

SUNY Old Westbury
CRRSAA/HEERF Act Frequently Asked Questions
April 1, 2021

1. What is the Higher Education Emergency Relief Funds (HEERF) provided by the federal government?

Under the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2021 (CRRSAA), passed by Congress in December 2020, there is \$22.7 billion for the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF). The U.S. Department of Education (USDOE) has allocated HEERF monies to colleges and universities for both student aid and institutional purposes.

2. How were the HEERF student aid funds allocated to Colleges and Universities?

The amount of funds allocated to each school was determined by a formula provided by SUNY and is based on the HEERF Act guidance. This formula significantly weighs the number of full-time/part-time students based upon their Expected Family Contribution (EFC). Old Westbury's initial allocation for student aid was \$2,761,337, which represents the minimum amount in financial aid grants that must be awarded to students.

3. What expenses will the HEERF grant cover?

For an expense to be eligible, it must be related to the disruption of campus operations caused by the Coronavirus. These financial aid grants may be used for any component of the student's cost of attendance or for emergency costs that arise due to coronavirus, such as tuition, technology, food, housing, health care (including mental health care), or childcare.

4. Who is eligible for a HEERF grants?

There are no specific student eligibility requirements but campuses are required to prioritize financial grants to students with exceptional need, such as students who receive Pell grants starting with students at the lowest Expected Family Contributions (EFCs). HEERF student aid grants cannot be conditioned on continued or future enrollment.

The Office of Financial Aid will use the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) data to determine eligibility. If you are eligible to file a FAFSA but have not yet filed for 2020-21 and need assistance, please file a FAFSA at studentaid.gov.

5. Is there an application process?

No. When funds become available, we will email eligible students notifying them that they meet the student aid grant criteria based on their FAFSA and financial aid information.

6. When will the HEERF grants be available to students?

Once Old Westbury receive the funds, we will begin distributing grants to eligible students as soon as possible. Students enrolled in e-Refund (direct deposit) will receive the grants directly into their account. Students not enrolled in e-Refund will receive a student refund check mailed to them. Recipients will be notified via their Old Westbury email account.

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7. How do I set up direct deposit?

To set up the direct deposit use the SUNY Old Westbury portal to login with your password, click the "FINANCES" icon and then select the "\$ PAY ONLINE (E-BILL)" link. Using the "Refunds" tab, you can then enter your bank information. You must specify a U.S. personal checking or savings account as your direct bank deposit account. Please be very careful when entering your bank information as incorrect data may cause a delay in your refund.

8. How will the amount of each HEERF grant be determined?

SUNY has developed a methodology to provide emergency grants to students with exceptional need. Based on this awarding methodology, students will receive a Base Grant that correlates with their fulltime (FT) or part-time (PT) status plus a standard supplemental amount based on the student's primary EFC. This methodology is consistent with USDOE regulations.

9. Will receiving a HEERF grant affect a student's regular financial aid?

No. Recipients of emergency grants will see no impact on the calculation of their financial need.

10. Do I have to pay this money back?

No. Any funds a student receives from the HEERF grant will not need to be repaid.

11. Are HEERF grants taxable?

No. The grants are not included in a student's gross taxable income.

12. I got this money as a refund. Does this mean my student account balance has been paid off?

No. Distribution of HEERF student aid grant funds are made directly to students and not applied by Old Westbury toward any outstanding balances that may still be owed by the student. As such, receipt of these funds does not indicate the recipient has satisfied their financial obligations to Old Westbury for any charges incurred during the Spring 2021 term or any terms prior. Please check your current student account balance on the Old Westbury portal.

13. Can I use my HEERF grant to pay my outstanding student account balance?

Yes. If you would like to apply all or a portion of your emergency grant to your outstanding account balance you must respond by sending an email to bursar@oldwestbury.edu within 10 days of notification. You must identify the amount you want to apply to your account within your email communication. If we have not heard from you within 10 days of notification, you will receive a direct payment of your emergency grant by electronic transfer to your account or a check mailed to your address of record.

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14. Why didn't I receive a HEERF grant?

Under USDOE rules for the program, students who are not eligible for federal financial aid programs are not eligible for federal HEERF grants. If you are eligible for federal aid, but did not receive a HEERF Grant, you should notify the Financial Aid Office for a review of your situation by submitting a request via your Old Westbury email.

In general, you probably didn't receive a HEERF grant because you may not have met the criteria of greatest financial need. However, we know that many families' income is in flux or there may be additional expenses associated due to the pandemic. Please contact the Office of Financial Aid at financialaid@oldwestbury.edu

15. Are HEERF grants available for Undocumented, DACA and International students?

USDOE has not issued written guidance to clarify whether or not undocumented, DACA, or international students may receive these funds. As such, these students should not be awarded Student Aid funds at this time. USDOE has indicated that it is exploring additional opportunities for campuses to support these students during the coronavirus pandemic.

WE WILL PERIODICALLY UPDATE THESE FAQs
AS MORE INFORMATION ON THE HEERF ACT BECOMES AVAILABLE.