

Suffolk County Community College

College Brief

No. 114 April 30, 2020

TO: The College Community

FROM: Dr. Christopher Adams
 Vice President for Student Affairs

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 Vice President for Academic Affairs

SUBJECT: Assistance to Students for the Spring 2020 Semester:
 Addressing Student Financial Aid Concerns

We have now completed four weeks of online and remote instruction. Nearly 20,000 students and over 1,200 faculty have made this transition. This has not been easy! Outreach by phone to every one of our students continues and students who needed help with technology have received loaned laptops from the College. Our campus food pantries are still open for students needing food. The College Foundation continues to provide emergency financial support to students and College Briefs have been issued sharing details on all of these efforts.

Despite the challenges that we continue to address to the best of our ability, current conditions are causing anxiety in an atmosphere of great uncertainty. We have heard from some of our students who are expressing an anxiety borne of social concern, health issues, family struggles, or unemployment. So how are we addressing that anxiety and aiding our students?

With the support of the federal government, we are:

1. Using the broad approval the U.S. Department of Education has given us to distribute SEOG funds. We can now award SEOG to any Title IV aid-eligible student with any level of financial need.
2. Providing emergency student grant aid through the federal CARES Act. We have qualified to receive over \$6 million dollars to assist students affected by COVID-19. More information on this important initiative is forthcoming within the next few days.
3. Relaxing existing Return to Title IV (R2T4) calculations required for federal aid recipients who withdraw from all courses in a given term. If a student identifies as affected by COVID-19, we are performing the calculation, but we are not required to return funds to the government. Suffolk's response has been to reach out to all Title IV aid recipients who withdrew on or after March 26, 2020—the start of the second week of spring break—to question whether they identified their withdrawal as COVID-19 related. We have not returned funds in the name of those who have responded affirmatively, and impacted students will not be required to repay this expense.

4. Continuing to pay Spring 2020 federal work study students who were unable to complete their job duties during the College's face-to-face shutdown.
5. Awaiting guidance on how Title IV aid recipients affected by COVID-19 will be treated in the satisfactory academic progress (SAP) calculation. While awaiting further clarification, the initial guidance is that SUNY Suffolk will not have to include the course attempts this semester in satisfactory academic progress calculations for financial aid for affected students.

With the support of New York State, we are:

1. Implementing the State guidance that students affected by COVID-19, who are unable to complete courses for the term or who earn fewer credits than required by award programs, will be held harmless in both satisfactory academic progress (SAP) calculations and program renewal. However, the guidance mandates that the student was on-track to meet the minimum requirements.
2. Implementing a system that will eliminate the Spring 2020 term for SAP purposes for students identified as affected by COVID-19. Suffolk County Community College plans to delay running State SAP until the necessary State programming has been delivered and affected students have the opportunity to self-identify.

For further information on financial aid issues, please e-mail our financial aid officers:

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