

# CARES Act Institutional Portion

**REPORTING PERIOD: June 19, 2020 through July 18, 2020**

**Institutional Acknowledgement:**

Palo Alto College signed and returned the Certification and Agreement to the U.S. Department of Education on June 17, 2020, and 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.

**Amount of Student Emergency Aid Grants received:**

Palo Alto College has received \$1,620,472.00 from the U.S. Department of Education pursuant to the institution's Certification and Agreement for the institutional portion. Section 18004(c) of the CARES Act allows Recipient to use up to 50 percent of the funds received to cover any costs associated with significant changes to the delivery of instruction due to the coronavirus so long as such costs do not include payment to contractors for the provision of pre-enrollment recruitment activities, including marketing and advertising; endowments; or capital outlays associated with facilities related to athletics, sectarian instruction, or religious worship (collectively referred to as "Recipient's Institutional Costs"). Section 18004(c) also requires Recipient to use no less than fifty percent of the funds received to provide emergency financial aid grants to students for expenses related to the disruption of campus operations due to the coronavirus (including eligible expenses under a student's cost of attendance such as food, housing, course materials, technology, health care, and child care).

**Amount of Student Emergency Aid Grants Disbursed:**

Currently \$0 funds have been distributed from the CARES Act Institutional funds due to continuing to distribute remaining funds from the primary CARES Act Emergency Relief funds received. We anticipate starting to distribute MSI funds in early Fall.

**Estimated Number of Students Eligible to Receive Emergency Aid Grants:**

The estimated total number of Palo Alto College students eligible to participate in programs under Section 484 in of the Higher Education Act (HEA) of 1965 and thus eligible to receive Emergency Financial Aid Grants to students under Section 18004(a)(1) of the CARES Act is 5,196.

**Number of Students Receiving Emergency Aid Grants:**

Currently \$0 funds have been distributed from the CARES Act Institutional funds due to continuing to distribute remaining funds from the primary CARES Act Emergency Relief funds received. We anticipate starting to distribute MSI funds in early Fall.

**Institutional Methodology:**

Palo Alto College developed the following methodology to determine which students are eligible to receive Emergency Financial Aid Grants and the amount students are to receive under Section 18004(a)(1) of the CARES Act:

Palo Alto College's approach has been revised several times due to vague instructions from the Department of Education and the late notice that students had to be Title IV eligible to receive CARES Act funding. Because this is "Emergency Aid" we were originally going to have the front line to receiving funds be through our Advocacy Center, where students could be case managed and provided with additional tools to get through the COVID-19 event. When we were notified that students had to be Title IV eligible, we had to shift so that students would apply through the Student Financial Aid Office for funding after their Title IV eligibility was confirmed.

An electronic application was developed that students would complete to request funds. Based on Department of Education guidance, documentation of an expense was requested but was not mandatory. On the application, students requested funds and also signed a certification stating that the funds were for expenses that were the result of a disruption in their education due to the COVID-19 event.

The application was placed online in a pre-fillable pdf that was submitted electronically to a [priorityaid@alamo.edu](mailto:priorityaid@alamo.edu) inbox where Financial Aid staff began to work them from the queue in mostly date order.

Working collaboratively with the Advocacy Centers a rubric was developed of what an appropriate award would be for different categories of expenses. The rubric was to be our guide for awarding decisions. While we received a significant number of applications after it was made available on May 1, 2020 at 2:00 p.m., the volume was not as high as expected and students were not asking for much assistance. It was noted that they were taking a very short-term view of their need. In some cases, we rounded up their request to be the amount we had determined on our rubric. We anticipated that these students would be returning to request additional funds in coming months. To better assist them, their fund requests were doubled with instructions to the students that we were anticipating an additional request for the recurring expenses and encouraged them to budget appropriately.

On May 12, 2020 we also made a one-time distribution of \$300 to all Pell eligible students who attended in the spring of 2020. Regulations were clear that a single distribution could be made if a specific group could be identified that was impacted. PAC is a Hispanic Serving Institution. Our experience is that the economically disadvantaged do not always request assistance so this distribution decision was made to ensure that they were aware of available assistance and to provide funds they may have needed but did not request. To date, Palo Alto College has disbursed 90.18% of their funds allocated to students.

Palo Alto College utilizes the BANNER Student Information System. CARES Act awards to students are disbursed to the student account and then refunded directly to the students. The

entire CARES Act award is passed through to the student, with no existing balances impacting the refund.

From this point forward, we are monitoring the fund usage to be able to assist students throughout the fall of 2020.

The following documentation is provided: 1) Verbiage from our website provided in item 7 below, (2) the Emergency assistance application, (3) an email sent to all students receiving the \$300 disbursement and (4) messages sent to students from our Student Information System regarding award decisions (5) May 1, 2020 Student Update and (6) May 13 Student Update.

**Information to Students on Emergency Financial Aid Grants:**

Any instructions, directions, or guidance provided by the institution to students concerning the Emergency Financial Aid Grants. All information provided to students is found on our website at [alamo.edu/studentemergencyaid](http://alamo.edu/studentemergencyaid).

**Important Documents and Links**

- [Recipient's Funding Certification and Agreement Emergency Financial Aid Grants to Students under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security \(CARES\) Act](#)
- **Federal Student Aid: Emergency Aid Requirements and Steps to Apply**