



Architectural Practice Pipeline Stimulus Bill Provisions

The federal government response to COVID-19 includes some important provisions for those with student loans—or those who employ those with student loan debt. Here are some of the policies within the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act that are most relevant to the architectural field:

Student loan debt

1. Student loan repayment is on hold

- The Department of Education is putting existing student loan debt on automatic forbearance until September 30, 2020. The borrower does not have to make payments on during this period, with no penalty and no added interest.
- The forbearance takes place automatically on April 10 but is back dated until March 13. So, if you made a payment between March 13 and April 10, you could seek a refund. Go to Federal Loan Servicing for details: <https://myfedloan.org/borrowers/covid/>
- The student loans that qualify for this forbearance are the Federal Family Education Loan Program or the William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan Program. Private loans do not qualify.

2. Employers can help pay back your student loans

- Employers are usually prohibited from paying their employee's student loans directly. That restriction has been waived until January 1, 2021.
- Employers do not have to pay into your student loans. But for those who choose to do so, the CARES Act enables employers to contribute to their employee's student loan repayment on a tax-free basis.
- Employers can contribute up to \$5,250 annually.
- The amount the employer contributes is deducted from your salary. It works the same as if your employer pays into your retirement account—it's money from your salary, but it isn't taxed, so it goes farther.

Current student financial aid

1. Work Study

- The CARES Act authorizes, but does not mandate, that institutes of higher education continue to provide work-study financial aid to students who were unable to work due to COVID-19.
- It limits the eligible period to one year.
- Check with your college or university to find out their policy.

2. Pell Grants

- The Secretary of Education is not counting any semester (or the equivalent) that a student was unable to finish due to COVID-19 against that student's Pell Grant amount.

More information on the Department of Education's policies in response to COVID-19 is available here: <https://www.ed.gov/coronavirus?src=feature>