

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 total of such funds for all HEERF I, II, and III through May 25, 2021 was \$1,174,349. The Certification filed under the CARES Act was satisfactory for the university to accept funds allocated by the ARP.

On November 1, 2021, the university distributed \$377,000 of the grant proceeds to 377 students; each eligible student receiving \$1,000. There were 306 students who received a cash distribution by check or direct deposit, while 71 students requested that this payment be applied to their outstanding account balance. The remaining balance, \$309,019, was drawn on March 28, 2022 and distributed to 330 qualifying students. The amount distributed to each student was \$936.42. There were 246 students who received a cash distribution by check or direct deposit, while 84 students requested that this payment be applied to their outstanding account balance. The university relied upon completed FAFSAs to determine exceptional financial need.

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 Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF III) provides additional financial assistance to students during this difficult time. Thomas University is committed to the success of our students, and ensuring compliance with the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA) while optimizing the benefits to our students.

Recipients of this email have been identified by our office as “exceptionally needy”, and have been pre-screened to apply for this grant. You may choose to apply this grant to **your (term) balance**, or you can opt to receive this grant as a **direct payment**. We request that you complete the linked questionnaire by **(date).**”