Understanding and Implementing Effective Emergency Aid Practices

Adult Promise Phase II Convening

June 5, 2017
Boulder, Colorado

Omari Burnside
Director of Strategic Initiatives

NASPA® Research and Policy Institute
Why I’m excited to be here…

- East meets West
- New partners in the mission
- Previous work with university systems
- Power of a network
- Timely, relevant, and critical work
What is NASPA?

NASPA is the leading association for the *advancement, health, and sustainability* of the student affairs profession.

NASPA addresses common functional areas within *student affairs* (housing, advising, conduct, assessment) as well as *broad higher education themes* (access, persistence, and degree completion).

Our work provides high-quality professional development, advocacy, and research for **15,000 members** in all 50 states, 25 countries, and 8 U.S. territories.
Today we will cover…

The What
- Emergency Aid 101: Understanding the Basics
  - NASPA’s Landscape Analysis of Emergency Aid Programs
  - Project Goals & Method

So What?
- Key Learnings from the National Study

Now What?
- Building and Strengthening Your Emergency Aid Program
  - Critical Needs
  - Campus Capacity Areas
  - State Support
The What

*Emergency Aid 101: Understanding the Basics*
NASPA and its partners co-created a working definition for emergency aid.

Emergency aid includes one-time **grants**, **loans**, and **completion scholarships** of less than $1,500 provided to students facing unexpected financial crisis, as well as **food pantries**, **housing assistance**, and **transportation assistance**.
First, let’s make sure we have a shared understanding of the key terms…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergency Aid Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Campus vouchers</td>
<td>Cover materials from the bookstore or meals from the dining hall; few barriers to distribution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Completion scholarships</td>
<td>Cover outstanding balances for students poised to graduate or continue to the next semester</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emergency loans</td>
<td>Address hardship related to the timing of a student’s financial aid disbursement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food pantries</td>
<td>Address food insecurity on campus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restricted grants</td>
<td>Support students who experience unexpected hardship; typically require that students meet certain academic or other requirements</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unrestricted grants</td>
<td>Support students who experience unexpected hardship; typically awarded without restrictions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It is also important that we understand what emergency aid is not...

Emergency aid is not...

- Part of student’s financial aid package or award
- Meant to be a recurring solution for a student’s financial troubles
- The sliver bullet for student financial capability
In 2016, NASPA released the *Landscape Analysis of Emergency Aid Programs*

- Conducted with funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
- **Primary Goals:**
  - Describe the current condition of emergency aid programs across institutional sectors
  - Highlight connections to student outcomes
  - Provide examples of exemplary practice
  - Surface emerging institutions
The report highlights results from campus interviews and a national survey.

### Campus Interviews

- **October – December 2015**
  - **20+ institutions** interviewed
  - Brought **multiple perspectives** from financial aid, student affairs, development

### National Survey

- **January – March 2016**
  - **695** institutions responded
  - **523** have an existing emergency aid program
NASPA’S survey received responses from institutions that varied in type…

**SECTOR OF RESPONDING INSTITUTIONS**

- 35% Public, 4-year or above
- 38% Private for-profit, 4-year or above
- 2% Public, 2-year
...and by size

SIZE OF RESPONDING INSTITUTIONS

- Under 1,000: 13%
- 1,000 - 4,999: 11%
- 5,000 - 9,999: 19%
- 10,000 - 19,999: 40%
- 20,000 and above: 18%
So What?

*Key Learnings From the National Study*
Learning #1: Emergency aid is not a new student success strategy

Survey Question: Approximately how long has your institution’s emergency aid program been established?

- Less than 1 year: 5%
- 1-2 years: 7%
- 3-5 years: 18%
- More than 5 years: 64%
- I don't know: 6%

Over 80% of colleges that have an emergency aid program have had it for 3 or more years.
Learning #2: Emergency aid is at all types of institutions

### (SECTOR BREAKDOWN)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution Type</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>I don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Public, 2-year</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private for-profit, 4-year or above</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Private not-for-profit, 4-year or above</td>
<td>73%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public, 4-year or above</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### (SIZE BREAKDOWN)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Size Category</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
<th>I don't know</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>20,000 and above</td>
<td>91%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10,000 - 19,999</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5,000 - 9,999</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1,000 - 4,999</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>31%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under 1,000</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Learning #3: Emergency loans are offered most by campuses

Survey Question: Which types of aid are offered at your institution?

- Completion Scholarships: 33%
- Emergency Loans: 67%
- Restricted Small Grants: 47%
- Unrestricted Small Grants: 54%
- Vouchers: 47%
- Food Pantry: 45%
Learning #4: Word of mouth is the primary method for disseminating info for all types of emergency aid

Survey Question: For each type of emergency aid at your institution, which communication channel is the primary means of informing students about emergency aid opportunities?
Learning #5: Majority of colleges do not use data to proactively identify students who would benefit from emergency aid.

Only 23% of institutions use data to proactively identify students.

Survey Question: What prevents your institution from using data to proactively identify students who may benefit from emergency aid.

- Concerns about students' privacy: 16%
- Not comfortable using data to target students: 19%
- Do not have capacity to analyze data: 30%
- Do not collect the data that is needed: 30%
- Too many students qualify: 42%
- Not clear what data is relevant: 40%
Learning #6: Financial resources is the leading barrier to serving more students with emergency aid.

Survey Question: Which of the following are barriers to serving a greater number of students with emergency aid?

- Limits of existing financial aid packages: 37%
- Cumbersome application process: 5%
- Available program does not align with need: 28%
- Lack of communication about program: 33%
- Limited personnel: 15%
- Lack of financial resources: 76%
- Lack of interdepartmental coordination: 12%
- Lack of clear ownership for administering program: 10%
Learning #7: University foundations and individual donors are the leading sources of emergency aid funds

Over 50% reported foundations and donors as the source for grants; 44% for completion scholarships; 41% for loans

The next leading source was the operating budget.

No more than 2% of institutions reported alumni giving as the source for any type of emergency aid.
Summary of Key Learnings

1. Emergency aid is not a new student success strategy

2. Emergency aid is at all types of institutions

3. Emergency loans are offered the most by campuses

4. Word of mouth is the primary method for disseminating info for all types of emergency aid

5. Majority of colleges do not use data to proactively identify students who would benefit from emergency aid

6. Financial resources is the leading barrier to serving more students with emergency aid

7. University foundations and individual donors are the leading sources of emergency aid funds
Now What?

Building and Strengthening Your Emergency Aid Program
“A goal without a plan is just a wish.”

-Anonymous
Our post-analysis of the survey revealed that there are 5 critical needs

- A **common language** to describe and discuss emergency aid
- More **compliance guidance** for administering emergency grants and loans
- Set of **procedures** to guide the development of new and existing programs
- Better **use of data** to identify students who need aid and assess effect of programs on student success
- More **automated processing**
This means that campuses must build their capacity in several key areas

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Capacity</th>
<th>Potential Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Leadership</strong></td>
<td>Is there a clear office/department/individual responsible for the emergency aid program’s implementation and success?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Policy</strong></td>
<td>Does the campus adhere to relevant state and federal guidelines for distributing financial aid?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Institutional Research</strong></td>
<td>To what extent does the campus use data to identify the students who could benefit from the program the most?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Technology</strong></td>
<td>To what extent does the campus leverage technology to receive and process requests in a timely manner?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sustainability</strong></td>
<td>To what extent does the campus allocate and leverage multiple sources to secure enough funding for the emergency aid program?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Communication</strong></td>
<td>Are various mechanisms used to inform students about emergency aid availability?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When building an emergency aid program you may come across some questions and critiques

1. **Is the delivery of emergency aid outside of the mission of higher education?**
   
   “Institutions are not social service agencies.”

2. **What if students “game the system?”**
   
   “If a student needs emergency aid, perhaps that means he or she cannot afford to go to college.”

3. **Should emergency aid be considered a one-time resource for students?**
   
   “We should not expect students to build emergency aid into their yearly budget.”
Your office can play multiple roles in helping campuses build up their programs

- Leverage your power to **convene**
- Serve as a **policy** advisor
- Provide **tools and resources** to streamline the process and to create continuity among campuses
- Review current **state aid programs** and see which can be used and/or repurposed for emergency aid
- Be a **data** steward!
- Be their **advocate**
Closing Thoughts…

- Emergency aid has the potential to be an impactful tool to support retention, persistence, and completion.
- A strong emergency aid program requires a campus to effectively collaborate between multiple departments/offices.
- Use data to tell your story, highlight the moral imperative, and to show impact.
- Having an emergency aid program is more than just administering funds and resources to students. We must work with students to understand their unique story to provide them with the best support possible.
Questions?
Thank You!

Omari Burnside
Director of Strategic Initiatives
NASPA
oburnside@naspa.org
202-719-1197