

# **Grossmont, Cuyamaca colleges assisting students affected by coronavirus pandemic**

**EL CAJON** – More than 4,200 Grossmont and Cuyamaca College students who face financial challenges as the result of the coronavirus pandemic have been approved for emergency grants from the colleges to help them continue their education.

The grants come from the \$5 million the colleges collectively received from federal funding through the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act, along with grants from the Foundation for Grossmont & Cuyamaca Colleges, and other program and college funding.

As of mid-May, more than 2,500 students at Grossmont College and over 1,700 students at Cuyamaca have been approved for emergency grant funding, which is being disbursed in phases as quickly as staff can process the applications. The students are receiving either a \$500 grant or a \$250 grant if they previously received \$250 through the district's Grossmont-Cuyamaca College Promise program for first-time students. The grants can be used for food, housing, course material, technology, childcare and healthcare.

The colleges have been deluged by students requesting help, with more than 4,000 applications submitted at Grossmont College and 2,000 at Cuyamaca College so far.

“The need is great. I am so grateful we are able to get this support to our students,” said Lynn Neault, chancellor of the Grossmont-Cuyamaca Community College District. “I wish we could do more and we are continuing to seek other resources.”

For Cuyamaca College student Yvonne Hunt, the emergency funds have meant being able to continue her Paralegal Studies classes as she struggles to cope with a precipitous drop in income in the wake of COVID-19.

Hunt was in dire straits after her income took a nosedive from a full-time job to meager hours driving Lyft while sharing cramped quarters occupied by four adults and a 10-year-old child.

“To put it lightly, it has been debilitating,” she said. “The emergency funding means I can keep the lights on and the water running. It also means that I am able to continue my education.”

Another source of aid for students hard hit by the pandemic is \$90,000 the college district received from the San Diego Foundation as part of a regional grant to help community college students needing laptop computers and internet access to continue their education. The San Diego Foundation awarded a \$500,000 grant to be shared among the five community college districts in San Diego County.

With its share of monies, Cuyamaca College has purchased 106 refurbished Chromebooks, hotspot devices and 12-month wireless services agreements. Grossmont College has purchased 261 Chromebooks to be distributed to students in the fall.

The Foundation for Grossmont & Cuyamaca Colleges has also been raising funds specifically to help students who are struggling with the challenges resulting from the pandemic, including job losses and technology needs resulting from classes being converted to online or remote learning. Donations to the foundation's Emergency Student Support program can be made online.

The colleges are continuing to take applications from students who are seeking grants. At Cuyamaca College, the application process is through the Cuyamaca Cares Emergency Fund. At Grossmont College, the application process is through the Student Equity and Achievement grant.