

# Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund March 31, 2021

## INTRODUCTION

The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act or, CARES Act, was passed by Congress and signed by the President on March 27th, 2020. This bill allotted \$2.2 trillion to provide fast and direct economic aid to the American people negatively affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Of those funds, approximately \$14 billion was allocated to the Office of Postsecondary Education as the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund, or HEERF, to provide funding to institutions of higher education “to prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus.”

## REPORTING

Mercyhurst University is required to provide regular reporting to the U.S. Department of Education (ED) regarding the use of funds authorized by the CARES Act for funds received by Mercyhurst. The information below is intended to not only meet the reporting requirements of the CARES Act, but provide additional information to our university community regarding Mercyhurst’s use of the student grant portion of the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF).

Section 18004(e) of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (“CARES Act” or the “Act”), Pub. L. No. 116-136, 134 Stat. 281 (March 27, 2020), directs institutions receiving funds under Section 18004 of the Act to submit (in a time and manner required by the Secretary) a report to the Secretary describing the use of funds distributed from the HEERF. Section 18004(c) of the CARES Act requires institutions to use no less than 50 percent of the funds received from Section 18004(a)(1) of the CARES Act to provide Emergency Financial Aid Grants to students for expenses related to the disruption of campus operations due to coronavirus (including eligible expenses under a student’s cost of attendance such as food, housing, course materials, technology, health care, and childcare). On April 9, 2020, the ED published documents related to the Emergency Financial Aid Grants, including a [letter](#) from Secretary Betsy DeVos and a [Certification and Agreement](#) form for signing and returning by institutions to access the funds.

The Certification and Agreement directs each institution applying for HEERF funds to comply with Section 18004(e) of the CARES Act and submit an initial report (the “30-day Fund Report”) to the Secretary thirty (30) days from the date of the institution’s Certification and Agreement to ED. Each HEERF participating institution must post the information listed below on the institution’s primary website. The following information must appear in a format and location that is easily accessible to the public 30 days after the date when the institution received its allocation under 18004(a)(1) and updated every 45 days thereafter:

- Acknowledgment of Funding and Certification
- Total Award
- Funds Distributed to Date
- Student Eligibility
- Total Student Awards Made
- Methods Used to Determine Which Students Receive Aid and How Much
- Instructions or Directions Given to the Students
- Reports Submitted to U.S. Department of Education
- Final Reports for CARES Act A1 Funds

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF FUNDING AND CERTIFICATION**

Mercyhurst University acknowledges that the institution's authorized representative signed and returned to the Department of Education (Department) the Recipient's Funding Certification and Agreement to Students under the CARES Act. Mercyhurst gives its assurance that the institution has used, or intends to use, no less than 50 percent of the funds received under Section 18004(a)(1) of the CARES Act to provide Emergency Financial Aid Grants to students

## **TOTAL AWARD**

Mercyhurst has received a total of \$3,142,547 under Section 18004(a)(1) of the CARES Act. The US Department of Education issued Award No. P425E2020-1 for a total amount of \$1,571,274 which has been or will be provided directly to students affected by campus disruptions due to coronavirus.

### *Award Information:*

Number: P425E2020-1

Title: CARES Act: Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund

### *Mercyhurst University Student Relief Portion:*

Budget Period: 03/13/2020 - 03/13/2021

Award Amount: \$1,571,274

CFDA: 84.425 Education Stabilization Fund

## **FUNDS DISTRIBUTED TO DATE**

The total amount of funds that Mercyhurst University has received from the Department pursuant to Mercyhurst's Certification and Agreement [for] Emergency Financial Aid Grants to Students is \$1,571,274. The total amount of Emergency Financial Aid Grants distributed to students under Section 18004(a)(1) of the CARES Act from the date of submission, March 13, 2020, through the close of business on March 31, 2021, was \$1,571,274.

## **STUDENT ELIGIBILITY**

The estimated total number of Mercyhurst students eligible to participate in programs under Section 484 in Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965, and thus eligible to receive Emergency Financial Aid Grants to students under Section 18004(a)(1) of the CARES Act is 2,840. To be eligible for CARES Act relief funds, students must have had a valid FAFSA on file on or before March 27, 2020 (the date the legislation was enacted), must meet Title IV eligibility requirements, and must have been registered for coursework at Mercyhurst as of March 27, 2020.

## **TOTAL STUDENT AWARDS MADE**

The total number of Mercyhurst students who have received an Emergency Financial Aid Grant to students under Section 18004(a)(1) of the CARES Act as of December 31, 2020 was 2,579.

## **METHODS USED TO DETERMINE WHICH STUDENTS RECEIVE AID AND HOW MUCH**

Student were notified of their award a letter.

The University has signed and returned the Certification and Agreement form necessary to access the funds, and intends to use 100% of these funds to provide emergency financial aid grants to students, within one year of the application date or March 13, 2020. Funds may only be provided for student expenses related to the disruption of campus operations due to the coronavirus. Funds cannot be granted on need alone or due to financial loss because of COVID- 19.

The University awarded the emergency relief as follows: a) \$1,571,274 or 100% of overall allocation in direct grants to students from the initial application process, concluded by March 31, 2021, b) approximately \$0 or 0% of the overall allocation in direct grants to students on an ongoing process for appeals since March 31, 2021. All grant payments were made directly to students and were not applied toward any outstanding balance on their student account.

These distributions generally represent grants for eligible students who were displaced from campus housing, likely had disruption to their planned expenses, and/or needed to purchase adequate supplies to continue their education, which were previously provided by the University. The students' Expected Family Contribution (EFC) was also considered when determining eligibility and award amount in order to assist those with the greatest need.

The Application for Emergency Assistance could be completed by any Mercyhurst University student. Students who did not qualify for CARES or did not receive the full request amount, were considered for funds from Mercyhurst University Emergency Relief Fund.

Given the significant disruption in spring 2020, it is expected that students may need emergency funding in summer session and into the fall semester. Awards from the Mercyhurst University Emergency Relief Fund will continue to be made as funding permits.

## **INSTRUCTIONS OR DIRECTIONS GIVEN TO THE STUDENTS**

In accordance with the Secretary of Education's instructions for institutions to issue aid to students as soon as possible under the student aid portion of the CARES Act, Mercyhurst's posted notice of the CARES Act, along with the Application Form, on the Mercyhurst website and also mailed this information to students on May 18, 2020.

# Mercyhurst University

## Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act REQUIRED DISCLOSURES

### March 31, 2021

Mercyhurst University was allocated up to \$3,142,548 in federal relief funds authorized under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act). As a recipient of funding, the university is required to provide a series of disclosures regarding our use of the funds.

**1) An acknowledgement that you have signed and returned the Certification, and your assurance that you have used or intend to use no less than 50% of the funds for student grants.**

The university has signed and returned the Certification to the Department of Education. At least 50 percent of funds have or will be used for student relief grants. To date, Mercyhurst University has issued \$1,571,274 in grants to students.

**2) The total amount of CARES Act funding that you will receive or have received pursuant to your Certification and Agreement for Emergency Financial Aid Grants to Students.**

The university was allocated up to \$3,142,548 in funding.

**3) The total amount of grants distributed to students under 18004(a)(1) of the CARES Act as of the date of your submission/posting (i.e., 30 days after receiving allocation, and every 45 days thereafter).**

To date, \$1,571,274 in emergency funding was released to 2,579 students. Relief grants ranged from \$67 to \$2,305, with the average student receiving approximately \$610.

**4) Estimated total # of students at your institution "eligible to participate in programs under Section 484 in Title IV."**

2,840 students were eligible for Title IV aid in the spring semester.

**5) Total number of students who have received a grant under 18004(a)(1) of the CARES Act.**

To date, \$1,571,274 in emergency funding was released to 2,579 students. Relief grants

ranged from \$67 to \$2,305, with the average student receiving approximately \$610.

**6) The method(s) your institution used to determine which students receive grants, and how much they would receive.**

In order to grant students aid expeditiously, Mercyhurst University automatically released relief funds to eligible students; students did not need to apply for relief. Based on the available guidance from the Department of Education at the time Mercyhurst issued relief funds to students, any student with a valid FAFSA on file with the institution as of March 27 (the date the act was signed into law), who was Title IV eligible, and who was enrolled for in-person coursework was eligible for some relief funding. Students who had withdrawn prior to that date or who were in online-only coursework were ineligible for relief.

Two factors determined the amount of funding per student: 1) a student's expected family contribution, a federal calculation of financial need that accompanies a student's FAFSA (students were grouped into one of eight discrete categories of financial need), and 2) the number of credits a student was enrolled in as of March 27 (12 or more credits versus fewer than 12 credits). Consistent with the provisions of the CARES Act, more aid was targeted to students who were Pell eligible.

**7) Any "instructions, directions, or guidance provided by the institution to students concerning the Emergency Financial Aid Grants."**

The following text was included in the relief notices sent to students:

*"Congress has passed the CARES (Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security) Act to provide relief to Americans affected by this crisis. A portion of those relief funds were reserved for college students whose educations were disrupted.*

*Mercyhurst University recently received approximately \$1.5 million in CARES Act funds to assist eligible students with the disruption and unanticipated expenses associated with the*

*pandemic. Per guidance from the Department of Education, these funds are reserved for students eligible for Title IV federal financial aid. At Mercyhurst, any student who sent us a valid FAFSA on or before March 27, 2020 (the date the legislation was enacted), who meet Title IV eligibility requirements, and who were registered for in-person coursework as of March 27 will receive a portion of this relief funding.*

*You will receive [amount] from those CARES Act funds in the coming week. If you have direct deposit information on file with the university,*

*those funds will be deposited to your bank account. If we do not have this information on file, your funds will be issued via a paper check and mailed to your home address.*

*We hope these funds provide support to you for unanticipated expenses incurred due to the pandemic. Moreover, we hope you and your families are safe and well."*

Posted: March 10, 2021

**Quarterly Budget and Expenditure Reporting under CARES Act Sections 18004(a)(1) Institutional Portion, 18004(a)(2), and 18004(a)(3), if applicable**

**Institution Name:** \_\_\_\_\_Mercyhurst University\_\_\_\_\_ **Date of Report:** 4/7/21 **Covering Quarter Ending:** 3/31/21

**Total Amount of Funds Awarded:** Section (a)(1) Institutional Portion: \$1,571,274 Section (a)(2): \_\_\_\_\_ Section (a)(3): \_\_\_\_\_ **Final Report?**

Category	Amount in (a)(1) institutional dollars	Amount in (a)(2) dollars, if applicable	Amount in (a)(3) dollars, if applicable	Explanatory Notes
Providing additional emergency financial aid grants to students. <sup>1</sup>				
Providing reimbursements for tuition, housing, room and board, or other fee refunds.	\$1,571,274			
Providing tuition discounts.				
Covering the cost of providing additional technology hardware to students, such as laptops or tablets, or covering the added cost of technology fees.				
Providing or subsidizing the costs of high-speed internet to students or faculty to transition to an online environment.				
Subsidizing off-campus housing costs due to dormitory closures or decisions to limit housing to one student per room; subsidizing housing costs to reduce housing density; paying for hotels or other off-campus housing for students who need to be isolated; paying travel expenses for students who need to leave campus early due to coronavirus infections or campus interruptions.				
Subsidizing food service to reduce density in eating facilities, to provide pre-packaged meals, or to add hours to food service operations to accommodate social distancing.				
Costs related to operating additional class sections to enable social distancing, such as those for hiring more instructors and increasing campus hours of operations.				

<sup>1</sup> To support any element of the cost of attendance (as defined under Section 472 of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended (HEA)) per Section 18004(c) of the CARES Act and the [Interim Final Rule](#) published in the *Federal Register* on June 17, 2020 (85 FR 36494). Community Colleges in California, all public institutions in Washington State, and all institutions in Massachusetts have different requirements due to recent U.S. District Court actions. [HEERF litigation updates can be found here.](#)

Category	Amount in (a)(1) institutional dollars	Amount in (a)(2) dollars, if applicable	Amount in (a)(3) dollars, if applicable	Explanatory Notes
Campus safety and operations. <sup>2</sup>				
Purchasing, leasing, or renting additional instructional equipment and supplies (such as laboratory equipment or computers) to reduce the number of students sharing equipment or supplies during a single class period and to provide time for disinfection between uses.				
Replacing lost revenue due to reduced enrollment.				
Replacing lost revenue from non-tuition sources (i.e., cancelled ancillary events; disruption of food service, dorms, childcare or other facilities; cancellation of use of campus venues by other organizations, lost parking revenue, etc.). <sup>3</sup>				
Purchasing faculty and staff training in online instruction; or paying additional funds to staff who are providing training in addition to their regular job responsibilities.				
Purchasing, leasing, or renting additional equipment or software to enable distance learning, or upgrading campus wi-fi access or extending open networks to parking lots or public spaces, etc.				
Other Uses of (a)(1) Institutional Portion funds. <sup>4</sup>				

<sup>2</sup> Including costs or expenses related to the disinfecting and cleaning of dorms and other campus facilities, purchases of personal protective equipment (PPE), purchases of cleaning supplies, adding personnel to increase the frequency of cleaning, the reconfiguration of facilities to promote social distancing, etc.

<sup>3</sup> Including continuance of pay (salary and benefits) to workers who would otherwise support the work or activities of ancillary enterprises (e.g., bookstore workers, foodservice workers, venue staff, etc.).

<sup>4</sup> Please post additional documentation as appropriate and briefly explain in the “Explanatory Notes” section. Please note that costs for Section 18004(a)(1) Institutional Portion funds may only be used “to cover any costs associated with significant changes to the delivery of instruction due to the coronavirus, so long as such costs do not include payment to contractors for the provision of pre-enrollment recruitment activities; endowments; or capital outlays associated with facilities related to athletics, sectarian instruction, or religious worship.”

Category	Amount in (a)(1) institutional dollars	Amount in (a)(2) dollars, if applicable	Amount in (a)(3) dollars, if applicable	Explanatory Notes
Other Uses of (a)(2) or (a)(3) funds, if applicable. <sup>5</sup>				
<b>Quarterly Expenditures for each Program</b>	\$1,571,274			
<b>Total of Quarterly Expenditures</b>	\$1,571,274			

**Form Instructions**

*Completing the Form:* On each form, fill out the institution of higher education (IHE or institution) name, the date of the report, the appropriate quarter the report covers (September 30, December 31, March 31, June 30), the total amount of funds awarded by the Department (including reserve funds if awarded), and check the box if the report is a “final report.” In the chart, an institution must specify the amount of expended CARES Act funds for each funding category: Sections 18004(a)(1) Institutional Portion, 18004(a)(2), and 18004(a)(3), if applicable. Section 18004(a)(2) funds includes CFDA 84.425J (Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs)), 84.425K (Tribally Controlled Colleges and Universities (TCCUs)), 84.425L (Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs)), 84.425M (Strengthening Institutions Program (SIP)); Section 18004(a)(3) funds are for CFDA 84.425N (Fund for the Improvement of Postsecondary Education (FIPSE) Formula Grant). Each category is deliberately broad and may not capture specific grant program requirements. Explanatory footnotes help clarify certain reporting categories. While some items in the chart are blocked out, please note that the blocking of such items is consistent with Department guidance and FAQs and is not definitive. Provide brief explanatory notes for how funds were expended, including the title and brief description of each project or activity in which funds were expended. Do not include personally identifiable information (PII). Calculate the amount of the Section 18004(a)(1) Institutional Portion (referred to as “(a)(1) institutional” in the chart), Section 18004(a)(2) (referred to as “(a)(2)” in the chart), and Section 18004(a)(3) (referred to as “(a)(3)” in the chart) funds in the “Quarterly Expenditures for each Program” row, and the grand total of all three in the “Total of Quarterly Expenditures” row. Round expenditures to the nearest dollar.

*Posting the Form:* This form must be conspicuously posted on the institution’s primary website on the same page the reports of the IHE’s activities as to the emergency financial aid grants to students made with funds from the IHE’s allocation under Section 18004(a)(1) of the CARES Act (Student Aid Portion) are posted. It may be posted in an HTML webpage format or as a link to a PDF. A new separate form must be posted covering each quarterly reporting period (September 30, December 31, March 31, June 30), concluding after either (1) posting the quarterly report ending September 30, 2022 or (2) when an institution has expended and liquidated all (a)(1) Institutional Portion, (a)(2), and (a)(3) funds and checks the “final report” box. IHEs must post this quarterly report form no later than 10 days after the end of each calendar quarter (October 10, January 10, April 10, July 10) apart from the first report, which is due October 30, 2020. For the first report using this form, institutions must provide their cumulative expenditures from the date of their first HEERF award through September 30,

<sup>5</sup> Please post additional documentation as appropriate and briefly explain in the “Explanatory Notes” section. Please note that costs for Sections 18004(a)(2) and (a)(3) funds may only be used “to defray expenses, including lost revenue, reimbursement for expenses already incurred, technology costs associated with a transition to distance education, faculty and staff trainings, payroll incurred by institutions of higher education and for grants to students for any component of the student’s cost of attendance (as defined under section 472 of the HEA), including food, housing, course materials, technology, health care, and child care.”



2020. Each quarterly report must be separately maintained on an IHE's website or in a PDF document linked directly from the IHE's CARES Act reporting webpage. Reports must be maintained for at least three years after the submission of the final report per 2 CFR § 200.333. Any changes or updates after initial posting must be conspicuously noted after initial posting and the date of the change must be noted in the "Date of Report" line.

### **Paperwork Burden Statement**

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995 (PRA), no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless such collection displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 1840-0849. Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 2 hours per response, including time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Under the PRA, participants are required to respond to this collection to obtain or retain benefit. If you have any comments concerning the accuracy of the time estimate or suggestions for improving this individual collection, or if you have comments or concerns regarding the status of your individual form, application, or survey, please contact: Jack Cox, U.S. Department of Education, 400 Maryland Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20202.