

MODEL PROPOSAL TO CHARACTERIZE USE OF CARES ACT FUNDS
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The CARES Act of 2020 has appropriated federal funding to support university students, both undergraduate and graduate, including graduate workers, as they adapt to the COVID-19 crisis. _____ has been awarded \$_____ million to be given to students currently in need of financial support amidst the crisis.

According to the legislation and the Department of Education, universities must establish guidelines for the distribution of federal money. Because it is up to each institution to determine principles by which the system should operate as well as processes for distributing public money to support students, we call for a just and accountable university-wide system for distributing CARES Act relief funds. We envision a centralized body that organizes the application and distribution process for CARES Act relief funds; we refer to this body throughout the document as the **CARES Act Commission**.

While we know that these initial federal funds are insufficient to meet the vast, urgent need of _____ students, we offer here a vision for distributing funds based on this community's diverse needs, both undergraduates and graduates. It is a model that attempts to equitably divide resources among all campuses and according to a fair and transparent process in which students are actively involved. As we continue to fight for political responses to the ongoing crisis, we believe this vision can form the basis for a just system of supporting _____ students.

Distribution of Federal Relief Funds

First, we call for the process to distribute CARES Act funds to students to pay for:

- Living Expenses, including but not limited to:
 - Housing costs (i.e. rent and mortgage payments, renters' and homeowners' insurance, and moving costs due to displacement)
 - Food
 - Transportation (i.e. car payments, public transit fees, rail, air, and bus tickets)
 - Utilities (i.e. water, gas, electricity, internet)
 - Caretaking expenses (i.e. caring for children and elders)
 - Health care expenses
 - Legal representation for international and undocumented students dealing with legal fallout from COVID-19
- Research continuity, including but not limited to:
 - Home office supplies
 - Books

- Digital subscriptions to research databases
- Other research materials

Equity in the Relief Process

Because federal funds fall far short of what would be necessary to deal with the thousands of personal and familial crises undergraduate and graduate students at _____ face, it is imperative that the University's system for determining and distributing aid balance multiple needs across many divisions within our community.

It is vital that _____ administers CARES Act federal funding in a way that reflects parity between campuses by treating the _____ student body as a whole and **does not reflect bias toward a particular campus**. No program or department will review applications; all applications will be reviewed solely by the CARES Act Commission. Federal funding will be used to supplement the existing emergency fund resources of each campus to ensure this equal access for students. **Both undergraduate and graduate student populations will have equal access to emergency fund resources.**

Access to emergency fund resources will prioritize the urgent basic needs of students, including food, shelter (e.g. rent), healthcare, access to childcare, legal and visa support for international and undocumented students, and access to internet/wi-fi. Due to the fluidity of the COVID-19 scenario, we believe that access to these emergency funds should be available on a rolling basis. Funds will be provided as quickly as possible to those who need it in the immediate term. Making emergency funds available on a rolling basis allows for students to access the emergency funds as new unfortunate circumstances occur (e.g. loss of income). Additionally, access to emergency funds will be available for educational and research resources.

Accountable and Transparent Process

Having established the key qualifications for a just and equitable funding distribution system, the question of process looms large. It is not enough simply to say certain situations make one eligible for support. The power of transparency to all stakeholders makes apt the saying "sunlight is the best disinfectant," and we see several critical opportunities for access and transparency.

First, we call for the University to establish the **CARES Act Commission**, a centralized body to distribute federal relief funds across the three campuses. The Commission will be composed of representatives of all three campuses. This central body will establish and implement a process to identify, assess, and respond to student relief applications. We propose that student government associations and unions for undergraduate, graduate, and professional students be represented on the Commission to establish the terms and conditions of the emergency funding relevant to their respective populations so that accountability and transparency can be ensured throughout, in particular through a weekly written report made to the respective student government associations and published online.

Second, we call for emergency funds to be available to all student groups. **All students--undergraduate and graduate students, including fellows, workers (TAs, GAs, PTLs, etc.), and professional students--will be equally eligible to apply for relief funds.** Their applications will be assessed on an equal basis, grounded in the urgency of their needs.

Third, we call for the immediate development of evaluation criteria, which will be made public no later than the opening of the application process. Students require a clear understanding of the evaluation process and evaluation considerations. We call for the evaluation criteria and funding priorities, as well as plans for rolling versus determinate submissions, to be clearly stated in all communication that contains submission information. This will allow students to be specific in their applications and planful in their financial management.

Fourth, we ask that the submission and evaluation process be streamlined and handled entirely by the **CARES Act Commission**. Departments and schools will not act as gatekeepers to emergency funding by participating in the evaluation procession, as is the case with other funding opportunities (e.g., Graduate Student Fellowships). Moreover, students will not be required to meet privately with a dean of students or any other administrator as a condition for being able to access the fund. A single centralized application process will allow for clear and direct messaging from the CARES Act Commission.

Lastly, we call for the creation of a centralized webpage for the Commission, such as _____, where all announcements, application details (including eligibility standards and evaluation rubrics), the application portal, lists of Commission with application eligibility info, lists of Commission members, and regular weekly reports of disbursements will be publicly posted and available. The webpage will be posted on _____, and any other regularly visited student resource site.