



# COVID-19 | Delaware State University

## STUDENT EMERGENCY RELIEF FUND

[desu.edu/studentrelief](https://desu.edu/studentrelief)

**“My students are going through so much: parents laid off, so the student is the breadwinner; sick grandparents; 5 family members sharing one antiquated desktop. My heart is breaking. I know I can’t save them all, but I want to. Our campus is more than just a place to take classes—for many, it’s their lifeline.”**

*Charlisa Holloway Edelin, JD*  
Chairperson, Mass Communications, Visual & Performing Arts

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COVID-19 has created unimaginable stress on life as they knew it. Everyone is affected—financially, emotionally, and socially—but the burden falls especially heavily on our students. Many of them come from the most disadvantaged communities in Delaware and across the country and possess few resources to deal with the crisis.

In response, the University has established a [Student Emergency Relief Fund](#) to support our students’ most critical needs.

Professor Edelin captures the immediacy and urgency of watching our students struggle against unequal odds every day, but nothing brings it to life like actually hearing their stories.



- **Terry**, a Psychology major from Middletown, Delaware, previously depended on University computer labs to get his work done. Now he’s risking COVID-19 to travel daily to his uncle’s house, the only place he can borrow a laptop with wireless access.
- **Mia** is a junior Education major now living in a three-bedroom apartment in New York City, at the epicenter of COVID-19. Struggling to finish her spring courses online, she is competing for internet bandwidth with four school-age younger siblings.
- **Yazmin**, a Dreamer and a Sociology major, had to remain on campus because she had no place else to go. She struggles with a lonely existence where there used to be hundreds of friends and classmates around her. She worries about what happens when she, or other students, test positive for the virus and become even more isolated.

Terry, Mia, and Yazmin are motivated and resilient; our professors reach out to them daily, and their families provide moral support. Still, in this pandemic’s wake, they are tired, anxious, and desperately concerned about their ability to continue and to complete their degree programs. Multiply these cases by several thousand students now dispersed across the state and the nation, and you’ve got some idea of the challenge.

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, the University has responded quickly and with resolve.

- Transitioned 1,447 courses to an online format in just five days so that students could continue their education;
- Housed and cared for 200 students who literally had no place else to go;
- Held weekly digital forums with the entire University community;
- Created innovative practices to maintain University operations while keeping our employees safe; and
- Offered facilities to the state for medical testing and hospital overflow.

Although COVID-19 has imposed a tremendous strain on the University’s resources, we have made the decisions that needed to be made, even in the face of growing uncertainty.

We anticipate significant assistance from the recently enacted COVID Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (CARES). Still, our analysis illustrates an initial \$1.6 million gap between our resources, the federal stimulus, and our true ability to meet all of our students’ emergency needs.

This is a difficult time for everyone. Job loss, income insecurity, the strain of not always being able to be with the ones you love the most—it all leaves us wondering what’s next. Yet, I also know that you realize that now is not the time to stop investing in the lives of our young people.

The University’s [Student Emergency Relief Fund](#) is an opportunity for us to join together to keep their dreams alive at this critical moment in history.

The needs are pressing and immediate:

- **Food insecurities:** Students who have lost campus jobs and meal plans often don’t know where next week’s food will come from;
- **Clothing:** Hundreds had to leave most of their clothes and belongings on campus;
- **Housing and rental shortfalls:** In the unexpected scramble to find someplace to live, many are one payment away from possible eviction;
- **Technology access:** Students without wireless access at home cannot go to libraries or public hot spots to work;
- **Course materials and laptops:** Lessons are inaccessible without the appropriate technology;
- **Medical supplies:** A growing number of students and/or their immediate family members are threatened by infection, and many do not have health insurance.

If you can, please join us; no contribution is too large or too small. Please visit [desu.edu/studentrelief](https://desu.edu/studentrelief) to learn more about how you can donate to the Student Emergency Relief Fund and the difference you can make in our young people’s lives. If you have questions or need additional information, please contact me or Dr. Vita Pickrum, Vice President of Institutional Advancement, at [vpickrum@desu.edu](mailto:vpickrum@desu.edu).

They matter. It all matters.

Sincerely,

Tony Allen, Ph.D.  
President