



For College, Community, and Justice

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## #RealCollege Funding Opportunity: Supplemental Support Under the American Rescue Plan

On January 20th, 2022, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) [announced](#) new resources for colleges and universities to address the crisis of student basic needs insecurity, including a new \$198 million grant opportunity under the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF), **Supplemental Support under American Rescue Plan (SSARP)** program. These funds [will provide](#) much needed support for institutions to help #RealCollege students through evidence-based practices to help students meet their basic needs, stay enrolled and re-enroll in school, reduce or eliminate their debt, and complete their degree or credential.

In awarding these funds, ED will prioritize the following five types of institutions:

1. Institutions that were underfunded during the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act (CRRSAA) due to technical errors, application issues, or not reporting in IPEDS;
2. Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) or Strengthening Institutions Program (SIP) Grantees that were underfunded due to technical errors or application Issues, are newly eligible, or are a branch campus;
3. Institutions that were underfunded through the American Rescue Plan Act (ARP) due to an institutional merger or change in Program Participation Agreement (PPA);
4. **Community colleges and rural institutions serving a high percentage of low-income students and experiencing enrollment declines;** and
5. Institutions serving high percentages of graduate students.

There are many ways to use SSARP funds to support students. Institutions [have already used](#) tens of billions of dollars in HEERF funding to provide much-needed emergency grants for students and to help marginalized, minoritized, and low-income students confront challenges related to the COVID-

19 pandemic. Additionally, ED has published new [guidance](#) providing examples of how colleges can use the institutional portion of any HEERF grants to make investments into meeting the basic needs of students.

This additional funding opportunity is a chance for institutions to build new initiatives or scale up existing efforts that have proven successful at addressing students' basic needs, including food, housing, child care, transportation, mental health, and more.

### **#RealCollege Priority Institutions: Community Colleges and Rural Institutions with High Pell Grant Enrollment that Experienced Significant Enrollment Declines**

Under Absolute Priority 4, the SSARP funds will prioritize applications from community colleges and rural institutions where:

- 50 percent or more of degree/certificate-seeking undergraduate students enrolled in Fall 2019 were Pell Grant recipients; **and**
- Student enrollment between Fall 2019 and Fall of 2020 declined by 4.5 percent or more.

Institutions should calculate whether or not their enrollment of Pell Grant recipients meets the 50 percent eligibility threshold by using IPEDS and the 2019-20 Student Financial survey. The ratio can be calculated using the headcount of degree/certificate-seeking undergraduate students enrolled in fall 2019, divided by the total headcount of all degree/certificate-seeking undergraduate students enrolled in fall 2019.

ED will automatically calculate whether an institution has met the 4.5 percent decline based on total fall headcount reported in IPEDS. Institutions do not need to calculate this rate.

Institutions with questions about their eligibility or the metrics used to calculate Pell Grant eligibility thresholds should contact the IPEDS help desk at [ipedshelp@rti.org](mailto:ipedshelp@rti.org).

### **Practices to Support #RealCollege Students through SSARP Funding**

The Hope Center encourages eligible institutions to use SSARP funding to support evidence-based practices to address student basic needs insecurity, such as:

- Coordinating basic needs supports through [basic needs centers](#) and benefit hubs that help students access HEERF emergency aid and non-HEERF pandemic relief, like expanded Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, rent and housing relief, transportation vouchers, benefits like the Child Tax Credit, childcare support, Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), or state and federal financial aid.
- Providing additional emergency grants to students facing conditions or circumstances that may necessitate additional support or regular cash assistance, with a particular focus on [parenting students](#), LGBTQ students, students from minoritized backgrounds, and justice system-impacted students.
- Creating [universal meals programs](#) and meal voucher programs that help reduce food insecurity and hunger.
- Expanding broadband access and the ability to engage in remote learning, including by providing equipment such as Wi-Fi hotspots, tablets, and laptops, and by leveraging other initiatives such as the Federal Communications Commission’s (FCC) Emergency Broadband Benefit program.
- Expanding access to [mental and behavioral health services](#), by increasing the supply of mental health providers, counselors and staff, and expanding mental health outreach to students experiencing or at risk of basic needs insecurity.
- Canceling debt and clearing the account balances of students currently enrolled or those who have left school since the onset of the pandemic, and pairing debt cancellation with outreach to students about the opportunity to receive a financial aid adjustment due to recent unemployment, loss of income, or other extenuating or emergency circumstances.
- Participating in [Hope Impact Partnerships](#) to assess students’ basic needs on each participating campus, assess campus policies and programs, and analyze, plan, and take action to improve students’ basic needs security and well-being.

**Note:** Grantees receiving funding under Absolute Priority 4 must use at least **50 percent** of their award for emergency financial aid grants to students.

## How to Apply for SSARP Funding

ED has announced that application deadline for SSARP funding has been extended to **April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2022**, with notification of awards in late spring or early summer.

Institutions should consult the [Federal Register notice](#) announcing the SSARP funding opportunity to read more about the program.

Institutions can complete their application at: <https://www.grants.gov/web/grants/view-opportunity.html?oppld=337794>