

The Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund III (HEERF III) is authorized by **the American Rescue Plan (ARP)**, Public Law 117-2, signed into law on March 11, 2021, providing \$39.6 billion in support to institutions of higher education to serve students and ensure learning continues during the COVID-19 pandemic. Students cannot apply for assistance directly from the U.S. Department of Education. Rather, institutions have the responsibility of determining how the grants will be distributed to students, how the amount of each student grant is calculated, and the development of any instructions or directions that are provided to students about the grant.

On May 25, 2021, funds were allocated to the university through the ARP (HEERF III) expressly for Financial Aid Grants to Students in the amount of \$798,819. The Certification filed under the CARES Act was satisfactory for the university to accept funds allocated by the ARP. The only stipulation is that a draw upon those ARP funds must occur within 90 days of the award. The university has until August 23, 2021 to make a draw on these funds. No distributions to students were made for the period ending June 30, 2021 and, consequently, no draws occurred during that period.

On August 19, 2021, the university used \$112,800 of the grant proceeds to distribute to 94 students, \$1,200 per student, all of which were eligible to receive such grants. The balance yet to be distributed to students is \$686,019. Undergraduate and graduate students who demonstrated exceptional financial need were eligible to receive the grant. The university relied upon completed FAFSAs, but also encouraged students to apply directly explaining their need if they had not completed a FAFSA.

The following is an extract of the message sent to students pertaining to the grant (The university entitled the grant the Student Hardship Fund for internal purposes in order to track it separately.):

“The Student Hardship Fund is available to any student enrolled at Thomas University for the Fall 2021 semester. Students are eligible regardless of whether they completed a FAFSA or are eligible for Title IV. International students may also receive a COVID Relief Grant. This fund prioritizes students who have faced unexpected expenses, the loss of employment, reduced income, or food or housing insecurity.

COVID Relief Grants through the Student Hardship Fund are generally limited to \$1,000. However, financial support exceeding \$1,000 may be requested under extreme hardship circumstances and with documentation of economic loss. Students are encouraged to apply as soon as possible because funds are limited. Please note that applications will not be considered once the Student Hardship Fund has been depleted. The Office of Financial Aid will review applications and supporting documentation. The committee will endeavor to provide an award decision within five (5) business days.”