



Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund Frequently Asked Questions

Where is this money coming from?

The money is part of the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF), which was expanded under the American Rescue Plan (ARM). Funding allocations were set by the Department of Education and given directly to institutions.

Why are you awarding Block Grants?

First, the University wants to get this relief to students as quickly as possible. Block Grants allow us the ability to do so.

Second, the ARM also requires that institutions prioritize students with *exceptional need* (such as students receiving a Pell Grant). By using Block Grants and following the Department of Education's guidance, we are able to better meet the requirements of the ARM.

Who is eligible to receive the HEERF funds?

Students must be enrolled or have been enrolled at Westfield State University during the COVID-19 national emergency in order to be eligible to receive funds under the HEERF. This would mean anyone who was enrolled at Westfield State any time after March 13, 2020 (the date the COVID-19 National Emergency was declared) is eligible.

There are no specific requirements that a student be Title IV eligible to receive The ARM requires that institutions prioritize students with *exceptional need*, such as students receiving a Pell Grant. To that end, Westfield State has directed the bulk of the funding to students who have filed a FAFSA and are Pell Grant eligible.

Who is not eligible to receive the HEERF funds?

As of this initial disbursement (July 2021), any student who has not been enrolled at the University is considered ineligible. This means that any student who will begin at Westfield State in the Fall 2021 would not be eligible for the initial round of Block Grants.

Can I receive funding if I did not file a FAFSA?

Westfield State is allowing students who did not or will not file a FAFSA to file an affidavit that will allow them to certify they have financial need, which will allow them to receive a reduced Block Grant amount of \$300.

Do I need to provide any documentation when submitting the affidavit?

You do not need to provide any documentation, however, you must certify that you have faced unexpected expenses or had a change to your financial circumstances as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Will this count towards my financial aid?

No, the HEERF funds are not counted towards financial aid for the 2020-2021 academic year or the 2021-2022 academic year. HEERF funds will also not count as income for the calculation of your Expected Family Contribution (EFC) or estimated financial assistance (EFA).

Can the funds be used to pay my outstanding balance?

Students can choose to have the funds be directed to pay an outstanding balance, however, it is not required that students do so. Students who wish to do so must complete an affidavit stating that they would like to have the funds go to pay their outstanding balance.

If a student has an outstanding balance and does not want to apply the grant to that balance, the grant will still be paid out to the student.

What are the block grant amounts that the University is awarding?

The University is awarding the following block grants to students:

Undergraduate Students			
EFC	0 - 5711	5712 - 12,000	12,001 +
Full-Time	\$1,500	\$1,000	\$500
Part-Time	\$1,200	\$800	\$400
Graduate Students			
EFC	0 - 2500	2501 - 10,000	10,001 +
	\$800	\$600	\$300

Students who file an affidavit with the University will receive a \$300 grant.

How do I know if I am Full-Time or Part-Time?

The University defines a full-time student as being enrolled in 12 or more credits. Students enrolled in 12 or more credits was considered full-time for the purposes of the Block Grant. Graduate students were awarded a Block Grant regardless of their enrollment status.

Do I need to provide receipts to receive the HEERF Funds?

No

Do the HEERF Funds need to be paid back?

No

What if I have additional needs beyond the Block Grant?

The University will be awarding most of the funding through the Block Grant process. Students who have exceptional need beyond the amount awarded through the Block Grant should contact the Financial Aid Office at financialaid@westfield.ma.edu.