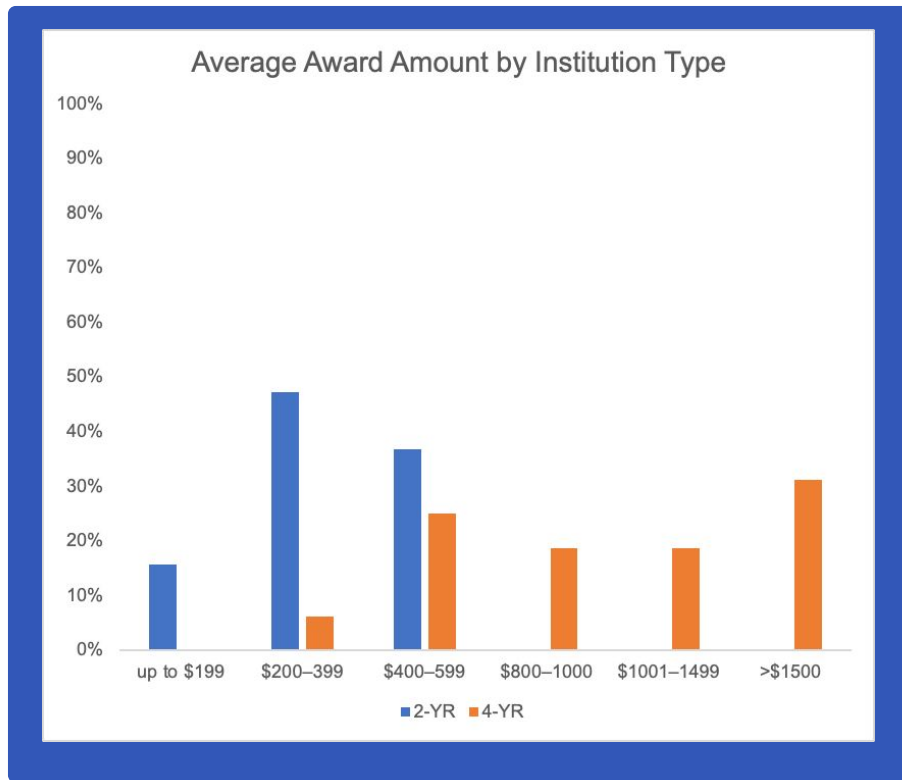
## **Typical Requirements:**

- Currently enrolled student
- Minimum credit hour requirement
- Reapplication restrictions (e.g., only eligible once per semester)
- Maximum award amounts
- Good academic standing/ minimum GPA

## **Less Common Requirements:**

- Pell eligible
- Time to completion requirement (e.g., only eligible in final year)
- Categorical requirements (e.g., parenting student)

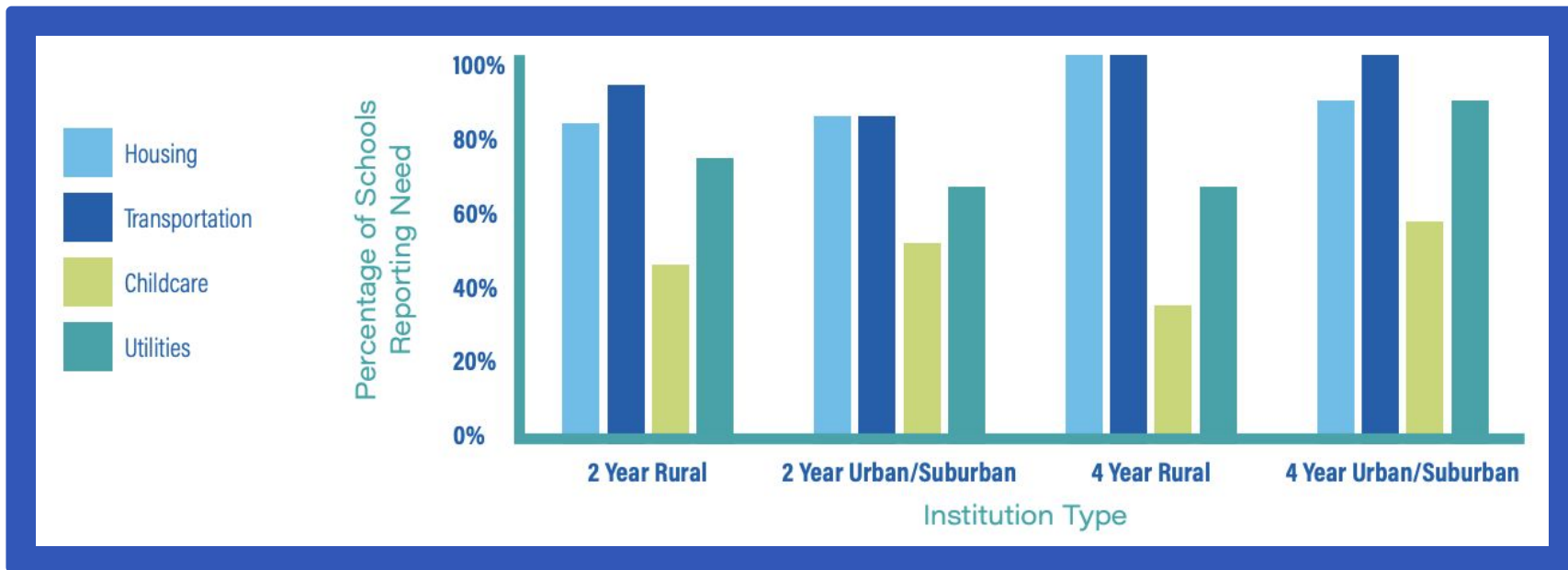
# Award Amount & Disbursement



- Over 60% of EA awards are between \$200 and \$599
- 78% of community colleges disburse funds within 5 business days or less
- Disbursement methods vary - through financial aid office, cash/gift cards, direct payment to vendor

# Top Requests Reflect Basic Needs

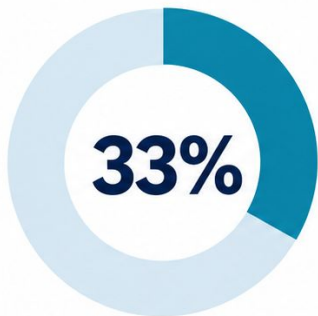
Housing, transportation, childcare, and utilities were the most common requests for support across rural, urban and suburban institutions.



# Emergency Aid Supplements Broader Social Service Offerings

| SUPPORT SERVICES OFFERED BY SURVEY RESPONDENTS | 2-YEAR INSTITUTIONS | 4-YEAR INSTITUTIONS | RURAL | SUB/URBAN |
|------------------------------------------------|---------------------|---------------------|-------|-----------|
| Career Support                                 | 68%                 | 88%                 | 50%   | 93%       |
| Clothing Donations                             | 47%                 | 81%                 | 43%   | 73%       |
| Childcare Support                              | 68%                 | 38%                 | 50%   | 53%       |
| Food Pantry                                    | 84%                 | 94%                 | 79%   | 93%       |
| Housing Support                                | 58%                 | 56%                 | 36%   | 67%       |
| Medical                                        | 11%                 | 0%                  | 14%   | 0%        |
| Social Services Referrals                      | 78%                 | 75%                 | 64%   | 87%       |
| Transportation Assistance                      | 89%                 | 50%                 | 79%   | 60%       |
| None                                           | 11%                 | 0%                  | 14%   | 0%        |

# Tracking Outcomes



**One-third** of community college respondents track outcomes for students that receive emergency aid.



Enrollment  
Status



Persistence to  
Next Semester



GPA



Degree or Credential  
Completion

# Best Practices

1

## **Comprehensive, Student-Centric Service Design**

Emergency aid is most effective when institutions utilize a case management approach and provide supplemental basic needs wraparound supports.

2

## **Streamline Request Process to Prioritize Access**

Requiring FAFSA/TAFSA and a lengthy application process may unintentionally exclude students.

3

## **Address Communication Gaps to Normalize Use of Student Service Offerings**

Building awareness of these programs and reducing stigma is a common challenge. Training all staff and faculty on a referral process, including information about services in new student orientation, and proactive communications help build awareness.

4

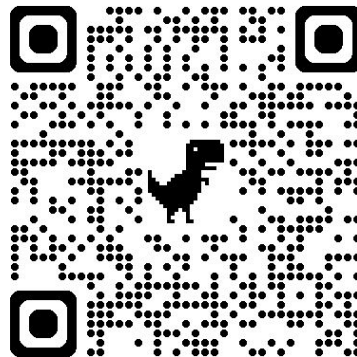
## **Track Outcomes to Support Sustainability**

Institutions that track the impact of emergency aid on persistence and completion rates reported that it helped to build institutional and philanthropic support for continued or increased investment in these programs.

# Case Study: Grayson College

# Texas Community Colleges Leading the Way

*As part of a forthcoming series examining how Texas community colleges are driving student completion by implementing basic needs strategies, including emergency aid, we partnered with Grayson College to conduct a qualitative case study. Check out the video below and look for the written brief coming soon!*



# Grayson Cares

**A Student-Centered Approach to the Mission of Grayson College: Student Success.**

**Connect. Support. Empower.** Grayson Cares is a comprehensive student support initiative designed to meet students where they are — addressing the full range of challenges that can stand between them and academic success.

## Mental Health

Counseling and crisis response  
for students in need

## Basic Needs

Food assistance, housing, and  
transportation resources

## Emergency Aid

Rapid aid for students facing  
unexpected hardship

## Case Management

Personalized coordination of campus and community  
supports

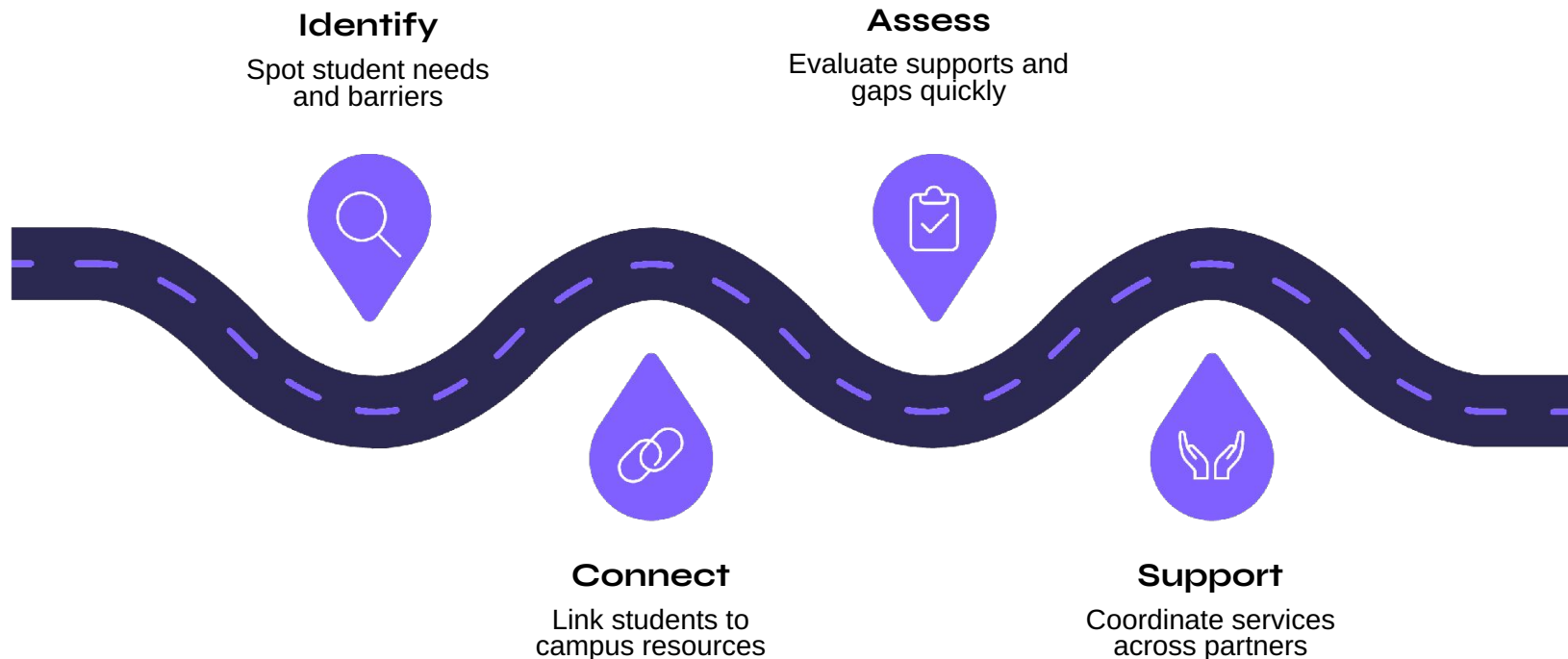
## Community Resources

Connections to local organizations and partner  
services

# Our Strategy

## One Coordinated Approach

Grayson Cares brings campus and community resources together to address the barriers that can affect student success. Rather than operating in silos, the program functions as a unified system — ensuring that every student who reaches out receives timely, coordinated, and meaningful support.



**The goal:** Remove barriers, strengthen connections, and help students stay on track. By aligning institutional resources with community partnerships, Grayson Cares creates a safety net that is both responsive and sustainable — built to meet students at their point of need and walk alongside them toward success.

# Program Structure

## Meeting Students Where They Are

### Multiple Points of Entry

- Student self-referral
- Faculty & staff referrals
- BIT referrals
- Counseling & crisis response

### Coordinated Supports

- Counseling services
- Vic's Market & food assistance
- Emergency aid
- Housing & transportation resources
- Case management
- Community referrals

The program's structure is intentionally flexible, recognizing that students arrive with different needs, different levels of awareness about available resources, and different comfort levels in asking for help. Whether a student walks in on their own or is referred by a concerned faculty member, Grayson Cares is designed to respond.

# The Student Experience

## One Door. Multiple Supports.

A student may come to Grayson Cares for **one immediate need** and discover a broader network of support they didn't know was available. The program is built around the understanding that challenges rarely come alone — financial stress, food insecurity, mental health struggles, and academic difficulty are often interconnected.

### → Listen

We start by hearing the student's story without judgment

### → Assess the Whole Picture

We look beyond the presenting issue to understand the full context

### → Address Immediate Needs

We act quickly to stabilize the student's situation

### → Connect to Resources

We link students to the right campus and community supports

### → Follow Up

We check in to ensure support is working and adjust as needed

□ **Students don't have to know where to start — we help them figure it out.**

# Funding & Administration

## Leveraging Resources to Meet Student Needs

Grayson Cares is sustained through a diverse mix of funding sources and governed by rigorous administrative practices that ensure accountability, compliance, and continuous improvement. This multi-layered approach to resource management allows the program to remain responsive to evolving student needs while maintaining fiscal integrity.

### Funding Sources

**Grant Funding**

**Institutional Resources**

**Foundation & Donor Support**

### Administration

**Budget & Expenditure Tracking**

**Reporting**

**Continuous Improvement**

# Board Engagement

## Connecting Grayson Cares to Institutional Priorities

Board engagement is a critical component of Grayson Cares' long-term sustainability and institutional alignment. When board members are informed and engaged, they are better positioned to champion student success initiatives, advocate for resources, and hold the institution accountable for outcomes that matter.



### Awareness

Visibility into the real needs students face on campus



### Institutional Priorities

Support for strategic goals tied to student retention and success



### Program Impact

Clear understanding of how grant-funded initiatives are performing



### Accountability

Oversight of resources and outcomes to ensure responsible stewardship

**Student success is an institutional responsibility.**

# Measuring Impact

## From Services to Outcomes: August 2025 - August 2026

Grayson Cares is committed to data-informed practice. Tracking outcomes is not just a grant requirement — it is a core part of how the program learns, improves, and demonstrates its value to students, the institution, and the community. Every data point tells part of a student's story.

### Emergency Aid

\$157,694.72

Serving: 597 Students

### Transportation Insecurity

Gas Vouchers: \$51,320.00

Serving: 1,283 Students

### Basic Needs Food Insecurity

NTFB Mobile Food Pantry - 9,427 individuals served. 156,421 lbs food

635 - Students Check-in's

### Vic's Market

7,613 lbs

4,144 - Students Check-in's

### Counseling

In-person: 495 Counseling Sessions

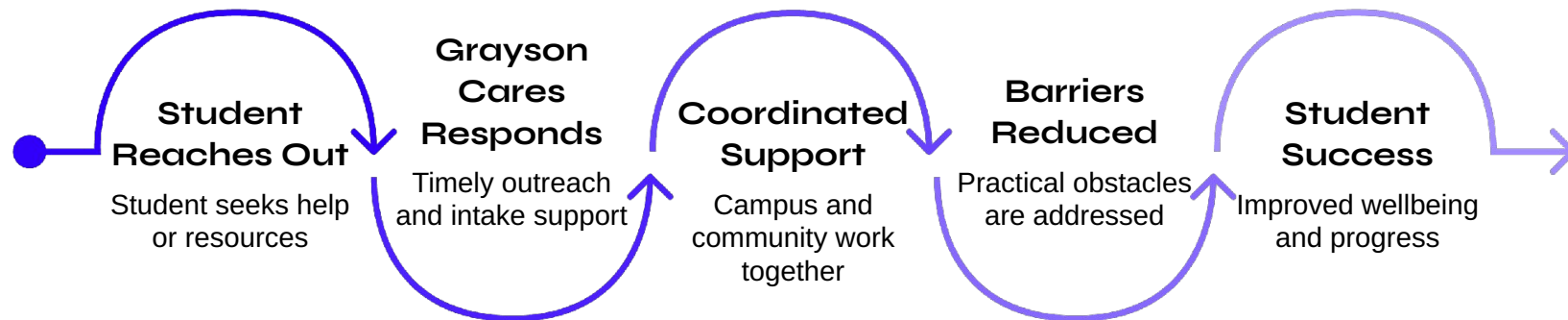
Telehealth: 516 Basic Needs/Counseling Registrations



**The central question:** Did our support help remove a barrier to student success?

# The Grayson Cares Model

Connect. Support. Empower.



The Grayson Cares model is more than a program — it is a commitment. A commitment to seeing students as whole people, to addressing the full range of challenges they face, and to building a campus culture where no student has to navigate difficulty alone. From the first point of contact to long-term follow-up, every step in the model is designed with one outcome in mind: **student success.**

We care about our students. We care about their success. And we're here to help them navigate what's next.

# Closing

# Takeaway Questions

## Awareness

What level of visibility into student needs do you have? What visibility into available supports do students have?

## Impact Monitoring

How would you assess the quality of data and insights related to your emergency aid program? What systems and capacity may need improvement to track outcomes?

## Alignment

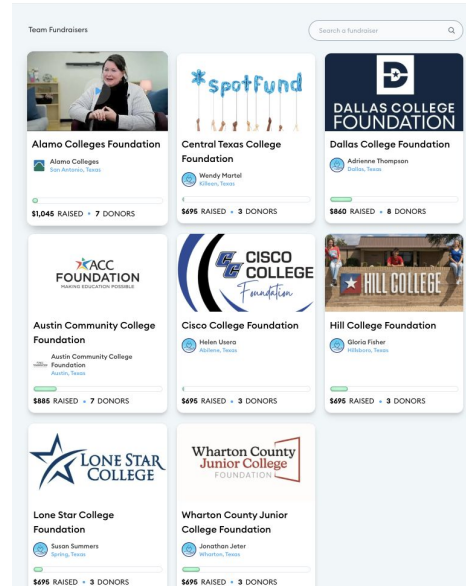
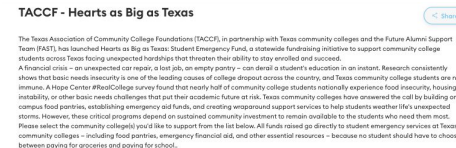
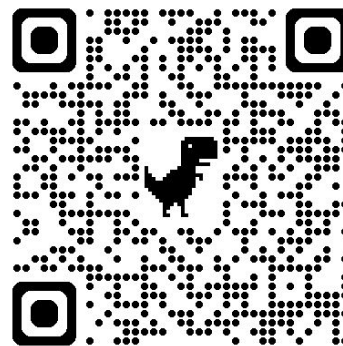
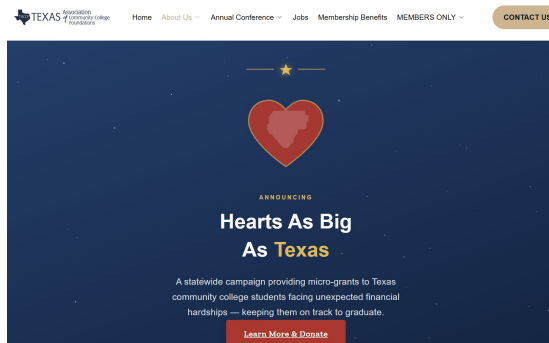
To what extent are emergency aid and other support services integrated and aligned to institutional priorities and goals?

## Governance

How are decisions made concerning the administration of emergency aid at your institution? Are financial aid resources aligned to optimize student persistence and completion?

# Heart as Big as Texas campaign

- Student emergency aid fund launched by the **Texas Association of Community College Foundations**
- Dr. Adrienne Thompson (Dallas College) serves as current Board President
- Matthew Busby (Del Mar College Foundation) former Board President





# Thank you

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