

Initial Report
Governor’s Emergency Education Relief (GEER) Fund
North Carolina – S425C200034

On March 10, 2020, Governor Cooper declared a state of emergency to coordinate the response and protective actions to prevent the spread of COVID-19. Since then, the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted every county in North Carolina and has greatly impacted our state’s preK-12 and postsecondary education systems and our state’s workforce.

- On March 14, 2020, Governor Cooper ordered all K-12 public schools in the state to close for in-person instruction for two weeks. That closure was extended two more times, with all K-12 public schools being ordered to remain closed for in-person instruction the remainder of the 2019-20 school year on May 5, 2020.
- The UNC System ordered all constituent institutions to move all instruction to remote and to move to keep all students off-campus for the remainder of the spring semester beginning March 23, 2020. The state’s community colleges and most of the state’s independent colleges also transitioned to remote learning as well in March.
- Between March 15 and July 30, 2020, more than 1.2 million North Carolinians filed more than 2 million claims for unemployment insurance.

As of August 7, 2020, North Carolina has 132,812 lab-confirmed cases of COVID-19 and 2,134 North Carolinians are known to have died from the disease. All 100 of North Carolina’s counties have reported cases of COVID-19 since the start of the pandemic.

To help address the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on North Carolina’s K-12 and postsecondary students, Governor Roy Cooper is directing the \$95.6 million in GEER funding the state received to help support K-12 and postsecondary students most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Specifically, the funds will be used by the state’s public schools and postsecondary institutions to better address the academic, physical, and mental health needs of students during the 2020-21 school year. This initial report provides details on the process for how those funds will be awarded to LEAs and IHEs and the amount of funding to be awarded.

Allocations of GEER Funds to LEAs

Because all K-12 public schools were closed in March for in-person instruction and because every NC county has reported cases of COVID-19, funding will be made available to all LEAs in the state. The allotment formulas are being developed in consultation with the State Board of Education and Department of Public Instruction to distribute the allotment based on LEAs that have been “most significantly impacted” by coronavirus. The formula(s) will include indicators of local need. The Governor is directing two streams of funding by formula to support LEAs in meeting the needs of K-12 students.

- **K-12 Student Success Grants** - \$20 million in GEER funding will be directed to the State Board of Education to be allocated out to all LEAs and charter schools to provide flexible academic supports and related aid responsive to the needs of students and families particularly vulnerable during the pandemic, including students with disabilities, food and housing insecure students, at-risk students, and English language learners. Aid may be used

for a range of purposes, including tutoring, afterschool programming, hiring additional teachers or TAs, purchasing additional instructional resources, etc. The State Board of Education will distribute these funds by formula that considers factors such as student population, at-risk students, and student and county wealth. Final determination of the formula will be made in consultation with the State Board of Education and the Department of Public Instruction.

- **K-12 Student Wellness Grants** - \$40 million in GEER funding will be directed to the State Board of Education to be allocated out to all LEAs and charter schools to help strengthen capacity of schools to support student's physical health and emotional wellbeing during the pandemic by hiring up to 500 additional nurses, counselors, social workers, and psychologists (Specialized Instructional Support Personnel or SISP) to support NC students over the next year of recovery. These funds will be distributed by the State Board of Education by formula that considers factors such as student population, at-risk students, and student and county wealth. Final determination of the formula will be made in consultation with the State Board of Education and the Department of Public Instruction.

The State Board of Education and the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) distribute state funding to LEAs and charter schools through a system of funding allotments that are based on a set of formulas approved by statute and/or State Board policy. The State Board adopts an allotment policy for each funding allotment. LEAs and charter schools are required to report back monthly to DPI on how much funding has been spent from each allotment and what the funds were used for based on DPI's chart of accounts.

For both of these funding streams, the State Board of Education will establish an allotment policy that will direct LEAs and charter schools on allowable uses for the funds, as well as direct LEAs and charter schools to provide equitable services to non-public schools located within the LEA in the same manner as provided under section 1117 of the ESEA. To monitor how funds are spent, LEAs and charter schools will report back monthly to the NC Department of Public Instruction how much of the funds have been spent and what the funds were used for. All LEAs and charter schools that receive GEER funds will be required to complete a certification form acknowledging that they will spend the funds in accordance with the CARES Act and the State Board's allotment policies, and that they will provide equitable services to non-public schools located within the LEA in the same manner as provided under section 1117 of the ESEA.

Allocations of GEER Funds to Postsecondary Institutions

Because all postsecondary institutions in North Carolina were impacted by the closure of campuses in the spring and because all counties in the state have reported cases of the coronavirus, all postsecondary institutions in North Carolina have been significantly impacted by coronavirus. Allotment formulas are being developed in consultation with the North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority and NC Community College System to ensure funds are distributed to institutions serving students most significantly impacted by the pandemic. The Governor is directing four streams of funding to support postsecondary students in the state's public and private universities and community colleges.

- **Workforce Training Tuition Assistance** - \$15 million in GEER funding will be directed to the NC Community College System (NCCCS) to be allocated by formula out to the state's 58 community colleges by the State Board of Community Colleges. These funds will provide financial assistance to adult learners pursuing workforce training in high-need career pathways. The formula for these funds will be developed by NCCCs and may include continuing education enrollment at each institution, cost of various continuing education programs, and local/regional workforce trends. Institutions will be required to submit a certification form in order to receive the funds, and to submit regular reports to NCCCS and North Carolina Pandemic Recovery Office (NCPRO) detailing expenditures and the number of students receiving tuition assistance. NCCCS may withhold up to 3% of the funds (or \$450,000) to ensure successful implementation of the program, including promoting the tuition assistance opportunity to potential beneficiaries.
- **Resilience Grants, UNC System** - \$6 million in GEER funding will be directed to the UNC Board of Governors (BOG) to go to the State Education Assistance Authority (SEAA) for distribution by formula to eligible UNC System constituent institutions to provide flexible student aid and supports for North Carolina students most impacted by COVID-19. This aid is focused on improving retention and success among students who experience increased financial need and related challenges due to the pandemic. Funds will be distributed by SEAA to institutions using an allotment formula that primarily uses North Carolina's UNC Need Based Scholarship eligibility. Funds may not be used to supplant other forms of student aid. UNC institutions will provide a monthly report to SEAA and NCPRO on how much of the funds have been spent, how the funds were spent, and how many students have received aid.
- **Resilience Grants, Independent Colleges and Universities** - \$4 million in GEER funding will be directed to the UNC Board of Governors to go to the State Education Assistance Authority (SEAA) for distribution by formula to eligible independent colleges and universities to provide flexible student aid and supports for North Carolina students most impacted by COVID-19. This aid is focused on improving retention and success among students who receive need-based aid. Funds will be distributed by SEAA to institutions using an allotment formula that primarily uses North Carolina's NC Need Based Scholarship eligibility. Funds may not be used to supplant other forms of student aid. Independent colleges and universities that receive funds through this program will provide a monthly report to SEAA and NCPRO on how much of the funds have been spent and how many students have received aid.
- **UNC K-12 Gaps Funding** - Roughly 1,000 UNC System students were left out of formulas for federal funding programs HEER and ESSER because they attend a high school program at a UNC constituent institution. To close that gap, the UNC Board of Governors may apply for up to \$566,000 in GEER funding to provide relief aid to institutions that serve those students commensurate with CARES Act aid received by LEAs and charter schools on a per student basis. The UNC Board of Governors may use a formula that considers the statewide average ESSER and CRF combined funding per NC student, the FTE of K-12 student enrollment at the eligible UNC constituent institutions as of March 13, 2020, and other factors unique to such institutions (e.g., residential status) when applying for these funds.

P-20 Resilience Fund

The remaining funds (\$10,072,869) will be used as a discretionary fund to (1) address issues that emerge as students and educators return to schools and campuses for the 2020-21 school year and (2) bolster points in the education pipeline particularly stressed due to the pandemic and/or build infrastructure necessary for the long-term recovery of the state's K-12 and postsecondary education systems. These may include boosting digital learning strategies, childcare supports, equity-focused retention programs, seamless transfer programs, and educator retention efforts.

Funds will be awarded at the discretion of the Governor based on a combination of the following criteria:

- Target students, schools, colleges, and related support infrastructure that have been most significantly impacted by COVID-19;
- Show promise to accelerate students' success and/or limit learning loss during and following the pandemic;
- Center around equity; or
- Involve multiple institutions or address cross-sector needs.

Details on the distribution of these funds, the recipients, and the distribution criteria will be provided in future reports.

At this time, the Governor is not planning to distribute any of the GEER funds to state or local teachers' unions or associations, or to use for payments to SEA or IHE administrators.

Oversight by the NC Pandemic Response Office (NC PRO)

The North Carolina Pandemic Recovery Office (NCPRO) was established in North Carolina Session Law 2020-4 to oversee and coordinate the use of federal relief aid received by the State. NCPRO has established a rigorous monthly reporting process for all State and non-State entities that have received allocations from the Coronavirus Relief Fund. NCPRO will oversee reporting for the use of GEER funds in alignment with requirements and guidance established by the U.S. Department of Education in a manner that streamlines the process for grantees who have received aid from both CRF and GEER funds.

Recipient institutions will submit a report to on the 20th day of each month using the C-1 and C-2 form provided through NCPRO reporting. Recipients must report the total amount of funds received, the total amount of funds spent, location of recipient, the place of service, the number of education-related jobs created or retained as a result of the grant, the number of students retained as a result of the grant, and the number of students generally impacted as a result of the grant.