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Cerritos College Forgives \$1.3M in Unpaid Fees to Help Students Stay in School

HEERF funds support students continue education

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NORWALK, Calif. – January 6, 2022 – Community college students are among the most severely affected by financial hardships exasperated by COVID-19. Cerritos College distributed **\$1.3 million** from the [Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund \(HEERF\)](#) to forgive **2,400 unpaid student accounts** from summer 2020 through fall 2021. The College forgave past-due delinquencies to allow students to enroll in classes without penalty, giving them a chance to stay in school. The campus dismissed unpaid fees related to enrollment, class materials, student representation, and health services for resident, non-resident, and international students.

"We understand the negative impacts the pandemic has had on our students. Over the last two years, students had to abruptly transition from taking classes in person to going online. At the same time, many students lost their jobs and were unable to pay for food, housing, health care, and college expenses," said Yvette Tafoya, dean of enrollment services at Cerritos College. "By forgiving delinquent accounts, we put the needs of our students first and eliminated a major financial barrier. We want students to complete the classes they need to graduate or transfer without delaying their progress. Aside from dismissing account balances, our Student Services team also implemented several programs to help students succeed, including [Falcons Nest Basic Needs](#), which provides hygiene and food support and [The Village](#) for students facing homelessness, among others."

The [American Rescue Plan of 2021](#) allows institutional HEERF funds to be utilized to reengage students by discharging the complete balance of a student's institutional debt as lost revenue and reimburse themselves through the HEERF institutional grant.

About Cerritos College: Cerritos College serves as a comprehensive community college for southeastern Los Angeles County. Communities within the college's district include Artesia, Bellflower, Cerritos, Downey, Hawaiian Gardens, La Mirada, Norwalk, and portions of Bell Gardens, Lakewood, Long Beach, Santa Fe Springs, and South Gate. Cerritos College offers degrees and certificates in more than 180 areas of study in nine divisions. Annually, more than 1,200 students successfully complete their course of studies. Enrollment currently averages 21,000 students. Visit Cerritos College online at <http://www.cerritos.edu/>.

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