



May 26, 2021

TO: THE DISTRICT BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF VALENCIA COLLEGE

FROM: SANFORD C. SHUGART
President

RE: DISBURSEMENT OF STUDENT FINANCIAL AID GRANTS UNDER THE HIGHER EDUCATION EMERGENCY RELIEF FUNDS III (HEERF III) AUTHORIZED BY THE AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN ACT (ARP); FALL 2021, SPRING 2022, AND SUMMER 2022

On March 11, 2021, the President signed into law the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARP). Under ARP, the United States Department of Education (ED) has made available \$39.6 billion to distribute to institutions of higher education to ensure learning continues for students during the COVID-19 pandemic through the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF III). Valencia College (Valencia) will receive a total of \$102,448,723 in ARP/HEERF III funds from ED. Of this amount, at least \$52,935,148 must be used for student aid.

ARP has some important differences from the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act) and the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA) relative to the student aid portion. Unlike the guidance issued with the CARES Act and CRRSAA, which outlined a number of characteristics that would make a student ineligible for a financial aid grant under the respective programs, the May 11, 2021 HEERF III Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) document from the ED clarifies that all students who are or were enrolled in an institution of higher education during the COVID-19 national emergency are eligible for emergency financial aid grants from the HEERF, “including citizens, permanent residents, refugees, asylum seekers, Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients, other DREAMers, and similar undocumented students.” Furthermore, the FAQ clarifies that international students are also eligible to receive emergency financial aid grants from HEERF III.

Similar to CRRSAA/HEERF II, HEERF III *requires* that institutions prioritize students with exceptional need in awarding financial aid grants. ED encourages institutions to carefully document how they prioritize students with exceptional need in distributing student grants as the Department intends to establish reporting requirements regarding the distribution of aid. Valencia plans to classify students who have completed a 2021-22 FAFSA and have an

estimated family contribution (EFC) of zero as having exceptional need. EFC is an index number used to calculate how much financial aid students are eligible to receive; an EFC of zero reflects maximum aid eligibility.

In addition, ED encourages, and Valencia will, prioritize domestic students, especially undergraduates, in allocating this funding.

Valencia has developed detailed plans to disburse HEERF III emergency aid to eligible students in the Fall 2021, Spring 2022, and Summer 2022 semesters. For consideration by and the approval of the District Board of Trustees, Valencia presents its plans to distribute HEERF III student financial aid funds to eligible students during the Fall 2021, Spring 2022, and Summer 2022 semesters.

Fall 2021 Disbursement of Aid

On or about October 25, 2021, Valencia will identify students potentially eligible to receive a HEERF III financial aid grant as those who are: 1) degree- or certificate-seeking and enrolled in at least one course in Fall 2021; 2) enrolled in an Accelerated Skills Training program between August 23-October 25, 2021; or 3) enrolled in a continuing education English language program (Intensive English or English for Speakers of Other Languages) between August 23-October 25, 2021.

Shortly after October 25, 2021, the college will send an email to all HEERF III aid-eligible students with information about how to access a HEERF III aid application. The application will only be available to students eligible to receive HEERF III aid and will only be visible to students after they have logged into Atlas. The HEERF III aid application will ask students to confirm that they have financial need related to the cost of attendance or emergency costs related to COVID-19 (such as tuition, food, housing, health care (including mental health), or childcare). Applications will be due by a specific date to be determined, prior to the end of the Fall semester (December 12, 2021).

Expected grant awards for eligible students who complete the HEERF III aid application are as follows:

- Degree- or certificate-seeking students with exceptional need: \$2,000
- All other eligible degree- or certificate-seeking students: \$1,500
- Students enrolled in an Accelerated Skills Training program: \$1,000
- Students enrolled in a continuing education English language program: \$500

The college cannot and will not condition the receipt of an emergency financial aid grant on continued or future enrollment with the college.

Spring 2022/Summer 2022 Disbursement of Aid

Valencia anticipates following a similar process in the Spring 2022 and Summer 2022 semesters; grant award amounts may vary based on the number of student applicants and funds remaining after each round of disbursements.

In designing the disbursement plan and in actually distributing these funds, Valencia has followed, and will follow, the requirements of HEERF III as well as the requirements, instructions and guidance provided by the ED. The College's plan as presented has been drafted in consultation with outside counsel, expert in federal funding matters such as presented here. The consulting attorneys will be providing Valencia with a formal written legal opinion expressing their agreement that the College's plan is compliant with the requirements of the law and related official guidance.

RECOMMENDED ACTION:

The President recommends that the District Board of Trustees of Valencia College authorize the College to disburse HEERF III student financial aid funds for the Fall 2021, Spring 2022, and Summer 2022 semesters, in accordance with the plan as presented, and that the Board further authorize the College to adjust the disbursement plan in a compliant manner as necessary or appropriate in the event new official guidance is issued with respect to HEERF III disbursements, and/or to maximize the efficient and effective disbursement of these funds to students in compliance with the applicable requirements.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Samuel C. Shuyart". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'S' and 'C'. Below the signature is a solid horizontal line.

President