

# NASFAA's "Off The Cuff" Podcast - Episode 180 Transcript

Justin Draeger:

Hey everybody. Welcome to another edition of Off The Cuff. I'm Justin Draeger. I'm joined today by three folks in our profession who are going to be talking to us about this latest round of HEERF funding. I guess we're calling it HEERF Part II on the NASFAA side. Please join me in welcoming our guests. Do you want to introduce yourselves?

Christina Tangalakis:

Yeah, that'd be great. I'll jump in. I'm Christina Tangalakis. I'm the Associate Dean of Financial Aid at Glendale Community College. I am with Glendale Community College in Glendale, California. Because we have a school in Arizona, but I'm coming to you from Southern California today.

Justin Draeger:

With snow?

Christina Tangalakis:

With snow, yes.

Justin Draeger:

Apocalyptic. That's right. Thank you, Christina.

Rachelle Feldman:

Hi, I'm Rachelle Feldman. I'm the Interim VP for Enrollment at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill Public, here in North Carolina, where all it is pouring rain, I personally have yet to see snow this year.

Justin Draeger:

Well, hopefully that'll be a reality for you. So, we're pulling for you. And Jim?

Jim White:

Jim White, Dean of Student Financial Services at Gonzaga University in Spokane, Washington. We're a private university of about 4,500 undergrad, 3,000 grad. And I believe we have a basketball team that's doing pretty well in the country at this point in our history.

Rachelle Feldman:

Don't rub it in.

Justin Draeger:

See if Rachelle has anything to add to that. All right. So Jim, let me start with you. Have you received your funding in G5? And related to that, have you guys completed your annual reporting?

Jim White:

We have received the funding in G5. We haven't drawn it down. We just noticed that it's there. And we did complete the report. The interesting thing about that report was, the hardest piece of information for me to get was the last question on it that asked us to tell FTEs over what seemed like four very or five different random dates, but got that in and submit it on Friday.

Justin Draeger:

Okay. But you had your funding before the report was done and then it sounds.

Jim White:

Yeah. We had the funding before the report was done.

Justin Draeger:

And Rachelle and Christina, same thing?

Rachelle Feldman:

Yeah. We're still working on our report and we saw the funding, I think last Sunday.

Justin Draeger:

Okay.

Christina Tangalakis:

Yeah. I checked in with leadership this weekend and reporting is not done to the best of our knowledge and nothing to draw down yet. But we did receive our notification on the 15th.

Justin Draeger:

Okay. That's helpful. I think when we had talked to the Department of Education officials in the Trump administration, they had said sometimes there's a tie between funding and when your annual report would be done. That's not unheard of with the federal government, especially on grant funding. But it doesn't appear that there's any rhyme or reason to this people were clearly getting their funding before they had finished their annual reports.

Justin Draeger:

So, since you all are sort of on this track and you're wrapping up or have wrapped up your annual reports, I assume now you're looking at your HEERF II funding. Before we get to that, though. I'm curious, do you all have remaining funding from the previous, the spring rounds? Do you have any funds left from that, they haven't disbursed yet? If so, how much and any idea how you'll work that into this next round of funding? Are you planning to build it all in? Keep it separate? I don't mean so much accounting, but in terms of allocating. Christina, you want to start?

Christina Tangalakis:

So, are you talking specifically the student allocation?

Justin Draeger:

Yeah. The students' allocation.

Christina Tangalakis:

I can speak to that more effectively. What we did early on is, we did a 70-30 split. So, the financial aid office took the first 70% and disbursed a flat rate and with experience being the driver there, so we got that out quickly with the Title IV eligibility and then other remaining 30%, we withheld to do more of a need based application procedure. And we still have some of those funds left. And then that was spearheaded by our basic needs department. So, it's been a joint effort. So, 70% is completely expended and there's a portion of the 30% remaining. But I think that my suspicion is that HEERF II will fold in and expand that basic needs program.

Justin Draeger:

Okay.

Christina Tangalakis:

To do that, I think the leadership likes being sensitive to individual needs and with respect to their expenses versus the flat rate to get it out the door. So, I would expect to see that.

Justin Draeger:

How about you Jim? Did you have any money left over and how are you planning on folding that in or not, to your HEERF II funding?

Jim White:

We don't have any money left over. It was all spent by the really middle of May, beginning of June at the very latest. So, we're starting the program with a clean slate. And we're going to probably follow a similar approach as we did with the first round, where we created a Google doc online, where students applied. They completed a very simple application and that's how we allocated it. And we did some direct communication to groups of students we thought would have a particular need and then advertise it through just our daily electronic newsletter that goes to all students. And the money went pretty fast.

Justin Draeger:

How about you, Rachelle?

Rachelle Feldman:

Yeah, we have completely spent all the student portion of the money, but actually our campus, allocated about \$2.5 million of our institutional portion to students and we are quite done with that. We have a couple \$100,000 left, so we'll probably roll that in with our plans for the HEERF II funds in the hope that the regulations will be more expansive and we'll have a little more freedom. We also did a combination of applications from students for individual needs. And then in our fall term, actually we did what I'll call block grants based on different student eligibility criteria, targeting the median students without an application. We'll probably do something similar.

Justin Draeger:

So, I don't want any of our listeners to hold you in some contractual sense to what we're going to talk about here, to what you're going to do with HEERF II. Because to some extent, I imagine you're all still

trying to figure it out and maybe there's additional guidance that would be coming from a new administration.

Justin Draeger:

That said, Jim, you said you probably will follow the same allocation method you did with the first round of funding. So, can you walk us through sort of briefly? I know you said you put out application for students. Do you suspect you'll use the same application? Because of the expanded student eligibility, do you think you'll mix it up a little bit? How do you think you might proceed with the second round of funding?

Jim White:

Well, we're going to have a conversation with leadership in about two weeks to nail everything down. So, I'm just going with what we did the first time is some basic parameters. We're going to have to adjust the form. And I'll talk about that in a minute. We had a very simple form. First round was speaking very specific to things we could fund and things we couldn't fund. So, we were very clear about what the purpose of the money was and which of those costs or those expenses do they need help with. And then we tried to honor it and because we have a pretty good institutional aid budget and we have some money that was donated to help students, we treated all the money together. And when students were not eligible or we worried, the eligibility criteria seemed to change hourly first round.

Jim White:

So, we basically said, "if there's a hint of worry that the student might not be eligible, we'll use institutional funds to help them out. If they clearly have filed a FAFSA set anytime with Gonzaga and we know that they met all the student eligibility requirements, we'll use the federal funds." And then, we serve basically every student that asks because we assume that their needs were all legitimate. One thing this pandemic has shown us is just about everybody's hurting in some way. Some are hurting more financially than others. We did wind up looking at need a little bit but again, we didn't really deny anyone who asked for money. We found it from some other place if we had to.

Jim White:

So, I'm thinking we're going to do the very same thing, kind of similar, in terms of an application. We're going to amend it because now this time, we're allowed to keep the money onto a student's accounts, if they give us written authorization to do so. And so, I think we're going to build that into the form and that would be the main difference. But we'll probably go in with a similar approach of, "Let's use all of our institutional resources as well as this money and just serve the needs of whatever student declares through the process."

Justin Draeger:

Did you give every student the same amount Jim or did the amount differ based on how they selected or indicated their need?

Jim White:

We told them that there was a maximum of 1,500 because we were trying to spread the money out as far as we could and we honored their needs. And we did have some students only ask for 200 or 300. Some students asked for 1,500 and some were in the middle. On average, I think if you do a strict average, it was like 1,499 on average, is what students got. And we'll probably have another limit. We

have about 900 Pell recipients and we were trying to basically serve about the same size as our Pell Grant population without being very specific to the Pell Grant population.

Justin Draeger:

Christina, you said that in your first round of funding, you sent out, I think did you say a straight amount to students? Did you just use the FAFSA as your sort of entry point? Do you envision doing something different or are you guys considering doing something differently this time around?

Christina Tangalakis:

I think, yes. To answer the last question first, we are considering doing something differently. But I need to preface that by saying we still don't have a timeframe here established, if I'm working with current information. So, going back to HEERF I, we did use the FAFSA-based Title IV criteria for the 70%. And I circulated three funding models, a couple of variable models on a flat rate model because we have a shared governance type situation on my campus. So, we needed feedback from our entire campus community and the decision was made that the flat rate was going to be the most popular option.

Christina Tangalakis:

So, we funded about 5,800 students with \$625. It was a passive process. Students did not need to reach out to us. We felt like we would be disadvantaging those who were just unaware of the money, but may have need. And we have a large immigrant population. And so, we were just concerned about barriers to getting the word out and creating another step. So, what we did was we created an acknowledgement through our ERP, where the student could simply acknowledge they had expenses related to campus closure, I believe was the phrase or something, to click through and acknowledge that they were self-certifying. And then that released the aid to their account, first time ever, we had to bypass student accounts. So, that was of course, an interesting step. That's how we did the first 70%. Again, that the 2nd HEERF, the campus leadership feels like, similar to what Jim mentioned that sensitivity to a student's specific situation is the way they want to move.

Christina Tangalakis:

However, when you compare the two, we were able to reach out. It's a breadth or depth kind of question. We reached 5,800 students kind of in the blink of an eye and were able to have impact versus just about 1,200 or so that we've been able to do with the remaining 30%, because of the time commitment to assessing and reading applications, et cetera. So, once we know the timeframe, we might be doing a little bit of both, is what I'm saying, because you've got conflicting ethics there. Do you want to get it out the door? Or do you want to be spot on accurate with your dollar amount?

Justin Draeger:

Right. And as long as leadership understands the tradeoff there, then they're in a position where they can decide or divvy up the funds as you suggested. Like the bulk of the funding is going to go out fast or some portion, and then another portion will be held back to go a little bit deeper.

Justin Draeger:

How about you Rachelle? Compared to the first round of funding, how are you guys looking at perhaps the second one? Some of the decision points?

Rachelle Feldman:

Yeah. Well, first I'd really like to speak to what Christina said about that being the first time they bypassed students accounts. I actually think a lot of the funds we gave students that had to refund directly, it actually confused them. So, if you can imagine that the government gave you money for your light bill, but instead of giving it to you, they gave it to the electric company, who then had to give it to you to pay your bill. That's how students felt. Like, "Why didn't you just net it out? Why are you sending me a bill now?"

Justin Draeger:

Because they're saying, "I have a balance at the school," and you're saying, "Hey, by the way you have a balance of the school," and they're saying, "Right, keep the money." And you're saying, "We can't."

Rachelle Feldman:

We can't. Right. So, I think that's a good development, that was student permission. I think that will be actually easier for students and not bad behavior on the part of schools or anything like that. So, it's interesting because like Jim, we're very blessed with a substantial institutional aid budget and some donors and by the time the first CARES Act passed, we had raised nearly \$1 million from private donors for our emergency aid. So, we were already well on our way with reading applications for students that needed to move home. We closed the campus. There were some really specific things that students needed money for. So, I felt like we had some very straightforward ways, although time consuming to award the funds. Basically, did you have to need transportation money home? Did you have to suddenly rent an apartment? Do you have to put your things in storage?

Rachelle Feldman:

We were getting people back from study abroad on the only plane tickets they could find or back to somewhere abroad. So, we were able to sort of mesh the CARES money with the private money. And like Jim said, depending on the student eligibility, we would assign which one, which was actually interesting. Because I'm not sure students understood that we were combining the money and they thought like, "Where's my CARES money?", "Do you care what flavor it is? Here's your money."

Rachelle Feldman:

And then use the funds really to help students make up lost credit hours during summer. And we use them like I said, to direct to the neediest students come the fall term. So, we actually saved quite a bit of our money for the fall term, because we had already met what we thought were the basic needs of spring and our spring term was almost over. So, we didn't really want to just pour money out there that students wouldn't still have, when they came back in the fall.

Rachelle Feldman:

And for fall again, we were that school that tried to go in person and pivoted to going back home very quickly, so then we again had money for people to go back home and an internet supplement to help people who weren't used to remote work or live in an internet desert, which exists in North Carolina, probably many other states as well. It's a little less straightforward now I think. Like what are the expenses? We know they're there. We know people are needy and I know Justin, you and I have discussed my frustration that we can't just look at family income loss and say, "Oh, this student has more need, and therefore we'll give them this money." Which would be, I think very useful for the family.

Rachelle Feldman:

So, I think we're going to wait a little bit, sort of look at what new guidance might come out. Look at the timeframe because we do have a year from the award letter to spend and decide if we want to spread the funds over a longer timeframe or really allocate them all in the spring. We have a lot to discuss on our campus. We also have to discuss the balance between undergraduate students and graduate students. And as Christina mentioned, there are students with basic need issues all the time. COVID has made them more worse, what can we do in that area?

Justin Draeger:

Well, let me pick up for just a second on something you mentioned there Rachelle, which is the graduate students. So, if you're going to be looking at funding graduate students, with the idea that we're prioritizing need here, how are you going to differentiate need for... If you have a traditional graduate student who maybe has only been working a year or two. Whose income is like basically zero, whose EFC is probably zero. You have a huge cluster of EFCs that are zero. How would you differentiate need there without just assuming they all have a need and then giving them some straight grant amount?

Rachelle Feldman:

What a wonderful question, Justin.

Justin Draeger:

What's the answer? Do you have the answer?

Rachelle Feldman:

I think that probably for graduate students, we will stick to having an application that has them describe the expenses that they're facing or the needs that they have, rather than looking. I mean, an EFC for a graduate student rarely tells us anything.

Justin Draeger:

Right. Yeah. Jim, how about you something similar? Are you guys... Well, first of all, are you looking at graduate students? And if so, how are you going to tackle that cluster of need?

Jim White:

I think the graduate students that we served the first round, we served them mostly with institutional funds, just because it was cleaner and easier to do. And we didn't have a huge number of them request it, because part of the first group that was excluded were online students. And we have a lot online programs that are solely graduate. The second time around, I'm not sure about the need. That's one of our conversations we're going to have to think about.

Jim White:

We know that some of our graduate programs like our nursing programs that are online, those students were really severely impacted in their clinical placements. And so, their education was disrupted more so than other graduate students. So, kind of thinking that through and we talked a little bit this morning about maybe giving some priority to some of those students, but again, not really sure. And the need part, you and Rachelle are correct. Very hard to figure out for grad students. So, I'm assuming we're going to rely on an application.

Justin Draeger:

It's interesting. What I'm hearing from you are three very completely valid ways of thinking about this fund. So Christina, you're talking about taking your leadership sort of this option of trade-off between getting funds out the door quickly versus assessing need and being more targeted.

Justin Draeger:

Rachelle, it sounds like you're leaning towards, "We're going to hold back for just a little bit and really identify areas of need."

Justin Draeger:

Jim, you sound like sort of with your first round, you really are going to try to move and get money out the door.

Justin Draeger:

There's one big question that I think different from the first time around, which is the department said they're not going to apply Section 44 student eligibility requirements to these funds. And Christina, I wonder, how are you all thinking about citizenship still applies, but you don't need to check everything else related to select the service or whether they're in default.

Justin Draeger:

So, I wonder what are you guys thinking about citizenship requirements? Are you thinking about, again, sticking to the FAFSA? Are you thinking about collecting it from students? And one other question for you all, which again, I don't want to put you on the spot, but I sort of remember Jeff Baker always saying, "The school doesn't know what it doesn't know." Sort of thing, and there's a risk in there but I'm curious what you all are thinking. Let's start with you, Christina.

Christina Tangelakis:

Not only do we have a diverse population, but we also have a very active state legislature which to demonstrate to the listeners, we successfully have a preliminary injunction, the California Community Colleges, 116 campuses which is, I believe if I'm not mistaken, the largest system in the country. But we did get some reprieve from Title IV eligibility, 44.

Christina Tangelakis:

So, I should go back to my original statement, is that original us 70%, we did follow to the letter, the written directions and the guidance on CARES HEERF I. And then the 30%, which was post injunction, which I believe came out in June from our chancellor. That we were free to relieve ourselves from those restrictions, then we were able to open up to all students.

Christina Tangelakis:

So, what that did, not only to students who we automatically think about with Title IV, which is the DACA students who clearly get excluded. And of course we have the largest population of DACA students in the country in California, I believe over 200,000. So, we think about those, but we'll also, in our particular situation, we're also looking at non-credit students who come in and remain English languages immigrants.

Christina Tangalakis:

So they go straight into... And we have a lot, as you may know, I think Glendale Is probably a known... Obviously, locally as a large Armenian community, but perhaps even your listeners around the country know that. So, we have a lot of immigrants coming in and learning the English language and struggling to get fluent so that they can partake in higher education at a for credit basis. So, we're able to serve the non-credit community now because of this relief. And we're also able to serve the international community with this relief. So, we feel pretty, I guess free is the word, to serve our population as we see fit.

Justin Draeger:

Yeah. You're in a unique situation. So for those who you're referring to the injunction, for those who don't know, the community college system actually filed a lawsuit against the Department of Education on their student eligibility requirements. Judge cited in your favor. The injunction didn't apply to everybody nationwide, but it did apply to your schools. So, you are able to ignore some of the alleged student eligibility requirements that the department retroactively put on these funds. And all of that is to say, you have leadership that will stand behind you as you try to meet the needs of all your students with these funds.

Christina Tangalakis:

Yeah. I mean, the chancellor's office is very pro-student and of course we have, of course, a very diverse population and the leadership is very supportive of all students, irrespective of their citizenship. So, we have support up and down the leadership pipeline. But it's interesting to be a system within the state who has this kind of permission now, whereas the UCs in the Cal State don't, and of course the privates. So, we're in a very interesting, but also kind of liberated position. So, it's not a bad place to be helpful.

Justin Draeger:

Yeah. Well, no, it's not. And we fully support you and your system for fighting for all your students. This might not be a very representative sample because Jim, now I'm thinking about the State of Washington. You guys also, the state filed a suit against the department. And you and the entire state received a reprieve as well. So, what does that mean for you all in terms of using the FAFSA or not using the FAFSA for citizenship this time around?

Jim White:

Well, I think to... Again, the first time around, so much of that was influx. As we were spending the money. So we tended to be pretty conservative, we tended to use institutional resources for DACA students, as well as internationals. And this time around, we'll just be freer. Will be a little bit less limited in terms of using institutional resources. We'll have them if we need them, but we'll spend the federal money first and rely on the institutional resources for kind of those cases that just don't seem to fit the right. That just doesn't fit in this case. And they always come up. There's always an ask that just is coloring outside the lines a little bit. So we'll want to make sure we have some money for those. But I'm glad that the restrictions are less this time around as long as they don't change between now and when we start spending the money.

Justin Draeger:

Rachelle. And as a person who is in a state that is not protected by a court order, what are you guys doing about citizenship this time round?

Rachelle Feldman:

Yeah, I'm feeling a little jealous of my West Coast friends. Although I think if I were still at a UC school, I'd be very resentful of the community. So, the first time around we were very strict about using the FAFSA and only students who had filed the FAFSA to get any of the money. I think that this is part of my wait and see schema. So, I'm hoping that with the new administration that seems a little more sympathetic, at least to our dreamers, that we might get some different guidance. And I hope it does change, if it gets more liberal, in terms of who we can give it to because I think sometimes those are the students with the most need and the fewest other resources to help them.

Rachelle Feldman:

But assuming the guidance doesn't just change and allow us to become broader in our allocation, I think we will take the citizenship that they report to us through our admission system and through our Residency Determination System because we're a public institution. We have to determine in and out-of-state residency on every student. And I don't feel the need to ask them for more documentation than that. They haven't filed a FAFSA.

Justin Draeger:

Yeah. And if you know through your admission system that they are an international student, then again, you would already have that information. You don't need to burden them with an additional question.

Rachelle Feldman:

They don't need to prove it again. Right.

Justin Draeger:

Okay.

Christina Tangalakis:

Yeah. I'd love to have a brief chat or actually what I really want to do is listen to my colleagues here about how they're operationalizing exceptional need. Because again, in California, with our generous Cal Grant Program, oftentimes our neediest students are very well-funded. So, how are we looking at need? Are we looking at a matrix between EFC and unmet need? Or are we only going with EFC because we might be over not that there's too much aid, but we might be missing out that horseshoe shape in the middle that I call it, that always gets overlooked. Because they're working class middle class.

Justin Draeger:

Yep. Rachelle, do you want to respond to that? I think we're talking, Christina just said that working class, middle income folks who sometimes aren't getting maxed out on other grants, how are you all stacking your relative need?

Rachelle Feldman:

Yeah, I think that's a great question. And we're sort of coming at it at Carolina from a little different angle. We are lucky enough to have the institutional funds to meet need in every student package. Meet demonstrated need for those who file a FAFSA. But that means, to some degree, our out-of-state

students and our middle income students are a little more out-of-pocket. They might have a higher loan expectation.

Rachelle Feldman:

So the first round, we really targeted the students in our Carolina Covenant Program, which is our lowest income students have to come from below 200% of the poverty line. Assuming they had additional other expenses, family income losses, we know from the data coming out of the federal reserve that the lowest income families were hit hardest by the pandemic. It felt like a good assumption.

Rachelle Feldman:

And then, we did a little more for students that didn't meet that criteria, but were Pell Grant eligible, and a little more for other students that had need. But I think that the ones that we did from application really got more to the expenses that were facing students not in those categories. And sometimes they were higher expenses or they didn't have other funding for it. But I don't know that there's a magic bullet. If you don't have a bunch of students with unmet need to find who really truly is facing the highest need in terms of not just thinking about the financial aid application and the EFC.

Justin Draeger:

This is a question. Could you use loan debt that they're taking as one of the criteria in terms of ranking relative need?

Christina Tangalakis:

Yeah. It's interesting that you say that. One of the approaches we took during this year, because all our students are for fall. All our students were living mostly at home because were all remote. Because we were saving institutional funds by not paying for housing. We actually converted all the loans that we gave students from institutional funds into grants. And then we started looking at loan debt. So, I think looking at loan debt longer term would be an innovative way to do it. Again, you have to tie that sort of to expenses somehow for this whole concept to work.

Justin Draeger:

Yep. So Jim, how about you, this is sort of the EFC versus how they're packaged, how much aid they're actually packaged with?

Jim White:

Yeah. I mean, we're a high cost school, so we have a lot of students have a lot of need here. And we did look at things like plus loan borrowing. How many families had burdened by what we would consider to be very high plus loans. The other thing for us where this kind of this HEERF funding bisected kind of our special conditions appeal process, because we have a lot of families that in asking for this money, really triggered that there was a loss of wage or a loss of income. Particularly in areas where our population students for Hawaii, the tourist industry in Hawaii has been decimated. So many people are out of work. So, we kind of tried to watch for those clues, so we can also bring them into kind of the special conditions appeal process, which in some cases may get them some Pell Grant funding or some subsidized loan funding and some additional institutional funding.

Jim White:

I also would say wages. We saw a lot of students who work really hard to pay for school while they're enrolled in school. And for our federal work study students, we were able to continue them working because of the provisions that were granted in emergency relief, disaster relief. And our state adopted the same program. We have a very large state work study program in Washington and fortunately they did similar. So, our students who had been awarded and started working in the program could continue to work. But we have this population of students who were working in part-time jobs, who suddenly lost their jobs. Many of them on campus because those campus departments were shut down and didn't need the labor.

Jim White:

So, we also kind of targeted those students as being needy because their whole funding strategy was disrupted. And some of them had rent that they needed to pay off while they were online now in school, and others just needed to for basic assistance. So, we kind of looked at that population as well. And for a while, we talked about doing block grants for that population of part-time workers, but we backed off of that and just went to our application and looked again for those populations to direct target communications to say, "Hey, money's available, if you're hurting. This is what you could do."

Justin Draeger:

I really liked the idea that you've all raised. Christina, you at the outset here about trying to create a holistic picture for some of our students. So, even if you do a block grant to low EFCs out of the gate, maybe there's this other cohort of students that you're looking at in a more of a holistic approach based on how much loan debt they're taking on or their work level, or if they needed a special appeal, or they ended up in a professional judgment queue. There might be different ways to slice and dice this.

Justin Draeger:

Before we wrap up and we could probably continue talking about this all day but I know we all have other work we need to do, like actually disbursing and allocating these funds. I wonder if you could talk about lessons learned. What did you learn from HEERF I that you hope to apply to HEERF II. Rachelle, let's start with you. Anything stand out?

Rachelle Feldman:

Well, I think I'm trying to apply the main thing I learned, which is wait a little bit for guidance, in case it changes every hour. I also think we learned that we have to strike the balance between making it simple to administer for ourselves, so that we can get money out efficiently to students, and targeting the students we feel really need the funds. And that's difficult to do, but I think we learned some things about process that will help us really be more strategic and more targeted without killing our staff in the coming year.

Justin Draeger:

Thank you. How about you, Christina?

Christina Tangalakis:

I agree. I think right now there's a feeling of a level of expertise that we have that we didn't. And also a level of comfort and not that there isn't urgency surrounding disbursing emergency funds. Not knowing how things would unfold with HEERF I in the spring of 20 created, I don't know how else to say it, just a sick feeling in my stomach about, "Can we do this?" Because we were all in uncharted territory and now

we're navigating through the same waters again, essentially. So, there's a little more peace and knowing, I guess the word is confidence. The confidence now we can do it. The expertise exists on campus. Leadership is well-oiled and ready to deliver their thoughts to us. We'll be ready to execute when they're ready to pull the trigger.

Justin Draeger:

Yeah, I like that. Not a lot of offices operate with this extra slack to take on an entirely new program in a given year. So now that we've done that once, the idea is we at least have an infrastructure in place. People sort of know their steps and we might change the moves a little bit but you've got a process. I liked the confidence one. Jim, how about you?

Christina Tangalakis:

As we wound down the first round of expenditures, it seemed like we were getting a rash of students who had heard from a friend that the money was available and so they wanted their share. So, I kind of want to think about a better way to be more proactive and we tried to do that on the application to say, "Limited amount of money available. Here's the parameters." I just want to be more, I guess, direct with students in that case to make sure that, "Hey, we respect that they have concerns and may have needs, but here's what the purpose is. Articulate what your need is and we'll figure out the best way to help you with that." But trying to give them that information more upfront to try to discourage the, "Oh, my friend told me that they're giving out money and I want my place in line."

Justin Draeger:

I definitely liked the proactive communications. All right. Let me wrap up by asking one final question here. We have a new administration. The inauguration was just last week. We have a secretary of education that'll be going before the Senate for confirmation. If you were to give one piece of advice to the new department of education secretary. What would that be about these funds? Jim, let's start with you.

Jim White:

Well, there's a lot of talk in the media about the student loan crisis and I would just say, I think some scrutiny needs to be given that the reason we had such a student loan crisis is because there's not enough grant funds available to begin with. And certainly, there's a lot of students who would not normally get grant funds who got it through these two programs for one and two. It really shows that the need is out there. And so, more research is needed, but breaking away to avoid future student loan crisis would be more grants upfront.

Justin Draeger:

Thank you, Jim. How about you, Christina?

Christina Tangalakis:

Well, I would near what my president said when I touched base with him on this issue before we started taping is that, these HEERF funds between round one and round two, were absolutely critical to the ongoing operations of our district. We're a single school district. And without these funds, we would have had to considerably close critical parts of our operations. So, they've been operation-saving and kept students in schools. So, I would say it has our full support. If he's ever in doubt, he can come talk to us.

Justin Draeger:

And you Rachelle, thank you.

Rachelle Feldman:

Well, I can't help but endorse Jim's thoughts about additional grant funds and how much they're needed. I think I would say thank you to Congress and the department for helping us through this crisis, but realize the needs are going to be longer term than just a year or two. There's a long-term economic impact and students and families need help. And we need people to be as educated as they can be, to move our country forward. So, really be thinking about longer term support for students in the form of grants, rather than maybe thinking about a one-time loan forgiveness for existing borrowers. And the other thing I would say is, the more flexibility you can give schools and students with what how to do what's best for their own population, the more effective the funds will be.

Justin Draeger:

Fantastic. I want to thank all three of you for taking time out of your very busy schedules while you're figuring all of this out, and making proposals on campus about how to help your students to show up and speak to what you're thinking about with HEERF II funds. For those who are interested, we are going to put Jim, Rachelle and Christina's information in the show notes. They have graciously said that we could put their emails in there so people can email them. Although I'm not going to commit any three of you to answering all of the emails that you're going to get.

Christina Tangalakis:

I can forward them to you Justin I have your email.

Justin Draeger:

Okay. Phone me right back to NASFAA. All right. Well, thank you all three of you for what you're doing. We'll try to stay in touch as the week's go forward. To all of our listeners out there, please continue to send in your comments and your questions. Check out NASFAA's resource page, [nasfaa.org/ COVID-19](https://nasfaa.org/COVID-19). We're updating still HEERF I and now HEERF II Q&As on NASFAA's page and we will talk to you again soon.