

# Report on the Use of Funds Distributed to USC from the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund

First posted May 23, 2020

Updated July 7, 2020

Updated August 21, 2020

Updated October 5, 2020

The U.S. Department of Education published a [Notice of Public Posting Requirement of Grant Information for Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund \(HEERF\) Grantees on August 31, 2020](#), directing universities to report quarterly on the receipt and use of funds received from the HEERF established by the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act). The following report contains the information listed in the Department of Education's notice.

USC signed and submitted the [Funding Certification and Agreement for Emergency Financial Aid Grants to Students under the CARES Act](#) to the Department of Education on April 10, 2020. USC signed and submitted the [Funding Certification and Agreement for the Institutional Portion of the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund Formula Grants Authorized by Section 18004\(a\)\(1\) of the CARES Act](#) to the Department of Education on May 21, 2020. To date, one hundred percent (100%) of Section 18004(a)(1) funds expended by USC have been used to provide Emergency Financial Aid Grants to students. USC intends to use all of the formula grant funds it has been allocated under Section 18004(a)(1) of the CARES Act, including the institutional portion, to provide Emergency Financial Aid Grants to students for expenses related to the disruption of campus operations due to coronavirus.

As of September 30, 2020, USC has received \$14,858,876 in formula grant funds from the Department of Education. Of the 20,107 students that USC estimates are eligible to participate in programs under Section 484 in Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965, USC has awarded Emergency Financial Aid Grants to 13,507 students totaling \$18,684,405, as of that date.<sup>1</sup>

To determine which students received Emergency Financial Aid Grants for spring 2020 expenses, USC asked eligible students to complete an application for COVID-19 emergency assistance. The application identified categories of eligible expenses, such as food, housing, technology, transportation, child care, and medical expenses. USC determined the amount of each emergency grant based on the category of expense and whether the request was supported by documentation and/or an explanation. The maximum award amount was \$3,000, although students returning from study abroad programs could receive funding in excess of \$3,000 to cover eligible travel expenses.

For fall 2020, USC used financial aid data to determine eligibility for grant funds. At the undergraduate level, USC awarded \$1,000 to high need students as well as students awarded federal work study. At the graduate level, USC awarded \$500 to graduate students based on financial need as determined by the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The CARES Act allocation formula emphasized Pell Grant recipients with 75 percent of the allocation based on USC's share of full-time equivalent Pell Grant recipients relative to such individuals at all institutions. The remaining 25 percent was based on non-Pell, non-online enrollment. Because USC received CARES Act funds in large part due to Pell Grant recipients at the undergraduate level, fall CARES Act funds were directed to that population. In addition, students awarded federal work-study received CARES Act funds in recognition of the challenges in finding a work-study job in the fall.

In accordance with the [Department of Education's interim final rule regarding student eligibility for funds under the CARES Act](#) and [guidance issued by the Department of Education](#), funding is limited to students who are eligible to receive federal financial aid and are enrolled in a program that met on-campus prior to

---

<sup>1</sup> USC requests funds on the Department of Education's Grants Management system to cover expenses as needed.

the transition to online classes due to COVID-19. Under these guidelines, international students and students enrolled exclusively in an online program are not eligible to receive Emergency Financial Aid Grants.

USC used multiple university-wide communication channels to share information about the availability of the grants for spring 2020 expenses, which included a [memo to USC students by the provost](#) and the posting of [frequently asked questions](#) on the university's COVID-19 website. In addition, the Financial Aid Office created a banner on its website that links to the application. For fall 2020, the Dean of Financial Aid sent an [Update on Distribution of CARES Act Funds](#) to eligible students. Additional [frequently asked questions](#) were added to the university's COVID-19 website.

USC provided further guidance to individual applicants by email, ranging from follow-up requests for documentation to notifications about grant decisions. Students who were awarded an emergency grant received a notification with instructions to complete and sign an acceptance form certifying that they are eligible for federal financial aid, will use the funds only for expenses related to the disruption of campus operations due to COVID-19, and will maintain documentation and allow USC to review if requested.