

# **Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF) II Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA) FAQ**

## **1. What is the HEERF II Student Emergency Aid?**

On December 27, 2020, the President signed the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2021 (CRRSAA) (P.L. 116-260). This new law gives the U.S. Department of Education (Department) approximately \$22.7 billion to distribute to institutions of higher education in order to prevent, prepare for, and respond to coronavirus through the HEERF. As a result, NSU has been allocated \$3,450,858 in emergency student aid. This aid will be awarded as HEERF II grants.

According to the CRRSAA and guidance from the Department of Education (ED), the following factors were used to determine eligibility distribution of the emergency aid funds to students:

- Institutions must make financial aid grants to students, which can be used for any component of the student's cost of attendance or for emergency costs that arise due to coronavirus, such as tuition, food, housing, health care (including mental health care), or child care.
- Unlike the CARES Act, the CRRSAA requires that institutions prioritize students with exceptional need, such as students who receive Pell Grants, and authorizes grants to students exclusively enrolled in distance education.
- Students must be a U.S. Citizen or eligible non-citizen
- Students must be enrolled in the Spring 2021 semester at NSU in a degree program.

## **2. Who is eligible for the funds?**

Students who are enrolled in the Spring 2021 semester at NSU and meet the following criteria may be considered for the HEERF II grant award.

- Enrolled in a degree program
- Enrolled in at least a 3-hour course
- U.S Citizen or Eligible Non-Citizen
- Have a 2020-21 FASFA on file with NSU indicating they meet the citizenship requirements.

Additionally, unlike the CARES Act, the CRRSAA requires that institutions prioritize students with exceptional need, such as students who receive Pell Grants. NSU has defined exceptional need for the purpose of these funds based on two populations:

- Group 1 – students meeting the above criteria and have an Expected Family Contribution (EFC) from the FAFSA less than \$5,712,
- Group 2 – students meeting the above criteria and not in group 1 may be determined to have exceptional need based on the completion of the HEERF II grant survey.

### **3. Do I need to complete a FAFSA to receive a HEERF II Grant?**

While the CRRSAA does not require students to complete a *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* to receive funds, the only way we can determine if a student meets the citizenship requirement in an automated fashion is for a FAFSA to be filed. Upon filing the FAFSA, the federal government conducts a Citizenship Database Match on each application. When the FAFSA data is received by NSU, it indicates the student's citizenship status.

### **4. What are the types of expenses covered by the HEERF II grant?**

HEERF II financial aid grants may be used for any component of your cost of attendance or for emergency costs that have arisen due to the coronavirus (COVID-19), such as tuition, food, housing, healthcare (including mental healthcare), or childcare.

### **5. How will NSU distribute the HEERF II student emergency funding and how much will I receive?**

As a result of the guidance, NSU will be awarding HEERF II grants from the CRRSAA to the following groups of students, and under the following conditions:

Group 1: Spring 2021 students who are enrolled in a degree program, enrolled in at least a 3-hour course, 2020-21 FAFSA on file with NSU, U.S. Citizen or eligible non-citizen and have an EFC from the FAFSA less than \$5,712 will receive \$1,274.32 no later than Friday, March 19<sup>th</sup>. A notification email will be sent out to group 1 students. No additional action is required by the student to receive the HEERF II grant.

Group 2: Spring 2021 students who are enrolled in a degree program, enrolled in at least a 3-hour course, 2020-21 FAFSA on file with NSU, U.S. Citizen or eligible non-citizen, with exceptional financial need may apply to receive \$1,000 by completing the HEERF II grant survey. An email with the survey information will be sent to eligible students. The survey must be completed no later than March 23, 2021. Qualifying students will receive \$1,000 no later than Friday, March 26<sup>th</sup>.

Students who receive an award from Group 1 are not eligible to apply for additional award as part of Group 2.

**6. I did not receive an email notification HEERF II grant award, what should I do?**

If you did not receive an email by close of business on Friday, May 19, 2021, and you think you meet the eligibility requirements listed in question 2, please contact the Financial Aid Office at [financialaid@nsu.edu](mailto:financialaid@nsu.edu) or call 757-823-8381.

**7. What is the timeframe to receive the HEERF II grant and how will I receive the distribution?**

Group 1 – Students will receive a distribution award of \$1,274.32 through direct deposit no later than, Friday, March 19, 2021. Distribution will be processed through direct deposit if you have banking information on your student account. If you have not set up direct deposit through your student account (MyNSU), please do so as soon as possible to avoid any delay in receiving your distribution. If you have direct deposit set up, please confirm that the bank account is still active and where you want your payment to be deposited. Log into your student account through MYNSU to verify your banking information. If you prefer not to provide your banking information through MYNSU, a paper check will be processed and mailed to your permanent address of record on March 19, 2021.

Group 2 – Students will receive a distribution award of \$1,000 through direct deposit no later than, Friday, March 26, 2021. Distribution will be processed through direct deposit if you have banking information on your student account. If you have not set up direct deposit through your student account (MyNSU), please do so as soon as possible to avoid any delay in receiving your distribution. If you have direct deposit set up, please confirm that the bank account is still active and where you want your payment to be deposited. Log in to your student account through MYNSU to verify your banking information. If you prefer not to provide your banking information through MYNSU, a paper check will be processed and mailed to your permanent address of record on March 26, 2021.

**8. Will the HEERF II grant funds affect other financial aid already received?**

No, HEERF II grant funds will not reduce your financial aid package.

**9. Can I request a HEERF II Grant for the Fall 2020 semester?**

Unfortunately, you cannot. The CRRSAA legislation specifically states *funds may only be used for pre-award costs incurred on or after December 27, 2020*. This was after the conclusion of the Fall 2020 semester.

**10. I am not enrolled in the Spring 2021 term. Can I still receive a HEERF II Grant?**

No. Students must be enrolled in at least a 3-hour course in the Spring 2021 semester to be considered for assistance.

**11. I already received the a HEERF II award, but I have additional expenses, Can I apply to receive additional HEERF II funding?**

No. Due to the limited funding we received and the desire to assist as many students as possible, the maximum amount a group 1 student can receive is \$1,274.32 and the maximum amount a group 2 student can receive is \$1,000.

**12. Are students enrolled in a certificate program eligible for a HEERF II Grant?**

No, only students enrolled in a degree-seeking program are eligible to receive funds.

**13. Is the money I received from the CRRSAA in the form of a HEERF II Grant taxable?**

It is our understanding based on information from the U.S. Department of Education (ED) that HEERF II Grants awarded to students under the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA) are not treated as taxable income.

The same is true for HEERF I funds awarded under the CARES Act.

According to the IRS website (see link below), “Emergency financial aid grants under the CARES Act for unexpected expenses, unmet financial need, or expenses related to the disruption of campus operations on account of the COVID-19 pandemic, such as unexpected expenses for food, housing, course materials, technology, healthcare, or childcare, are qualified disaster relief payments under section 139 of the Internal Revenue Code. This grant is not includible in your gross income.”

FAQs: Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund and Emergency Financial Aid Grants under the CARES Act