

Higher Education Emergency Relief CARES Act Fund Report – Emergency Financial Aid Grants to Students

Bel-Rea Institute of Animal Technology

Bel-Rea Institute (OPE ID: 012670) received education stabilization funds under Section 18004(a)(1) of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (“CARES Act”), Public Law No: 116-136. This Fund Report applies to the student portion received under the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund that is designated exclusively for emergency financial aid grants to students.

The institution appreciates that Congress and the President have made these critical funds available for eligible students who have expenses related to the disruption of campus operations due to the coronavirus pandemic. We take receipt of these federal funds seriously and are distributing them in accordance with the CARES Act and implementing guidance.

The institution is making the below information available for transparency purposes and in compliance with the U.S. Department of Education’s (“Department”) Electronic Announcement of May 6, 2020.¹ For questions or concerns regarding this Fund Report, please contact **Stasi Bottinelli, Financial Aid Manager**, at bottinelli@bel-rea.edu.

1. The institution signed and returned to the Department the Certification and Agreement [for] Emergency Financial Aid Grants to Students. 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.
2. The total amount of funds that the institution will receive or has received from the Department pursuant to the institution’s Certification and Agreement [for] Emergency Financial Aid Grants to Students is **\$235,291**.
3. The total amount of emergency financial aid grants distributed to students under Section 18004(a)(1) of the CARES Act as of the date of this Fund Report is **\$235,291**.
4. The estimated total number of students at the institution 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 under Section 18004(a)(1) of the CARES Act, as of the date of this Fund Report is **265**
5. The total number of students who have received an emergency financial aid grant under Section 18004(a)(1) of the CARES Act as of the date of this Fund Report is **91**
6. The methods used by the institution to determine which students receive emergency financial aid grants and how much they would receive under Section 18004(a)(1) of the CARES Act are provided at **Attachment A**.
7. Any instructions, directions, or guidance provided by the institution to students concerning the emergency financial aid grants are provided at **Attachment B**.

¹ See: <https://ifap.ed.gov/electronic-announcements/050620HigherEdEmergencyReliefFundRptg>

Attachment A

Methods used by Bel-Rea Institute to determine which students receive emergency CARES Act/HEERF funds and how much they would receive under Section 18804(a)(1) of the CARES Act:

Who Determined How CARES Act/HEERF Grant Funds Would Be Spent:

A committee of Bel-Rea staff members was created to work through the CARES Act requirements.

The committee designated three staff members from the Financial Aid Office at Bel-Rea as a sub-committee to determine to whom the funds would be given and how much each recipient would receive.

The sub-committee discussed numerous ideas about how best to disburse the grant funds. Though giving all current Bel-Rea students something, up front was discussed as a possibility, the main committee wasn't sure if giving the entire student body funds right away might deplete available funds for those students with high need. Therefore, it was determined that an application/questionnaire would be used. The application would be a guideline to determine what costs were being incurred and how much was needed for each student.

Creation and Distribution of Application:

The application was based on an example from the CARES Act Grant Guide put out by CECU (Career Education Colleges and Universities) with cost categories added by the sub-committee. On the application, students were asked to describe the types of expenses they had incurred and any changes to their circumstances due to the Coronavirus pandemic.

The first round of applications and instructions were emailed to the entire current student body on April 21, 2020 with a requested response deadline of May 4, 2020. The second round of applications and instructions were emailed to the current student body on July 21, 2020 and to all new summer quarter students on August 10, 2020.

Determining to Whom and How Much:

The amount each student would receive was not determined until after Bel-Rea received most of the completed applications.

Some schools have used the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) EFC as a guideline. The sub-committee did not want to do so because many students who might have a higher EFC on the FAFSA and not be eligible for as much financial aid as those with a lower EFC might actually need more help with costs incurred because of COVID-19.

Bel-Rea chose to prioritize exceptional need and establish a maximum grant-per-student amount.

The sub-committee created a list of costs that might be incurred, including those suggested in the CARES Act/HEERF guidelines as well as additional costs based on students' responses to the application. 19 cost categories were established.

From that point, the subcommittee chose to use a point system-assigning each cost category one or more points. The number of points assigned to a cost category was based on a general idea of how much a student might spend on that cost category as well as how much of a burden one cost category might be over another. The higher the burden the higher the number of points it was assigned. For example, household expenses normally covered by the school was assigned 1 point. Examples of this type of expense might be toiletries and utilities. Job loss for a student who was not living with parents was given 4 points.

Next, the sub-committee chose to assign a value of \$300 to one point. This amount was decided upon after discussing how much a student might spend on the different cost categories. \$100 seemed too little for all the categories assigned one point. \$300 per point seemed about right. During the first round (Spring 2020), all student applicants were paid \$300 per point.

For the second round (Summer 2020), the subcommittee determined there were two groups of applicants: First-time applicants and Second-time applicants who had received funds in the first round. The first-time applicants were awarded funds based on the same system as those in the first round. The second-time applicants were paid funds using a slightly different methodology. The total remaining funds were not enough to pay \$300 per point to each student in this category. Instead, and in order to give something to each student who applied for assistance, the remaining funds were divided by the sum of the applicants' total points to determine an amount per point. The amount the second-time recipients received was about \$101.85 per point.

Testing the point system:

The sub-committee chose a maximum award amount based on the CARES Act/HEERF guidelines which suggest that no student receive more than the current maximum amount of Pell Grant (\$6195). The total award the student the sub-committee found to have the highest need, was a few hundred dollars under this suggested maximum so the sub-committee felt the points and associated dollar amount was within reason.

Additionally, it was the hope of the subcommittee to have funds remaining for a second or even third round of awards earmarked for the summer and fall quarters, 2020. After totaling the points/dollar amount for all of the students in the initial spring group the sub-committee found there were funds remaining for future awards. After paying all applicants in the second round (Summer 2020 quarter), the total fund allotment was completely paid out.

Notification of Awards and Disbursement:

Emails were sent to all applicants notifying them of how and when they could receive their funds. The email included a letter of attestation for them to complete, sign and return. The school chose to use the paper check method to distribute funds.

First round checks became available on May 21, 2020 for students to either pick up at the school or have sent to them by mail. As of June 1, 2020, all checks were distributed.

Second round checks began being made available on August 21, 2020. As of September 3, 2020, all checks were distributed.

ATTACHMENT B

The following letter was emailed to all enrolled students on April 22, 2020:

Dear Bel-Rea Students,

Emergency grant funds are being made available to our students. The U.S. Department of Education has created the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act for colleges to provide emergency assistance (HEERF grant) to students who have incurred expenses related to the disruption of campus operations due to COVID-19.

We recognize that many of you have had unexpected financial challenges due to moving to online classes and the closure of campus. Therefore, following U.S. Department of Education guidance, Bel-Rea Institute offered direct cash grants to students to assist with expenses incurred because of COVID-19 in respect to your cost of attendance, such as food, housing, course materials, technology, health care, and childcare. This may include, but is not limited to, a reduction in personal or family household income due to changes in work status, unexpected costs due to online learning and/or increased medical and travel/moving expenses.

The CARES Act/HEERF grant funds can only be used to cover the above listed expenses.

Further funds will be made available in the Summer, 2020 ~~and possible Fall, 2020 quarters~~. More information on the application process and timing will be provided in the next few months.

* (As of September 2020, all Bel-Rea CARES Act HEERF funds have been distributed).

If you have questions, please direct them toward Melissa Slagter in the Financial Aid Office at Bel-Rea. Her email address is slagter@belrea.edu.

Please take good care of yourselves. We look forward to when we all get to be together on campus again!

Stasi Bottinelli
Financial Aid Manager
Bel-Rea Institute of Animal Technology