



# OFFICE OF POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION (OPE)

OVERVIEW ON THE HIGHER EDUCATION EMERGENCY RELIEF FUND UNDER THE AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT OF 2021

SEPTEMBER 2021

# AGENDA

- Introductions
- About the American Rescue Plan Funding
- Eligibility – Students with Exceptional Needs
- Equitable Recovery
  - Emergency Financial Aid
  - Retention
  - Re-engagement
  - Prevention and Mitigation
- Transparency & Accountability
- Tools & Resources
- Discussion (Q&A)



# DISCLAIMER

This document is being used in support of a live discussion. As such, it does not necessarily express the entirety of that discussion nor the relative emphasis of topics therein.

Institutions are encouraged to carefully review the Department's full guidance at the end of this presentation and on the [ARP HEERF III](#) website.



# AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN (ARP)

The ARP is a \$40 billion investment in America's institutions of higher education – double the first two COVID recovery packages combined.

The total \$76 billion investment helps:

- Mitigate the negative impact of the pandemic on students' educational attainment
- Target resources to students with greatest need
- Support students' ability to meet basic needs
- Support for staffing, teaching, student support services, and educational programs/courses
- Support campus safety measures and protocols
- Comply with guidelines on allowable expenses and reporting requirements



# AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN (ARP)

ARP is also one of the largest, single, investments ever made in American higher education--for both students and institutions. It provides resources for many of our nation's most under-resourced institutions that educate the students most impacted by the pandemic. These investments include:

- More than \$10 billion to Community Colleges,
- More than \$2.6 billion to Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs),
- Approximately \$190 million to Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities (TCCUs), and
- More than \$6 billion to minority-serving institutions (MSIs), such as Hispanic-serving institutions (HSIs) and Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-serving institutions (AANAPISIs)



# OBLIGATED FUNDS

- **Supplemented existing awards:** The Department made supplemental awards to the existing Student Aid Portion and Institutional Portion grants for institutions that already received HEERF funding. Proprietary colleges were required to first submit the HEERF Proprietary institution certification form.
- **One more round of funding coming:** The Department has made all obligations with the exception of the A3 funding stream which is for institutions with the greatest need and will have more information on that soon.
- **More than a year to spend:** From the date of obligation, colleges have a full year to spend both the existing HEERF funds and new ARP funds within a particular funding stream. Colleges can also request a no-cost extension for an additional year. (FAQ questions #39, 40, and 41)



# NEW USES OF FUNDS

- The ARP has two new required uses of HEERF III
  - Implement evidence-based practices to monitor and suppress coronavirus in accordance with public health guidelines; and
  - Conduct direct outreach to financial aid applicants about the opportunity to receive a financial aid adjustment due to the recent unemployment of a family member or independent student
- For more information on these new required uses see FAQ #28-35.



# PRIORITIZING EXCEPTIONAL NEEDS

- All students, regardless of citizenship, qualify ([our new eligibility rule can be found here](#))
- Colleges can use various ways to identify exceptional need, including:
  - Pell grant recipients
  - Information on the FAFSA (FAFSA is not required for HEERF funds)
  - Alternative information, such as significant unexpected expenses either for themselves or their families, including the loss of employment, reduced income, or food or housing insecurity.
- Colleges are expected to establish a transparent process for assessing need.
- The Department strongly encourages colleges to use their institutional funds to make additional emergency financial aid grants to their students.
- See FAQ questions #7-9 for more information on eligibility and greatest need.



# EQUITABLE RECOVERY – EMERGENCY AID

- When making HEERF emergency financial grants to student's colleges must not:
  - Condition the receipt of emergency financial aid grants to students on continued or future enrollment in the institution,
  - Use the emergency financial aid grants to satisfy a student's outstanding account balance, unless it has obtained the student's written (or electronic), affirmative consent, or
  - Require such consent as a condition of receipt of or eligibility for the emergency financial aid grant.
- See FAQ questions #7-19 for more information on emergency financial aid grants to students



# EQUITABLE RECOVERY – EMERGENCY AID

- The Department may determine an institution has failed to prioritize students with exceptional need if the institution established preconditions for students to receive emergency financial aid grants, such as:
  - Establishing a minimum GPA,
  - Imposing other academic, athletic performance, or good standing requirements,
  - Requiring continued enrollment in the institution, or
  - Requiring the student to first pay any outstanding debt or balance.
- See FAQ questions #7-19 for more information on emergency financial aid grants to students.



# INSTITUTIONAL EXAMPLES – EMERGENCY FINANCIAL AID

- **San Joaquin Delta College** (HSI in Stockton, California) has already earmarked \$6.2 million of their ARP allocation to provide direct grants to over 4,100 students that have shown the highest need for financial support.
- **Fisk University** (HBCU in Nashville, Tennessee) distributed over \$500,000 to 100% of their students eligible for emergency aid from previous relief packages.
- **Diné College** (TCCU in Tsaile, Arizona) distributed more than \$600,000 in emergency funding to students from previous relief packages.
- **Northern Virginia Community College** (Annandale, Virginia) used 25% of CARES Institutional funds for emergency grants to students.
- **Austin Community College** (HSI in Austin, Texas) clearly communicated to their students they do not need to receive federal aid to receive a HEERF emergency grant.



# EQUITABLE RECOVERY - RETENTION

- Institutions may use grant funds for additional student, academic, financial, and mental health support systems that will help students persist.
  - Student supports services, such as childcare, food, housing, and health care.
  - Academic supports, such as technology needs, academic supplies, mentoring and tutoring.
  - Financial supports, including additional emergency grants and tuition subsidies.
  - Mental health counseling, such as peer support groups and supporting coping and resilience for students.
  
- See FAQ questions including #9-18, 22, 26, 27, and 28.



# INSTITUTIONAL EXAMPLES - RETENTION

- **Foothills-De Anza Community College** (Los Altos Hills, California) used previous funding to establish a Mental Wellness Ambassador program aimed at promoting mental health services, reducing stigma surrounding mental health disorders, creating community, and fostering an inclusive and non-judgmental campus culture.
- **Grand Rapids Community College** (Grand Rapids, Michigan) purchased laptops and hot spots, and extended Wi-Fi signals to public library parking lots to reach students in rural areas. Additionally, they directed \$3.4 million in CARES Act funds for childcare, housing, and food.
- **Blackfeet Community College** (TCCU in Browning, Montana) purchased 500 laptops, using previous relief funding to create a loaner program to allow students to remain enrolled and engaged with their academic studies.
- **Alcorn State University** (HBCU in Alcorn, Mississippi) used relief funds to provide enhanced virtual academic support services.



# INSTITUTIONAL FUNDS - REENGAGEMENT

- Institutions can use their (a)(1) Institutional Portion funds to discharge the complete balance of a student's institutional debt so students can reenroll, continue their education, or obtain their official transcript to transfer to another institution and/or secure employment.
- The Department strongly encourages institutions to use their institutional HEERF portion to discharge such debt.
- However, direct “marketing and recruitment” activities are an impermissible use of HEERF funds.
- See FAQ questions #22, 26, and 27



## INSTITUTIONAL EXAMPLES

- **Delaware State University** (HBCU in Dover, DE) earmarked \$730,000 of their ARP allocation to cancel the debts of more than 200 recent graduates who were financially impacted by the coronavirus pandemic. These graduates will have on average \$3,200 in debt discharged.
- **Elizabeth City State University** (HBCU in Elizabeth City, NC) cleared unpaid balances for all student accounts from Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 semesters due to COVID-19 hardships totaling \$286,500 so students can re-enroll.



# INSTITUTIONAL FUNDS - PREVENT AND MITIGATE COVID

Institutions may use their (a)(1) Institutional Portion funds for COVID detection, prevention, and more:

- **Detection:** Diagnostic or screening testing strategy, setting up testing sites, purchasing tests, and hiring additional personnel to administer tests.
- **Prevention:** Spreading awareness and build confidence in getting vaccinated, and to set up vaccination sites on or off campus, including costs of bringing sites to rural and satellite locations.
- **Reducing barriers to vaccination:** Paid time off and sick leave for staff.
- See FAQ #28 and 29



# INSTITUTIONAL EXAMPLES - PREVENT AND MITIGATE COVID

- **Alabama State University** (HBCU in Montgomery, Alabama) used relief funds to prioritize the health and safety of its students, faculty, and staff through the purchase of personal protective equipment (PPE).
- **Mountain View College** (HSI in Dallas, Texas) has used relief funds for PPE masks and enhanced weekly cleanings.
- On May 11th, President Biden announced the opportunity for community colleges to partner with federal pharmacy programs to serve as vaccination sites.



# INFRASTRUCTURE AND JOB LOSS

- Minor remodeling (FAQ #23, 24):
  - Installation or renovation of HVAC systems to improve air filtration.
  - Purchase or lease of temporary trailer classrooms.
  - Installation of room dividers and other interventions to prevent the spread of COVID-19.
- Staff support (FAQ #25):
  - Paid student internships and job training experiences that support local coronavirus-related recovery.
  - Salaries for staff who were unable to work during a period of any full or partial campus closures due to the pandemic.
  - Any additional/overtime work any staff incurred from March 13, 2020 onward associated with coronavirus.



# TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- **Reporting:** Grantees receiving ARP funds must continue to adhere to the two quarterly reporting requirements originally implemented through the CARES Act. Next deadline is October 10. (FAQ #36, 37)
- **Audits** (FAQ #38)
- Also see FAQ questions #49 and 50



# RESOURCES

- **HEERF Customer Care Center**
  - Email: [HEERF@ed.gov](mailto:HEERF@ed.gov) and Phone: 202-377-3711
- **ARP home page**
  - <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/arp.html>
- **ARP FAQs (issued on May 11, 2021):**
  - <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/arpfaq.pdf>
- **Lost Revenue FAQs (issued on March 19, 2021)**
  - <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/heerflostrevenuefaq.pdf>
- **HEERF Grant Auditing Requirements (issued March 8, 2021)**
  - <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/heerfauditletter.pdf>



# RESOURCES

- **Email addresses for HEERF documentation:**
  - HEERF Quarterly Reports: [HEERFReporting@ed.gov](mailto:HEERFReporting@ed.gov)
  - Voluntary Decline of HEERF Grant Funds: [HEERFRefund@ed.gov](mailto:HEERFRefund@ed.gov)
- **Maintenance of Effort Requirements and Waiver Requests**
  - [https://oese.ed.gov/files/2021/04/MOE-Chart\\_with-waiver-FAQs\\_FINAL\\_4.19.21\\_12pm.pdf](https://oese.ed.gov/files/2021/04/MOE-Chart_with-waiver-FAQs_FINAL_4.19.21_12pm.pdf)
- **Voluntary Decline Form**
  - <https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/arpheerfiiivoluntarydecline.pdf>
- **Drawing Insights from the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF) Reporting for 2020**
  - <https://content.govdelivery.com/accounts/USED/bulletins/2f109ee>



