

Laredo College, Congressman Cuellar announce over \$73M in emergency aid and other federal funds

Laredo College and Congressman Henry Cuellar announced \$73,134,236 in federal funding during a joint press conference on Sept. 9.

Through the Higher Education Emergency Relief Fund (HEERF), LC has received \$53,293,581 in allocations. Conversely, the college has also been allocated \$19,840,655 in other federal funding, including multi-year grants.

These funds include emergency aid for students, COVID-19 PPE and mitigation measures, upgrades to technology, lab equipment, audiovisual equipment and additional instructors. The funding also includes support for academic tutoring, federal work-study programs, STEM education, vocational/workforce training and all of the quality educational programs offered at Laredo College.

"The COVID-19 pandemic has greatly impacted Laredo College and the surrounding community. These federal funds will help to address the financial fallout from the pandemic and help the college move forward in an economically efficient manner," said Congressman Cuellar. "Nearly 20,000 students have already received direct aid from these federal grants—money that helps students with tuition, personal computer equipment, and necessary COVID-19 items like PPE and masks. As a senior member of the Appropriations Committee, I will continue to provide Laredo College students with the resources they need to learn in a safe, state-of-the-art educational setting."

Laredo College Board President Lupita Zepeda emphasized the importance of these funds in helping Laredo College navigate the fast-paced, evolving nature of COVID-19, both at an institutional level and through its direct financial impact on students.

"These emergency funds have been instrumental in assisting us with the economic, academic and logistical challenges posed by the COVID-19 pandemic," Zepeda said. "We are grateful to Congressman Henry Cuellar for his integral role in securing this funding that will continue to benefit thousands of Laredo College students in the form of tuition assistance, debt forgiveness, academic programs, new equipment and technology, enhanced health and safety initiatives and much more."

A total of \$20,409,400 in emergency aid has already been disbursed to thousands of Laredo College students to assist with tuition, fees and other educational costs.

At the institutional level, part of the allocated federal funds has been utilized to cover the cost of providing additional technology hardware to students, such as laptops and tablets, or covering the added cost of technology fees. Since



the onset of the pandemic, the college has purchased 1,110 laptops for student and faculty use. These funds were also used to subsidize the cost of high-speed internet for students or faculty to transition to an online environment.

Health and safety remain at the center of the college's aggressive COVID-19 prevention and mitigation efforts. Hence, part of these funds will be used to purchase, lease or rent additional instructional equipment and supplies, such as laboratory equipment or computers, to reduce the number of students sharing equipment or supplies during a single class period and provide time for disinfection between uses. These funds will also be directed to operating additional class sections to enable social distancing, such as hiring more instructors and increasing campus hours of operation.

Additionally, the funds will cover purchases of PPE, masks, cleaning and safety supplies, upgraded air filters, thermometers and other COVID-19 mitigation equipment and materials.

These federal monies have been vital in shouldering the financial costs associated with the increase in demand for online learning through purchasing faculty and staff training in online instruction,

the acquisition of equipment or software to enable distance learning, upgrading campus Wi-Fi access and extending open networks to parking lots or public spaces.

Laredo College celebrates Hispanic-Serving Institutions Week, 75th anniversary kick-off with a proclamation

Laredo College Board of Trustees, executives, administrators, students and honored guests witnessed a historic proclamation marking the celebration of National Hispanic-Serving Institutions Week with a memorable event that also served to kick off LC's 75th Anniversary programming as the institution celebrated its 75-year legacy of excellence in higher education with all attendees.

Hispanic-Serving Institutions Week

Each year, the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU) calls on Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs) to observe National HSI Week. This week recognizes the many colleges and universities throughout the nation for their work and critical role in educating and empowering Hispanic youth.

Our institution is an active member of the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities (HACU), a nonprofit organization whose mission is to champion Hispanic student success in higher education by promoting the development of member colleges and universities, improving access to and the quality of post-secondary educational opportunities for Hispanic students and meeting the needs of business, industry and government through the development and sharing of resources, information and expertise.

For almost 75 years, LC has historically championed the academic success of thousands of Laredo and surrounding areas, most of whom are Hispanic. In the summer of 2021, the college was even privileged to be designated the top Hispanic-Serving Institution by Affordable Colleges Online, a college rankings and student resource website.

The Celebration

City of Laredo Mayor Pete Saenz also honored the institution with a proclamation that brought together the community to celebrate this momentous occasion. Laredo Independent School District Superintendent Dr. Sylvia Rios also joined the beginning of the celebration, as they recollected how the district and LC began a college to educate the community 75 years ago. Representatives from the office of State Representative Richard Raymond also expressed their excitement about these 75 years of accomplishments. Representatives from the office of Congressman Henry Cuellar presented LC with a Congressional Certificate of Recognition for serving Laredoans for almost 75 years by providing high quality educational programs and services. A representative from State Senator Judith Zaffirini's office provided a unique gift that included a Texas flag that had been flown over the state capitol with its certificate of authenticity.

The event served as an opportunity to thank and recognize everyone who has made this institution a possibility for many Hispanics and the fantastic activities that will kick off the Laredo College 75th anniversary celebration.

Laredo College since its inception

"Laredo's first institution of higher learning was established to serve the needs of a bustling city that was yearning for a place that offered academic excellence," said LC Interim President Dr. Marisela Rodriguez Tijerina. "As an institution with a rich history, Laredo College has gone through multiple name changes, structure redesigns and leaders, yet it remains and will continue to be a historic gem that shines throughout South Texas."

Today, the college is a two-campus district serving the diverse needs of a growing community. The downtown Fort McIntosh Campus maintains its historic



origins, while history begins anew at our South Campus in South Laredo, with contemporary architecture and the latest technology.

Both campuses serve a three-county area composed of Webb, Jim Hogg and Zapata counties. Our two campuses serve more than 10,000 students each year through a variety of affordable academic programs, technical and vocational programs, non-credit community interest courses, adult education courses and endless opportunities to train for a career in any profession they choose and the option to earn credits for major universities across Texas.

Student graduate knowing they attended a college with stellar designations in various areas such as the #1 nursing program, 100% passing rates in various fields, the #1 college in Texas with the lowest graduate debt, the lowest student debt-to-income ratio amongst two-year public colleges in the nation and #1 community college in Texas.

On this 75th Anniversary, LC reinforces its mission of being a learner-centered institution of higher education, thereby transforming the lives of our students and community through educational programs and services to fulfill the dynamic needs of our local, regional, national, and global communities.