

Higher Education Emergency Relief Funding under the CARES Act Emergency Relief Grants for Students

June 4, 2020 – Final Report

On April 10, 2020, Dr. Walt Tribley, President of the Northern Wyoming Community College District, signed a Certification and Agreement for NWCCD’s application for the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF) Grant under the CARES Act. As required by the U.S. Secretary of Education, this agreement indicates that our institution will use no less than 50 percent of the funding to provide emergency financial aid to students. NWCCD was awarded the Grant and allocated \$587,680 in funding to be distributed as emergency financial relief grants to students.

As recommended by our auditors and other professionals in the field, NWCCD issued the final disbursement of these grants prior to May 22, 2020, which was the official end of the Spring 2020 term. After the final disbursement was processed on May 20, 2020, NWCCD had distributed a total of \$587,680.80 in Emergency Financial Relief Grants to students as outlined in the table below.

CARES Act Emergency Student Funding Report, Disbursed				
	Expected Family Contribution	Total	Award	Distribution
Pell eligible				
	\$0-\$5,576			
Full-time		242	\$1,280.60	\$309,905.20
Part-time		87	\$780.60	\$67,912.20
Subsidized Fed Loan eligible				
	\$5,577-\$14,010			
Full-time		63	\$1,080.60	\$68,077.80
Part-time		15	\$680.60	\$10,209.00
Unsubsidized Fed Loan eligible				
	>\$14,010			
Full-time		127	\$880.60	\$111,836.20
Part-time		34	\$580.60	\$19,740.40
Total Eligible Requests Received		568		\$587,680.80
Ineligible		74		
In process		0		
Total Requests Submitted		642		

Throughout this process, our staff monitored official guidance from the U.S. Department of Education that continued to be released. As a result, and according to our best interpretation, we first invited students who had already completed a 2019-2020 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to request funding from the HEERF Grant if they were a high school graduate enrolled in at least six credit hours and working toward a certificate or degree in a Federally-approved program. We had identified 1,051 students who met that initial criteria. A second notice was sent to 422 additional students who met the initial criteria, except for completing the FAFSA, encouraging these students to complete a FAFSA. Later it was determined that the students who had not yet completed a FAFSA could, instead, sign a self-attestation of their eligibility to receive HEERF funding. In total, students were contacted as many as four times if they did not complete a request for funding.

Once a student requested emergency funds, NWCCD staff verified that the following eligibility requirements were met, before issuing the grant to the student.

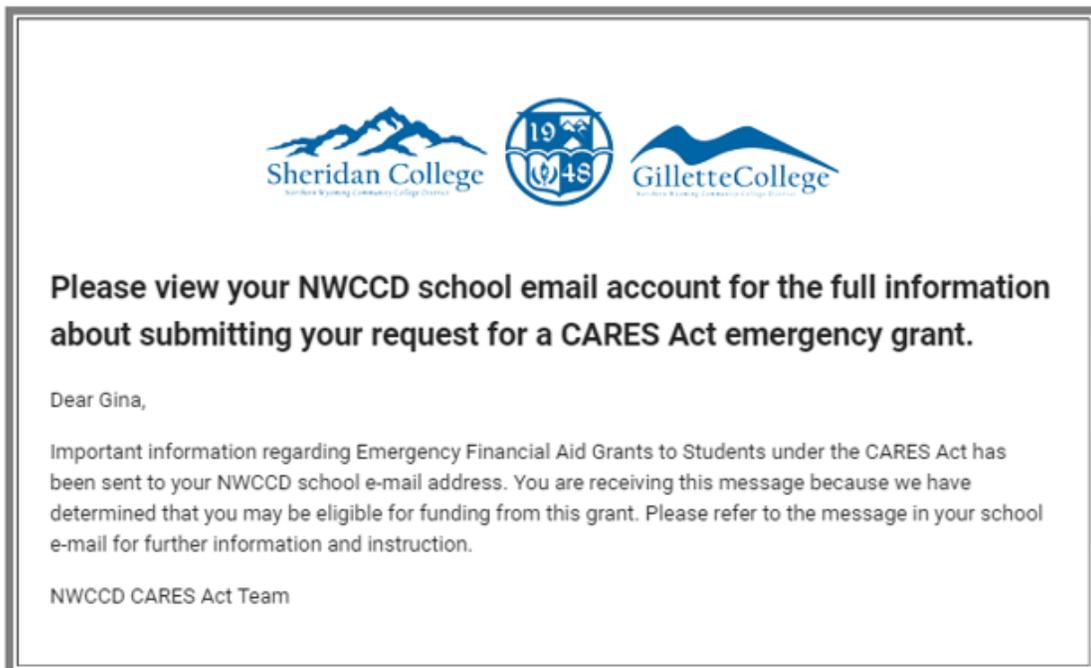
- Students must have a high school diploma or equivalent (high school students are ineligible).
- Students must be enrolled in a credentialed program (professional development students are ineligible).

- Student must have a valid social security number and be a U.S. citizen.
- Male students must have registered for Selective Service.
- Students who have a completed FAFSA on file for the 2019 Academic Year have demonstrated eligibility. Students who had not completed the FAFSA were asked to sign a self-attestation of their eligibility to receive funding.
- Students who were enrolled fully online prior to COVID-19 (March 13, 2020) disruption are ineligible; this is confirmed by additional guidance released by DOE.
- Students enrolled in 12 credit hours or more will be considered full-time.
- Students enrolled in 6 to 11 credit hours will be considered part-time.
- W's and I's will not count toward full-time or part-time status.
- Attestation by the student of agreement to the use of funds as stated in the law is necessary to prove our compliance and will be provided by filing a request for funding form.
- The "spirit" of the funding is that it be used for those with true financial need.
- Until verified, students must be meeting satisfactory academic progress.

In order to follow our institution's data protection protocols, we sent the full HEERF funding information, with a link to our request form, only to our school's email addresses. To be sure that students were notified, we sent text messages to all identified students using every cell phone number we had on file. The text message, shown below, instructed them to check their school email for additional information. We also sent e-mails to each identified student's non-school email accounts on file, that also directed the students to check their school email.

Text message: CARES Act Emergency Relief funds now available! You may be eligible. Check your school email account for more information.

Message sent to private email addresses:



The following is a copy of the original directions sent to the identified students school email addresses, inviting them to request funding from the HEERF Grant:

NWCCD recently received access to \$587,680 of Higher Education Emergency Relief Funding made available from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. These emergency funds have been issued through the Secretary of Education with a mandate to make them available to **"students for their expenses related to the disruption of campus operations due to coronavirus, such as food, housing, course materials, technology, health care, and child care."** You are receiving this message because we have determined that you may be eligible for financial aid from one of these grants.

In order to receive funding, you must meet the following criteria:

Have expenses related to the disruption of campus operations due to coronavirus, such as food, housing, course materials, technology, health care, and child care.

Submit our Emergency Financial Aid Grant request form [here](#)

Be enrolled in a program and working toward a degree or certificate as of March 13, 2020.

Be registered for at least six (6) credit hours and at least one (1) face-to-face class as of March 13, 2020.

Have completed your 2019-2020 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and any verification required.

The amount you receive will be based on your level of enrollment (full or part-time) and the amount of expected family contribution calculated from your FAFSA.

The spirit of the CARES Act is to provide aid as quickly as possible to those who truly need it. With that said, we would encourage you to evaluate your personal situation and consider giving your allocation to those students who have significant need by denying the aid you may be eligible for. You can do so by marking the appropriate response on the request form.

Depending on the number of requests and amount of aid distributed, you could receive additional disbursements from these funds; however, you will only have to submit your request one time.

Distribution schedule:

Submit eligible request by Sunday, May 3rd, distributed Wednesday, May 6th.

Submit eligible request by Sunday, May 17th, distributed Wednesday, May 20th.

Submit eligible request by Sunday, May 31st, distributed Wednesday, June 3rd.

Payments will be processed on Wednesdays and checks will be mailed on Thursdays. For the fastest receipt, please be sure your mailing address is accurate and sign up for direct deposit.

Additional information can be found on the request form and the student portal page. Please send further questions to WeCare@sheridan.edu.

We're all in this together,

NWCCD CARES Act Team

NOTICE: This message is intended only for the personal and confidential use of the designated recipient names above. If you are not the intended recipient of this message, you are notified that by law, any review, dissemination, distribution or copying of this message is strictly prohibited. In addition, if you have received this message in error, please advise the sender by email and delete the message.

Below is the final message sent to any eligible student who had not yet requested funding:



Exciting news! You do NOT have to complete a FAFSA in order to receive Emergency Funding from the CARES Act if you will answer four brief questions! The deadline to apply for CARES funding is SUNDAY, May 17, at midnight. If you do not apply, we will use your grant funds to increase the awards of other students.

Dear Gina,

NWCCD still has over \$250,000 remaining funds from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act. This money must be distributed to students by the end of the 2020 Spring semester.

We have waived the requirement for you to file a FAFSA as long as you are able to self-certify that you meet the eligibility requirements in the form below. In order to receive funding, you must meet the following criteria:

Have expenses related to the disruption of campus operations due to coronavirus, such as food, housing, course materials, technology, health care, and child care.

Submit our Emergency Financial Aid Grant request form [here](#)

Be enrolled in a program and working toward a degree or certificate as of March 13, 2020.

Be registered for at least six (6) credit hours and at least one (1) face-to-face class as of March 13, 2020.

Grant amounts range from \$300 to \$1000 on a first come, first serve basis. Failure to complete the form before May 17 at midnight will result in your forfeiting your portion of the CARES Act funding.

Please send further questions to WeCare@sheridan.edu.

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