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CHANCELLOR

MEMORANDUM #2020-EXE-041

DATE: May 13, 2020

TO: ACCS Presidents and Chief Financial Officers

FROM: Chancellor Jimmy H. Baker

RE: CARES Act- Institutional Funds

This memorandum sets forth the Alabama Community College System's best understanding of the CARES Act-Institutional Funds and provides the following guidance as to how ACCS colleges should both utilize and disburse these funds in accordance with the law and guidance provided.

On April 22, 2020, ACCS provided instructions that each College's President could complete and submit the "Recipient's Funding Certification and Agreement for the Institutional Portion of the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund Formula Grants Authorized by Section 18004(a)(1) of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act."

As revealed in the DOE's Funding Certification and Agreement, **CARES Act-Institutional Funds are permissible to be used only to cover costs associated with significant changes to the delivery of instruction due to the coronavirus.** The DOE's guidance about what that includes is sparse and currently appears to be a much narrower scope of coverage than originally hoped by postsecondary institutions.

As a result, ACCS recommends that colleges do not drawdown the entire amount of CARES Act-Institutional Funds like it did with the CARES Act-Student Funds. The CARES Act-Institutional Funds should be drawn only as those funds are utilized. Recommended Account Codes are as follows:

Alliant: 02-06-3500* Restricted - Institutional Support- CARES Act College Relief
If you have already utilized these program codes, please use your next available program code in the appropriate functional area.
Banner: 21200 CARES Act - Dept of Ed Relief
212000 CARES Act - College Relief

The Department of Education urges each College to devote the maximum amount of CARES Act-Institutional Funds possible to emergency financial aid grants to students, especially if the College has significant endowment or other resources at its disposal. Nevertheless, each College retains discretion in determining how to allocate and use the CARES Act-Institutional Funds. However, the colleges may only use funds on those costs for which the College has a reasoned basis for concluding such costs have a clear nexus to significant changes to the delivery of instruction due to the coronavirus.

ACCS System Office understands the impact a Distance Learning initiative will have on the students of the Alabama Community Colleges and has therefore obligated $2.5 million dollars to support this initiative. These funds will be utilized to implement Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) offerings for remedial education opportunities (see attachment A), virtual and augmented learning components, and virtual and augmented learning platforms throughout the System.

ACCS is also supporting an enhanced method for the delivery of instruction with a common learning management system, professional development training for all instructors, and student tutoring and proctoring platforms. As allowable with the CARES Act Institutional funds, ACCS requests each ACCS college obligate at least twenty-five percent from these institutional CARES Act funds for the Distance Learning initiative expenses outline below. Depending on the IT infrastructure at each college, it may be necessary for the college to obligate additional CARES Act Institutional funds to meet the minimum requirements necessary to support the Distance Learning initiative.

For one year from signing the Agreement, Colleges are permitted to use the CARES Act-Institutional Funds for costs associated with significant changes to the delivery of instruction due to the coronavirus that were first incurred on or after March 13, 2020, including but not limited:

1) To expand remote learning programs (examples: learning management systems, online proctoring, online tutoring);
   NOTE: ACCS is moving toward one centralized learning management system and believes online tutoring and online proctoring are necessary expansions, in which all ACCS colleges will be required to participate. ACCS has prepared three requests for proposals (RFP), which will be posted with deadlines of June 10, 2020. Implementation efforts will begin immediately after the vendors have been selected and contracts are formalized. The colleges will be implemented in two phases. The Distance Learning (DL) Cohorts will be separated into two groups; one group will consist of colleges currently utilizing Blackboard and Moodle and one group will consist of colleges currently utilizing Canvas. Go-live for the System-wide LMS will begin as early as December 2020. The proctoring and tutoring go-live dates will follow approximately two months after the LMS go-live, for each Cohort. See attachment B through D for additional details.
2) To train faculty and staff to operate in a remote learning environment;
   NOTE: ACCS is retaining Quality Matters for online training and course review, and each college will be required to pay for course review for faculty to obtain certification. (Estimated cost calculation: $550 per faculty member per unduplicated online course. If you have 5 instructors teaching 15 sections of ENG101, the estimated cost is $2,750 for ENG101.) See attachment E for additional details.
3) To build IT capacity for supporting remote learning programs (example: increase internet connection, speed, and/or bandwidth, upgrade firewalls and security, upgrade college servers, upgrade remote access speeds, create virtual machines for student use);
   NOTE: ACCS is issuing two RFP's to standardize on Next Generation Firewalls and security software to enable a more robust, secure, and reliable environment to support remote based learning. Recommended firewalls are Palo Alto, Fortinet, Checkpoint, and Cisco NG Firewall that support 10 Gigabit of throughput and 125 MB of ipsec throughput. Security software will include vendors with behavioral based agents like Sentinel One, Carbon Black, CrowdStrike, and Cylance. ACCS will also be reviewing opportunities to develop or build virtual desktop environments to support future remote based work or educational delivery needs.
4) To reimburse itself for expenses related to refunds made to students for tuition, housing, food, or other fees or services that the college could no longer provide as a result of significant changes to the delivery of instruction, including interruptions in instruction, due to the coronavirus;
5) To reimburse itself for hardware, software, online licensing fees, or internet connectivity that the College may have purchased on behalf of students or provided to students where costs are associated with a significant change in the delivery of instruction due to the coronavirus;

6) To pay a per-student fee to a third-party service provider, including an Online Program Management, for each additional student using the distance learning platform, learning management system, online resources, proctoring, tutoring, or other support services;
7) To provide scholarships for future academic terms, provided those are related to costs associated with significant changes to the delivery of instruction due to the coronavirus (example: tuition or other fee scholarships for "Eligible Students" who were COVID-impacted in the summer by being required to take an online course instead of face-to-face course);
8) To make additional emergency financial aid grants to students, provided that such emergency financial aid are for expenses related to the disruption of campus operations due to coronavirus but students must be eligible to receive emergency financial aid grants, and only students who are or could be eligible to participate in programs under Section 484 in Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended (HEA), may receive emergency financial aid grants. No students who were enrolled exclusively in online programs/courses as of March 13, 2020, are eligible for emergency financial aid grants.

Colleges are prohibited from using CARES Act-Institutional Funds:

- To pay any costs that are not associated with significant changes to the delivery of instruction due to the coronavirus,
- To pay contractors for the provision of pre-enrollment recruitment activities, which include marketing and advertising,
- To pay third-party recruiters or online program management for recruiting or enrolling new students at the institution,
- To reimburse endowments,
- To pay for capital outlays associated with facilities related to athletics, sectarian (religious doctrine) instruction, or religious worship,
- To pay senior administrator and/or executive salaries, benefits, or any other cash or other benefit for a senior administrator or executive.

Each College shall keep detailed records of how they are expending all CARES Act Funds and be prepared to report the use of the funds to DOE, demonstrating such use was in accordance with Section 18004(c), accounting for the amount of reimbursements to the college for costs related to refunds made to students for housing, food, or other services that the college could no longer provide, and describing any internal controls the college has in place to ensure that funds were used for allowable purposes and in accordance with cash management principles.

Please note that the guidance issued herein may be subject to revision depending upon whether new or additional guidance is released by the DOE in the future. ACCS will do its best to keep up with any news as it is released and provide that to the colleges.

Prior to any drawdown or expenditure, ACCS asks each college to provide a plan to Sara Calhoun (sara.calhoun@acc.edu) with a detailed plan of disbursement including cost estimates of how it intends to utilize these CARES Act Institutional Funds, and ACCS will review the proposal and provide a written response.

Attachments

Attachment A

Below you will find examples of how the creation of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) can benefit student retention, completion, and success.

Test Out a Major before Committing

Prospective Community College students can complete a MOOC course in their prospective major to see if it is the right fit. This risk-free, money-free method can help prospective students figure out what major to choose and ultimately save money. Starting college knowing what prospective students want to study means they will not waste time bouncing between majors and paying for useless classes.

Become Familiar with College-Level Learning before Enrollment

Completing a MOOC can help prospective students understand what college classes are like before they pay for them. The tests they take and assignments they complete offer insight into what the next years of college might look like.

Prepare Academically for College

70% of high school seniors accepted to college are unprepared. MOOCs can be designed to help combat this unpreparedness. MOOCs can be created for entry-level math, first-year composition, and pre-calculus.

MOOCs are Open to Everyone

Another advantage of MOOCs is that there are no prerequisites for MOOC learning. Prospective students can sign up for any class no matter their background or age.

Helps Colleges and Scholarship Applications Stand Out

The knowledge gained from MOOCs can also help in department or interest-specific scholarship applications and interviews. Taking these massive open online courses shows initiative and intellectual curiosity.

Free AP Exam Preparation and Courses

Harvard University and MIT's edX MOOC platform offers FREE AP exam preparation and courses. Prospective students can learn confusing material at their own pace. These supplementary courses can help individuals achieve high AP exam scores.

Attachment B

Below you will find examples of how a single system wide Learning Management System (LMS) can benefit student retention, completion, and success.

Organizes Online Learning Content in One Location

Instead of having your online learning content spread out over different hard drives and devices, you can store all of your online learning materials in one location. This reduces the risk of losing important data and makes it easier to create your online learning course.

Provides Unlimited Access to Online Learning Materials

Once you upload your online learning course materials into the LMS, students will have unlimited access to the information they need. Even those who are on the go can login to the online learning platform via smartphones and tablets, so they do not have to wait. This is one of the main reasons why an LMS is essential for students located in different time zones.

Easily Tracks Student Progress and Performance

An LMS allows the ability to track a student's progress and ensures they are meeting performance milestones. For instance, if an online student is not able to successfully complete an online learning scenario, a faculty member can offer them supplemental resources to improve their performance or learning behaviors. The majority of LMSs feature reporting and analytic tools that allow faculty to pinpoint areas of their online learning course that may be lacking, as well as where it excels.

Reduces Learning and Development Costs

An LMS gives faculty the power to completely do away with instructor travel costs, online training site rentals, and printed eLearning materials. Online students can carry out all of their course material online, which means faculty can save a sizable sum on the schools Learning and Development budget. For example, you will not have to worry about printing out 500 manuals, because all the information your students require is right in the LMS.

Keeps Institutions Up to Date with Compliance Regulations

Using a system wide LMS gives institutions the ability to add new compliance standards to online learning courses within a matter of minutes. Faculty and administration can always be aware of the latest compliance rules that they need to be aware of, so that your institution can avoid costly penalties. In addition, you have the ability to ensure that every employee is on the same page when it comes to expectations and policies.

Quickly and Conveniently Expand Online Learning Courses.

If you want to add additional online learning courses in order to update information based on new trends or scientific evidence, you can simply login to the LMS and make the necessary modifications without redoing your entire online learning course.

Attachment C

Below you will find examples of how a single system wide Online Proctoring Service can benefit student retention, completion, and success.

It Instills Greater Exam Integrity

An online proctoring system must authenticate the identity of the student, monitor real-time exam conditions, and lock down the testing computer from performing any task other than taking the examination. Using Lockdown Browser Features, the student's workstation can be locked down, which prevents access and communications to external resources. This lock down process prevents test takers from copying and distributing test content. The use of recorded test session as proof of exam integrity, assures students, parents, and faculty that the awarded college degree holds the expected value. Ultimately, the Alabama Community College System wants faculty to be comfortable promoting online testing, student to feel like they are testing on a level playing field, and those valuing the online degree to be sure that it demonstrates the knowledge and accomplishments of the student.

It is Cost Effective

An online proctoring system must move from a model that is dependent on large numbers of live proctors to an online method that allows a greater number of tests to be monitored by a smaller amount of resources. This process also increases the consistency of the process, thus improving fairness.

It is Convenient

An online proctoring system must be flexible and take into consideration student lifestyle needs. Students take online classes specifically because they are convenient. A testing system that requires them to leave their home defeats that purpose. If no live proctors are required for testing, this allows students to take the exam at any hour without impacting existing resources or requiring additional ones. Also, a system wide online proctoring service can be used for any exam, test, or quiz several times a year.

It is Safe and Secure

An online proctoring system is essential to providing online security for students. Students and institutions must be comfortable with the proctoring platform and the people behind it are professional and responsible. If online proctoring solutions and data collection are not secure, there is a risk the student population will not adopt it, which can lead to increasing institutional operating costs which, in turn, could lead to program failure.

Attachment D

Below you will find examples of how a single system wide Online Tutoring Service can benefit student retention, completion, and success.

24/7 Availability

Learning can happen anytime and anywhere. Students should not have to wait until a scheduled time for problem-solving, rather they can get the solution anytime. At times it becomes a bit difficult for the student to catch up with the private tutor but with online tutoring, each and every student can learn at their own pace.

Personalized Approach

Engaging the students is being made much simpler as students can be quickly assessed and provided with all the materials they need through a learning management system. Individual supplements for learning can be accessed at any time, giving students the wide window for knowledge enhancement while maintaining a weekly or daily class form. Lessons are available from the tutor for the students to review and also to view recorded sessions as many times at a later time. It means that tutors have to rely on merit rather than scarcity, and students do not have to settle for just anything available. The versatile nature of online tutoring permits students to book sessions that match their own busy schedules.

Available for All

Any age group interested in online tutoring can opt for it sitting in the comfort of their home. It multiplies advantages for many students. Students who cannot travel can easily access the tutoring service online without any hindrance. Reporting indicates students feel less threatened to seek help using an electronic system.

Affordable High-Quality Online Services

Highly qualified tutors are available 24/7 for online students. Students can opt for online tutoring services, and not worry about disrupting their current work schedule. Students do not have to make any extra time for visiting tutors. The affordability of online courses is reasonable as well as the time and transportation cost is saved.

Attachment E

Below you will find examples of how Quality Matters (QM) can benefit student retention, completion, and success.

What is Important About the QM?

The QM process is supported by research that establishes the importance of a variety of features in constituting a quality online course and the importance of quality course design as a component of a quality online course. Institutions using QM as an integral part of their online quality process, along with the other critical elements of online course quality, positively impact their faculty, staff, students, and culture to one of collaboration and continuous improvement.

What is Important About QM Implementation?

Implementation of QM tools, resources, and processes can be understood as an institution's step toward excellence beginning with an ad-hoc approach in which individual faculty or course designers use QM resources to improve selected courses. These steps toward excellence continue with systemic institutional change with embedded processes.

Examples of QM Impact

Official QM Course Reviews, both QM and subscriber managed, results in all participants taking the recommendations and experience from the review back to their own online and face-to-face courses and improving them.

- 94% of faculty indicated they either had or planned to make changes in their online courses as a result of their course review experience.
- 81% of the course review team indicated they either had or planned to make changes in their online courses as a result of their course review experience.
- 80% of faculty indicated they either had or planned to make changes in their face-to-face courses.
- 65% of the course review team indicated they either had or planned to make changes in their face-to-face courses.

The learning that takes place in QM Professional Development results in participants taking that knowledge and applying it to key aspects of their own online and face-to-face courses.

Individuals that participate in QM Professional Development made changes in their online, hybrid, and face-to-face courses as a result of their experience, including revising their unit level learning objectives, improving their course alignment, and paying greater attention to their communication with students.

- 94% of individuals that participated in QM Professional Development indicated they made changes to their courses as a result of their QM Professional Development participation.

Consider the Reach of QM Engagement

- 1 Course Review impacts 360 students (***1 course x 4 review-participating instructors x 3 courses x 30 students***)
- 5,000+ QM-certified courses impact 1,800,000 students (***5,000 QM-certified courses x 360 students***)
- 25% of all online students have been impacted by QM (***7.1 million students taking courses online ÷ by 25% = nearly 1.8 million students impacted by QM-certified courses***)