Emergency Aid Toolkit

Recommendations and resources for higher education professionals to create, implement, and promote emergency aid programs
What’s Inside

- Background
- Research on Student Financial Need
- Developing Emergency Aid Programs
- How to Promote Emergency Aid Programs
- Sample Campaign Templates
Background

The COVID-19 pandemic has thrust students, their support networks, and institutions of higher education toward a financial crisis. In response, the President signed the CARES Act into law, which provides institutions of higher education with $14 billion in support and allocates funding to create emergency aid programs for students.
Given the immediacy of challenges presented by COVID-19 and the availability of CARES Act funding, many institutions are moving quickly to develop emergency aid programs on their campuses. Yet, institutions of higher education may lack clear guidance given the ambiguity surrounding funding and timing. To support the higher education community, this toolkit provides information relevant to establishing and promoting emergency aid programs, providing students with the immediate assistance they need.
Research Regarding Student Need

61% of public two-year students
57% of all four-year students
reported having trouble getting $500 in cash or credit to meet an unexpected need within the next month

53% of all two-year students
51% of all four-year students
agreed or strongly agreed that they worry about being able to pay their monthly expenses

73% of all two-year students
66% of all four-year students
ran out of money at least once within the last 12 months
Developing Emergency Aid Programs
2020 Emergency Aid Report

This report highlights:

- Common Practices for Starting an Emergency Aid Program
- Challenges of Starting and Administering Emergency Aid Programs
- Relevant Resources
- Suggestions for Further Reading

Download the report
2020 Emergency Aid Checklist

The toolkit includes easy checklists for institutions to assess their infrastructure and readiness for administering emergency aid programs. Topics include:

- Necessary Infrastructure For Emergency Aid Programming
- Institutional Readiness Assessment
- Application Development
- Disbursement
- Post Disbursement

Download the checklist
Recommendations for Student Emergency Aid Application Accessibility

It is critical that students can easily access and submit emergency aid applications. To quickly distribute emergency aid funds, use the recommendations in the guide when creating student emergency aid applications.

Download the guide
Sample Emergency Grant Application

Institutions can use this sample application, but professionals should also be aware of the needs of their own student population. Collaboration is key when creating an application, as the application should be simple and student focused. You know your students, and the application should reflect that knowledge and understanding. Connect with your students to understand their needs and create an application that responds to these needs. This strategy will likely increase student engagement with the application and your ability to provide emergency aid quickly.

Download the sample application
Promoting Emergency Aid Programs
What Students Need to Know

- How to apply and where to find the application
- How to document their qualified expenses
- Who to contact and how if they have questions
- What other forms of emergency aid are available
- When to expect a decision on their application

- That they do not need to repay these emergency grants. These grants can be explained as a free “unrestricted grant” and that a student’s financial standing with the school will not change as a result of applying for and receiving a grant.
- How you will follow up with them after they apply
What You Can Do

- **Keep messaging simple and short.**
  When students feel stressed, they may have shorter attention spans and be less likely to pick up on key details.

- **Do not communicate a culture of scarcity.**
  Assure students that emergency aid is available to them and their institution will support them.

- **Develop the capacity to communicate with students before, during, and after the application and emergency aid disbursement process.**
  Students will have anxiety about applying for emergency aid, and consistent communication with students will ensure them that you will support them through the process.
SAMPLE EMAIL 1: ONLINE APPLICATION

Subject Line: Apply for Emergency Aid Funding
(alt: “Do You Need Emergency Funding? Apply Now!”, “Emergency Aid Funding Now Available,” “Student Emergency Aid Funds,” “Application for Emergency Funding.”)

Greetings <student name>,

This is <point of contact or office> from <institution>, and we wanted to let you know that we have COVID-19 emergency financial assistance available for students. If you have experienced a financial problem due to the disruption of campus operations as a result of coronavirus, you can submit an emergency aid application. You can submit the application <here>.

We cannot guarantee that you will receive the full amount of emergency aid that you apply for. However, if you have any questions, please contact <point of contact> at <email, phone>.

Thank you, stay safe, and we hope to hear from you soon!

<Signature line>
Sample E-mail Campaign

SAMPLE EMAIL 2: PDF/WORD/FILE APPLICATION

Subject Line: Apply for Emergency Aid Funding
(alt: “Do You Need Emergency Funding? Apply Now!,” “Emergency Aid Funding Now Available,” “Student Emergency Aid Funds,” “Application for Emergency Funding.”)

Greetings <student name>,

This is <POC or office> from <institution>, and we wanted to let you know that we have COVID-19 financial assistance available to you. If you have experienced a financial problem due to COVID-19, you can submit an emergency aid application. The application is attached to this email. Or, you can find the application posted on our website <here>.

We cannot guarantee that you will receive the full amount of emergency aid that you apply for. However, if you have any questions, please contact <point of contact> at <email, phone>.

Thank you, stay safe, and we hope to hear from you soon!

<Signature line>
Sample Text Campaign

Introduction Text
Hey <name>! We know that the COVID-19 pandemic is very stressful, but help is coming! <The institution; we> will have emergency funds that you can apply for. We will be in touch soon, so take care and stay safe and healthy! <Institution; we> are here for you!

Application Push
Hey <name>! It’s <the institution; us>! Have you experienced financial problems due to COVID-19? If you have, can we send you an application so you can apply for emergency aid?

Yes.
Okay, we are here for you! Go here and follow these instructions, <name>! <link to application>

No.
Thanks for letting us know. Please stay safe—we care about you!
Sample Text Campaign

Follow-up

Hey <name>! During COVID-19, your health and safety is our #1 priority.

Have you experienced financial problems due to COVID-19? If you have, can we send you an application so you can apply for emergency aid?

Yes.

Okay, we are here for you! Go here and follow these instructions, <name>! <link to application>.

No.

Thanks for letting us know. Please stay safe—we care about you!

Download the sample texts
Sample Call Campaign

Hello. This is <first name> from <institution>. Is <student name> available?

Good Morning/Afternoon <student name>. Given the financial stress caused by COVID-19, <the institution> has emergency aid funds available to students who have experienced disruption of campus operations due to coronavirus. This funding does not need to be paid back but you do need to complete an application to be considered.

Would you like to learn more about the Emergency Aid Program?

(IF WEBSITE APPLICATION)
Great! You can apply for emergency funding at <application link>. After you apply and have any questions, you can contact <point of contact> at <email address>. Please be aware that funding will be prioritized for the greatest needs so there will be an approval process. We hope this funding helps and please stay healthy and safe! Have a great day!

(IF EMAIL/PDF/WORD APPLICATION)
Okay, thank you for letting us know. You can apply for emergency funding by emailing <point of contact> at <email address>. We hope this funding helps and please stay healthy and safe! Have a great day!

Download the sample calls

Yes

Okay, sounds good. If you do have questions or change your mind, contact <point of contact> at <email address>. Thank you and have a great day!

No
Sample Social Media Campaign

Use social media to boost awareness that Emergency Aid is available for your students.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Platform/Audience</th>
<th>Content</th>
<th>Notes/Questions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Facebook Current students</td>
<td>We know that the COVID-19 pandemic is very stressful, but help is coming! We will have emergency funds that you can apply for. Stay tuned for further updates coming soon. Remember we are here for you! #your institution’s branded hashtag</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter Current students</td>
<td>Have you experienced financial problems due to COVID-19? If so, you can submit an emergency application. I’ve reviewed your application, visit [URL to application] #your institution’s branded hashtag. If you have any questions please contact us at [@your contact info]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instagram Current students</td>
<td>[Institution name] Student! If you’ve been financially struggling due to COVID-19, we’re here to help. You can now apply for emergency aid by visiting [URL to application] #your institution’s branded hashtag. If you have any questions please contact us at [@your contact info]</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Twitter New students</td>
<td>We know that the COVID-19 pandemic is very stressful, but help is coming! We will have emergency funds that you can apply for. Follow us for more updated tips on how to stay safe and healthy! #your institution’s branded hashtag</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Facebook New students</td>
<td>Give the financial stress caused by COVID-19, we now have emergency aid funds available to students who apply for them. This funding does not need to be paid back. Visit the following page to apply: #your institution’s branded hashtag</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Download the [social media posts](#) Download the [graphics](#)

Facebook

Instagram

Twitter
Resources

CARES Act Letter from the Secretary of the Department of Education (April 9, 2020)
https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/caresactgrantfundingcoverletterfinal.pdf

CARES Act Guide for How to Apply for Funding (April 9, 2020)
https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/guidancetoapplyforheerf.pdf

CARES Act and GRANTS.GOV Application Submission Guidelines and Tips (April 9, 2020)
https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/grantsgovsubmittipsheerf.pdf

CARES Act Formula and Emergency Aid Allocation Amounts (April 9, 2020)
https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/allocationsforsection18004a1ofcaresact.pdf

CARES Act Recipient Funding and Agreement (April 9, 2020)
https://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/caresheerfcertificationandagreementfinalombapprovedforissuance.pdf

Trellis Company Webinar on Emergency Aid Services (April 7, 2020)

NASPA Report on Emergency Aid Programs (2016)

Wisconsin Hope Lab Report on Distributing Emergency Aid (2017)


The Hope Center Report on Distributing Emergency Aid (2020)
For more information, visit the Emergency Aid Resources page at www.trelliscompany.org/covid-19-emergency-aid-resources