

FAQs for Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF I)

What is the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF I) and how was the allocation to CACC determined?

On March 13, 2020, President Donald Trump declared a national emergency concerning the COVID-19 outbreak and signed into law the federal Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act on March 27, 2020. The CARES Act allocated nearly \$14 billion to support colleges and universities around the country. The most significant portion of that [funding allocation](#) provides that \$12.56 billion will be distributed to institutions using a formula based on student enrollment. Of the amount allocated to each institution under this formula, at least 50 percent (50%) must be reserved to provide students with emergency financial aid grants to help cover expenses related to the disruption of campus operations due to coronavirus.

Central Alabama Community College (CACC) received a total allocation under the Higher Education Emergency Relief Funds (HEERF) in the amount of \$1,222,052, of which 50% or \$611,026 will be distributed to eligible students for specific expenses related to the cost of attendance that were a direct result of the disruption of campus operations due to the national COVID-19 pandemic.

Frequently Asked Questions about the Emergency Financial Aid Grants to Students under Section 18004 of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act can be viewed [here](#).

Which students are eligible to receive emergency financial aid grants from the HEERF?

Student eligibility for HEERF funds will be determined by CACC based on guidance from the U.S. Department of Education's HEERF Funding Certification and Agreement, HEERF Student FAQs, Sections 18004(a)(1) and 18004(c) of the CARES Act, and Section 484 in Title IV of the Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965, as amended.

CACC will utilize the completed Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), which provides the necessary information to determine basic eligibility criteria included in Section 484 of the Higher Education Act (HEA).

What eligibility criteria are included in Section 484 of the Higher Education Act (HEA)?

Section 484 of the HEA states that Title IV eligible students must:

- Be enrolled or accepted for enrollment in a degree or certificate program.
- Not be enrolled in elementary or secondary school.
- Be making satisfactory academic progress (currently enrolled students).
- Not owe an overpayment on Title IV grants or loans.
- Not be in default on a Title IV loan.
- File "as part of the original financial aid application process" a certification that includes
 - A statement of educational purpose.
 - Student's SSN.
- Be a U.S. citizen or national, permanent resident, or other eligible noncitizen.
- Have returned fraudulently obtained Title IV funds if convicted of or pled guilty or no contest to charges.
- Not have fraudulently received Title IV loans in excess of annual or aggregate limits.
- Have repaid Title IV loan amounts in excess of annual or aggregate limits if obtained inadvertently.
- Have Selective Service registration verified.
- Have Social Security Number verified.
- Not have a federal or state conviction for drug possession or sale, with certain time limitations.

How do I apply for the HEERF grant funds?

Students who meet basic eligibility criteria for federal financial aid according to the 2019-2020 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) will automatically receive consideration.

If you have already completed the FAFSA for the 2019-2020 academic year, your eligibility is currently under review. If you have not completed the 2019-2020 FAFSA, you must complete the FAFSA no later than **June 17, 2020** in order to be considered for HEERF grant funds.

If I did not file a FAFSA, may I still do so?

If you are eligible to file a FAFSA but have not yet filed for the 2019-2020 academic year, you may do so at studentaid.gov.

The US Department of Education deadline for filing a 2019-2020 FAFSA is June 30, 2020; however, CACC must expend all funds within one year from execution of the Funding Certification and Agreement for the HEERF grant funds for students. Based on this timeline, students wishing to be considered for HEERF grant funds must complete the FAFSA and include CACC on the FAFSA no later than **June 17, 2020**.

Is there a deadline to apply?

To ensure consideration for HEERF grants funds, students must have completed the 2019-2020 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) no later than **June 17, 2020**.

If you have already completed the FAFSA for the 2019-2020 academic year and listed Central Alabama Community College on the FAFSA, you will receive consideration for the HEERF grant funds.

How much can I expect to receive?

While realizing every eligible student, with the exception of exclusively online course taking students, enrolled for the Spring 2020 was impacted from transitioning to an 100% online instructional delivery method, CACC recognizes students with larger enrollment loads would experience a greater expense in transitioning to remote online instruction. Taking this into consideration, CACC established funding tiers based on an enrollment/participation status as of March 13, 2020 and a three-phase award distribution process as outlined in the Report on Higher Education Emergency Relief Funds (HEERF I).

How will I be notified of my award status?

Student award notification letters will accompany the processed check and will include eligibility criteria used by the College, the award distribution methodology, a series of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs), and a link to the CACC website where the required Department of Education report is posted.

Additional communication will be managed through the student's CACC email account, text messaging, and by telephone.

How will these funds be disbursed?

CACC established funding tiers based on student enrollment/participation status as of March 13, 2020 and a three-phase award distribution process as outlined in the Report on Higher Education Emergency Relief Funds (HEERF I).

Actual award distributions will be made via check delivered through the U.S. Postal Service to the last identified address available in the student's admission record. Address information can be verified by logging in to your MyCACC student account.

Can CACC apply the HEERF award to my student account to pay outstanding balances?

The Department of Education clearly states HEERF grant funds to students cannot be applied toward outstanding balances by the College, and must be disbursed directly to students. CACC will distribute awards to eligible students via check.

Will the HEERF grant funds impact my financial aid award at CACC?

HEERF grant funds will not have an impact on current financial aid awards or any future financial aid awards.

If I'm determined to be eligible for the HEERF grant funds, when can I expect to receive my award?

CACC will disburse HEERF grant funds in a three-phase award distribution process.

- Phase I funds are estimated to be disbursed on May 18, 2020.
- Phase II funds are estimated to be disbursed on July 17, 2020.
- Phase III funds are estimated to be disbursed on January 21, 2021.

Will I need to report HEERF grant funds on my federal tax return?

The IRS issued [FAQs on the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund and Emergency Financial Aid Grants under the CARES Act](#) that clarifies that CARES Act aid should be treated as a "qualified disaster relief payment" and not be treated as taxable income. Each financial award you receive from the federal government and other sources will have separate and unique tax consequences for your federal tax return. Visit the [IRS website](#) for assistance.

Who can I contact for more information or if I have questions about my award?

If you have questions about the HEERF grant, please email your questions to HEERF@cacc.edu.