Since the COVID-19 pandemic began, Irvine Valley College (IVC) has received much-needed stimulus funds to aid the college in responding to the pandemic and continuing its operations in an entirely different environment. Throughout this time, the health and safety of students, faculty, and staff has remained IVC’s top priority. The college leveraged Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF), state and federal COVID-19 Response Block Grants (CRBG), Student Equity and Achievement (SEA) Program funds, and Hunger Free Campus funds, in addition to many hours of dedicated staff time and effort, to address the challenges caused by the pandemic. Overall, IVC invested $16.6 million in state and federal funds in the following major areas: $9.1 million to cover revenue losses/payroll costs and indirect costs associated with the pandemic; $5.8 million in direct student emergency grants and food assistance; $846,000 in equipment, including Chromebooks and laptops for students, faculty, and staff to support remote learning and operations; and $816,000 in software support, personal protective equipment (PPE), cleaning and sanitization supplies, COVID-19 tests and other critical purchases to combat the coronavirus.
1 Replacement Cost for Student Resources

With the onset of COVID-19 and the need to move to a virtual learning environment, Irvine Valley College implemented a learning management system that could deliver lab classes, such as biology, physics, and dance. Another web-based learning management system was purchased to serve as the platform upon which courses could be delivered virtually, including mobile learning options. Additional plugins were utilized to enhance online course design and delivery practices. A software solution was implemented that could provide a simulated, class-like lab environment to deliver required course-based labs. The college acquired faculty-identified lab kits for student use from the convenience of students’ homes.

2 Technology for the Virtual Environment

The adaptation of courses from an in-person to a virtual environment required the purchase of various digital modalities. A software platform for online tutoring was implemented for its ability to offer scheduling, appointment management, web-based video conferencing, and other online communications for faculty and students. Speech-to-text transcription software was acquired to produce automated meeting notes and recordings. An on-demand streaming video platform has provided accessibility to online library media. For accessibility purposes, the college structured a closed captioning program to provide 48-hour turnaround of videos to ensure accessibility is prioritized. Hardware to support the virtual environment includes webcams, spotlights, Wi-Fi extenders, and headsets for faculty online teaching. These platforms were crucial in transitioning to an all-online college, as resources such as digital signatures and document workflow solutions provided an efficient way to approve and authorize activities and documents through an electronic process.
Remote technology support continued to be provided over phone, chat, and email to ensure the needs of students are met from 7am-7pm daily since the beginning of the pandemic. The college added online student services to ensure student needs were addressed and met. A virtual help desk was created to provide online resources, counseling and advisement services, and student engagement opportunities in a virtual environment. The implementation of a chatbot component to the student services webpages assisted students and the public by directing their questions to resources and staff. The college employed student ambassadors to provide online outreach support, follow up with students and assist with calling campaigns. Lastly, the college expanded its professional staff to provide medical advice, medical documentation, and contact tracing for students and staff.

Online education resources provided professional development opportunities to faculty for effective technology adoption and use. The college updated multiple library databases to enhance remote learning and offered office hours and Q&A sessions for faculty members each semester.
6 Direct Outreach

The college engaged in several direct outreach efforts, making nearly 5,000 phone calls to prospective students encouraging them and reminding them to complete the matriculation and enrollment processes. The college engaged in a calling campaign to offer support to those students who needed to complete FAFSA applications or the financial aid process, and also assisted them with enrollment and follow-up services. Students were contacted by counselors and mental health professionals to assist with basic needs and mental health support.

7 Emergency Grants

Given the additional financial strain placed upon students and their families since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, Irvine Valley College has awarded $5,519,874 of direct emergency aid to students. Through multiple state and federal initiatives, direct financial aid was provided to students who submitted an online request or was automatically awarded as part of an equity-guided approach. The equity-guided approach was based on the Expected Family Contribution (EFC) from students’ financial aid applications. In addition, IVC utilized funds to purchase more than $5,000 of digital food gift cards for students struggling with food insecurity.

8 Testing and Vaccine Distribution for Students

The college purchased supplies for vaccination clinics and COVID-19 testing for athletes, which was a requirement for their return to campus. IVC acquired a Cephied PCR test machine, swabs and multiple medical supplies for the vaccination clinic including syringes, alcohol wipes, bandages, signage, emergency supplies such as epinephrine, and other needed medical supplies. The Health and Wellness Center also opened for services for students who needed non-emergency medical care and supplies.
IVC held three IVC Cares drive-thru events. The first event on November 23, 2020 was a holiday meal distribution and support services outreach held on campus. The Office of Student Equity and the Health and Wellness Center hosted the drive-thru meal distribution for students in response to the Student COVID Impact Survey distributed to IVC students in October 2020, where it was revealed that 67% of respondents were experiencing depression or anxiety along with food and housing insecurity. Nearly 500 meals were distributed to students and their families in need.

On December 18, students were invited to the second IVC Cares meal distribution drive-thru to receive holiday meals, support, and holiday cheer from Student Services staff. Five hundred students participated and received a safely pre-packaged holiday meal from Maggiano’s Restaurant. As a surprise to the students, they were also each given a box of disposable masks courtesy of the Health and Wellness Center. On April 16, 2021, the Office of Student Equity, in collaboration with the Health and Wellness Center, hosted a third IVC Cares meal distribution drive thru event. Students received a meal from Maggiano’s Restaurant and supplies to support their health including face masks, a thermometer, a pedometer, and additional healthy food items. Students also received flyers with resources available to support their health including mental health services, yoga, and Student Equity programs to build relationships and community.
Preparing the Campuses for Reopening

In preparation for the full return of students and staff, the college conducted a deep cleaning and sanitization of classrooms, offices, and public areas in addition to providing portable, touch-free handwashing and hand-sanitizing stations throughout the campus. IVC secured much-needed general cleaning supplies, masks, and other protective materials, which will be made available to all classrooms, labs, and public areas.

The college purchased and installed informational and directional signage and floor stanchions to encourage physical distancing and crowd control in high-volume areas. Additionally, the college purchased several high-density sanitizing-mist foggers and a generous supply of sanitizing solutions to ensure thorough sanitizing of chemistry, biology, and computer labs. IVC installed Plexiglas shields to help mitigate the transmission of airborne pathogens and provide for the health and well-being of students and staff in and around public service counters. Lastly, the college purchased the full extent of equipment and supplies to make the campus a touch-free environment, including touch-less restroom faucets, soap and paper towel dispensers, and automatic flush valves on all toilet fixtures.