

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

May 10, 2020

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act was passed by Congress and signed into law by President Trump on March 27th, 2020.

The CARES Act provides several different methods for distributing aid, including a portion to be distributed to institutions of higher education with assurance from the institutions that no less than 50 percent of the funds received will be used to provide Emergency Financial Aid Grants directly to students. As a result, the U.S. Secretary of Education has issued the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF) Grant under the CARES Act.

Dr. Walt Tribley, President of the Northern Wyoming Community College District, signed a Certification and Agreement for NWCCD's application for the HEERF Grant on April 10, 2020, assuring our intention to use no less than 50 percent of the funding to provide emergency financial aid to students. NWCCD was awarded the Grant and has allocated \$587,680 in funding to be distributed as emergency financial relief grants to students.

As of May 10, 2020, NWCCD issued and disbursed Emergency Financial Relief Grants to 339 students for a total of \$132,200. Students received distributions from \$150 to \$500, depending on their Title IV Federal Aid level of eligibility (Pell, Subsidized Loans, Unsubsidized Loans) and their enrollment status (full or part-time), with the highest amounts going to Pell-eligible, full-time students. Although guidance has been unclear, we are currently inviting students who have already completed a 2019-2020 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to request funding from the HEERF Grant if they are a high school graduate enrolled in at least six credit hours and are seeking a certificate or degree in a Federally-approved program. We have identified 1,051 students who meet that initial criteria. A second notice has gone out to 422 additional students who meet the initial criteria, except for completing the FAFSA. These students have been encouraged to complete a FAFSA.

Once a student requests emergency funds, NWCCD staff are verifying that the following eligibility requirements are 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 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.

The following is a copy of the directions sent to students, 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 3<sup>rd</sup>, distributed Wednesday, May 6<sup>th</sup>.

Submit eligible request by Sunday, May 17<sup>th</sup>, distributed Wednesday, May 20<sup>th</sup>.

Submit eligible request by Sunday, May 31<sup>st</sup>, distributed Wednesday, June 3<sup>rd</sup>.

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](mailto:WeCare@sheridan.edu).

We're all in this together,

NWCCD CARES Act Team

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