May 27, 2020

United States Department of Education
LBJ Building
400 Maryland Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20202

Attn: The Honorable Betsy DeVos
Secretary of the Department of Education

Dear Madam Secretary,

In accordance with the “Recipient’s Funding Certificate and Agreement, Emergency Financial Aid Grants to Students under the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act” document (Recipient’s Certificate), please find below and attached certain narrative reports and/or supporting documentation in compliance with Item 4.(c) of the aforementioned document and Sections 18004(e) and 18006 of the CARES Act. Specifically, you asked institutions receiving funds to:

(I) report the following within thirty (30) days from the date of Recipient’s Certificate and every forty-five (45) days thereafter, or in such other form as the Secretary may specify:
   A. how grants were distributed to students;
   B. the amount of each grant distributed to each student;
   C. how the grant was calculated;
   D. the instructions or directions given to students about the grant; and

(II) document that recipient has continued to pay all of its employees and contractors during the period of disruptions and closures to the greatest extent practicable, explaining in detail all specific actions and decisions related thereto, in compliance with Section 18006 of the Cares Act.

(I) A. How grants were distributed to students – Panola College (the College) formed a committee from its executive staff to write and adopt a policy and define and outline procedures to accomplish the task of disbursing the CARES Act student grant within the guidelines defined by the US Department of Education (Attachment 1). The College set up a simple, user-friendly application (Attachment #2) on its website and informed its students of the existence of available grants in various ways. First, the College issued a general public press release through its website and college newspaper, the Pony Express (Attachment #3). Second, the College informed students through multiple social media posts on multiple platforms (Twitter, Facebook and Instagram) (Attachment #4). Third, the College sent individual email notification and text messages via RAVE Emergency
Alert System to its students, alerting them of the grant opportunity (Attachment #5). These contact methods were “managed” to determine unopened email or text for follow-up and to analyze data (views, reactions, shares) on social media platforms (Attachment #6). This student contact effort was maintained until the application process closed on May 22, 2020.

The College will distribute the total students’ grant ($753,666.00) equally to each qualifying applicants in the coming weeks.

(I) B. The amount of each grant distributed to each student: See Schedule #1

(I) C. How the grant was calculated: See Schedule #2

(I) D. The instruction or directions given to students about the grant: Students were required to complete an on-line application to receive a grant. The application stated the Department of Education requirements for eligibility, required information on the nature of COVID-19 expense incurred and required the student’s attestation to use the grant to cover COVID-19 related expenses (see Attachment #7).

(II) Recipient’s continues to pay employees and contractors: Panola College Board of Trustees met on March 30, 2020, and passed resolution 19-20.1 (see Attachment #8), whereby the College would maintain its employees at full pay during the COVID-19 emergency. Panola College has regularly and routinely paid its contractors during the disruptions or closures relating to the COVID-19 emergency (see Attachment #9).

The US Department of Education reporting requirement says “Recipient shall promptly comply with Section 18004(e) of the CARES Act and (i) report to the Secretary thirty (30) days from the date of this Certificate and Agreement…….“. That due date is prior to the College’s intended distribution of grant funds to qualifying students. Any unintended, minor variations to the policies and procedures outlined in this report will be defined and updated in the required supplemental reporting.

Sincerely,

Gary G. Kelley
(903) 693-2072