

APPROVED

SEPTEMBER 15, 2020

Item #E-2
September 15, 2020

**GOVERNOR'S EMERGENCY EDUCATION RELIEF FUND GRANT PROGRAM
FISCAL YEAR 2021 AWARDS**

Submitted for: Action.

Summary: This item requests approval for the Executive Director to determine grant awards as part of the Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) Fund. The goal of this grant initiative is to overcome barriers created by the COVID-19 pandemic related to the recruitment and ongoing enrollment of postsecondary students most impacted by the pandemic, including underrepresented, first-generation, rural, and Pell-eligible students. The GEER Fund Grant is supported by \$3 million in federal funds as authorized by Section 18002 of Division B of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), Public Law No. 116-136 (March 27, 2020).

Action Requested: That the Illinois Board of Higher Education authorizes the Executive Director to determine and allocate grant awards up to \$500,000 to eligible institutions as part of the Governor's Emergency Education Relief Fund grant program.



GOVERNOR'S EMERGENCY EDUCATION RELIEF FUND GRANT PROGRAM FISCAL YEAR 2021 AWARDS

The Governor's Emergency Education Relief (GEER) Fund is a component of the federal CARES Act designed to provide support to education entities, including institutions of higher education, during the COVID-19 pandemic. The State of Illinois was awarded \$108 million in GEER funds. The Office of the Governor allocated \$48 million of these monies to higher education, including \$3 million for a competitive grant program.

The purpose of the GEER Fund grant program is to provide financial assistance to institutions of higher education in recruiting and retaining postsecondary students who are most at risk of not continuing their college education, including students of color, first-generation, rural, and Pell-eligible students. Participation in the GEER Fund grant program is open to public and independent, non-profit Illinois institutions of higher education that hold accreditation through the Higher Learning Commission.

The Illinois Board of Higher Education released the request for proposals on July 21, 2020 with an application deadline of August 20, 2020. Applicants for the GEER Fund grant program were required to submit proposals describing how they would use the funds to mitigate barriers to initial or ongoing enrollment of the identified student populations, provide evidence of the efficacy of these plans, and their approaches to monitor outcomes. Examples include closing technology gaps, implementing targeted academic or other support services, and providing assistance with key needs such as child care and transportation. Applicants for GEER Fund grant monies could request up to \$500,000 with the provision that all requests be used for direct services and that no indirect costs be charged to the grant. The grant period will end September 30, 2021.

Recommendation

The staff recommends the adoption of the following resolution:

The Illinois Board of Higher Education hereby authorizes the Executive Director to allocate \$3,000,000 in Governor's Emergency Education Relief grant funding in Fiscal Year 2021 to eligible institutions of higher education with institutional awards of up to \$500,000. The Board authorizes the Executive Director to:

- 1) *Determine eligibility of postsecondary institutions, evaluate and rank application proposals, and select recipient institutions pursuant to Section 18002 of Division B of the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES Act), Public Law No. 116-136 (March 27, 2020);*
- 2) *Distribute awards to institutions of higher education; and*
- 3) *Provide the Board with the list of institutions selected for funding at the next Board meeting.*