



**Emergency Financial Aid Grant for Students under the  
Coronavirus, Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act**

Section 18004(a)(1) of the CARES Act, Pub. L. No. 116-136 (March 27, 2020), authorizes the Secretary of Education to allocate formula grant funds to higher education institutions. Section 18004(c) of the CARES Act requires each institution to use no less than fifty percent of the funds received to provide emergency financial aid grants to students for expenses related to the disruption of campus operations due to coronavirus.

The Department of Education has given guidelines with respect to timing of when the funds must be spent, though there is still clarification needed. For now, the University is operating under the assumption that the funds must be spent within one (1) year of the receipt of the funds.

Westfield State experienced a second disruption due to the coronavirus at the beginning of the Fall 2020 semester. Students were initially supposed to move on campus prior to the start of the semester of the Fall semester on September 2<sup>nd</sup>. On August 14<sup>th</sup>, the University adjusted the move-in plan for students to have them move-in beginning September 25<sup>th</sup>, which resulted in residential students needing to begin the year remotely from

As of September 30<sup>th</sup>, Westfield State University has spent \$2,133,348 of the \$2,256,030 allocated as direct emergency relief for students. For the remaining part of the allocation, the University has decided to award a second round of block grants to students. Under this plan, students will receive a block grant of **\$300** if they meet the following criteria:

- The student has completed the financial aid process for the 2020-2021 academic year as of 10/07/2020
- The student is receiving a Federal Pell Grant
- The student is an active student as of 10/07/2020
- The student is residing on campus as of 10/07/2020

The University has determined that as a result of the shift to online learning for the first month of the school year, students incurred expenses in areas such as food, housing, and technology. The University has come up with the following items that students may have incurred:

- Technology
  - While on campus, students would have had access to computer labs to work on papers, projects, and conduct research. In order to participate in online learning, students may have been required to purchase a computer to use in order to continue their studies.
    - Estimated cost for a computer: \$400 - \$1,000

- The University does not assume that student have access to internet at their home or temporary dwelling to support the move to online learning. And in the event they do, their access may be affected by inadequate technology or lower capabilities that would prevent the student from fully engaging in their online learning.
  - Estimated cost for internet: \$60 (300 Mbps for one months)
- Food
  - While on campus, students would have access to the various food service options provided by the University. Students would be able to use their meal plans and dining dollars to help with covering their food needs.
    - Estimated cost for food: \$100 per week
- Total expenses incurred as a result of switching to remote learning: **\$560 - \$1160**

Additionally, students residing on campus with prior approval would have faced a reduction in services while conducting the first month of classes remotely:

- Technology
  - While on campus, students had limited access to computer labs to work on papers, projects, and conduct research. In order to participate in online learning, students may have been required to purchase a computer to use in order to continue their studies.
    - Estimated cost for a computer: \$400 - \$1,000
- Food
  - While on campus, students would have access to the various food service options provided by the University. Students would be able to use their meal plans and dining dollars to help with covering their food needs.
    - Estimated cost for food: \$100 per week

Total expenses incurred as a result of switching to remote learning: **\$500 - \$1100**

### **Calculation**

Based on the number of students eligible for the grant at the University, it was decided that the funds should be split equally amongst all eligible students based on the allotment that was remaining in the HEERF pool given to the University. Taking in to account that not all students incurred these expenses, while others may have incurred higher expenses, the University divided the funds equally amongst the qualified students, arriving at \$300 per student.

At the discretion of the Director of Financial Aid, a Block Grant may be awarded or adjusted based on information communicated to the Director. In such instances, the Director will note the change and the rationale for the awarding or adjustment of a Block Grant.