

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT
Christopher M. Reber, Ph. D.



April 1, 2020

Dear Hudson County Community College Students and Community Members,

Allow me to begin by expressing my sincere hope that you and your loved ones are healthy and safe. We care about you and one another, and we understand and support your priority of caring for family members and other loved ones at this difficult time.

I continue to be inspired by the courage and steadfast determination of our students, faculty, staff, trustees, and other members of our HCCC family during this time of great challenge. By working together and supporting one another, our students will succeed and our HCCC community will emerge stronger than ever.

I want to take this opportunity to welcome you back from our extended Spring Break. Earlier this week, I shared a [video message](#) with the college community, and today I would like to follow up with some additional information of particular concern to our students. Allow me to address some of the challenges you have brought to our attention and respond to specific questions we have received about technology, student activities and general services, and tuition and fees, including questions related to refunds.

Effective immediately, we have asked our Bursar's Office to be flexible and to work with students going forward, including this summer and fall, to extend payment terms wherever possible. In addition, we will be allowing students to register for summer and fall classes regardless of their outstanding financial balances. Students, we do not want to let finances stand in the way of your academic progress. Instead of our normal policy of requiring payment in full by the start of each summer term, students will have until the end of the summer term to pay for their courses.

Although we encourage you to adhere to published payment deadlines when possible, we will not cancel summer term student registration for non-payment until further notice.

Once a student registers for summer courses, their schedule is secure. Students relying on financial aid should work closely with our Financial Aid Office to submit FAFSAs and additional paperwork in a timely manner. Financial aid awards and refund checks continue to be processed and issued on schedule. We will communicate fall payment deadlines and policies as soon as they are determined.

Unfortunately, the College is experiencing financial challenges related to the pandemic just as our students are. For example, some of New Jersey's state appropriation to community colleges has been frozen effective immediately, and we anticipate additional freezes in state and other funding going forward because state revenues are now significantly reduced. Like you, the College and the State of New Jersey are appealing for funding relief at the federal level.

The CARES Act just passed by the United States Congress and signed into law last Friday includes the establishment of an Education Stabilization Fund. The [CARES Act](#) includes a variety of provisions relevant to higher education.

Half of the funds each higher education institution will receive through the CARES Act are intended to provide emergency student financial aid for expenses related to the disruption of college operations due to the Coronavirus. We expect eligible expenses to include a student's cost of attendance; for example, food, housing, course materials, technology, health care, and child care. As soon as we know the specifics of these measures, we will communicate them to the entire College community. The New Jersey Council of County Colleges (NJCCC) has provided a summary of [Resources for Community College Students](#).

Allow me to address some specific concerns from students in several categories.

Technology

We are reallocating some savings in expenditures related to the pandemic in order to provide and ensure students have needed access to technology. Since many of our students have shared that they do not have access to a computer at home, we have placed an emergency order for an initial 650 Chromebooks, which students can borrow for the duration of fully online learning. These devices have arrived and are being distributed to students as requests are received. If you are in need of a computer, please fill out the [Coronavirus Concern Form](#) and you will hear back from us promptly about how to pick up your Chrome Book.

We have also created an emergency fund to support the needs of our students through the Hudson Helps program. The HCCC Foundation has contributed to this fund, and we have asked employees and community members to contribute also. Students in need should visit [Hudson Helps](#) to access resources, including emergency aid.

In spite of the College's current financial challenges, we are investing in online infrastructure, computers and numerous other resources to keep our programs whole and to operate the College and pay our faculty and staff. All of HCCC's employees, including student workers and part-time staff, are being paid during the spring semester.

Student Activities and General Services

Although our methods of offering instruction and student support services have changed, students will continue to receive the same quality instruction and student supports they received prior to the pandemic.

Prior to moving College operations online, we did not differentiate fees for our online students. Our fully online students have always paid the same fees as our onsite students pay. This is because online students have the same access as onsite students to services such as Canvas, course technology, online tutoring, mental health counseling, IT support, advisement, accessibility services, and student activities such as clubs, honor societies, and Commencement. Therefore, when we moved instruction and services online, we did not adjust our fee structure. In fact, the College has invested more fully in services such as online tutoring, software to facilitate lab work, accessibility services, and other student supports because of the recent move to remote services required by the state and federal governments.

We are committed to ensuring that every HCCC student will be able to complete the spring semester, and future semesters, as planned. Students can access comprehensive [Remote Student Services](#) from their homes. In addition, students can access community resources and apply for emergency grants on the [Hudson Helps Portal Page](#). We will post links that will help students navigate the federal stimulus relief landscape through Hudson Helps as more information becomes available.

Tuition and Fee Refunds

While we greatly appreciate the many financial and other stresses students are experiencing due to the pandemic, we regret that we are unable to refund, to enrolled students, tuition and fees that have been used to create, expand and sustain services and staff for the reasons explained above. We will act on distributing and helping students gain access to federal aid relief with speed and fairness as soon as the funds are available. We do not yet have a specific date or details for the distribution of funds, but we will communicate information as soon as we know more. Students who feel their situation requires special consideration should email studentaffairs@hccc.edu for assistance.

I hope this has been helpful in answering your questions and providing context at this time of great challenge for all of us. Thank you for your understanding and for all you are doing as members of our HCCC family. We will get through this together.

Should you have further questions, please refer to the [HCCC Coronavirus Resources Page](#). Please do not hesitate to submit a Coronavirus Concern Form to the [Coronavirus Task Force](#) or reach out to me directly. We will continue to provide important information as it becomes available. In the meantime, please stay safe and healthy!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Chris", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Christopher M. Reber
President