

# SPC Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF)

**Grant Program:** Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF)

**Grant Program Title:** Education Stabilization Fund

**PR/AWARD #:** P425E202550

**Project Description:** 84.425E Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF) for students impacted by COVID-19

**Budget & Performance Period:** April 25, 2020 – April 24, 2021

**Current Award Amount:** \$1,713,753.00

**REPORTING PERIOD:** April 25, 2020, through May 25, 2020

## Institutional Acknowledgement:

On April 17, 2020, St. Philip's College's (SPC) Authorized Representative and President, Dr. Adena Loston, signed the Certification and Agreement for Emergency Financial Aid Grants to Students under the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF), 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, St. Philip's College assures its intent to use no less than 50% of the Federal funding received under Section 18004(a)(1) of the HEERF 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 St. Philip's College students using funds received under Section 18004(a)(1) of the HEERF as of May 21, 2020, is \$1,609,524.00.
- The total amount of emergency financial aid grants available for disbursement to St. Philip's College students using funds received under Section 18004(a)(1) of the HEERF as of May 21, 2020, is \$104,229.00.

## Estimated Number of Students Eligible to Receive Emergency Aid Grants:

The estimated total number of St. Philip's College students eligible to participate in programs under Section 484 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 HEERF is 5,322. This estimated total was derived using the number of all 2019-2020 FAFSA applications received by SPC'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 21, 2020, a total of 2,740 students attending St. Philip's College have received Emergency Financial Aid Grants under Section 18004(a)(1) of the HEERF.

## Institutional Methodology:

St. Philip's 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 HEERF:

St. Philip's College's approach in determining student eligibility was amended several times due to varying interpretations of the USDOE 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 St. Philip's College (SPC) Student Advocacy 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 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.

HEERF Emergency Financial Aid Grants information is housed on the [Students Emergency Aid](#) page of the Alamo Colleges/St. Philip's College website and is reachable through the [Alamo Colleges Corona Virus Response](#) page which can be found on the Alamo Colleges and St. Philip's home pages. The information is further promoted through student and employee email, COVID-19 newsletter updates, and St. Philip's newsletters. SPC students can request emergency aid assistance through an electronic application available in the ACES student portal and accessible through the SPC website. Adhering to the U.S. Department of Education guidance, documentation of expenses is requested from students applying for 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 Center, in collaboration with the SPC Student Services leadership, developed a rubric for what an appropriate award would be for different categories of expenses. The rubric was to be SPC's guide for emergency grant award decisions. While SPC 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 SPC's previously mentioned rubric. The SPC Student Advocacy staff anticipated that these students would be returning to request additional funds in the coming months. To better assist and support SPC 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 SPC Student Advocacy, which determined to anticipate an additional future request for the recurring expenses and encouraged them to budget appropriately.

On May 11, 2020, the SPC Student Advocacy staff began case-loading students who had applied for HEERF Emergency Financial Aid Grants with priority to denied students. Students were denied based on not meeting the eligibility criteria. SPC began outreach efforts to help students understand the reasons for the denial and what they could do to meet the criteria, such as enrolling in a summer course. The SPC Student Advocacy staff is also working with students who do not qualify for HEERF Emergency Financial Aid Grants to determine whether alternative sources of emergency aid or community assistance are available and could be leveraged. Additionally, the SPC Student Advocacy team also began outreach efforts to students who were awarded funds from HEERF Emergency Financial Aid Grants to provide further assistance if additional funds or community resources were needed. This process established a connection between students and Advocacy team members who will be supporting the students through the COVID-19 pandemic to remain enrolled.

Guided by the 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 SPC 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 St. Philip's 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 SPC 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 HEERF Emergency Financial Aid Grants funding would help increase awareness and the requests for assistance.

### **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 received by St. Philip's College and available for disbursement have been provided to students on the institutional website, student emergency aid application, email communications sent to students, and in the Student Information System (award status/outcome) can be viewed by clicking on the following link:

- [Student Communications-SPC HEERF Emergency Aid Grant](#)

### **Important Documents and Links**

- [Recipient's Funding Certification and Agreement Emergency Financial Aid Grants to Students under the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund](#)
- [Federal Student Aid: Emergency Aid Requirements and Steps to Apply](#)