

CARES Act Emergency Funding for Students

The Coronavirus Assistance, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act approved more than \$14 billion in support for higher education. Using a formula based on both total enrollment and the share of enrolled students eligible for Pell Grants, Rice University has been allocated \$3,433,160 of which at least 50% must be distributed in grants to students in recognition of expenses and financial hardship related to the disruption of campus operations due to coronavirus.

The U.S. Department of Education has required that all recipients of funds awarded under Section 18004(a)(1) of the CARES Act must be eligible to participate in programs under Section 484 in Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965. Title IV eligibility excludes international, DACA and undocumented students. The CARES Act also makes ineligible those students enrolled in solely an online degree program.

Rice University, on June 9, 2020, signed and returned to the Department of Education a Certification and Agreement affirming that the university will distribute at least 50% of this CARES Act funding to students whose expenses were affected by the COVID-19 emergency.

On June 12, Rice received notice of award to Rice from the Department of Education for the first 50% (\$1,716,580) of CARES Act funds.

Via email on June 15, the Dean of Undergraduates and the Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies informed Rice students of the university's plans for distribution of CARES Act funds. During the week of June 22, Rice University distributed \$1,858,600 of CARES Act funds to 2,775 undergraduate and graduate students.

In addition, the university provide institutional funds to those eligible international, undocumented or DACA students who were not eligible to receive federal funds. The terms for distributing aid to students are described below.

Rice University used the following criteria to determine the eligible population and the allocation amounts.

- Were enrolled as degree-seeking students during the Spring 2020 semester and did not withdraw and in the case of graduate students did not graduate by May 2020
- Had their on-campus enrollment disrupted by COVID-19. (Students enrolled solely in on-line degree programs are not eligible.)
- Were eligible to receive CARES Act funds as defined by federal rules (i.e., must be or could be Title IV eligible). As of June 11, 2020, Rice had 2,597 undergraduate and graduate students with FAFSAs on file for Title IV eligibility and an estimated 700 or more graduate students who could be Title IV eligible.)

- In the case of undergraduates, received need-based aid during the spring 2020 semester.

The rules prohibit the distribution of CARES Act funds to international students, DACA students and undocumented students. However, the university will use its own funds to provide similar benefits to those students.

The university, Rice distributed CARES Act funds as grants to students at the amounts listed below:

- \$1,000 for undergraduate students who were Pell recipients in spring semester 2020.
- \$700 for undergraduate recipients of The Rice Investment or Questbridge scholarships in spring semester 2020 who were not Pell recipients. (Rice will also provide \$700 from institutional funds for all DACA and undocumented students who received The Rice Investment or Questbridge scholarships.)
- \$500 for all other undergraduate students who received need-based aid in spring semester 2020. (Rice will also provide, from institutional funds, \$500 to all international undergraduate students who received need-based aid during the spring 2020 semester.)
- \$500 for all degree-seeking domestic graduate students who were enrolled in spring semester 2020, did not graduate in May 2020 and were not enrolled in an online degree program. (Rice will also provide, from institutional funds, \$500 to all international, DACA and undocumented degree-seeking graduate students who were enrolled in the spring 2020 semester, did not graduate and were not enrolled in an online degree program.)

No application process was required. Students who have set up direct deposit received these payments in their bank account. Students without direct deposit received a paper check sent to the mailing address that is in the university system. The federal government has advised that the amounts are not taxable and that they do not count toward existing financial aid packages.