

CARES Act Updates for NWOSU

As part of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, Northwestern Oklahoma State University (NWOSU) was awarded \$1,506,494. Half of these funds are designated for direct benefit to eligible students enrolled at NWOSU. Below are guideline updates on the distribution of those funds.

On May 11, 2020, NWOSU completed the required certification requesting funds designated for student distribution in the amount of \$753,247 with the Department of Education. The following methodology was established to calculate and distribute funds for emergency financial aid grants to eligible students.

Based on the March 13, 2020, date of the Federal Emergency Declaration, enrollment records were pulled for all students. From the total student population enrolled for the spring 2020 semester, the following student groups were excluded from the calculation and were not paid funds from the stimulus money.

- Concurrent Students
- Incarcerated Students
- DACA/Undocumented Students
- Students enrolled in all online classes prior to March 13
- Students who withdrew from the University prior to March 13
- Students not fully admitted to NWOSU

Total credit hours for the spring 2020 semester equal 21,059. The above population totaled 2,214 credit hours. This leaves 18,845 eligible credit hours to be used for distribution calculations. The decision was made to pay eligible students \$38.00 per credit hour enrolled for the spring 2020 semester. A total of 1,406 NWOSU students meet the eligibility requirements to receive the emergency financial aid grant funds.

The first round of students to receive funds were those who had filed a FAFSA, passed all of the Federal edits, and were fully admitted to NWOSU. All students deemed eligible from the above pool were sent an email asking them to self-certify that they met the eligibility requirements. This included being a U.S. citizen or eligible non-citizen, having a valid Social Security number, and being registered with Selective Service (for male students). A second part of the certification stated that by accepting the funds, the student certified the money would be used to pay eligible expenses under a student's cost of attendance, such as food, housing, course materials, technology, health care, and child care. Once certified, the funds were processed for stimulus payment. Students had the opportunity to decline the funds due to not meeting the eligibility requirements. NWOSU used university email to make the initial contact. Follow-up phone calls were made to students not responding based on the cell phone or permanent phone numbers on file in the Registry Office.

Funds were deposited electronically through Herring Bank for students that had banking information on file. As students were contacted, they were encouraged to set up electronic banking information if not on file. For eligible students that did not follow through, a paper check was processed and mailed to their permanent address on file with the Registry Office. The following shows the distribution of CARES funds to eligible students:

- May 20, 2020 \$500,384 (954 students)
- May 29, 2020 \$95,722 (181 students)
- June 4, 2020 \$13,376 (28 students)
- June 12, 2020 \$50,692 (110 students)
- June 24, 2020 \$12,274 (26 students)
- July 15, 2020 \$11,438 (26 students)
- July 24, 2020 \$4,256 (10 students)
- August 12, 2020 \$4,294 (9 Students)

On June 12, 2020, Northwestern Oklahoma State University certified with the Department of Education the institutional portion of the CARES funding in the amount of \$753,247. NWOSU has received the following funds:

- June 24, 2020 \$171,667 (Housing Refunds)
- June 24, 2020 \$214,266 (Board Refunds)

On July 16, 2020, Northwestern Oklahoma State University certified with the Department of Education the Strengthen Institutions Programs (SIP) of CARES funding in the amount of \$74,208.

The remaining CARES funds designated for students were disbursed to eligible students during the fall 2020 semester. The eligibility criteria were based on the following factors. Students who were classified as seniors and had received a CARES disbursement during the spring 2020 semester were identified. Students had to be PELL eligible (EFC of 5711 or lower) based on FAFSA data on file with the financial aid office. This population yielded 122 eligible students. Each student received \$520 in CARES funding. Payments were processed on September 17, 2020, and distributed directly to student accounts. Total funds disbursed to students totaled \$63,440.

Northwestern Oklahoma State University received \$753,247 of institutional funds from the CARES Act. As of December 31, 2020, \$2,629 had been spent for direct student aid, with these funds being included as part of the total paid on September 17, 2020. The University has also spent \$185,643 on technology equipment for students and classrooms as well as technology infrastructure.

Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund II Act (CARES II)

Northwestern Oklahoma State University received \$2,103,972 in institutional funds, \$753,247 in student funds, and \$119,035 in Strengthening Institutions Programs funds as part of the second round of Federal funding.

The following methodology was used to determine the distribution of the student funds. Eligibility requirements included enrollment at Northwestern for the Spring 2021 semester following the end of the drop/add period. Removed from the eligibility list were incarcerated, international, and DACA students. As required by the new legislation, priority was given to students with need. Payment for spring stipends was determined on the following criteria:

- \$23.50 per credit hour enrolled
- \$100.00 if student filed a FAFSA
- \$300.00 if student was PELL eligible

A web-based form was created that allowed students to give Northwestern permission to use the CARES funding to pay a current or prior balance (Spring 2020, Summer 2020, Fall 2020, or Spring 2021). The stipend was deposited into the student's bank account on file with the University via Herring Bank. If no account information was available, a paper check was issued and mailed to the student using their address on file with the Registry Office.

Total student funds paid through CARES II was \$756,399.50. A total of 1,669 students received benefit from this Federal funding. Payments were processed on April 22, 2021. Recipients included 1,152 students who filed a FAFSA and 602 PELL-eligible students.

American Rescue Plan Act (CARES III)

Northwestern Oklahoma State University received \$2,288,468 in institutional funding and \$2,265,872 in student funding from this third round of stimulus. These funds will be spent during FY22.

Summer 2021 student CARES payments were disbursed to students on July 8, 2021. All students enrolled in this distribution were eligible to receive CARES III funds. Students had the option to apply all or part of the money to their bursar account balance. Students had to give NWOSU permission to apply the funds (via web certification).

Calculation of the student distribution was as follows:

- \$100 per credit hour enrolled for Summer 2021
- \$200 for students that had a FAFSA on file with the Financial Aid Office
- \$500 for students that were PELL eligible

650 students were enrolled for summer and received stipend payments totaling \$487,400. Breakdown of the fund payment was as follows:

- \$121,200 (192 students) applied CARES funding to balance due on account
- \$302,600 (392 students) paid to student
- \$63,600 (67 students) portion to pay NWOSU balance, remaining funds to students

Northwestern Oklahoma State University was notified on August 6, 2021, that the institution had received a Supplemental Assistant to Institutions of Higher Education (SAIHE) grant (84.425S) (HEERF II) in the amount of \$576,176. The purpose of this grant is “to ease the financial burden on our low-income PELL grant recipient students to keep them in college and assist those who put their education on hold during the COVID-19 pandemic and want to re-enroll.”

The first payment from these funds was on August 31, 2021, with the priority being those students owing a prior invoice that were enrolled for the Fall 2021 semester. A total of \$97,519.08 was applied to NWOSU past-due charges impacting 94 students.

The final Student CARES Funds were disbursed to students enrolled for the Fall 2021 term. Fall 2021 student CARES payments were disbursed to students on October 6, 2021. All students enrolled in this distribution were eligible to receive CARES III funds. Students had the option to apply all or part of the money to their bursar account balance. Students had to give NWOSU permission to apply the funds (via web certification).

Calculation of the student distribution was as follows:

- \$81 per credit hour enrolled for Fall 2021
- \$100 for students that had a FAFSA on file with the Financial Aid Office
- \$300 for students that were PELL eligible

1,768 students were enrolled for the Fall 2021 semester and received CARES funding totaling \$1,983,432. Breakdown of the fund payment was as follows:

- \$306,269.00 (275 students) applied CARES funding to balance due on account
- \$1,455,230.00 (1,294 students) paid to student
- \$221,933.00 (199 students) portion to pay NWOSU balance, remaining funds to students

This payment utilized all of the CARES Student funds. Unless more Federal funds are received, no further student disbursements will be processed.

Northwestern Oklahoma State University received a Supplemental Assistant to Institutions of Higher Education (SAIHE) grant. These funds are to be used to pay off prior balances of undergraduate students with those having financial need being considered first. These funds will be referred to as the Debt Relief Grant. Total amount of the grant is \$558,786.

The first round of payments was made on September 1, 2021, to students enrolled for the fall 2021 semester that had a prior balance due to Northwestern. Priority was given first to those with the greatest need as determined by filing a FAFSA. A total of 94 undergraduate students received funds for a total paid of \$97,519.08.

On October 21, 2021, the second round of Debt Relief Grant funds were used to pay off prior balances of undergraduate students. First priority was given to students with a balance and PELL grant eligibility. Second priority was given to students that had filed a FAFSA but did not have PELL grant eligibility. Third priority was given to all remaining students with a balance.

The priority of semesters used for payment of debt was as follows:

- Spring 2020
- Summer 2020
- Fall 2020
- Spring 2021
- Summer 2021

Funds disbursed to this population to pay off institutional charges totaled \$347,136.81. Students were sent a letter to inform them of this transaction.

The final amount of debt relief funding was applied to student accounts on January 5, 2022. Priority was determined by students that had a fall 2021 balance due to Northwestern Oklahoma State University. Those with the most need had first priority (Zero EFC), followed by those that received a Federal PELL grant, followed by those who had filed a FAFSA. A total of 81 students received assistance totaling \$114,130.11. Following this disbursement of funds, all Debt Relief Grant funds have been exhausted.

At this point all Federal CARES funds designated for disbursement to students have been spent by Northwestern Oklahoma State University. Unless additional funds are received, no additional student payments are planned.

Any questions about the CARES Act information listed above should be addressed to Dr. David Pecha, Vice President for Administration at (580) 327-8528 or email dmpecha@nwsu.edu.

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