

Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF) – Established through the CARES Act of 2020

June 2020

Guidance:

The following are taken from documentation provided by the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE):

“The CARES Act provides institutions with significant discretion on how to award this emergency assistance to students. This means that each institution may develop its own system and process for determining how to allocate these funds, which may include distributing the funds to all students or only to students who demonstrate significant need.

The only statutory requirement is that the funds be used to cover expenses related to the disruption of campus operations due to coronavirus (including eligible expenses under a student’s cost of attendance, such as food, housing, course materials, technology, health care, and childcare).

With that said, I would like to encourage the leadership of each institution to prioritize your students with the greatest need, but at the same time consider establishing a maximum funding threshold for each student to ensure that these funds are distributed as widely as possible. As a point of reference, you might consider using the maximum federal Pell grant as that threshold.”

Eligibility:

To be eligible to receive emergency aid, you must have met **all** of the qualifications:

- Been enrolled at the University of West Alabama (UWA) in a degree or certificate program in the Spring 2020 semester.
- Have a high school diploma or a General Education Development (GED) certificate, or have completed homeschooling.
- Be a U.S. citizen or national, permanent resident, or an eligible noncitizen.
- Not be in an exclusively online degree program (Bachelor of Science in Nursing).
- Have submitted a 2019-20 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).

Awarding:

USDOE awarded UWA \$1,192,293 in funding to be given directly to students. For the 2020 spring semester we had 1349 registered on-campus students and issued federal aid to 966. Out of our registered students for 2020 spring semester, 440 had zero EFC, 261 were also Pell eligible based on EFC

higher than zero, and 265 other federal aid recipients. This represents the three tiers of categorized need used for distributing the HEERF monies.

Example: Per Student Per Tier

440 Zero EFC \$1250 Each \$550,000

261 Pell Eligibility \$1000 Each \$261,000

262 All Others w/FA \$750 Each \$198,750

277 Non-Fed Aid Students \$500 Each \$138,500

\$1,148,250 (Transmitted) \$1,192,293 (Total Funding)

This left \$44,043 of aid that can be used for students who may have experienced a greater impact due to the changes, or who were later found to be eligible. Students were able to apply for additional funding to help with expenses incurred as a result of course changes from campus to online this spring. The application was open until June 12, 2020.

The additional funding will be distributed on a case-by-case basis upon review of the student narrative on their request, and/or by special consideration at the bequest of the student after the initial disbursements are made. The total amounts represented above are subject to change based on number of applications received and degree of need exhibited. *[Example] At \$500 each, we could help approximately 88 additional student requests.*

Application:

No application was necessary to be included in the initial distribution of funds. All eligible students were awarded and had grant funds disbursed via check in standard mail. If you think you were eligible and overlooked, please contact the Financial Aid Office.

Additional Funding:

If you received an email from the UWA Financial Aid Office inviting you to apply for additional CARES grant funding, you are eligible to apply. Follow the instructions in the email to complete the application.

Funds are limited and upon review of a committee will be disbursed to those who exhibit an extremely high amount of unexpected costs.

Report:

USDOE has asked the College to identify the estimated total number of students eligible to participate in programs under Section 484 in Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965. As of June 6, 2020, the College estimates that this number is approximately 1,300. This figure represents those current UWA students who have demonstrated their Title IV eligibility and have a valid 2019-20 FAFSA on file as of this precise date, less those who were enrolled exclusively in online programs as of March 13, 2020. It is possible, however, that some portion of these students, while Title IV eligible, did not incur eligible CARES Act expenses.

Based on the statement issued by the USDOE on May 21, 2020, related to the force and effect of its guidance documents, the College estimates that approximately 28,000 students meet the underlying statutory terms of the CARES Act.

As noted above, according to the CARES Act and guidance from the Department of Education, the “sole and exclusive purpose” for these student grants is for “expenses related to the disruption of campus operations due to coronavirus, such as food, housing, course materials, technology, health care, and child-care expenses.” Loss of income is not covered by these grant funds. All applicants seeking additional funding are required to attest that they have incurred a high number of eligible expenses.