

Grand Rapids Community College  
Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund III

Initial 30-day report

June 10, 2021

**Acknowledgments of Signed Certification and Agreement Forms**

- Following the March 11, 2020, passage of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARP), Grand Rapids Community College (GRCC) received notice on May 12, 2021, that it would receive an additional \$13,057,485 in Higher Education Emergency Relief Funds (HEERF III) for the purpose of providing financial awards to students affected by the COVID pandemic.
- The U.S. Department of Education (ED) provided a Grant Award notification to GRCC on May 12, 2021.

**Determination of eligible students**

Similar to HEERF II under the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSSA), HEERF III grants to students may be used for emergency expenses arising due to the pandemic, as well as to cover any component of a student's cost of attendance, such as tuition, food, housing, physical and mental health care, and child care. HEERF III specifically requires the college to prioritize this grant funding to students with exceptional need. GRCC defined exceptional need as students who encountered significant barriers to their academic success as the result of the Coronavirus pandemic. Students indicate the barriers they experienced via the GRCC HEERF III student application. Students pursuing an exclusively online program of study are eligible for HEERF III grants

In reviewing the awarding guidelines from ED and in reviewing the needs of GRCC students, GRCC determined that HEERF III funds would be made available to students based on the following criteria:

- Students needed to be enrolled at GRCC any time on or after March 13, 2020. This includes students enrolled in credit-bearing courses, apprenticeships, and job training courses. The semesters included in this time period are Winter 2020 (as long as the student was enrolled on or after March 13, 2020), Summer 2020, Fall 2020, Winter 2021, and Summer 2021.
- GRCC has initially excluded the following students from eligibility: Guest students, consortium students, and dual enrolled students, including middle college or concurrently enrolled high school students.
- Also, excluded initially were students who were eligible for HEERF I funds under the CARES Act and/or HEERF II funds under CRRSSA.

The total number of eligible students was 6,078. The students were identified as eligible on June 8, 2021.

**Definition of Exceptional Need**

Students with exceptional need have encountered significant barriers to their academic success as the result of the Coronavirus pandemic. Such barriers include one or more of the following:

- Loss or reduction of income
- Housing
- Utilities
- Food
- Transportation
- Textbooks and/or required class supplies
- Outstanding tuition bills
- Technology (Internet service, computer, etc.)
- Physical/mental health care
- Child care
- Household family care

GRCC designed an application form that was available to students via their GRCC Online Center, which requires students to use their GRCC credentials to login to the form. Non-credit students submitted an application separate from the student Online Center. These students were monitored by administrators in that area. Once logged into the application, students would review the information on the form and mark as “Yes” any of the categories listed above. Also on the application, the student confirms their overall eligibility for a HEERF III award.

**Award Amounts:**

GRCC established the awarding amount of \$3,000 for students who submitted an application and who indicated that they had experienced financial hardship in at least one of the categories listed on the application.

As of the drafting of this report (June 10, 2021), no awards had been distributed to students.

**Communication:**

GRCC sent both email and text messages to students to encourage them to apply for HEERF II. The following is the template for the email that was sent to students on June 9, 2021.

Dear [[Student's First Name]],

Grand Rapids Community College is pleased to notify you that you may be eligible for Higher Education Emergency Relief Funds through the American Rescue Plan (ARP), if you have experienced exceptional need, defined as having encountered significant barriers to your academic success as the result of the Coronavirus pandemic.

The federal government also has now expanded eligibility to include DACA, undocumented, and international students.

To determine your eligibility, start by signing into MyGRCC. If you are unable to sign in, contact IT Student Support at (616) 234-4357.

Next:

- Select the Online Center
- Select the Higher Ed Emergency Relief tile
- Review general information about the GRCC Higher Education Emergency Relief Funds Application
  - Click the Complete Application button, if you wish to be considered for funding
  - Confirm you meet the eligibility requirements listed
  - Select all barriers to academic success you experienced as the result of the Coronavirus pandemic
  - Click the Submit Application button
- Update your BankMobile refund preference, if desired, following the instructions provided
- Confirm your contact information and update it, if necessary, in your Online Center

You will receive a separate email notification from BankMobile, if higher education emergency relief funds are disbursed to you.

If you have questions, the GRCC CARES Team can help. Please review our Higher Education Emergency Relief Funds FAQs, email us at [GRCC\\_CARES@grcc.edu](mailto:GRCC_CARES@grcc.edu).

These are difficult times. GRCC has other resources available to help with a variety of challenges. Visit our GET HELP webpage – [grcc.edu/gethelp](http://grcc.edu/gethelp) – listing college and community resources for food and housing insecurity and other challenges.

We hope this will bring some relief to you during this unprecedented public health crisis.