



**American Rescue Plan Act
Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund III
Quarterly Report – Student Portion (ALN 84.425E)
December 31, 2021**

The American Rescue Plan Act (ARP), signed into law in March 2021, provides additional assistance to institutions of higher education via the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund III (HEERF III). As a prior grantee of HEERF II under the Coronavirus Response and Relief Supplemental Appropriations Act, Berry College received a HEERF III supplemental award from the U.S. Department of Education under the ARP.

At least half of Berry College's HEERF III allocation must be used to make emergency financial aid grants to students (Student Aid Portion). The remainder may be used for institutional purposes. The **Student Aid Portion available via the HEERF III supplemental award is \$2,049,855.**

Under the ARP, students who are or were enrolled at Berry College on or after the COVID-19 national emergency are eligible for HEERF III Grants. Institutions must **prioritize funding to students with exceptional need** (such as Pell Grant and other federal or state need-based aid recipients) or undergraduate students with **extraordinary financial circumstances**. Beyond these categories, institutions may include students who have faced significant unexpected expenses caused by circumstances such as the loss of employment, reduced income, or food or housing insecurity. Berry College considers students with financial need and substantial aggregate student debt as having exceptional need and/or extraordinary financial circumstances.

As of fall 2021, the student enrollment at Berry College is 2,308 students (2,177 undergraduates). Approximately 1,000 undergraduate students are recipients of federal or state need-based aid. Of this group of students, approximately 550 students are recipients of a Pell Grant.

In order to prioritize HEERF III Grants to domestic undergraduate students with exceptional need or extraordinary financial circumstances, Berry College has created a **HEERF III Grant application form** available in the student's school portal (VikingWeb). Appendix I to this report is a copy of the announcements sent to students regarding the HEERF III Grant application. A first announcement was sent to all students meeting the enrollment criteria on July 15, 2021. A second announcement to enrolled freshmen and first-year transfers was sent on October 12, 2021. Both announcements were sent via electronic and hard copy mail.

A college-appointed committee reviews HEERF III Grant applications and selects recipients on a rolling basis according to their financial need and their extraordinary circumstances. The committee's established amounts for a HEERF III Grant are \$1,000 as a minimum award and the 2021-22 Pell Grant (\$6,495) as a reference for the standard maximum award. The committee may use professional judgment to award larger amounts according to any exceptional circumstances brought forward by students in their application forms. Appendix II is a copy of the HEERF III Grant application form as displayed in the student's portal.

Since the quarterly report as of 9/30/2021, Berry College has received **67 new HEERF III Grant applications and distributed \$243,145 in funds total to 53 undergraduate students** (first-time selected among former and new applicants). Of the **53 undergraduate students**, 29 students were identified as having exceptional need and 24 as having financial need and/or extraordinary financial circumstances. Appendix III is a copy of the communication enclosed with the grant check sent directly to each student.

Berry College continues its outreach concerning HEERF III Grants to students while closely monitoring the development of COVID-19 challenges on campus and in the local and regional communities. Berry College has prioritized the continued distribution of HEERF III Grants through application selections before moving to block grant awarding strategies during the later months.

Appendix I

Announcement to students on 7/15/2021



OFFICE OF FINANCIAL AID

Dear student,

At Berry College, we want to ensure that all members of the Berry family are able to continue their education and graduate on time, even when a national pandemic makes that financially challenging. Should you need financial help, here are three options to consider.

Option 1: If you or your family's financial situation has changed significantly from what is reflected on your 2019 federal income tax return (for example, if you've lost a job or otherwise experienced a drop in income during the past year), **you may be eligible to have your financial aid adjusted through the process known as Professional Judgment.** A drop in income could result in a decrease in your Expected Family Contribution (EFC), which could result in your eligibility for additional financial aid.

If you have experienced a significant drop in income:

1. Complete the FAFSA questions as instructed on the application, including the transfer of tax return and income information using the Data Retrieval Tool (DRT).
2. Submit your FAFSA form (if you have not done so already).
3. Contact the Office of Financial Aid (financialaid@berry.edu) with the name and ID number of the student along with a brief description of how your current financial situation has changed.
4. Once your FAFSA is processed and received by our office, your financial aid counselor will review the information and reach out to discuss your current situation and next steps.

Please note that Professional Judgment may take some days to several weeks to resolve.

Additionally, the school's Professional Judgment decision is final and cannot be appealed to the U.S. Department of Education.

Option 2: If your family has experienced disruptions related to COVID-19, we may be able to provide direct support using funds from the American Rescue Plan Act. We have created a form for you to use to tell us about your situation and request support to offset this situation. **To submit a request**, please log into VIKINGWEB.BERRY.EDU and look for the HEERF Grant Application link under the Finances tab.

Option 3: If the first two situations don't seem to fit and you still need help due to other challenges, reach out to our office at financialaid@berry.edu or 706-236-1714. You may also complete the online Request for Additional Aid Form (BERRY.EDU/AID/REQUEST). We are ready to hear your challenges and will strive to help ensure that all of our students successfully graduate on time.

We hope you enjoy the rest of your summer and look forward to welcoming all of you back in the fall.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Noemi Sarrion'.

Noemi Sarrion
Director of Financial Aid

2277 Martha Berry Hwy NW
PO Box 495007
Mount Berry, GA 30149-5007
o 706.236.2215 TOLL FREE (OPTIONAL): 800.237.7842
BERRY.EDU/AID

Announcement to students on 10/12/2021



Dear student,

At Berry College, we want to ensure that all members of the Berry family are able to continue their education and graduate on time; even when a national pandemic makes that financially challenging. In this letter we wanted to outline two options should you need financial help.

Option 1: As mentioned during the SOAR Financial Aid sessions offered last June, if you or your family's financial situation has changed significantly from what is reflected on your 2019 federal income tax return (for example, if you've lost a job or otherwise experienced a drop in income during the past year) you may be eligible to have your financial aid adjusted via the process known as Professional Judgment. A drop in income could result in a decrease in your Expected Family Contribution (EFC) which could result in your eligibility for additional financial aid.

If you have experienced a significant drop in income that you have not previously discussed with the financial aid office:

1. Complete the FAFSA questions (if you have not done so already) as instructed on the application (including the transfer of tax return and income information using the Data Retrieval Tool (DRT).
2. Submit your FAFSA form (if you have not done so already).
3. Contact the Office of Financial Aid (financialaid@berry.edu) with the name and ID number of the student along with a brief description of how your current financial situation has changed.
4. Once your FAFSA is processed and received by our office, your financial aid counselor will review the information and reach out to you to discuss your current situation and advise on next steps.

Please note that Professional Judgment may take some days to several weeks to resolve. Additionally, the school's Professional Judgment decision is final and cannot be appealed to the U.S. Department of Education.

Option 2: If your family has experienced disruptions related to COVID-19, we may be able to provide direct support using funds from the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. We have created a form for you to use to tell us about your situation and request support to offset this situation. To submit a request, please log into VikingWeb at vikingweb.berry.edu and look for the HEERF Grant Application link under the Finances tab. Requests will be evaluated throughout the fall semester on a rolling basis.

If none of these options seem to fit your situation and you still need help due to other challenges simply reach out to our office at financialaid@berry.edu or 706.236.1714.

We hope that you are enjoying the fall semester!

Sincerely,

Noemi Sarrion
Director of Financial Aid

Appendix II

**BERRY** COLLEGE **HEERF III Grant Application**

ID Number:

Name:

Mobile Phone:

Are you currently employed?

Were you enrolled at Berry College on or after March 13, 2020?

Please explain any special circumstances or exceptional need that may further inform your application for a HEERF grant.

Based on your current financial hardship or the emergency costs caused by COVID-19, what is the amount of funding requested?

Emergency financial aid grants may be used for any component of the cost of attendance or for emergency costs that arise due to COVID-19, such as tuition, food, housing, health care, or child care. Please explain how the amount requested will assist you.

Submission Confirmation

Thank you for your application for a HEERF Grant. The Berry College HEERF Grant Committee will review your request and notify their decision for an award via email as soon as possible.

In accordance with guidelines set forth by the U.S. Department of Education, the Berry College HEERF Grant Committee will prioritize grant awards to undergraduate students with exceptional need or with extraordinary financial circumstances. Award decisions will be made based on HEERF III availability. Award checks will be mailed to the student's campus/personal address.

Appendix III



Date

Dear Student,

Thank you for submitting a Higher Education Emergency Relief Funding (HEERF) grant application through your Berry College student portal. These federal funds were provided to Berry College to assist students who have experienced challenges and disruptions due to the ongoing COVID pandemic. We are pleased to let you know that the HEERF Grant selection committee reviewed your application and you have been approved to receive a grant.

Enclosed you will find a check for the approved grant amount. To determine your grant amount, the review committee considered your situation, the amount requested, and guidelines from the federal government on typical grant ranges.

HEERF grants may be used for any component of your cost of attendance at Berry or for emergency costs that arise due to COVID-19, such as tuition, food, housing, health care, or child care. We encourage parents and students to discuss how best to use this grant.

If you have any questions about this grant, your cost of attendance, or charges at Berry College, you may reach out to one of the following offices.

Office of Financial Aid; financialaid@berry.edu, 706.236.1714

Student Financial Services; sfs@berry.edu, 706.236.2252

We are happy to support your family in this time of need and we hope that this grant allows you to continue to pursue your education at Berry and graduate on time.

We wish you a successful academic year.

HEERF Grant Committee