

Memo to Seattle Central Community
From Emergency Funds Committee

Re: Emergency Funds & supporting students during COVID-19

Last updated: 4/29/2020

Purpose

We are all experiencing an unprecedented time and students are understandably turning to the college for support. This message is to clarify what we know, explain our decision-making process for Emergency Funds, and to assure you we are watching this closely. As this situation continues to evolve, please trust the Emergency Funds committee is doing our best to meet the needs of students equitably and sustainably.

The scale of the financial need students have and the limited funds available makes us unable to meet the full financial need of each student. Student Support Programs continues to monitor community resources as well as any aid relief that might come from State or Federal agencies

Moving forward the Emergency Fund committee will **only consider applications from students who are not eligible for assistance through the CARES Act Funding**. The ability to serve students who fall outside that criteria is thanks in part to the large private fundraising effort from the Seattle College Foundation, which allows us to distribute funds more flexibly.

It is important to keep in mind that at Central, we have around 16,000 students who could potentially be in need of assistance. We know that unfortunately, not every student in need will be served; the committee thought it best we help more students reasonably than fewer students with larger grants.

CARES Act Funding

The Emergency Funding sent to the school through the Federal CARES Act included only vague direction around who could receive it, spending guidelines, and included no distribution process instructions. Student Services leaders came together to determine the following guidelines for CARES Act distributions.

- Students who have submitted a FAFSA and are eligible for Financial Aid are eligible for the one-time CARES Act stimulus award.
- Students who are eligible for the CARES Act award should receive a stimulus-like payment applied to their financial aid? account sometime during the week of May 4th.

Emergency Funds moving forward

Traditionally, the [Emergency Fund](#) is designed to address applications on a case by case basis after collecting supporting documentation. This is managed by one staff member, which was not scalable for distributing the sum of CARES funding.

Because the CARES Act money was sent with stipulations around funding eligibility, the Emergency Fund Committee is only responding to requests that affect students who fall outside of eligibility for their

CARES stipend. Because of this, we have decided to implement emergency eligibility for funding with the following guidelines:

1. Student is registered for classes during Winter 2020 and Spring 2020 quarters
2. Student has filed / attempted to file their FAFSA/WASFA for the '19-'20 school year **if they are eligible to complete the form**. Students who demonstrate that they did not apply due to ineligibility are exempt from this expectation.
3. Student has not received, or is not eligible for CARES Act funding.

To simplify our process and make it fair for all students, in most cases, we are distributing a \$600 emergency grant to people who have lost income as a result of COVID-19. The logic behind the \$600 grant is to provide a quarter's worth of \$200/month food stipends. This amount is approximately the maximum food stamp benefit for a single adult.

Applications received by Monday at 11:59 p.m. are considered in the Emergency Funds committee meeting on Tuesdays, and applicants are informed by end of day on Wednesday.

Accessing the emergency grant will not affect eligibility for further funding from the Emergency Fund but may affect the amount students can receive as more information about recovery becomes available. Even with additional fundraising, the Emergency Fund is not able to provide ongoing-financial assistance for students. This program was initially designed to anticipate one-time emergencies.

The eligibility and requirements around accessing Emergency Funds may fluctuate throughout this crisis. As such, we are going to be reviewing applications on a case-by-case basis and students should apply again if circumstances or eligibility change.

The Emergency Fund Committee is having hard discussions every week about how we can do this work fairly and accountably during an event that will change humanity as we know it. There isn't an instruction manual for any of us. The Committee is doing what we can to advocate and share the stories of students that are struggling right now. Please contact us at the office if you have questions or concerns.

Connecting with Student Support Services

Students can still count on Student Support Programs To help walk them through whatever issues they might be having. For already vulnerable students, economic impacts of COVID-19 are challenging, and neither CARES nor private Emergency Funding can fully alleviate those challenges

Student Support Programs staff will do their best to help students get through whatever issue they might be having and connect to external resources as possible. We are working from home, but happy to call, email, or skype through whatever is happening. For more information about community resources and general information [check out our resource page](#).

- Ariel.Li@seattlecolleges.edu – Emergency Fund and Childcare
- Zachary.Hunter@seattlecolleges.edu – Food and Resource Access
- Kerry.Hollifield@seattlecolleges.edu –Veteran's Resources
- Maria.Kang@seattlecolleges.edu – Re-Entry Program
- Molly.Mitchell@seattlecolleges.edu – Director

More information and resources around common needs:

Housing and Utilities:

There are [city](#), [state](#), and [federal](#) protections applied to your housing. You (and/or your landlord) are not in immediate danger of being evicted or foreclosed on, nor are late fees allowed to be assessed. Landlords attempting to evict, change locks, or withhold utilities for non-payment should be reported to the police immediately. Even if you were experiencing an eviction process before the stay-at-home order, it is still illegal to evict you. If you have money available for your rent, you should attempt to pay as much rent as comfortably possible.

Update: 1 in 6 Washington State residents are renters. 1 in 3 renters nationwide did not pay their rent in April. We understand that the ambivalence is uncomfortable, but you are not alone. Approximately 419,000 households did not pay their rent, just in WA.

Emergency Funding will not address housing and utilities costs with the Emergency Fund because widespread rent stoppages of this scale will presumably be dealt with by the state. We do not have the capacity or the funds to equitably cover housing costs for students. We don't know: what will become of these bills once the pandemic begins to subside. It is possible the bills will still be due, but those decisions will be made in tandem with choices about consumer stimulus packages, bill forgiveness, and other non-profit block grants.

More resources:

- United Way of King County was initially covering rental costs for people who have not paid their rent in April due to economic fluctuations caused by COVID-19. Information about the Home Base program [can be found here](#). However, as of late April, United Way has put their rental assistance program on hold. If you did not get a chance to apply before they froze the application, you should still leave your contact information with the website as they will contact you when they are successful with further fundraising efforts.
- There have been reports of landlords illegally trying to collect rent or evict tenants or raise the rent. Individuals who have received eviction notices should contact the Housing Justice Project or the CLEAR Hotline to get legal assistance. Information can be [found here](#).
- [Seattle Public Utilities](#), [Tacoma Public Utilities](#), [Puget Sound Energy](#), and [Snohomish Public Utilities](#) have all postponed late-payment shutoffs for at least 60 days. Customers are encouraged to contact these agencies to set up payment plans and apply for Emergency Funding linked above.
- [Major internet and cell phone providers are](#) waiving late fees, postponing disconnects, and even providing extra data or free data on mobile hotspots during this time.

Employment:

We know: People who have lost a job or lost hours, including gig economy (Uber, Lyft, DoorDash) workers, due to COVID-19 could be eligible for replacement income. Depending on

the reason you are missing work, unemployment insurance, paid sick leave, or WA State FMLA Leave should be the first sources of support.

Just as many jobs are disappearing, many are also showing up in inventory, logistics, delivery, janitorial, and medical industries. Those who have lost income and are healthy enough should consider finding employment through any of the agencies or companies looking for immediate help dealing with the demand caused by COVID-19. Students can contact Career Services through their [webpage](#), [Starfish](#), or email at careerservicescenter@seattlecolleges.edu for help with job applications and resumes.

All people (sans a few exceptions for different immigrant statuses) who filed a tax return in 2018 or 2019 earning less than \$75,000 (single) or \$150,000 (married) are going to receive a one-time \$1,200 direct payment in financial stimulus. The treasury has said most people will receive their payment by April 17th. If you need help filing your taxes to make yourself eligible, there are resources available to you that can help remotely. Contact SSP for a referral. We are aware that many students are going to be left out of this for many reasons, but as a student, you may be eligible for other kinds of funding such as Federal/State Student funding through the FAFSA or WASFA.

Unemployment Insurance (UI) has been expanded and extended. Anybody who has lost hours from work as a result of COVID-19 should apply for UI. Part of the CARES Act expands eligibility to people who may not have been eligible before because of contractor status or minimum seniority/hour requirements. The CARES Act also increases the amount and duration of payments available through 'Federal Pandemic Unemployment Insurance'. The agency responsible for distributing unemployment has said that their agents are reviewing applications on a case-by-case basis and are encouraging everyone who might be eligible to apply.

Many people who applied for unemployment before the rules were expanded are receiving automatic notices about a reversal of their initial denial. If you lost hours due to COVID-19, you should expect to get unemployment.

We don't know: what is going to be done about the widespread unemployment caused by Gov. Inslee's stay-at-home order. We don't know how this is going to intersect with issues of disability. Those who might not be considered safe to work now were perfectly able to work two weeks ago.

Food:

People currently experiencing food insecurity because of lost income should apply for SNAP and/or WIC benefits as soon as possible. We don't know when or if eligibility for these programs is going to change in relation to the COVID-19 crisis. The federal government is still trying to decide if we are going to get an extension on new SNAP rules set to take place on April 1st that would limit eligibility for able-bodied adults without dependents.

We understand that this resource is not fast or sufficient; that being said, food banks and K-12 school meals are considered essential under Gov. Inslee's declaration. Typically modeled after a grocery store, most food bank distributions have switched to pre-packaged food boxes to limit

social contact. Using the 2-1-1 resource is the best way to find food close to your home. The following are distribution days, times and locations close to Seattle Central:

- Jewish Family Services – 1601 16th Ave | 206-461-3240
 - Wednesday/Friday: 10:00 AM - Noon
 - Thursday: 2:00 PM – 4:00 PM
- Byrd Barr Place – 722 18th Ave | 206-812-4940
 - Tuesday: 11:00 AM – 4:00 PM
 - Wednesday: 12:00 PM – 4:00 PM
 - Thursday: 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM
- Immanuel Community Services – 1215 Thomas St | 206-622-1930
 - Monday: 11:00 AM – 1:00 PM
- SODO Community Market – 1915 4th Ave S | 206-625-0755
 - Monday: 1:30 PM – 7:30 PM
 - Wednesday, Friday: 8:00 AM – 2:00 PM

Many restaurants are providing free pick-up meals throughout the week in limited quantities. You can find announcements for these on the Student App or other social media outlets. Searching for groups in your neighborhood or in an affinity group are a good way to find opportunities to give and receive help.