



NOVA COVID-19 Emergency Student Aid Fund

NOVA Educational Foundation's *One NOVA* response to the Coronavirus pandemic

March 2020

Background

With an enrollment of more than 85,000 students, NOVA is the 14th largest institution of higher learning in the U.S. It offers 73 associate degree programs that lead to employment or university transfer and 61 certificate programs that teach specific skill sets such as healthcare and IT that are in demand across our region. NOVA graduates more than 6,000 students yearly, making the College a leading source of talented hires for the region.

However, statistics only tell part of the story. NOVA students attend classes and succeed often against great odds. More than 20% of NOVA students are the first in their families to attend college, and 76% of first generation students belong to a racial or ethnic minority. NOVA students hail from more than 160 countries and speak nearly 120 different languages.

In January 2020, The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice at Temple University (Philadelphia, PA) conducted a survey for Northern Virginia Community College (NOVA) to gather a current assessment of basic needs (defined as food or housing insecurity and homelessness) of NOVA students. More than 1,400 students participated. The survey results confirmed what many faculty and staff have known about our student body - basic needs insecurity is a condition challenging our students. The survey revealed:

- 32% of respondents experienced food insecurity in the prior 30 days
- 39% of respondents experienced housing insecurity in the previous year
- 15% of respondents experienced homelessness in the previous year

49% of students at Northern Virginia Community College experienced at least one of these forms of basic needs insecurity in the past year

Challenge

Based on The Hope Center's survey, we know that 49% of NOVA students experienced at least one form of basic needs insecurity just last year. This information causes us great concern given the ever-changing public health crisis caused by the Coronavirus pandemic.

The good news is that **NOVA remains open to serve our students through remote instructional and service delivery.** The College is dedicated to doing everything in its power to keep students in school to complete the current semester and continue progress toward their degrees.

Call to Action

College leadership and key staff are meeting daily to assess needs, implement creative solutions to meet basic needs and quickly deliver emergency aid to the students who need it most. Many of our students are already financially vulnerable. They work one or more part-time jobs in the service industry to pay their bills. With furloughs and layoffs happening every day, what income they have is diminishing rapidly. Food insecurity for students and their families is one of our top concerns. In addition, as NOVA has moved to remote instructional delivery and with K12 schools closed, many students are trying to make this work with a child at home.

As a result, we are launching the **NOVA COVID-19 Emergency Student Aid Fund** to facilitate the rapid delivery of emergency aid funding to our students who need it most. Our aim is to meet students' basic needs to help them stay in school to complete the semester and continue progress toward their degrees. Our goal is to raise \$750,000 to provide at least 1,500 grants at \$500 each. The NOVA Educational Foundation will match up to \$250,000. Ensuring every student succeeds is our highest priority. As our students face unprecedented challenges, we must do all we can to support them. Please consider making a tax-deductible donation to assist NOVA students during this challenging time. To contribute:

Online: <https://nova.cbo.io>

Text: Simply text "nova" to phone number **56651**. Follow the prompts to make and pay for your donation.

By email: foundation@nvcc.edu

By phone: 703-323-3023

Sample Request and Thank You Essays from Emergency Aid Grant Applications

Requests:

I have a sick dad with respiratory infections, very weak heart muscles and he's on daily kidney dialysis, he's on full quarantine because he's really vulnerable to the virus! So he's not working and I can't work to take care of him, we running out of food, water and his medical supplies. My family can't send us any money from home because all banks are closed.

Thank you. I am the single mother of a school aged daughter. The spa where I work as a massage therapist closed, indefinitely last Thursday. I have considered trying to find work at a grocery or warehouse, but in order to make any meaningful income, I would have to work full-time hours. This would significantly impair my ability to complete assignments and I would still need childcare. I am waiting to hear back from Social Services regarding whether or not I qualify for unemployment. \$500 would allow me to take a job (as the country waits for Congress) but not have to work 40 hours, allowing time for my studies. I cannot work 40 hours and successfully complete 12 credit hours, particularly as 2 classes are on condensed time frame of 8 weeks. I have never been so determined in my life to complete anything as I am about completing my degree and becoming a teacher and have been an A student since my return to college. I will find other work in the coming weeks, as massage therapy is likely to be one of the last industries to return to normal, but I need something to fill in this gap, so I am not derailed.

My father does Uber since he cannot walk, he can only walk short distances he is 66 years old today, so Uber eats and delivery is not an options. He has lower back disc issues and extreme sciatica, which I myself have genetically also acquired. Due to the virus, no one has been requesting rides and pool was shut down. My father used to average out to \$200 a day now with the virus panic he only makes \$20 a day it is not enough. I work full time 40 hours every week and I have my own debt and bills to pay, and yet what I have left after my expenses is not enough to support us as far as food costs go. He is looking into every type of aid he can apply for, so far no luck. Please assist, I cannot bare it. As of today I only have \$3 in my account and we don't even have enough to buy a carton of eggs. Before this, my father was more than capable to support our food needs.

I am a homeless working student. I have been laid off my job due to the COVID-19. I was laid off due to my store not having hours or customers. I was completing my homework assignments at work because of the internet access. Now with me being laid off I have no way to access internet. The emergency fund will help me buy temporary pass to finish the semester and also will help me with getting my essential supplies including pads, soap, deodorant,etc.

Thank yous:

Dear Donors, In one discussion for a class which just started 10 days ago, as everyone's life was changing so dramatically, I meet a classmate who works as a restaurant server. She wants to study medicine, but has gone from full-time work to 1 shift a week on carry out orders. It was online, but I could sense the fear and insecurity and I could relate. Your donations help people like this young woman and me stay on track, be encouraged and know that we are not in this thing alone. I will definitely have to find other work, as my industry has also shutdown. Your donation will give me a bit of space to find childcare, understand the risk involved in working (I'm a single mom) and make an informed decision while continuing my education. Thank you so much.

I am in gratitude to your generosity, and strive to follow in your shoes as I would not bare to see anyone suffer while I sit back and let them. I pray for many regards to be granted from your kindness and selflessness. My father and I, along with everyone else benefiting from your aid, I pray eternal rewards for you.

I want to take this moment and thank the donors who help students like myself to continue our education even though our classes are not meeting in-person at this time. Your help will go along way, without your help I wouldn't be able to continue with my spring semester. I also want to make you a promise, your help not only enable me to finish my classes this semester but it also motivates me to work harder - to complete my education and help others. I believe we will come out of this crisis stronger. I have always been proud of being a NOVA student but this time I feel I am not only a student but a member of NOVA family who help each other pull out of this crisis.

First of all, thank you for just thinking about helping other people. It makes a huge difference to be able to care for someone in need. When you help someone, you inspire them to help other people too. One day, when I surpass this obstacle, I will do the same too. Thank you for your kindness and generosity.