

Federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act Information - post 1/19/2021

In late March, federal legislation was passed to provide economic relief to individuals and organizations dealing with the ramifications of the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. This legislation — the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act — established a Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF) for colleges and universities in the United States.

Southwest Minnesota State University (SMSU) signed and returned to the U.S. Department of Education the Certification and Agreement to receive \$822,117 in HEERF funding for the purpose of providing emergency financial aid grants to students for expenses related to the disruption of campus operations due to the coronavirus. Another \$822,117 was received by the University for institutional expenses. \$560,312 of the institutional funds were used to reimburse the University for the Spring 2020 room and meal refunds. No less than 50 percent of the funding received under Section 18004(a)(1) of the CARES Act will be used for Emergency Financial Aid Grants to students.

The CARES Act directed that this \$822,117 of HEERF money must go toward emergency student financial assistance for expenses related to shifting from in-person to remote instruction. Eligibility requirements for this emergency assistance include enrollment in courses that were:

- Enrolled in at least one semester-based course in an eligible degree program,
- Not enrolled exclusively in online courses or fully online programs,
- In good Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) standing,
- US citizen or eligible noncitizen (hold a valid green card),
- Meet selective service registration requirement, if male,
- Not incarcerated,
- Not in default of a student loan/overpayment of a federal grant,
- Not a Senior Citizen receiving a tuition discount rate,
- Not a Postsecondary Enrollment Options (PSEO) student,
- Not a concurrently enrolled high school student,
- Not a University employee receiving an employee tuition waiver benefit for themselves.
- To be eligible, students also cannot have dropped, withdrawn, or had a Last Day of Attendance before March 6.

- As of May 8, 2020, a total of 1,516 students were identified as eligible for HEERF funding at Southwest Minnesota State University.

HEERF Funding Allocation

The HEERF funding was allocated into three areas:

- A base award to all eligible students of \$100 per student
- A supplemental award, \$737, to eligible students who were also Spring Semester 2020 Federal Pell Grant eligible, Minnesota State Grant eligible, or had an EFC of 0-6500.
- An application-based emergency grant for eligible students who experienced financial hardships/had expenses because of the disruption of campus operations due to the coronavirus. This program will be open to students who are eligible based on the criteria above. Students are eligible to apply for these grants through Academic Works at <https://smsu.academicworks.com/opportunities/5306>.
- Base Awards totaled \$151,600
- Supplemental Awards totaled \$503,371
- Available funds for grants totaled \$167,146, as of December 31, 2020 \$156,146 was awarded as grants with \$11,000 still available for granting
- 1,516 students have received an Emergency Aid Grant under Section 18004(a)(1) of the CARES Act

If you are attending more than one Minnesota State college or university, you can only receive a CARES Base Award from one school. If you believe you meet the criteria above for a Base Award, but do not see it on your student account, email the Financial Aid office at financialaid@smsu.edu or call 1-507-537-6281 to review your account.

Students scheduled to receive automatic base and supplemental payments provided by HEERF funding were notified in advance through an email communication to their official university email account. This communication outlined the purpose and amount paid and provided information regarding a forthcoming application-based COVID-19 Emergency Grant program to cover additional expenses.