



**Emergency Financial Aid Grant for Students under the  
American Rescue Plan**

On March 11, 2021, the *American Rescue Plan Act* was signed into law. Section 2003(a)(1) of the American Rescue Plan (ARP), provided an additional \$39.6 billion for the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF). The ARP funds are in addition to funds authorized by the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, 2021 (CRRSAA), Public Law 116-260 and the Coronavirus Aid, Recovery, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, Public Law 116-136. Emergency funds available to institutions and their students under all emergency funds total \$76.2 billion. The Department of Education has disbursed these funds to the Universities and as a result, Westfield State University has been allocated \$12,788,564. Of this allocation, Westfield State is required to award \$6,466,064 in direct student aid to students. As of November 30, 2021, Westfield State has awarded \$3,342,970 of the HEERF.

These funds may cover any component of the student’s cost of attendance or be allocated for emergency costs that arise due to coronavirus. Costs include, but are not limited to tuition, food, housing, health care (including mental health care) or child care. The ARP requires that institutions prioritize students with *exceptional need* (such as students who receive Pell Grants or undergraduates with extraordinary financial circumstances), in awarding financial aid grants to students.

The Department of Education has stated that all students are eligible to receive the grants, so long as they were enrolled during the COVID-19 national emergency.

Westfield State University is committed to getting funds to students as quickly as possible. The University has decided to award block grants to students in order to expedite the process. Under this plan, students will receive block grants based on their Expected Family Contribution (EFC) from the FAFSA that was filed for the 2021-2022 academic year. The breakdown of the awards is as follows:

Undergraduate Students			
EFC	0 – 5,846	5,847 - 12,000	12,001 +
Full-Time	\$1,500	\$800	\$400
Part-Time	\$1,200	\$600	\$300
Graduate Students			
EFC	0 – 2,500	2,501 - 10,000	10,001 +
	\$500	\$400	\$250

## **Calculation**

For the purposes of this calculation, a full-time student is defined as any student enrolled in 12 or more credits for the Fall 2021 semester. In determining the amount to give a student based on their enrollment, the University acknowledged that Cost of Attendance is different if a student is full-time or part-time for a given semester. Students who are full-time have a higher Cost of Attendance than students who are part-time and therefore, greater need.

For Graduate Students, the determination was made that we would award grants based on a student's EFC, regardless of enrollment status. Graduate Students have a wide range in cost of attendance, financial need, and enrollment, so the University felt that it was best to apportion the grants based on EFC, while ensuring that Undergraduates were prioritized.

For the purposes of the EFC, the University used the information that had been submitted on the 2021-2022 FAFSA.

The decision by the University is final and not subject to appeal or reconsideration.

## **Students with a rejected FAFSA**

Students filed a FAFSA for the 2021-2022 academic year and had the FAFSA come back as rejected by the Department of Education do not have a valid EFC. Therefore, these students will receive a \$250 Block Grant. Students are not required to submit any additional documentation.

## **Students without a FAFSA**

Students are not required to file a FAFSA in order to be able to receive funds under the HEERF. Students who have not filed a FAFSA for the 2021-2022 academic year will be eligible to receive a Block Grant by submitting an affidavit.

Students who file the affidavit will be eligible for a \$250 grant. The affidavit will require students to attest they have financial need that qualifies under the ARM. **The affidavit must be submitted to the Financial Aid Office no later than December 15, 2021.**

## **Outstanding Balance**

Grants awarded under the ARP are required to be awarded directly to students and cannot be applied directly to a student's account without their consent. Students will still be eligible to receive their grant, even if they owe an outstanding balance to Westfield State.

For students who wish to have the grant applied to their outstanding balance, they must submit an affidavit to the University and give their consent to have the grant applied their outstanding balance. The grant will be applied first to any outstanding balance from the Fall 2021 semester (or previous semester), then to any outstanding balance for the Spring 2022 semester. **The affidavit must be submitted to the Financial Aid Office no later than December 15, 2021.**

In the event the grant is more than enough to cover the outstanding balance, the remainder of the grant will be refunded to the student. A student who submits an affidavit may revoke their consent at any point prior to the grant disbursing.

### **Enrollment**

Students must be enrolled or have been enrolled at Westfield State University during the COVID-19 national emergency in order to be eligible to receive funds under the HEERF (for this round of grants, this would mean the Fall 2021 semester or earlier). For the purposes of distributing this round of grant funds, the University is only looking at students who are or were enrolled for the Fall 2021 semester.

Students will be awarded a Block Grant based on their 2021-2022 FAFSA. If no FAFSA has been filed, the student will be given the opportunity to file an affidavit.

Students who have graduated or withdrawn from Westfield State since the start of the Fall 2021 semester are eligible for the Block Grant and will receive the Block Grant.

### **Timeline**

December 3<sup>rd</sup>: Email sent to students informing them of the plan for disbursing ARP funds

December 6<sup>th</sup>: Email sent to students individually informing them of their ARP grant amount

December 14<sup>th</sup>: Deadline to submit Outstanding Balance affidavit

December 14<sup>th</sup>: Deadline to submit Block Grant affidavit

December 16<sup>th</sup>: Block Grants paid to students

*Timeline subject to change*

At the discretion of the Director of Financial Aid or their designee, a Block Grant may be awarded or adjusted based on information communicated to the Director. In such instances, the Director will note the change and the rationale for the awarding or adjustment of a Block Grant.