

NIU Student Emergency Fund

Spring 2020



Northern Illinois University
Your Future. Our Focus.



Student Emergency Fund

- Student Emergency Fund (SEF) existed prior to spring 2020 but had no formal structure and limited funding.
- As part of the SEM plan, began working to reestablish the SEF in fall 2019.
- COVID-19 intensified the need to make it operational spring 2020.

COVID-19 Experience

“I am currently living in my small, 2 door car after being laid off from my job due to the Covid-19 pandemic. I lost my apartment because I cannot pay the bills anymore. Also, I have been eating no more than a pack of ramen noodles a day. That is on a good day. Needless to say, my life has hit rock bottom shortly after the stay at home order was issued. All of the money I have worked for has been spent on trying to keep myself alive.”

Student Emergency Fund

- Immediate Relief (financial, resources and support)
- Limited Barriers
- Equity Minded
- Prioritized Degree Completion and Retention
- Leveraged CARES and Institutional Funds
- Coordinated Approach

SEF Application and Review Process

- Students complete a simple online application or students can be nominated by faculty or staff.
 - Expenses covered: technology, basic living expenses, childcare, emergency medical needs, travel, safety related
 - Expenses not covered: tuition, parking tickets, fines, entertainment
- Reviewed by committee (ADEI, OUS, Student Affairs) within 24 hours.
- Multiple communications to applicants from the Center for Student Assistance.
- Fund disbursement via direct deposit or check mailed to students within 3-7 business days.

SEF Timeline and Outcomes

- Within the first 24 hours, we received 1,990 applications.
- We received a total of 3,847 applications in 12 days.
- Average Award: \$330
- Total # funded: 3,272
- Total amount awarded: \$1,082,232.58
- 60% of recipients with multiple needs
- 63% re-enrolled for fall; 17% graduated or will graduate in summer; 20% not yet enrolled for fall

Lessons Learned

- The need is overwhelming and ongoing.
- The review process is emotional.
- Need for resources beyond financial assistance.
 - Laptop and hotspot check-out
 - Community resources, food banks, counseling, etc.
 - Follow up to assist with enrollment
- Staff embody Huskie values, with commitment to assist those in need, with time and financial contributions.
 - Employee parking refund donations equal to over \$20K

Emergency Fund Re-Launch

- Application opened on June 1
- 1,117 applications as of June 18
 - 512 students awarded (total amount awarded to date: \$241,470)
- Prioritizing:
 - Re-enrollment
 - Equity minded practice
 - Meeting student needs

Student Impact

- “Thank you so much for your assistance! I understand the scale of demand and that NIU is doing the best to assist everyone in need. Right now it makes a huge difference for me.”
- “I just wanted to take time to say that I am beyond grateful for the assistance I was granted. The money will help me focus on my studies for the remainder of the semester. Thank you to everyone who is part of the Center for Student Assistance.”
- “You have no idea how much this was needed, and it feels great to be supported by your institution during these times.”
- “I am thankful to be someone that received help at a time of such uncertainty...it put me in a WAY better place mentally and financially. Couldn't thank you enough.”