How much money will you and your college get from Congress’ coronavirus relief bill?

BY JIMENA TAVEL
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House Speaker Nancy Pelosi mostly praised the bipartisan work before lawmakers approved the $2.2 trillion rescue package for the U.S. economy and health system on March 27. She did take a moment to call out senators who objected to one benefit. (BY C-SPAN)

College students in Florida who are struggling to make ends meet to continue their studies amid the novel coronavirus public health crisis will soon be able to get some federal dollars to do so.

That's thanks to the $2.2 trillion Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security — CARES — Act, approved by Congress on March 27, which allocated $39.75 billion for an “Education Stabilization Fund,” split between K-12 and higher education, according to the American Council on Education.

Post-secondary institutions got about $14 billion. The stimulus bill indicated that approximately 90% of that, or about $12.6 billion, would go straight to colleges and universities, requiring them to give at least half, roughly $6.3 billion, to the students directly, said Carrie Warick, the director of policy and advocacy at the National College Attainment Network.

Nearly two weeks after lawmakers passed the CARES Act, the Department of Education announced Thursday it dispersed the funds to schools across the country, according to a letter from Secretary Betsy DeVos to college and university presidents.

But only the half that is for students — $6.3 billion for emergency aid grants — became immediately available.
“We are prioritizing this funding stream in order to get money in the hands of students in need as quickly as possible,” DeVos wrote.

Students will be able to pay for “expenses related to the disruption of campus operations,” like paying for WiFi at home, buying a laptop or books, finding a place to live and covering health charges incurred if a student or a loved one was diagnosed with COVID-19, Warick said.

The DOE indicated it will have guidance in the coming weeks on how colleges and universities can spend the other half of the money that they will eventually get.

The remaining $1.4 billion or so of the total $14 billion fund for higher education will be split into different buckets, including some directed to minority-serving institutions.

**DISTRIBUTION OF THE FEDERAL FUNDS**

To distribute the money, the Department of Education used a formula specified by Congress, based on student enrollment: 75% on the full-time enrollment of Pell Grant recipients and 25% on the full-time enrollment of students who don’t receive Pell Grants. The calculation excludes students who were already exclusively online.

Schools have a lot of leeway to decide how to hand out the funds to students, Warick said. The only requirement is for students to spend the money on food, housing, course materials, technology, healthcare, child care or other costs incurred due to the pandemic.

However, DeVos encouraged universities and colleges to prioritize students with the greatest need. It was recommended the schools established a maximum funding threshold for each student “to ensure that these funds are distributed as widely as possible.”

According to a spreadsheet provided to the Herald by Ben Miller at the Center for American Progress, 254 schools in Florida will get funding. Florida’s total is fourth behind California, Texas and New York — half of the state’s $740 million must go to students.

The University of Central Florida tops the list at about $51 million. It’s followed by Miami Dade College with about $49 million, Florida International University with about $38 million, the University of South Florida with about $34 million and the University of Florida with $31 million.

Nationwide, Arizona State will receive the most with about $65 million, trailed by Penn State with about $55 million and Rutgers with about $54 million. No. 4 on that list is UCF, and MDC is No. 5.

In total, about $9 billion will go to public institutions, while about $2.5 billion will go to private, nonprofit institutions, and $1.1 billion will go to private for-profit institutions, according to NCAN.

Colleges and universities can sign an agreement online and will get the funds as early as the middle of next week, Warick said. Then it’s up to how fast institutions can move to transfer the money to students.

Schools are still figuring it out. The University of Miami, which will get roughly $8 million, and MDC did not immediately respond to a request for comment.
According to press release sent Friday, FIU is “currently working on a plan and application process for students to access these grants” and expects to have details by the end of next week.

**WILL THE FUNDS BE ENOUGH?**

In mid-March, universities and colleges across the country started shutting down their campuses and migrating to remote learning in an effort to mitigate the spread of the novel coronavirus.

Many have announced they will keep their classes online through the summer and some fear they will have to do it past the fall.

This has caused a financial storm, as some schools have decided to issue prorated refunds to students for fees like housing, dining and tuition.

That, coupled with the expectation the enrollment numbers will drop significantly in the fall, has higher education institutions looking at a bleak future, Warick said.

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“I cannot yet tell you whether it’s enough,” said Warick. “But I know some of the top higher education associations were asking for $45 billion and they only got $14 billion. So what we’re hearing from some higher education associations is that this is not enough.”

In her Thursday letter, DeVos encouraged institutions that might serve an affluent population of students, to share.

“If you determine that your institution’s students do not have significant financial need at this time, I would ask that you consider giving your allocation to those institutions within your state or region that might have significant need,” she wrote.

**HOW MUCH MONEY WILL FLORIDA COLLEGES GET?**

Here are the top 50 Florida universities and colleges and the amount of funding each can access as early as next week.

The list released by the Department of Education includes all U.S. schools.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Overall</th>
<th>Of which must go to students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 University of Central Florida</td>
<td>$51,071,250</td>
<td>$25,535,625</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Miami Dade College</td>
<td>$49,074,737</td>
<td>$24,537,369</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Florida International University</td>
<td>$38,301,957</td>
<td>$19,150,979</td>
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<tr>
<td>4 University of South Florida</td>
<td>$34,839,748</td>
<td>$17,419,874</td>
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<tr>
<td>5 University of Florida</td>
<td>$31,046,411</td>
<td>$15,523,206</td>
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<tr>
<td>6 Florida State University</td>
<td>$29,309,828</td>
<td>$14,669,914</td>
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<td>7 Valencia College</td>
<td>$27,682,203</td>
<td>$13,841,102</td>
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<td>8 Broward College</td>
<td>$27,154,901</td>
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<td>9 Florida Atlantic University</td>
<td>$22,429,874</td>
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<td>10 Keiser University</td>
<td>$21,190,626</td>
<td>$10,595,313</td>
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<tr>
<td>11 Palm Beach State College</td>
<td>$18,933,435</td>
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<td>12 Florida Career College</td>
<td>$17,303,589</td>
<td>$8,651,795</td>
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<tr>
<td>13 Hillsborough Community College</td>
<td>$16,262,267</td>
<td>$8,131,134</td>
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<tr>
<td>14 Florida State College at Jacksonville</td>
<td>$14,500,515</td>
<td>$7,250,258</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
15 Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University $13,051,325 $6,525,663  
16 St. Petersburg College $12,813,482 $6,406,741  
17 University of North Florida $11,770,196 $5,885,098  
18 Florida Gulf Coast University $11,143,620 $5,571,810  
19 Indian River State College $9,553,094 $4,776,547  
20 Full Sail University $9,445,834 $4,722,917  
21 Florida Southwestern State College $9,178,997 $4,589,499  
22 Eastern Florida State College $8,816,361 $4,408,181  
23 Seminole State College Of Florida $8,150,059 $4,075,030  
24 University of Miami $8,139,089 $4,069,545  
25 Santa Fe College $7,859,449 $3,929,725  
26 Tallahassee Community College $7,763,584 $3,881,792  
27 Daytona State College $7,681,731 $3,840,866  
28 Nova Southeastern University $7,157,194 $3,578,597  
29 University of Tampa $6,941,444 $3,470,722  
30 Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University $6,845,716 $3,422,858  
31 University of West Florida $6,801,388 $3,400,694  
32 Bethune-Cookman University $6,648,501 $3,324,251  
33 Pasco-Hernando State College $6,574,907 $3,287,454  
34 Polk State College $6,116,050 $3,058,025  
35 Pensacola State College $6,004,939 $3,002,470  
36 Florida National University $5,884,598 $2,942,299  
37 College of Central Florida $5,063,707 $2,531,854  
38 Barry University $5,027,398 $2,513,699  
39 State College of Florida, Manatee-Sarasota $5,023,266 $2,511,633  
40 Southeastern University $4,820,567 $2,410,284  
41 Saint Leo University $4,579,587 $2,289,794  
42 Southern Technical College $3,873,252 $1,936,627  
43 South Florida Institute Of Technology $3,625,271 $1,812,636  
44 Florida Institute of Technology $3,607,645 $1,803,823  
45 Stetson University $3,578,583 $1,789,292  
46 St. Johns River State College $2,997,937 $1,498,969  
47 Miami International University of Art & Design $2,762,168 $1,381,084  
48 Flagler College $2,708,794 $1,354,397  
49 Rollins College $2,692,112 $1,346,056  
50 Northwest Florida State College $2,530,500 $1,265,250  

Source: U.S. Department of Education

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Jimena Tavel es una reportera de asignación general para el Nuevo Herald y Miami Herald. Tiene tres nacionalidades: hondureña, cubana y costarricense. Jimena Tavel is a general assignment reporter for the Miami Herald and el Nuevo Herald. She has three nationalities: Honduran, Cuban and Costa Rican.

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