

Northwest Vista College 30-Day Fund Report

CARES Act for the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund NVC CARES ER Student Aid Project

Grant Program: Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund-Student Aid (CFDA 84.425E)

Grant Program Office: Education Stabilization Fund

PR/AWARD #: P425E202516

Project Title: Northwest Vista College CARES Emergency Student Aid Project

Budget & Performance Period: April 25, 2021 – April 24, 2021

Current Award Amount: \$3,463,310.00

REPORTING PERIOD: April 17, 2020 through May 17, 2020

Institutional Acknowledgement:

On April 17, 2020, Northwest Vista College's Authorized Representative and President, Dr. Ric N. Baser, signed the Certification and Agreement for Emergency Financial Aid Grants to Students under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, uploading and returning the document to the U.S. Department of Education as part of the institutions' application submission to the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund-Student Aid grant program via the Grants.gov portal. In signing the aforementioned certification and agreement document, Northwest Vista College assures its intend use no less than 50% of the Federal funding received under Section 18004 (a)(1) of the CARES Act to provide Emergency Financial Aid Grants to students.

Amount of Student Emergency Aid Grants Disbursed:

The total amount of emergency financial aid grants disbursed to Northwest Vista College students using funds received under Section 18004(a)(1) of the CARES Act as of May 17, 2020 is \$2,120,721.00.

Estimated Number of Students Eligible to Receive Emergency Aid Grants:

The estimated total number of Northwest Vista College students eligible to participate in programs under Section 484 in of the Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965 and thus eligible to receive Emergency Financial Aid Grants to students under Section 18004(a)(1) of the CARES Act is 9,017. This estimated total was derived using the number of all 2019-2020 FAFSA applications received by NVC's financial aid office, and using the student eligibility criteria found in Section 424 of the HEA of 1965 as amended, ensuring the students included in the count were currently in good academic standing.

Number of Students Receiving Emergency Aid Grants:

As of May 17, 2020, a total of 4,338 students attending Northwest Vista College have received Emergency Financial Aid Grants under Section 18004(a)(1) of the CARES Act.

Institutional Methodology:

Northwest Vista College developed the following methodology to determine which students are eligible to receive Emergency Financial Aid Grants and the amount students are to receive under Section 18004(a)(1) of the CARES Act:

Northwest Vista College's approach in determining student eligibility was amended several times due to varying interpretations of the USDOE CARES Act HEERF student eligibility criteria between the institution's district financial aid office and the institutional and project leadership. Initially, the student emergency aid grant process was to be administered through the Northwest Vista College (NVC) Student Advocacy and Resource Center, so that students could be case managed and provided with additional tools to help them through the COVID-19 pandemic. In determining which students were eligible to receive CARES Act HEERF emergency grants, the district financial aid office made the decision to shift the process toward requiring students to submit or have submitted a 2019-2020 Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) application, basing this direction on that the FAFSA results would be a reliable confirmation of students' eligibility to apply to Title IV programs.

An electronic, fillable PDF student application was developed whereby NVC students can request emergency aid assistance. The application is posted on the Northwest Vista College Student Advocacy website, and CARES Act HEERF emergency student grant information and link are posted on the NVC homepage, and on all NVC social media sites (Twitter, Facebook). Email communications containing information on the availability and application process for CARES Act HEERF student emergency grants we sent to NVC students, faculty and staff. Based on Department of Education guidance, documentation of an expense is requested, but is not mandatory. The online student application includes sections for students to enter information on area of need and the amount being requested, and allows students electronically certifying that the funds requested are for expenses resulting from the disruption of campus operations due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Student Advocacy and Resource Center, in collaboration with the NVC Student Services leadership, developed a rubric for what an appropriate award would be for different categories of expenses. The rubric was to be our guide for awarding decisions. While NVC received a significant number of applications after it was made available on May 1, 2020 at 2:00 p.m., the volume was not as high as expected and students were not asking for much in monetary assistance. Student Advocacy staff noted that students were taking a very short-term view of their needs. In some cases, student awards were elevated upward of their request to be the amount that had been determined on NVC's previously mentioned rubric. The NVC Student Advocacy staff anticipated that these students would be returning to request additional funds in coming months. To better assist and support our students, their fund requests were increased, with instructions provided to the students that an assessment of their current circumstances and needs resulting from the coronavirus pandemic was conducted by the NVC Student Advocacy, which determined anticipating an additional future request for the recurring expenses and encouraged them to budget appropriately.

On May 11, 2020, the NVC Student Advocacy staff began case-loading students who had been denied CARES Act HEERF emergency student grants based on not meeting Title IV eligibility criteria. NVC began outreach efforts to help students understand the reason for denial and what they could do to meet the criteria, such as enrolling in a summer course. The NVC Student Advocacy staff is also working with students who do not qualify CARES Act HEERF emergency student grants to determine whether alternative sources of emergency assistance or community assistance are available and could be leveraged. Additionally, the NVC Student Advocacy staff also began outreach efforts to students who requested less than \$2,000 in CARES Act HEERF emergency student grant assistance to determine whether additional funds were needed, and to establish a connection with a team member who will be supporting the student through the COVID-19 pandemic to remain enrolled.

Guided by the CARES Act guidance for HEERF funding that states that a single distribution can be made if a specific group could be identified that was impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic, on May 12, 2020, a one-time disbursement of \$300 was made to all NVC Pell-eligible students who were enrolled during the spring 2020 term. The decision for the one-time disbursement was based on a 2019 survey of students within the Alamo Colleges, including Northwest Vista College, in which nearly 50% reported experiencing food insecurity and approximately 60% of students indicating being housing insecure. In the same survey, 17% of students reported having been homeless at some point in the prior year. Because of the fragile nature of poverty and our awareness of the likelihood that students were in survival mode, it was the institution's belief that a broad distribution alerting the students to the availability of CARES Act HEERF funding would help increase awareness and the requests for assistance. The entire CARES Act HEERF student emergency aid award is directly disbursed to the student, with no existing balances impacting the amount received by students.

Information to Students on Emergency Financial Aid Grants:

The following instructions, directions, and/or guidance pertaining to the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund Emergency Financial Aid Grants funding under Section 18004(a)(1) of the CARES Act received by Northwest Vista College and available for disbursement have been provided to students on the institutional website, student emergency aid application, email communications sent to students, NVC social media sites, and in the Student Information System (award status/outcome) can be viewed by clicking on the following link:

- [Student Communications-NVC CARES Act HEERF Emergency Aid Grant \(PDF\)](#)