

WWU creates Student Emergency Fund in response to COVID-19

Students affected by the pandemic can receive financial relief

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An interactive map of where donations to the relief fund are from. Washington has contributed the most donations, with 229 donors. // Visual by Travis Lane

By [Emily Bishop](#)

Western students experiencing financial hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic can receive financial support from the Student Emergency Fund, a donation-based fund.

The emergency fund is available to students who are enrolled for spring quarter. Eligible expenses are not limited to specific categories and include groceries, rent, childcare, unforeseen medical or travel costs, or electronics.

“I had to get a new laptop because I’m an environmental science major and all my classes are labs,” said Nathalie Wagler, a second-year student at Western who applied for the fund. “The laptop that I had before wasn’t capable of running any programs that I need for my classes. So, I got one that now is capable of doing so.”

According to the application, the average amount awarded is \$500, but students may receive a larger amount depending on their financial need.

“It was really, really easy. I think that everybody should apply if there’s something that they think could be covered,” Wagler said.

Students can expect to hear a response about a week after they submit their applications, which are due by May 29, as stated on the application.

“We wanted to get that in place so that students could get funding before the quarter ended,” Dina Murphy, assistant director of financial aid, said. “We’re going to reassess. We’re going to see how much funding is available as we get to the end of the quarter.”

During the school year, Western offers several scholarships and grants for those experiencing financial hardship. According to Angie Vandenhaak, director of development for annual giving and alumni membership, when the situation surrounding COVID-19 became more serious, discussions involving an additional donation-based fund for affected students began.

“We started talking about it around the same time that campus was talking about the decision to close and move to a remote working and learning environment,” Vandenhaak said.

The goal of the Emergency Fund is to meet the immediate needs of students during the COVID-19 pandemic, but Vandenhaak hopes the fund will continue to be available beyond this time.

“There’s always emergent needs of students. Things that are emergencies in someone’s life that may not be caused by a pandemic,” Vandenhaak said. “It’s still really important to help students meet those needs.”

There is no financial goal for the fund, which has raised more than \$34,000 in its first month.

“The generosity has been really heartening,” Vandenhaak said. “Our students’ resiliency has been really heartening.”

Donations are open to the public and can be made on the [Viking Funder website](#).

In order to apply, students must fill out the [Student Emergency Fund application](#).