



CARES Act – Higher Education Emergency Relief Funds Grants Initial 30-Day Report: May 26, 2020

Congress passed the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act which allocated \$1,470,055 in emergency assistance to Meridian Community College in the form of funds to be distributed to students and to 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 child care). The CARES Act provides institutions with significant discretion on how to award this emergency assistance to students. Each institution may develop its own system and process for determining how to allocate these funds.

Acknowledgement

Meridian Community College signed and returned the Certification and Agreement to the US Department of Education and has used, or intends to use, no less than 50 percent of the funds received under Section 18004(a)(1) of the CARES Act to provide emergency financial aid grants to students.

Application Process

MCC formed a committee to review all requirements for the awarding and disbursing of this federal aid. The CARES Act gave broad discretion to each college as to how it could be awarded, and yet, at the same time gave specific requirements for student eligibility. The committee included staff from student services, financial aid, business office, accounting, IT and the college administration.

The US Department of Education has stated that recipients must be Title IV eligible. To insure compliance with Title IV eligibility, students must:

- Not be in default on a federal student loan,
- Not be in overpayment on a federal loan or grant,
- If male, registered for the selective service,
- Possess a valid social security number,
- Not unqualified due to an unusual enrollment history pattern,
- Be a U.S. citizen or qualified non-citizen,
- Meet the requirements under our Satisfactory Academic Progress policy,
- Have not been convicted of a drug-related offense while receiving Title IV aid, and
- Be a degree-seeking student, and
- Have a high school diploma, GED, or equivalent.

In addition, the student must have been enrolled as a student at MCC on March 13, 2020 for the spring 2020 term.

Our committee made the decision to require the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) in order to insure that every student awarded grant funds met the Title IV student eligibility requirements. According to our records, MCC estimates that 1,980 students could be eligible to receive emergency financial aid grants. Of this number, 1,503 have already completed the FAFSA.

Students must complete the MCC Emergency Relief Fund application provided through a link on the MCC website. The application asks students to provide the amount of financial impact they have incurred related to the campus disruption due to the coronavirus by categories such food, housing, course materials, technology services, technology devices/hardware, health care/medical expenses, child care, or other expenses. Each student verifies that the information is accurate by submitting their name on this application. In addition, the application displays their current mailing address with a link for a request if it needs correcting. Address corrections will be made within 48 hours. The student will receive an email confirmation that their application was successfully submitted.

Calculation of Funds for Awarding and Process for Disbursing

Applications and eligibility status will be reviewed on a weekly basis. The initial group of 342 student awards totaling \$289,477.34 were mailed via paper check on May 22, 2020. Awards will continue to be made until funds are no longer available. Eligible students will be awarded funds based on the following scale:

- Students who report expenses of \$0 - \$500 will receive \$500
- Students who report expenses of \$501 - \$999.99 will receive the requested amount
- Students who report expenses of \$1,000 and higher will receive \$1,000
- Students who report an excess of \$1,000 may receive an additional award if funds are available

An email notice is sent to each student notifying them of the amount of the award and that the check has been mailed. Students who did not meet eligibility requirements are also sent an email notification of their status with the reason(s) why they did not qualify.

Students who have questions about the HEERF funds are instructed to email caresact@meridiancc.edu.