

Public Reporting for Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2021 (CRRSAA), the American Rescue Plan Act, 2021 (ARP) and the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF II & III)

31 December 2021

Background

On 22 April 2020, the university submitted to the Department of Education the certification and agreement form to receive Emergency Financial Aid Grants to Students under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act Section 18004(a)(1) of the CARES Act, Pub. L. No. 116-136. The funds were designated to provide emergency grants to students related to the disruption of campus operations due to coronavirus (COVID-19), and were restricted to on-campus students only. Eligible expenses related to a student's cost of attendance include food, housing, course materials, technology, health care, and child care.

On 27 December 2020, the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2021 (CRRSAA), Public Law 116-260 was signed into law, which authorized the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund II (HEERF II), and was announced on 14 January 2021. As East Central University had initially received CARES Act HEERF funds to distribute to students, the supplementation CRRSAA HEERF II funds were automatically granted to East Central University to distribute to students.

CRRSAA HEERF II required that Institutions must make financial aid grants to students, which can be used for any component of the student's cost of attendance or for emergency costs that arise due to coronavirus, such as tuition, food, housing, health care (including mental health care), or child care. Unlike the CARES Act, the CRRSAA requires that institutions prioritize students with exceptional need, such as students who receive Pell Grants, and authorizes grants to students exclusively enrolled in distance education.

On 11 March 2021 the American Rescue Plan Act, 2021 (ARP), was signed into law, which authorized the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund III (HEERF III). As East Central University had initially received CARES Act HEERF funds to distribute to students, the supplementation ARP HEERF III funds were automatically granted to East Central University to distribute to students.

HEERF III allows institutions to include undocumented and international students in the student population eligible to receive grants but maintains that grants can be used for any component of the student's cost of attendance or for emergency costs that arise due to coronavirus, such as tuition, food, housing, health care (including mental health care), or childcare. HEERF III also requires that institutions prioritize students with exceptional need, such as students who receive Pell Grants.

Public Reporting

As part of the reporting requirements by the Department of Education, East Central University is responding to the following items provided by the federal government.

Item 1

An acknowledgement that the institution signed and returned the certification and agreement form and that the institution has used or intends to use the funds to provide the mandated amount of at least 50% of the emergency financial aid grants to students.

On 22 April 2020, the university submitted to the Department of Education the certification and agreement form to receive Emergency Financial Aid Grants to Students under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act Section 18004(a)(1) of the CARES Act, Pub. L. No. 116-136. The entire amount designated for student grants will be distributed to Title IV eligible students.

No new certification or agreement was required to receive CRRSAA HEERF II funding and East Central University has met the new requirement of distributing the required amounts to students in the forms of CRRSAA HEERF II emergency grants.

No new certification or agreement was required to receive ARP HEERF III funding and East Central University will meet the new requirement of distributing the required amounts to students in the forms of ARP HEERF III emergency grants, during the Summer 2021, Fall 2021, and Spring 2022 terms.

Item 2

The total amount of funds that the institution received under the ARP programs:

The total amount of ARP HEERF III Funds that East Central received or will receive is \$8,595,472.

Item 3

Of those funds, the total amount that has been distributed to students as of the date of reporting (i.e. the first 30-day deadline, and then every 45 days thereafter):

ARP HEERF III Funds:

- ECU distributed \$45,700 on 22 July 2021 to 448 summer students and 1 student based on professional judgement.
- ECU distributed \$3,358,600 on 12 October 2021 to 1925 Students enrolled during the Fall 2021 Semester.
- ECU distributed \$381,000 on 20 October 2021 to an additional 215 Students enrolled during the Fall 2021 Semester.
- ECU distributed \$133,300 on 10 November 2021 to an additional 73 Students enrolled during the Fall 2021 Semester.
- ECU distributed \$443,940 on 8 December 2021 to 1193 Students enrolled during the Fall 2021 Semester, some of which had received funds earlier during the semester.

A total of \$4,362,540 of funds were distributed to students from the ARP HEERF III funds during 2021. There are no additional ARP HEERF III disbursements to students planned.

Item 4

The estimated total number of students at the institution eligible to participate in programs under Section 484 in Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 and therefore eligible to receive an emergency financial aid grant:

ECU estimated that there were 3136 students who are eligible under Section 484 in Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965 that are eligible to receive an emergency financial aid grant.

The Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund III Frequently Asked Questions document published on May 24, 2021 stated that: “Thus, students are no longer required to be eligible for Title IV student financial aid in order to receive HEERF grants to students.”

(<https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/arpfaq.pdf>)

Due to this guidance an additional 346 students were added to our count of students eligible to receive an emergency financial aid grant bringing the total to 3482.

Item 5

The total number of students who have received an emergency financial aid grant under ARP HEERF III:

As of 31 December 2021, 2255 students have received ARP HEERF III Emergency grants during Summer 2021 and Fall 2021.

Item 6

Describe the methodology the institution used to determine which students received emergency financial aid grants under ARP HEERF III and how much funding they received:

Summer 2021 Distribution: \$100 was given to each eligible student taking at least 1 credit during the Summer 2021 terms. 448 awards were made to students. ECU also made one professional judgement adjustment for a student and awarded them \$900 in HEERF III grant funds.

Fall 2021 Distribution:**First Eligibility Formula:**

The university reviewed all students in accordance with the eligibility requirements outlined in Section 314(a)(1), (a)(4) HEERF II (CRRSAA), and the guidance contained in the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund III Frequently Asked Questions” documented published May 24, 2021.

On 21 September 2021 student eligibility for ARP HEERF III funds were determined by the following criteria:

- Enrolled in the Fall 2021 Semester (Undergraduate students enrolled in at least 6 credits; graduate students taking at least 1 credit), and,
- Completed the 2021-2022 FAFSA OR are an international, DACA or undocumented student.

Once students were determined to be eligible the following Funding Amount Formula was used to determine grant funding:

- All international, DACA, or undocumented students received \$1000 (346 students)
- All Pell eligible students received a minimum of \$1000 regardless of unmet need (1224 students)
- Unmet need (calculated as Institutional Cost – EFC – Financial Aid excluding loans) was then used to create the following categorical award amounts in addition to the Pell minimum:

Unmet Need		
Min	Max	ARP HEERF III Grant
<	1000	\$ 500.00
1000	2000	\$ 600.00
2000	3000	\$ 700.00

3000	4000	\$ 800.00
4000	5000	\$ 900.00
5000	6000	\$ 1,000.00
6000	7000	\$ 1,100.00
7000	8000	\$ 1,200.00
8000	9000	\$ 1,300.00
9000	10000	\$ 1,400.00
10000	15000	\$ 1,500.00
15000	20000	\$ 1,600.00
20000	25000	\$ 1,700.00
25000	40000	\$ 1,800.00

- Students were contacted through email and asked to complete paperwork to apply for the funds, and to select a distribution method. Students who missed the first deadline were given opportunity to complete paperwork through a second and third deadline, which resulted in three distributions of funds under this method (12 October 2021, 20 October 2021, and 10 November 2021). 25 students who did not respond by the third deadline were included in the 4th distribution of funds which occurred with distribution of funds through the Second Eligibility Formula. All remaining funds for which applications were not received were added to the remaining funds to be distributed through the second eligibility formula.

Second Eligibility Formula:

To fully distribute remaining ARP HEERF III Emergency grant funds, the university reviewed all students in accordance with the eligibility requirements outlined in Section 314(a)(1), (a)(4) HEERF II (CRRSAA), and the guidance contained in the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund III Frequently Asked Questions” documented published May 24, 2021.

On 19 November 2021 student eligibility for remaining ARP HEERF III funds were determined by the following criteria:

- Enrolled in the Fall 2021 Semester (Undergraduate students enrolled in at least 6 credits; graduate students taking at least 1 credit), and,
- Completed the 2021-2022 FAFSA

Once students were determined to be eligible the following Funding Amount Formula was used to determine grant funding:

- Unmet need including previous HEERF III Fall 2021 emergency grant distribution (calculated as Institutional Cost – EFC – Financial Aid excluding loans – previous HEERF III Fall 2021 emergency grant distribution) was calculated for all students.

- Students who had a new unmet need amount greater than \$0 were invited to apply for a portion of the remaining pool of funds and 1193 students responded requesting a portion.
- These 1193 students were awarded an equal proportion of the remaining funds which was determined to be \$320 each. These funds were distributed on 8 December 2021.

Item 7

Instructions, directions, or guidance provided by ECU to the students included the following:

Summer 2021 Distribution:

- All eligible summer students were notified by email on 22 July 2021 that they would receive the grant through our student refund system – BankMobile.

Fall 2021 Distribution:

First Eligibility Formula:

- All students were notified by email on 18 August 2021 that we would be awarding ARP HEERF III grants in the Fall 2021 semester. The email reminded students to file the FAFSA, turn in verification documents, and set up their refund preference information, in order to be fully eligible for grant determination. (Note: ECU began using a new student refund system, TouchNet, on 1 August 2021).
- Students who were determined to receive Fall 2021 grant amounts as determined by the criteria in Item 6 (First Eligibility Formula), were notified through their ECU email accounts about the ARP HEERF III emergency assistance on 21 September 2021, and asked to submit their preferred distribution method. Students were offered the choice of applying their grant towards their student bursar account or to have the money sent directly to them. Students who selected direct distribution were asked to sign an affidavit confirming use of the funds pursuant to the terms of the ARP HEERF III guidelines.
 - A reminder was sent on 23 September 2021, and 24 September 2021, to students who had not yet submitted their distribution method preference and affidavit.
- Students who had not responded by 8am on 27 September 2021 were not included in the 13 October 2021 distribution.
 - These students were sent an email on 28 September 2021 with a reminder to complete the required steps, and additional outreaches to some of these students were made through Resident Assistants, Athletic Coaches, and support programs. Multiple additional emails (8 October 2021, 29 October 2021, 2 November 2021, 4 November 2021) were sent to students who had not responded. For those students for whom we had cell phone numbers a text message was sent on 8 October 2021 reminding them to complete the paperwork. Students who responded were included on the disbursements that occurred on 20 October 2021 and 10 November 2021.

Second Eligibility Formula:

- All students who were determined to be eligible under the Fall 2021 Second Eligibility Formula were notified by email on 19 November 2021 and instructed to apply through our institutional survey software (Class Climate). Students who did not apply received two additional email reminders before the deadline of noon on 3 December 2021.