**HEERF I, II, & III Quarterly Report**

West Chester University of Pennsylvania
Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Securities Act (CARES Act)
Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF) Report

Reporting as of October 8, 2021

HEERF 1: West Chester University of Pennsylvania (WCU) received federal funding under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act. These grants provide emergency relief funds to organizations and individuals affected by the coronavirus pandemic. The Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF), found in Section 18004 of the CARES Act, provides funding to institutions of higher education “to prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus.” The information below is intended not only to meet the reporting requirements of the CARES Act but also provide information to our community regarding West Chester University’s use of the student grant portion of the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund.

HEERF II: West Chester University of Pennsylvania (WCU) received additional federal funding under the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA). The U.S. Department of Education has expanded upon guidance previously provided under CARES for awarding of HEERF II funds to include the ability to award students who are exclusively in distance education courses and for the use of direct cost of attendance expenditures. However, CRRSAA also stipulates that funding should be prioritized with those who have exceptional need such as students who receive Pell grants and balances can only be paid with student grant funding if the institution collects written consent from the student.

HEERF III: West Chester University of Pennsylvania (WCU) received funding under the American Rescue Plan (ARP) with $16,435,339 designated for student emergency funds under Section 2003(a)(1). U.S. Department of Education expanded guidance for awarding ARP funds to be inclusive of non-citizens and for any period of enrollment from the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic. As a result, West Chester University decided to expand awards to all students enrolled in the spring term in response to operational disruptions from remote operations. Methodology included using the Expected Family Contribution from the 2020-21 FAFSA as a measurement of need as ARP continued to state priority should be given to students with exceptional need.

**Certification**

WCU President Christopher Fiorentino signed and returned to the U.S. Department of Education the Certification and Agreement form that was required to receive the HEERF funds. WCU will use no less than 50% of the total amount of funds received under Section 18004(a)(1) of the CARES Act to provide Emergency Financial Aid Grants to students. This stipulation was also signed and agreed upon in response to CRRSAA requirements which state under section 314(a)(1) that institutions are to provide the same amount of funding in financial aid grants to students this was required to provide under its original student aid portion. Additional certification was signed to acknowledge receipt and awarding procedures of HEERF III funds under the American Rescue Plan Section 2003(a)(1).

**Award**

WCU was allocated $5,996,058.00 in HEERF I from the U.S. Department of Education pursuant to WCU’s Certification and Agreement for Emergency Financial Aid Grants to Students.

An additional $5,996,058.00 was certified for use from HEERF II funds from the U.S. Department of Education via the CRRSAA certification procedures.

WCU also received $16,435,339.00 in HEERF III student aid funds from the U.S. Department of Education via the American Rescue Plan.

**Funds Distributed**

As of this report, the full allocation of HEERF I funding in the amount of $5,996,058.00 had been distributed under Section 18004(a)(1) of the CARES Act.

As of this report, the full allotment of $5,996,058.00 of HEERF II funding has been fully awarded under Section 314(a)(1).

As of this report, $16,435,339 of HEERF III funding has been awarded under ARP section 2003(a)(1).

**Student Eligibility**

For the Spring 2020 semester, an estimated 10,584 students at West Chester University were eligible to participate in programs under Section 484 in Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 and thus eligible to receive Emergency Financial Aid Grants under Section 18004(a)(1) of the CARES Act. For the Fall 2020 semester and Winter 2020 terms, an estimated 9,782 students were eligible. As a result, the correct amount disbursed by the deadline of this quarterly report was $5,989,008. 5054 students received an Emergency Financial Aid Grant under Section 18004(a)(1) of the CARES Act. For the HEERF II allocation, 16,257 students were enrolled during spring 2021 and identified as citizens or eligible non-citizens and therefore were able to apply for consideration for student emergency funds. For the HEERF III allocation the number of eligible students increases as a result of the expanded guidance under ARP which allowed for non-citizens to qualify. 16,613 students were determined eligible based on any enrollment history during the spring 2021 academic term.

**Methods Used to Determine Students’ Eligibility**

**Spring/Summer 2020 Awarding Methodology**

Students who had no other housing or meal options and remained on campus after March 16 for various reasons related to the coronavirus pandemic and those who had no other housing and food options during the Summer 2020 semester were awarded funds to defray their room and board expenses. Additionally, WCU developed an online application for students to apply for Emergency CARES Act Grants. Students who met eligibility criteria under Section 484 in Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 requested funds for food, housing, course materials, technology, health care, and child care expenses. Students enrolled in the Spring 2020 semester who were not eligible for Federal Pell Grants were awarded their requested amount up to a maximum of $750. Students enrolled in the Spring 2020 semester who were eligible for Federal Pell Grants were awarded their requested amount up to a maximum of $1,000.

Students could also indicate on the application that they had exceptional expenses above the $750/$1,000 maximum.

On May 22, 2020, based on guidance published by the U.S. Department of Education, WCU discontinued requiring Title IV eligibility for HEERF funds.  On June 11, WCU resumed requiring Title IV eligibility in compliance with the Final Interim Rule published in the Federal Register on that date.

On June 1, 2020, WCU also opened a separate application for students with exceptional expenses beyond the $750/$1,000 limit and began awarding additional funds to these students.  Students who indicated exceptional expenses on their initial application were reviewed first and additional funds were awarded.

On June 2, 2021, WCU awarded all students who were enrolled in a degree-seeking program for any duration of time a one-time emergency award from HEERF III funds in response to campus service disruption from continued remote operations. $15,839,800 was awarded to 16,179 students using the following criteria: Students who filed a 2020-21 FAFSA and had an official Expected Family Contribution (EFC) of $9,999 or less were awarded a one-time award of $1,700 and students who did not have a FAFSA and/or had an EFC of greater than $9,999 were awarded a one-time award of $600. The HEERF III awards were then refunded directly to the student. All students were notified via email the same day as their refund was processed as a direct payment via direct deposit or check.

**Fall/Winter 2020 Awarding Methodology**

For Fall 2020, West Chester University focused on assisting students who incurred additional expenses from signing leases for off-campus housing, anticipating that classes would resume to an in-person modality. Most students who signed leases for off-campus housing were unable to terminate their lease when it was determined that most classes would be taught through distance learning modalities.

A CARES Act Rent Relief application was opened. Students who applied by the published deadline, were enrolled for the Fall 2020 semester, were Title IV eligible, and were not enrolled in a 100% online academic program were determined eligible.  Each eligible applicant was awarded $1,100 to help offset their additional Fall semester housing expenses.

On September 9, 2020, a CARES Act Emergency Appeal Application was opened and sent to students who had reached out to different offices on campus explaining their need for financial support in relation to Covid-19. Awards were granted up to $1,000 to eligible students who were determined to be Title IV eligible based on their current FAFSA information. These funds are being posted as refunds to students fall 2020 accounts.

After the fall 2020 application closed, a separate winter emergency appeal application was opened on November 6, 2020, for students who submitted appeal for either additional assistance or new assistance as a result of being impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. These appeals came through multiple offices on campus as well as in response to a survey that was sent out and asked if students were facing financial difficulties. Students were confirmed to be Title IV eligible and have continuous enrollment before their applications were approved.

**Spring 2021 Awarding Methodology for HEERF II**

Students were informed on a public webpage titled “Emergency Funding” on WCU Covid-19 response section of the website of new eligibility criteria, application process, and award amounts as part of HEERF II distribution. On February 16, 2021, all active students were invited to apply for emergency funding made available through CRRSAA. The application was housed in our web-based scholarship manager platform. Students were informed to be eligible for funding they are required to have a 2021 FAFSA on file in order to certify citizenship or eligible non-citizenship status, review need as it is a priority for awarding consideration. Students were also to be enrolled in coursework during the spring 2021 term. However, students did not have to self-report or verify this information on the application since these data elements were being pulled into the application from the University’s PeopleSoft system. Students who met the criteria of the funds and completed an application were awarded $1,500 if they had a Pell eligible EFC and $1,000 if they had an EFC on the 2021 FAFSA that was ineligible for federal Pell grant funding. Students awards were credited as direct refund payments and would bypass any existing balance on their WCU account.

**Spring 2021 Awarding Procedures HEERF III**

Students who filed a 2020-21 FAFSA and had an official Expected Family Contribution (EFC) of $9,999 or less were awarded a one-time award of $1700 and students who did not have a FAFSA and/or had an EFC of greater than $9,999 were awarded a one-time award of $600. The HEERF III awards were then refunded directly to the student. All students were notified via email the same day as their refund was processed as a direct payment via direct deposit or check.

**Fall 2021 Awarding Procedures HEERF III**

The remaining $585,439 in HEERF III funding that was not distributed in spring 2021 was awarded to 301 students with the use of a new application. Students with past due balances, technology requests, requests for assistance with educations expenses or emergency funding were sent the HEERF III application to apply for up to a $3,000 award. Students with an eligible EFC for the Pell grant (including graduate students) were awarded up to the maximum $3,000 award, but those who did not qualify for Pell or did not file a FAFSA were awarded up to a $2,000 award. The application gave students the option to either request funds that would be applied to a current balance or prior balance that happened during the terms of disrupted modality. If this authorization was notated on the application, then students were awarded the amount of their outstanding balance while using Pell eligibility to determine the threshold. If students did not authorize payment toward a balance, then they were asked to identify what qualifying emergency expenses they were applying for. Those requesting emergency funds that were not authorized toward balances were issued a refund from their most recent period of enrollment.

**Instructions to Students**

Students were notified of the availability of funds, eligibility criteria, and application instructions as follows:

**Spring/Summer 2020**

An email message was sent to students enrolled in the spring 2020 semester who were identified as being eligible to participate in programs under Section 484 in Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 and thus eligible to receive Emergency Financial Aid Grants to students under Section 18004(a)(1) of the CARES Act. Additionally, a web release was published on the WCU website, along with a Frequently Asked Questions page.

**Fall/Winter 2020**

An email message was sent to students enrolled in the Fall 2020 semester, had filed a FAFSA indicating that they would be living off-campus, met WCU’s Satisfactory Academic Progress requirements, and were not enrolled in a 100% online academic program. The WCU website was also updated with information regarding the application process.

For students requesting to be considered for the CARES Emergency Appeal Application, students were emailed a direct link to the application. Within the introduction of the application, students were informed they had to have a FAFSA on file for 2020-21, be enrolled for the current fall semester, and meet Title IV eligibility requirements including WCU’s Satisfactory Academic Progress requirements.

A separate winter emergency appeal application was used for students who submitted appeal for either additional assistance or new assistance as a result of being impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic. These funds were awarded until January 6, 2021, but posted to fall 2020 accounts (as the spring term had not started at the time of awards). On January 6, 2021, the full allotment of the CARES Act funding was spent for total of $5,996,058 and therefore any outstanding requests were notified they would be contacted if future stimulus became available.

Students who were awarded funds from either one of the fall 2020 applications or the winter appeal application were notified of the award via an email message that includes the estimated timeframe that they will receive funds. For students who have provided direct deposit information, funds are provided via ACH to their bank account. Otherwise, a check was generated and mailed to the student.

**Spring 2021: HEERF II**

For HEERF II funding, all active students were sent an email communication from Financial Aid asking them to complete an online application and the 2021 FAFSA in order to be considered for funds. A copy of these email instructions can be found below:

**From:** Financial Aid <FINAID@wcupa.edu>
**Sent:** Tuesday, February 16, 2021 2:31 PM
**To:** WCU-All Active Students <WCU-AllActiveStudents@wcupa.edu>
**Subject:** Application for Emergency Funding

Dear WCU Golden Ram,

West Chester University received another allocation of Higher Education Emergency Relief Funds (HEERF II), authorized by the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2021 (CRRSAA). The first allocation was authorized by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act (CARES). These monies are to help WCU students who have unexpected expenses due to the pandemic.

WCU created an [**application**](http://bit.ly/2XUrzPN) if you wish to apply for consideration.

In order to be eligible for these funds you must:

* Be currently enrolled in the Spring 2021 semester
* Be a U.S. Citizen or Eligible Non-Citizen for Title IV Aid
* Have a 2020-2021 FAFSA on file (which can be filed at studentaid.gov/fafsa).

**Spring 2021: HEERF III Notification**

Dear Golden Ram,

We are excited to share that you have been awarded an emergency grant from the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF III) from the American Rescue Plan. Award amounts were determined by the 2021 FAFSA:

* If you filed a FAFSA and had an Expected Family Contribution (EFC) of $9,999 or less you were awarded a one-time award of $1,700.00.
* If you did not file a FAFSA, or your 2021 EFC was greater than $9,999, then you were awarded $600.00.

These funds are meant to assist with emergency expenses such as cost of living, technology, books, transportation, or medical expenses.

In order to review your award amount, please logon to MyWCU and review your "Account Summary" under "Student Financials." If you signed up for direct deposit the monies will be deposited into your account. Otherwise, in the coming days you will receive a check in the mail to your permanent address.

If you have questions about this award, please contact us at finaid@wcupa.edu.

Rams Up,

Financial Aid Office

**Fall 2021 Application Instructions:**

West Chester University is pleased to announce the availability of emergency assistance grants to lessen the burden of students facing expenses related to the disruption of campus operations due to Covid-19.

Requests will be reviewed for previous balances and/or expenses. Please be aware that funding is limited, and requests will be processed on a first-come, first-served basis until WCU’s allocated federal funds have been exhausted.