

PR/AWARD NUMBER: P425E200585
RECIPIENT NAME: Frostburg State University
Regional Development & Engagement

January 8, 2020

CARES Act

Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF)

Interim Report Through December 30, 2020

The CARES Act, which establishes and funds the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF), directs institutions of higher education (“institutions”) to use no less than 50 percent of funds received under Sections 18004(a) (1) and 18004(c) of the CARES Act to provide emergency financial aid grants to students for expenses related to the disruption of campus operations due to coronavirus.

Frostburg State University was awarded \$ 1,962,520.00 on April 22, 2020 for grants to students, with the award period ending on April 21, 2021. FSU President Ronald H. Nowaczyk signed and returned the student allocation grant agreement with the U.S. Department of Education on April 10, 2020. An additional \$1,962,520.00 was awarded in institutional use funds for the University’s direct expenses related to COVID-19. That grant award agreement was signed and returned to DOE on April 22, 2020.

In preparation for the award, Frostburg State University President Dr. Ronald Nowaczyk appointed a six-person committee to review HEERF program goals, U.S. Department of Education guidance and the expected financial needs of FSU students resulting from the disruption of the Spring 2020 semester due to COVID-19 and make determinations about how funds should be distributed.

The committee, consisting of two student body leaders (Jenna Puffinburger and Daysha Sanders) and four FSU Vice Presidents (John Short, Arlene Cash, Artie Travers and Al Delia) unanimously determined that emergency funding would be reviewed and awarded on a case-by-case basis upon submission of an application by individual students. The initial period for which requests for emergency funding would be reviewed is March, April and May of 2020, the initial period affected by various medical concerns, restrictions to work and movement and financial impacts. The committee specifically made the decision to not award funds on some type of across-the-board or tiered need formula basis determined largely by financial documentation submitted more than a year prior to the onset of the COVID-19 crisis. Rather,

the Committee established a detailed application, case assignment, eligibility determination, review, awarding, and funds disbursement process. With few categorical exceptions (e.g. – grocery expenditures) receipts or other documentation was required to substantiate the requested emergency funds. The two students on the Committee, by unanimous consent of the Committee, were not to be involved with the review or awarding of applicants' requests (due to the belief that student applicant privacy should be maintained as much as possible).

Based on initial DOE guidance, FSU established a process to survey students who were not already documented as Title IV eligible at the time they submitted their application for emergency funds. Completion of the survey included attestation by the student to their Title IV eligibility. Upon issuance of the revised DOE guidance rescinding Title IV eligibility as a pre-requisite to grant awards, FSU ceased requiring separate verification of Title IV eligibility for students not already documented as Title IV eligible. As a result of DOE's rescission of their revised guidance to not consider Title IV eligibility (by issuing proposed rules) in making grant awards, FSU will reinstitute Title IV eligibility verification for any student receiving funds.

Frostburg State University had an undergraduate student headcount of 3,864 in Spring 2020, with 397 being fully online students. Graduate headcount for the Spring semester was 706 students, of which 306 were enrolled in fully online programs. These figures totaled 4,570 students attending Frostburg State University in Spring 2020, with 745 enrolled in fully online programs. Adding the 48 students who were in the U.S. and attending FSU on a student visa to the number of students enrolled in fully online programs, the estimated number of Title IV ineligible students at the University was 793, leaving 3,777 eligible to receive Title IV funds.

Very extensive outreach and communication to the entire student body about the availability of emergency funding was conducted through direct email and campus communications organs, through various social media platforms, with use of the FSU web site, and through extensive outreach to faculty and staff to alert and encourage students with need to seek funds.

As of Wednesday, July1, 2020 Frostburg State University received 801 applications and acted on 703 applications, awarding 518 requests for emergency funds, totaling \$637,470.97. Many of the outstanding applications are on hold pending further documentation from the student.

Graduate students received 10 awards totaling \$12,673.00, with an average of \$1,267.30 awarded per student while undergraduate students received 508 awards totaling \$624,797.07 averaging \$1,229.92 per student. Actual total disbursed funds were \$637,470.97.

Denied applications totaled 186, with 40 denied due to the ineligibility of the applicant to receive HEERF awards; (7 were ineligible because they are not citizens or permanent residents, 29 were ineligible due to being fully online program students, 7 were non-degree student) and 146 were denied because the applicant was seeking funds for expenses beyond the parameters established by the Committee or by HEERF. The overall applications funded percentage was 73.7%.

During the Fall 2020 semester Frostburg State University had an undergraduate headcount of 4,119. During that time, the University continued to accept applications from undergraduate students, both living on campus and in off-campus rentals, for support for housing costs, as well as a few trickling applications for emergency expenses from the spring semester. As during the previous spring, very extensive outreach and communication to the entire student body about the availability of emergency funding of \$375 for housing costs was conducted through direct email and campus communication organs, through various social media platforms, with use of the FSU web site, and through extensive outreach to faculty and staff to alert and encourage students with need to seek funds.

As of September 30, 2020, 1,665 applications were received for the \$375 housing awards. 1,560 students received the awards, totaling \$580,000. 105 denials were issued, either because the student asked for funding other than housing costs or asked a second time after previously receiving an award. To date, 1,776 students have received some form of CARES Act award, with 332 receiving an award both in the spring and the fall. The total amount awarded is \$1,247,187.95

During the last quarter of 2020, FSU received a few additional applications for the fall housing award, granting 27 applications for \$10,125. Otherwise, the decision was made to reserve the remaining CARES Act funds for use during the spring semester. FSU intends to automatically award \$375 to help support housing costs for all students who received the award in the fall and are registered as of the Add/Drop date for the spring semester. Other students who did not apply for the fall award but otherwise qualify, will be able to submit an application. The remaining funds will be used to help with students that have emergency financial need, are eligible for CARES Act funding, and their need fits one of the criteria established by the Department of Education. As of December 31, 2020, the total amount awarded is \$1,257,312.95.