

Independent California Colleges and Universities and the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund Utilization: CARES ACT

About

Higher education institutions responded quickly to the COVID-19 pandemic to protect the health of students, faculty, and staff and to ensure that courses can continue. These measures included converting to a strictly virtual space (for those not already active in that arena); implementing health and safety measures and purchasing equipment; and supporting students with financial aid and technology. Colleges and universities adapted to changing health mandates and economic environments through the pandemic and are still experiencing the impacts of declines in enrollment and cost pressures on their budgets,

To help higher education institutions and students through this difficult period, the federal government provided financial support through the three COVID-19 relief acts—the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES), the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplement Appropriations Act (CRRSAA), and the American Rescue Plan Act (ARP) through the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF). In California, nearly \$10.1 billion in COVID-19 relief aid was awarded to higher education institutions and students via the HEER Fund. Of this total statewide amount, 85.6% has been spent as of November 30, 2022. This report provides a high-level summary of the disbursement of CARES Act HEERF for institutions and students.

HEERF and ICCUs

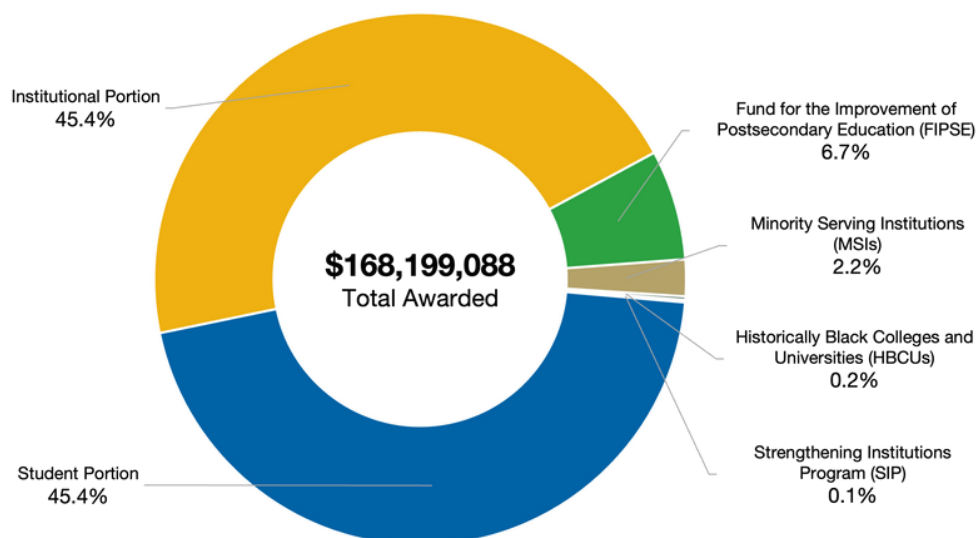
Looking at the independent California colleges and universities (ICCUs)—specifically, 104 WASC Senior College and University Commission (WSCUC) accredited, four-year and above, nonprofit institutions—across the three COVID-19 relief acts:

- **\$880,677,919 was awarded to ICCUs**
- **93.2% of awarded HEERF aid have been spent, or \$820,471,716**
- **On average, individual ICCUs have spent 95.5% of their total awarded HEERF aid**

CARES Act and ICCUs

As of the publication of this report, only the details of HEERF disbursed under the CARES Act have been made public by the U.S. Department of Education, specifically the timeframe between March 2020 to December 2020. Per the CARES Act, at least half had to be spent to support students, though institutions had the flexibility to provide additional aid to students from their institutional portion or other programs. The data on the following page looks at WSCUC-accredited ICCUs that received HEERF under the CARES Act. For more information, please contact [Thomas Vu](#), vice president for policy, and [Pamela Ong](#), research manager.

HEERF Awarded to ICCUs, by Program



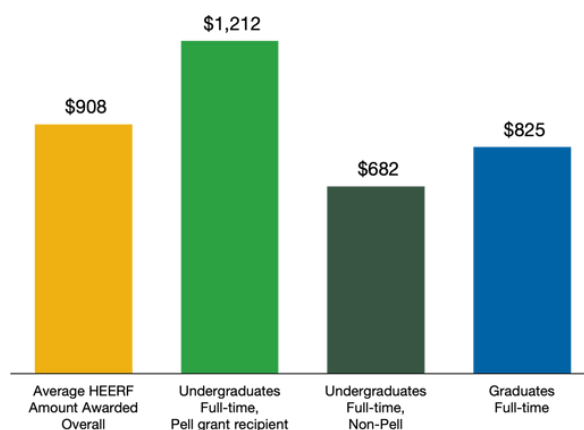
over
\$160M
was awarded to ICCUs

Average HEERF Disbursed to Students

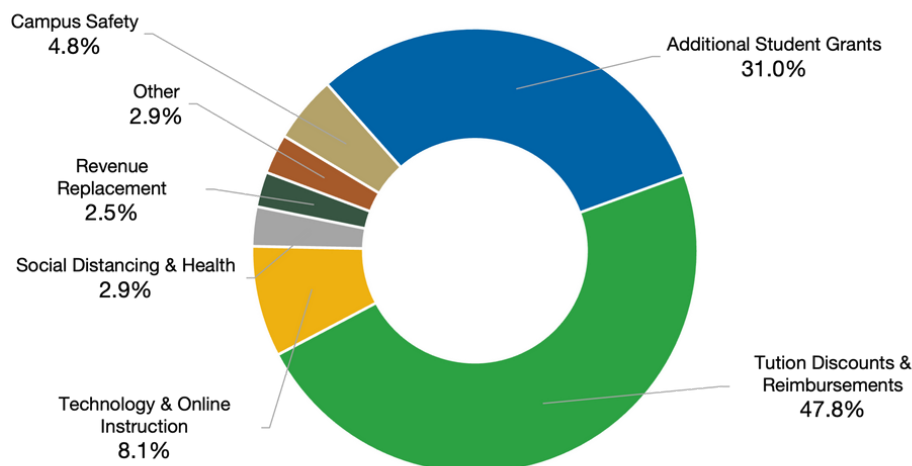
97,000 students
received HEERF support

\$88,105,119
was disbursed to students
through all HEERF programs

\$73,341,002
was disbursed directly to students
as Emergency Financial Aid



HEERF Institutional Spending



nearly
80%

of institutional aid went
back to directly
support students in the
forms of additional
student grants or
tuition discounts and
reimbursements

Source: U.S. Department of Education, Education Stabilization Fund (<https://covid-relief-data.ed.gov/profile/state/CA>)

Notes: Data collection was limited to WSCUC-accredited, nonprofit higher education institutions in California. The intent is to provide a wide scope to capture the diversity of the ICCU sector but also to recognize the high standards of accreditation by WSCUC; of this subset, the CARES Act data included only institutions that were required to complete the Annual Performance Report.