

## CARES Act/Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund Report – May 20, 2020

On April 9, 2020, the U.S. Department of Education announced that more than \$6 billion would be distributed to colleges and universities through the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF), authorized by the Coronavirus Aid Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act.

Each HEERF participating institution is required to make public the following information:

### **Certification and Agreement**

Glen Oaks Community College has signed and returned the HEERF Certification and Agreement forms to the Department of Education. The College intends to use the HEER funds to make emergency financial aid grants available to students.

### **Emergency Grant Fund Awards**

The total amount of funds received by the college for the student portion of the CARES Act/HEER funding was \$288,341.

On April 27, 2020, 377 students were awarded emergency grants through the college's student information system. The Financial Aid Office contacted an additional 79 students to request further information to determine eligibility for emergency grant aid with the intent to award funds after submission of the required documentation and verification of eligibility. After receiving clarification from the Department of Education regarding distribution of funds for students in exclusively online classes, the college disbursed an additional 33 emergency grants on May 8. In sum, 410 of the 506 potentially eligible students received grants for the Winter 2020 semester.

Students may view the amount of emergency grant funds through My Awards in the Financial Aid Tile via myGOCC. Checks for Winter 2020 were mailed to students the week of May 18.

### **Methods for Determining Eligibility and Distribution of Funds**

On April 15, 2020, the CARES Act Committee (consisting of staff from Financial Aid, Advising/Counseling, Student Housing, Academics, Student Services, Business Office and Finance, and the President) determined that the college would distribute HEER funding as widely as possible to eligible students. The committee did not feel an application process

would be sufficient and meet the purpose of the HEER emergency funds during the Winter term. A student survey, conducted during the first week of the COVID-19 college closure, showed that roughly 25% of GOCC students either lacked reliable access to a computer and/or to the internet. GOCC was concerned that students in most need would not know of, or have the ability to apply for, the funds. In order to reach the most students in need as quickly as possible, the committee determined the college would distribute emergency grant checks to all enrolled students who qualify based upon the U.S. Department of Education (ED) guidelines and forego an application process during this first phase of distribution.

The committee also decided to reserve 20% of the student portion of the HEER funds for distribution in the summer and fall terms. The committee's belief was that students would continue to incur expenses associated with the disruption to campus operations and the move to online instruction and services.

The CARES Act Committee determined that the most equitable way to distribute the funding in the Winter 2020 term would be to award a portion of the funds to all eligible students based upon the number of credits in which the students were enrolled. This rationale was that students enrolled full-time (12 or more credits) would have likely incurred more expenses or hardships related to campus disruptions than those enrolled in courses part-time. By calculating the number of credits enrolled and then dividing that number into the funding allotted for the first disbursement, eligible students received approximately \$44.00 per credit hour enrolled.

The college followed the ED guidelines to determine student eligibility for HEERF. According to the ED, students:

- Cannot be enrolled in a program or degree offered exclusively online.
- Must be eligible for Title IV (federal financial aid) funds
  - US citizenship
  - Completion of a current FAFSA at [fafsa.gov](https://fafsa.gov)
  - Valid social security number
  - **Registered with the Selective Service** (Males over age 18)
  - High school diploma, GED or completion of high school in an approved homeschool setting
  - Enrollment in an eligible degree or certificate
  - Met Satisfactory Academic Progress requirements
  - Cannot be in default on federal student loans

The Vice President of Student Services notified all students via email of the availability of, and eligibility requirements of, the CARES Act/HEER funding during all semesters in which funds were available. This communication was also posted on the [glenoaks.edu/coronavirus](http://glenoaks.edu/coronavirus) web page created specifically for COVID-19 related updates. Information was provided to local media outlets and was also posted on the college's social media accounts. The Financial Aid Office sent individual communications via text and email to students who needed to verify eligibility. Academic Advisors sent text messages to students to notify them of available grants.

### **Guidance Provided to Students**

Students were provided information via email on eligibility requirements and were encouraged to contact the Financial Aid Office with any questions regarding eligibility for emergency funds. The college also informed students they could view the award amounts in My Awards in the Financial Aid tile in myGOCC, the student portal.

Students were also notified via email that the HEER funds could be used toward any expenses related to the disruption of campus operations, including costs of course materials, food, technology, housing, healthcare, and childcare.

A letter accompanied the grant checks with an overview of the HEERF and a list of eligible expenditures for the funds. The Business Office encouraged students, in these letters, to contact their local tax advisor for information on any tax implications regarding emergency funding.