



GOVERNMENT OF PUERTO RICO

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Technical Education Program

October 8, 2021

EDUCATION STABILIZATION UNDER THE CARES ACT OF 2020: HIGHER EDUCATION EMERGENCY RELIEF FUND (HEERF) - EMERGENCY FINANCIAL AID GRANTS TO STUDENTS REPORTING REQUIREMENT – 8th UPDATE REPORT

The Puerto Rico Department of Education (PRDE) received an award for Education Stabilization under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security Act of 2020 (CARES Act): Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund - Emergency Financial Aid Grants to Students on May 3rd, 2020 in the amount of **\$1,657,969.00**. This amount represents the 50% of the total amount of the authorized award that PRDE received for institutions of higher education under Section 18004(a)(1) of the CARES Act. These specific funds were awarded exclusively to provide Emergency Financial Aid Grants students for expenses related to the disruption of campus operations due to coronavirus.

On April 16, 2020, the PRDE signed and returned to the USDE the required Funding Certification and Agreement. In this document the PRDE assured the intention 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. Accordingly, all of the funds received under the *CARES ACT: Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund - Emergency Financial Aid Grants to Students* were used for emergency financial aid grants to students (\$1,657,969.00). In addition, the agreement required the PRDE to comply with Section 18004(e) of the CARES Act by submitting 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 the Department. This report was updated by the PRDE every forty-five (45) days, as required also by Section 18004(e) of the CARES Act. However, the USDE published the new reporting requirements related to the CARES funds and established that reports from this program will be required on a quarterly basis. These must be published no later than 10 days after the end of a quarter and the next report is due on or before July 10, 2021 (which must include the expenses of the quarter from April 1 to June 30, 2021. This report may be a cumulative total of expenditures.).

Accordingly, the PRDE has made available the following information to update this report as of September 30, 2021, to comply with the requirements of the HEERF reporting and for the purpose of providing the sixth update to the first report prepared and published on May 15, 2020. The first update to this report was prepared and published on June 26, 2020. The second update to this report

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was prepared and published on August 10, 2020. The third update to this report was prepared and published on September 23, 2020. The fourth update to this report was prepared and published on October 21, 2020. The fifth update to this report was prepared and published on January 7, 2021. The sixth update to this report was prepared and published on April 9, 2021. The seventh update to this report was prepared and published on July 8, 2021.

Initially, the PRDE identified one thousand three hundred nineteen (1,319) students eligible to participate in programs under Section 484 of the 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, following the eligibility specifications that govern this statute. However, the PRDE identified sixty-two (62) additional students for a total of one thousand three hundred eighty-one (1,381) eligible students.

The PRDE continued its efforts to identify students who may be eligible to participate in the program and two (2) additional students were identified, for a total of one thousand three hundred and eighty-three (1,383) eligible students. Since most of the funds from this grant had already been distributed among the 1,381 previously identified students, in order to make the payment to these 2 additional students for the same amount as the payments made to the other students, PRDE used an amount of \$1,631.64 from the second portion of the federal grant received (known as the Portion of Funds for Institutions). The institutions provided to all eligible students the list of eligible expenses under a student's cost of attendance such as food, housing, course materials, technology, health care and childcare to provide guidance to students on the allowable uses of these funds.

Grants to students were issued in various rounds to the eligible participants. As of the date of this report, PRDE issued grant payments to all of the one thousand three hundred and eighty-three (1,383) eligible students for a total disbursement amount of **\$1,659,600.64** (\$1,657,969 from this grant + \$1,631.64 from the institutional portion). These payments were issued by electronic transfers and checks through the PRDE Financial System.

SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDS (JANUARY 2021):

On January 19, 2021, PRDE received a supplemental federal grant under this program in the amount of **\$1,657,969.00**, for a total grant of **\$3,315,938.00**. Similarly, these funds were awarded exclusively to provide additional emergency financial aid grants to students for expenses related to the disruption of operations of higher education institutions due to the coronavirus emergency. To distribute these funds, PRDE used the same criteria utilized to distribute the grant award received on May 3, 2020, and which are mentioned later in this report. PRDE identified nine hundred and ninety-one (991) students eligible to participate in this supplemental award. The institutions provided to all eligible students the list of eligible expenses under a student's cost of attendance such as food, housing, course materials, technology, health care and childcare to provide guidance to students on the allowable uses of these supplementary funds.

As of the date of this report, PRDE issued grant payments to nine hundred eight nine (989) eligible students for a total disbursement of **\$1,654,606.89**. These payments were issued by electronic transfers through PRDE's Financial System.

At the moment, the PRDE made all the disbursements corresponding to the funds received on May 3, 2020 and each student received \$1,200 dollars. Regarding the two (2) pending payments of the supplementary grant for the total amount of \$3,346.02, the PRDE will issue only one of these

payments since the student to whom the second pending payment would be issued did not qualify to receive it. Under this supplemental award each student received/will receive \$1,673.01 dollars.

The criteria used to process eligible students' payments of both awards were the following:

1. Students should be eligible for the Pell Grant, regardless of whether they are using their scholarship.¹

2. Grant payments were distributed to students affected by the coronavirus COVID-19 emergency, and who were not exclusively enrolled in distance education courses prior to the emergency.²

3. Students must have been active in any of the post-secondary institutes ascribed to the PRDE and comply with the following:

- a. Students are enrolled in one of PRDE's institutions that have federal accreditation according to the Program Participation Agreement. Currently, only five (5) post-secondary institutes ascribed to the PRDE have the federal accreditation: four campuses of the Instituto Tecnológico de Puerto Rico (Guayama, Manatí, Ponce and San Juan campuses) and the Escuela de Troquelería y Herramientaje.
- b. An active student is defined as anyone who had an active enrollment at the time the COVID19 emergency was declared.³
- c. The student has complied with the distance education alternative established by the PRDE and with the public policy related to attendance.
- d. The student is not a candidate for a total administrative withdrawal.

4. Other eligibility criteria that were considered to exclude students from receiving the award were:

- a. Student that has some debt with the USDE in Pell Grant, unpaid student loans, overpayment, among others (Default Codes: 2 – 8).
- b. Students not registered with the selective military service.
- c. Students that have not responded to V4 and V5 of the Verification audit.

5. One hundred ten (110) students were excluded from receiving the initial financial aid of \$1,200 since they did not meet the above criteria. Twenty-two (22) students were excluded from receiving the supplemental financial aid of \$1,673.01 as they did not meet the above criteria.

SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDS (MAY 2021):

On May 14, 2021, PRDE received an additional supplemental federal grant under this program in the amount of **\$5,030,119.00**, for a total grant of **\$8,346,057.00**. Similarly, these funds were awarded exclusively to provide additional emergency financial aid grants to students for expenses related to the disruption of operations of higher education institutions due to the coronavirus emergency.

¹ This criterion was not used in the process of distributing the supplemental grant funds, as established by the regulations for this grant.

² Under the supplemental award, a student enrolled full-time in distance education courses may be eligible for this supplemental award. However, this modality is not used by the post-secondary institutions ascribed to the PRDE.

³ In the case of the supplemental award, the student must have been active at the time these funds were distributed.

As of the date of this report, the PRDE is in the process of establishing the criteria for the evaluation and selection of students who will receive this financial aid. At this time, no payments have been issued with this grant. These payments will be issued by electronic transfers through PRDE's Financial System.

For questions or concerns, please send us an email to incentivocares@itec.pr. These will be answered as soon as possible.