



Higher Education Emergency Relief Grants under the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021

TO: External Partners

**FR: Annette Linders, DOFA Compliance
Melissa Flores, Interim General Counsel**

RE: Eligibility for Higher Education Emergency Relief Student Aid Grants

The Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund III (HEERF III) was authorized by the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA), signed into law on March 11, 2021 to provide \$39.6 billion in support to institutions of higher education to ensure student learning continues during the COVID-19 pandemic. MCCCCD was allocated approximately \$190 million in HEERF III funding under ARPA, with a minimum of approximately \$90 million to be distributed as student aid grants.

Maricopa Community Colleges developed its methodology for distribution of HEERF III funding to maximize distributions to as many eligible students as possible, while still complying with all applicable American Rescue Plan regulatory provisions, guidance from the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Education, and all other applicable laws and regulations regarding the distribution of HEERF Student Aid grants.

In developing our methodology, the following criteria were used to determine eligibility and amounts in awarding of HEERF III funds across Maricopa Community Colleges:

1. Students do not need to be eligible for Federal Student Aid to qualify for a Higher Education Emergency Relief grant
2. School enrollment during the funding semester is required and may be based on a specific point in time during the semester
 - o Enrollment was based on 10/25/21 for the Fall 2021 eligibility period
 - o Some colleges required a minimum of 3 credit hours as of 10/25/21
 - o Spring 2022 enrollment will be based on enrollment as of 2/23/2022
3. Students are given funding priority based on exceptional need calculated through the [Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\)](#) expected family contribution (EFC). Financial need is determined based on socioeconomic status

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for federal need based programs, including federal Student Aid grants. The Secretary advised that priority should be given to Pell Grant recipients, in order to maintain an equitable and consistent awarding process, MCCCDC will prioritize need based on socioeconomic status, using a similar process to a federal means tested calculation for students unable to file a FAFSA.

4. Students will only be awarded at one college, and award amounts will differ by college based on available funding levels and the number of eligible students

Please visit the MCCCDC HEERF [website](#) for more information regarding HEERF funding and student eligibility. MCCCDC distributed funds to over 90,000 eligible students during the Fall 2021 semester and will distribute another direct distribution to eligible students during the Spring 2022 semester. Once funds are distributed to eligible students, MCCCDC's responsibility ends with respect to the individual student circumstances that would determine their ability to access the aid (e.g., incorrect address in our system or lack of updated EFT information). Uncashed and returned checks will be processed according to MCCCDC policy; MCCCDC will attempt to contact students to reissue unclaimed funds for up to 90 days (depending on grant expiration dates). Unclaimed funds will be voided and redistributed to other eligible students (depending on funding availability and grant expiration date) after 90 days.

Please visit the [IRS website](#) for tax information related to higher education emergency relief grants.

Please contact Annette Linders at annette.linders@domail.maricopa.edu or Melissa Flores at melissa.flores@domail.maricopa.edu if you have questions regarding HEERF student aid funding. Thank you.

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