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## SUNY launches student emergency fund program

By [KESHIA CLUKEY](#)

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ALBANY — SUNY [has announced](#) the launch of a student emergency aid pilot program aimed at helping students who experience unforeseen financial hardship stay on track to graduate.

According to an announcement on Monday, the program will begin in the spring at seven SUNY campuses — the University at Albany, University at Buffalo, SUNY Buffalo State, Cayuga Community College, Dutchess Community College, SUNY Oneonta and SUNY Orange — with the goal of eventually taking it to scale system-wide.

“SUNY recognizes that students are not impervious to crises and we want to do all we can do to support students when a situation arises that will have a lasting impact on their ability to complete college,” SUNY Chancellor Kristina Johnson said in a news release. “An emergency aid program at SUNY New Paltz recently awarded funds to 100 students, and 87 percent of them have returned to campus and are on track to finishing their degree. Taking success like that to scale across our 64 campuses can be a real game-changer for SUNY students.”

The program is supported by more than \$600,000 in donations from the Gerstner Family Foundation and the Heckscher Foundation for Children, according to the release. It will be administered by the [SUNY Impact Foundation](#), which will collect data and study the effects of the emergency funding.

Initial grants, depending on undergraduate enrollment, range from \$50,000 to \$100,000 per SUNY campus, with an additional 10 percent of the grant amount available to cover direct administrative costs, according to the release.

The aid will be given to students facing homelessness or the threat of eviction; who have a medical emergency; who were involved in a natural disaster; or who experienced domestic violence, theft or loss of employment. Eligible expenses include rent, utilities, clothing, furniture, medical expenses, backup child care, backup transportation, and replacement of stolen items needed for school.

To be eligible for an emergency grant, students at the participating campuses must be enrolled in at least six credits and must be seeking a bachelor's or associate's degree.

“Across the nation, studies report as many as 65 percent of students surveyed who drop out plan to return, but the sad truth is that only 38 percent ultimately do,” SUNY Impact Foundation Executive Director Christine Fitzgibbons said in the release. “We are excited to implement and manage this grant program to provide aid to our students in the short-term, and assess the impact on retention and graduation rates moving forward.”

**Authors:**

[Keshia Clukey](#)

[kclukey@politico.com](mailto:kclukey@politico.com)

[@KeshiaClukey](#)