

Federal Reporting Requirements

Fall 2020: End of 1st Quarter Report

**Northwest Vista College
Fall 2020: End of 1st Quarter 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, 2020 – April 24, 2021

Current Award Amount: \$3,463,310.00

REPORTING PERIOD: April 17, 2020 through September 30, 2020

1. 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 intent to 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.

2. NVC has received a total of \$3,463,310.00 in CARES Act HEERF Student Aid.

3. 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 September 30, 2020 is \$2,809,839 (data extracted on September 30, 2020).

Previous totals include:

Report 1 (May 17, 2020): \$2,120,721

Report 2 (July 2, 2020): \$2,493,133

Report 3 (August 17, 2020): \$2,615,471

4. 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.

Previous totals include:

Report 1 (May 17, 2020): 9,017

Report 2 (July 2, 2020): 9,017

Report 3 (August 17, 2020): 9,017

5. Number of Students Receiving Emergency Aid Grants:

As of September 30, 2020, a total of 4,176 students attending Northwest Vista College have received Emergency Financial Aid Grants under Section 18004(a)(1) of the CARES Act. Between the 30-day report and the 75-day report there was a change in the interpretation of eligibility. Therefore, students that were awarded CARES Act funds that did not meet the new eligibility interpretation requirements had their CARES Act funding retracted and replaced with alternative institutional dollars. Students that were awarded CARES Act funds that did not meet the new eligibility interpretation had their CARES Act funding retracted and replaced with alternative institutional dollars. As a result, the cumulative number of students reflected in the 75-day report shows a decrease in number of students awarded (data extracted on August 12, 2020).

Previous totals include:

Report 1 (May 17, 2020): 4338*

Report 2 (July 2, 2020): 4148

Report 3 (August 17, 2020): 4161

**The reduced number of students helped between May 17th reporting and July 2nd reporting is due to a large number of students who were initially awarded the \$300 award to all Pell students where their checks or ACH funds were not able to be delivered by Heartland. After several attempts to locate those students the funds were returned to Alamo and the awards were cancelled. This reduced the number of students awarded and freed up funds to be awarded back to the program.*

Student Statistics...

[insert table]

6. 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 financial aid grants 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 Financial Aid Grants, the district financial aid office made the decision to shift the process in a direction that requires students to submit or have submitted a 2019-2020 Free Application

for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) application, given that the FAFSA Student Aid Report provides a reliable confirmation of students' eligibility to participate in programs under Section 484 the HEA.

*Fall 2020 Eligibility Requirements Updates:

- Be enrolled full-time or part-time in Fall 2020 semester (updated to reflect current semester of enrollment)

*All previous eligibility requirements remain unchanged and applicable.

While student awards are based on dependent and independent status, student actual eligibility will be based on the above requirements AND supportive assessment provided by a case management team. The award amount depends on the number of applicants, availability of funds, and need demonstrated in the application.

CARES Act HEERF Emergency Financial Aid Grants information is housed on the [Students Emergency Aid](#) page of the Alamo Colleges/Northwest Vista College website. It is also included on the [Student Advocacy & Resource Center](#) web page. Both pages are searchable using Google and using the Northwest Vista College website search tool. The information is further promoted through student and employee email, COVID-19 newsletter updates and NVC social media channels (Facebook, Twitter and Instagram). NVC students can request emergency aid assistance through an electronic application available in the ACES student portal and accessible through the NVC website. Adhering to U.S. Department of Education guidance, documentation of expenses is requested from students applying for CARES Act HEERF assistance, but is not mandatory. The online student application asks students questions pertaining to their need for assistance and the amount being requested, and requires students to electronically certifying that the funds for which they are applying 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 NVC's guide for emergency grant award decisions. While NVC received a significant number of applications after the online document 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 a student's request to 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 NVC 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 Financial Aid Grants based on not meeting the eligibility criteria. NVC began outreach efforts to help students understand the reasons 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 for CARES Act HEERF Emergency Financial Aid Grants to determine whether alternative sources of emergency aid 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 Financial Aid Grants 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.

Using 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 indicated 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 NVC faculty and staff 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 Emergency Financial Aid Grants funding would help increase awareness and the requests for assistance. The full amount of the CARES Act HEERF Emergency Financial Aid Grant award is made available directly to the qualifying student for expenses related to the disruption of campus operations due to coronavirus.

August 17, 2020

From May 1, 2020 through June 5, 2020 students completed an online application that asked questions pertaining to their need for assistance and the amount being requested, and required students to electronically certify that the funds were needed for expenses resulting from the disruption of campus operations due to the COVID-19 pandemic. As referenced above, all applications were reviewed by Financial Aid Officials to determine eligibility to participate in the program under Section 484 of the HEA.

Beginning June 6, 2020 NVC's case managers began reviewing the statuses of the initial pool of students who had been denied CARES Act funds or awarded small amounts in the initial distributions, to determine whether the student could meet the eligibility requirements (e.g. helping students complete the FAFSA, register for a summer class) or need additional support. Students who could not meet criteria but were in need of help, were encouraged to seek NVC emergency aid from other resources and were assigned to a long-term case management team.

The application link to CARES Act HEERF was temporarily inactivated on June 5, 2020 to allow team members to process all applications and to determine the balance of remaining funds. The application link was reactivated on July 28, 2020.

UPDATE - October 7, 2020

Northwest Vista College executive leadership approved the awarding of CARES funding for students which would allow a student who was awarded in the spring or summer to qualify for aid in the fall semester as long as all other eligibility criteria are met. All students who qualify are granted a screening award based on dependent (\$300) or independent (\$600) status, after which case managers reach out to work on emergency food support, additional CARES aid is considered without exceeding the cumulative maximum amount of \$6,127 and the semester cap of \$2,000 per student. Students are then transferred to the Student Advocacy Center case management team to help with applications for local rental assistance, public assistance or other resources to leverage the CARES funds toward the goal of long-term stabilization.

7. 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)

UPDATE

Archived CARES Act HEERF Student Aid Reports

- [First Fund Report \(30-Day\) - May 17, 2020](#) (PDF)
- [Second Fund Report \(75-Day\) - July 2, 2020](#) (PDF)
- [Third Fund Report \(120-Day\) - August 17, 2020](#) (PDF)

Important Documents and Links

- [Recipient's Funding Certification and Agreement Emergency Financial Aid Grants to Students under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security \(CARES\) Act](#) (PDF)
- [Federal Student Aid: Emergency Aid Requirements and Steps to Apply](#)