

Emergency Financial Aid Grants to Students Fund Reporting

On March 27, 2020, the President of the United States signed the CARES Act (H.R. 748), which provided 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, provided funding to institutions of higher education "to prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus." This report provides details on the first award Abilene Christian University received under the HEERF, the funds for Emergency Financial Aid Grants to Students under Award No. P425E20006.

CERTIFICATION

Abilene Christian University signed and returned to the Department of Education the Certification and Agreement on April 15, 2020. ACU used 50% of the funds received under Section 18004(a)(1) of the CARES Act to provide Emergency Financial Aid Grants to Students.

AWARD

Abilene Christian University received a total of \$2,838,742 under Section 18004(a)(1) of the HEERF. \$1,491,371 was distributed directly to students impacted by campus disruptions due to the Coronavirus. These funds from the U.S. Department of Education were awarded pursuant to our Certification and Agreement for Emergency Financial Aid Grants to Students.

FUNDS DISTRIBUTED

As of 1/22/2021, ACU has distributed all \$1,491,371 in Emergency Financial Aid Grants under Section 18004(a)(1) of the CARES Act.

STUDENT ELIGIBILITY

Abilene Christian University has an estimate of 2,376 residential undergraduate and graduate students eligible to participate in programs under Section 484 in Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 and who were thus potentially eligible to receive Emergency Financial Aid Grants to Students under Section 18004(a)(1) of the CARES Act. As of 03/31/2021, ACU has distributed Emergency Financial Aid Grants to 831 students under Section 18004(a)(1) of the CARES Act.

METHOD USED TO DETERMINE STUDENTS ELIGIBILITY

All potentially eligible students were notified of the application process developed by the university for these funds by an email correspondence from President Schubert. A committee reviewed the individual application requests as they were received and recommended distributions of this money to newly approved students on a weekly basis. Hundreds of ACU students experienced some financial relief due to qualifying for these funds.

The U.S. Department of Education has specified that students must meet certain criteria to qualify for the CARES Act funds. These include:

- Must be federal Title IV aid eligible, which has been determined by student's having a complete valid 2019-2020 or 2020-2021 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) on file
- Must meet Title IV aid eligibility criteria including

- U.S. Citizenship or Eligible noncitizen status
- Have a valid Social Security Number
- Be registered with Selective Service (if male)
- Be meeting Satisfactory Academic Progress standards for Title IV aid
- Students must have been enrolled and been in attendance at ACU
- Students must not have already been attending ACU via an online academic program

Maximum eligibility tiers were established by the university based upon various student situational experiences. The highest of which was set just below the maximum Pell Grant eligibility figure, as recommended by the U.S. Department of Education. The committee reviewed requests and determined student's qualifying amounts based upon their amounts requested to cover their current financial needs with respect to the established tier maximums. A follow-up questionnaire was sent to students whose initial application was unclear about their short-term financial needs. Awards were focused on the six financial categories encouraged by the federal government. These include funding to help students pay for housing, food, childcare, healthcare, technology and course materials. Distributions to students ranged between \$100 - \$6,000.

INSTRUCTIONS/DIRECTIONS GIVEN TO STUDENTS

Instructions, directions, guidance and the application provided to students regarding the Emergency Financial Aid Grants can be found here.

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HEERF II and HEERF III Funding

Subsequent federal stimulus bills approved additional funding for institutions of higher education which also included funds to help students. As a recipient of the CARES Act funding, Abilene Christian University was also considered for and approved to receive funding from the additional portions of Higher Education Emergency Relief Funds (HEERF) segments II and III. This report provides details on the use of those funds.

CERTIFICATION

Abilene Christian University was approved for HEERF II and HEERF III funding based upon our participation in the CARES Act funding distribution. ACU will award Emergency Financial Aid Grants to Students in at least the sum of \$1,491,371 from HEERF II funding, which is the same figure assigned to ACU from the CARES Act distribution. Additionally ACU will award at least \$4,117,123 to students as a portion of the HEERF III funds we have been granted.

AWARD

Abilene Christian University received a total of \$4,691,178 in HEERF II funding (\$1,491,371 designated for Emergency Financial Aid Grants for Students and \$3,199,807 as an Institutional Portion designated to help the university offset expenses associated with the coronavirus response. Additionally the university has

been awarded a total of \$8,209,095 from HEERF III funding (\$4,117,123 designated for Emergency Financial Aid Grants for Students and an additional \$4,091,972 as an Institutional Portion.

FUNDS DISTRIBUTED

As of June 30, 2021, ACU has distributed \$898,235 in Emergency Financial Aid Grants to Students from HEERF II funding. HEERF III funding will be utilized and distributed immediately following full use of the HEERF II allocation.

STUDENT ELIGIBILITY

Abilene Christian University is identifying all students who have attended courses since the national emergency declaration on March 13, 2020 for potential eligibility of these newer fund distributions. Thus far as of June 30, 2021, 700 students have received distributions of Emergency Financial Aid Grants to Students under the HEERF II program.

METHOD USED TO DETERMINE STUDENTS ELIGIBILITY

The university identifies potentially eligible students based upon their enrollment in coursework as of or since March 13, 2020, the date on which the national emergency was declared concerning the coronavirus response. An initial email was sent to all identified students on 3/18/2021 notifying them of the availability of funding. A link to an application was included with the email notification so students could apply immediately. Additionally, consideration has been given to students who have been recommended for HEERF funding by our Student Opportunities, Advocacy and Resources (SOAR) Program staff. A unique notification system has been developed for their use.

Eligibility for funding is determined subjectively based upon a maximum award amount initially set by the university as \$6,000 for each HEERF program individually (CARES Act, HEERF II and HEERF III). Students who are Pell Eligible are given prioritized consideration for funding. Awards are based in part based upon various student situational experiences. The highest award level was set just below the maximum annual Pell Grant eligibility figure, as originally recommended by the U.S. Department of Education. The committee reviews requests and determines student's qualifying amounts based upon their amounts requested to cover their current financial needs with respect to the established maximum.

INSTRUCTIONS/DIRECTIONS GIVEN TO STUDENTS

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