

Financial Aid Policies & Procedures Manual 2024- 2025

School Code:

Latest revision: May 2025¹

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1. INTRODUCTION STATEMENT OF PURPOSE

Federal regulations highly recommend institutions have written policies and procedures for the administration of Title IV student assistance programs in addition to the Higher Education Act and other Department of Education regulations and guidance. The contents featured in this Manual include the minimum general statutory and regulatory requirements. If no policy or procedure addresses a given issue, members of the Fees office are expected to follow federal guidance and use professional judgment based upon the intent of all financial aid programs and University practices.

This manual:

- Sets forth the UNIVERSITY policies for administering student aid and describes the procedures for implementation of these policies.
- Provides general procedures to ensure that a systematic and consistent approach is taken in the administration of financial aid.

FINANCIAL AID REFERENCE DOCUMENTS

In addition to this Manual, the following regulations and guides can be accessed electronically via the Federal Student Aid Knowledge Center at <https://fsapartners.ed.gov/knowledge-center>. These references assist the Office in determining and awarding aid. The adherence to the guidance contained within each is expected.

- Federal Student Aid Handbook
- Student Aid Index (SAI) Formula Guide
- FAFSA Specifications Guide
- Title IV Regulations and Updates
- Federal Registers
- Higher Education Act as amended.
- U.S. Department of Education (ED) Audit Guidance
- NSLDS Reference Materials
- Dear Colleague Letters and Electronic Announcements

- Program Participation Agreements

2.0 PHILOSOPHY AND POLICIES OF STUDENT

3.0 MISSION OF UNIVERSITY

Optional

UNIVERSITY PHILOSOPHY OF FINANCIAL AID

Optional – example below

The philosophy of student aid is to provide access and choice to students, who without such assistance would not be able to attend an institution of higher learning. UNIVERSITY believes that higher education is a privilege to be enjoyed by those who can afford to pay the cost, as well as those with limited financial resources. Parents and students are primarily responsible for paying college expenses; however, when families can demonstrate financial need, various sources of financial assistance are available to supplement the family's contributions.

The College's Financial Aid program is based on sound financial aid principles in keeping with institutional philosophy and purpose. The mission and primary purpose of the Fees office is to deliver the highest quality services in an efficient and effective way; to secure adequate funding from the various federal, state, and private sources to meet the needs.

of our students, and to support efforts that promote and encourage students to plan for postsecondary education.

4.0 ADMINISTRATIVE & FINANCIAL AID ORGANIZATION & MANAGEMENT AUTHORIZING AID,

DISBURSING AID & SEPARATION OF DUTIES

The function of “disbursement” is a two-step process. First, Financial Aid awards and packages student aid. Financial Aid also posts awards to COD. Next, Financial Services (Student Accounts) runs the “Application of Payment” process to apply the payments and draws down funds from G5 accordingly. The College established Financial Aid and Financial Services as two separate functions and operational units. These two functions are performed by separate departments/individuals who are not members of the same organizational family and do not together exercise substantial control over the College. The system separates the functions of awarding and delivering funds so that no one person or office exercises both functions for any student receiving federal aid.

The Fees office is responsible for the following.

- Collect supporting documentation for the determination of aid eligibility.
- Determine student eligibility for financial assistance.
- Award federal and state aid in compliance with laws, regulations, and policies.
- Notify students of aid eligibility.

Financial Services is responsible for the following.

- Runs Application of Payments process to post funds to students’ accounts.
- Maintain and disburse accurate bills.
- Collect payments for student accounts.
- Disburse funds to students.

Organization charts of each area are provided on the following pages (optional) to document this separation. In addition, there exists a clear and separate division of responsibility for the administration of financial aid.

The following diagram illustrates the organizational structure for UNIVERSITY's Enrollment and Retention Division, which includes the Fees office.

The following operating policies are constructed to assure that the Fees office is effective in fulfilling its responsibilities.

- All students must apply annually for financial assistance by submitting appropriate application forms to the FEES OFFICE.
- Funds available to the College for financial assistance are administered through the FEES OFFICE. When funds or awards are received for students from outside sources by other offices, the Business Office will notify the FEES OFFICE by posting the funds as Resources on the students' accounts.
- The FEES OFFICE maintains adequate records to ensure proper administration of aid funds. Documentation is maintained in a logical, organized fashion. Aid awarded is not in excess of need and /or the cost of attendance and aggregate awards do not exceed total expenditures of funds under each program.

The following diagram illustrates the organizational structure for UNIVERSITY's Financial and Administrative Services Division, which includes Financial Services.

OPTIONAL

RESPONSIBILITIES OF FINANCIAL SERVICES OFFICE

The primary responsibilities of the Financial Services Office employees are as follows.

- Maintain student accounts that record charges, credits, and amounts due.
- Maintain records in accordance with U.S. GAAP and government auditing standards.
- Reconcile financial data from financial aid and information software system(s) to the general ledger.
- Reconcile cash between bank statements and general ledger.
- Implement UNIVERSITY refund policy.
- Maintain internal controls and general stewardship for federal financial funds.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE FEES OFFICE STAFF

The following list provides the primary responsibilities of the Fees office staff, which is adequately staffed with qualified people to administer the Title IV programs. These employees require knowledge of federal regulations and institutional policies and procedures, the ability to deal with students and parents regarding sensitive financial and personal issues, and the aptitude to deal with regulatory changes.

- Publicize the availability of financial aid.
- Assist in counseling students about their access to education by applying for financial aid.
- Assess eligibility of applicants for aid and collect the applicable supporting documents.
- Verify data reported by parents and/or students.
- Maintain student financial aid records/files.
- Calculate cost of attendance.
- Monitor the satisfactory academic progress (SAP) of aid recipients.
- Award financial aid in an equitable manner while complying with policies and regulations.
- Notify students of aid eligibility.
- Authorize and process TIV aid awards.
- Calculate return of funds or overpayments when student withdraws.
- Provide effective communication with other offices to process applications and disburse funds on a timely basis.
- Maintain up-to-date knowledge of relevant federal regulations.
- Coordinate fiscal matters with the Business Office.
- Prepare federal Title IV reports.
- Administer the federal Title IV programs and state programs in accordance with the regulations.
- Design/implement systems to accomplish these tasks.

PURPOSE OF THE FEES OFFICE

The Fees office strives to assist students in achieving their educational goals by providing financial support and resources to attend and complete their education at University.

An institutional financial aid professional is expected to always maintain exemplary standards of professional conduct in all aspects of fulfilling his or her responsibilities, specifically including all dealings with any entities involved in any manner in student financial aid, regardless of whether such entities engage in a government sponsored, subsidized, or regulated activity. In doing so, a financial aid professional will ensure the following.

Financial Aid Calendar

OPTIONAL – example below

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Spring Term Award and Disbursement
Disbursement Spring disbursement.
Request Enrollment Coding for Fall Unofficial Withdrawals Reconciliation of all Federal Funds

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Verify Fall Disbursements Process End-of-Term Fall Unofficial Withdrawals
Reconciliation of all Federal Funds

*M
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h*

Reconciliation of all Federal Funds

*A
p
r
i
l*

Reconciliation of all Federal Funds

*M
a
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Summer May Term Disbursements (if any enrolled in May mini only
Request Enrollment Coding for Spring Unofficial Withdrawals
Reconciliation of all Federal Funds

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Process End-of-Term Spring Unofficial Withdrawals
Reconciliation of all Federal Funds

July

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OFFICE HOURS & SERVICES - optional

The College is open and available to service students from 7:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Thursday and from 7:30 a.m. until 11:30 a.m. on Friday. Financial Aid provides services at the One Stop Center in Gadsden and at the Ayers Campus each day of the week. Services are also provided in-person at least one day per month at the Gadsden State Cherokee campus and electronically as needed.

Students can submit all required documentation electronically through

FINANCIAL AID PERSONNEL - optional

The Fees office consists of the following personnel.

THIRD PARTY SERVICERS as applicable

UNIVERSITY utilizes the following third-party services:

FINANCIAL AID RECORDS MANAGEMENT

Example below

The following are office procedures for receiving financial aid applications, FAFSA Submission Summary (FSS) or electronic Institutional Student Information Record (ISIR), and other forms.

1. The Institutional Student Information Record is received in electronic format and downloaded in the system as received with the current date.
2. The ISIR will determine the student's need for federal financial aid, as well as any required verification requirements.
3. Verification documents will be accepted electronically from students via the lxxx

SECURITY OF FINANCIAL AID & STUDENT RECORDS

All employees are charged with safeguarding the security, confidentiality, integrity, and accuracy of protecting all documents on the campus as part of the condition of their employment. Any violation of this could lead to termination. Internal offices have locked windows and/or locked doors with restricted access. When offices are open, confidential information is kept out of sight from visitors, and computer screens are not visible to visitors. If ever an office is vacant for an extended period, the office and/or computers are locked.

Electronic records are maintained in xxx. This includes student demographics, enrollment status, attendance, academic progress, grades, scholarships, and student account records. xxx also maintains financial aid awards, financial aid award disbursements, and refunds/R2T4 calculations.

Each UNIVERSITY user of these systems has a unique login and password required to be entered before they can use the systems. Employees are given the access necessary to accomplish the functions of their position. If an employee leaves UNIVERSITY, his/her access to all these systems is immediately disabled.

The Director of Financial Aid is the Primary Destination Point Administrator (PDPA) who controls access to Federal Student Aid systems. The PDPA and users of the Federal Student Aid systems are

responsible for protecting the systems from access by unauthorized personnel.

LOCATION OF RECORDS

All FEES OFFICE employees are responsible for the security of any retained hard copy records, noting documents are scanned for electronic storage whenever possible. Student records will be maintained in individual electronic folders on a yearly basis. Records will be destroyed in accordance with federal and State destruction policies.

UNIVERSITY retains all financial aid records and files as required by law for *a minimum* of three years from the end of the award year for which the aid was awarded. Electronic files and imaged documents are destroyed/deleted in accordance with regulatory guidance.

ORGANIZATION OF STUDENT FINANCIAL AID RECORD

Records that substantiate student eligibility are maintained, with the majority being stored in electronic format. Although not exhaustive, the following types of records are maintained.

- cost of attendance information,
- documentation of a student's satisfactory academic progress (SAP),
- documentation of student's program of study and the courses in which the student was enrolled,
- data used to establish student's admission, enrollment status, and period of enrollment,
- required student certification statements and supporting documentation,
- documents used to verify applicant data and resolve conflicting information,
- documentation of all professional judgment decisions, and
- financial aid history information for transfer students.

CONFIDENTIALITY AND INSPECTION OF STUDENT RECORDS

Under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 as Amended (FERPA), University may disclose certain student information as "directory information." Directory information includes a student's name, address, telephone number, date of birth, academic honors, and major fields of study, as well as information about a student's participation in officially recognized activities and sports, the weight and height of members of athletic teams, the date of attendance by students, degrees and awards received, and the most recent previous educational agency or institution attended by a student. If any student objects to the release of such information, that student should notify the Registrar in person and in writing within three weeks after the beginning of each semester.

A school official is defined as a college employee, person or a student assisting another school official in performing his or her tasks. A school official with a legitimate educational interest may be granted access to confidential student information if the official needs the information to fulfill his/her professional responsibility. Legitimate educational interest does not convey inherent rights to all student information, but it does include:

- Performing appropriate tasks that are specified in his/her position description or by a contract agreement.
- Performing a task related to a student's education.
- Performing a task related to the discipline of a student.
- Providing services for the student, such as counseling, job placement or financial aid.

All records and conversations between an aid applicant, his/her family and the staff of the FEES OFFICE are confidential and entitled to the protection ordinarily given a counseling relationship. UNIVERSITY assures the confidentiality of student educational records in accordance with UNIVERSITY rules, State, and federal laws, including but not limited to section 483(a)(3)(E) of the Higher Education Act as amended and the 1965 Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 as amended.

AUTHORIZATION TO RELEASE INFORMATION

FERPA affords students certain rights with respect to their education records. These rights include the following:

1. The right to inspect and to review the student's education records.
2. The right to request the amendment of the student's education records to ensure that they are not inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the student's privacy or other rights.
3. The right to consent to disclosure of personally identifiable information contained in the student's education records, except to the extent that FERPA authorizes disclosure without consent.
4. The right to file with the U.S. Department of Education a complaint concerning alleged failures by University to comply with the requirements of FERPA; and
5. The right to obtain a copy of University's student records policy, which is available at the Records Office.

A student who wishes to obtain access to his/her financial aid record can do so in the presence of a UNIVERSITY employee. Access to IRS tax documentation submitted as part of the verification process will only be granted to the individual listed on the IRS documentation.

5.0 PARTICIPATION IN FEDERAL FINANCIAL AID PROGRAMS INSTITUTIONAL & PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY

The documents received from ED confirming UNIVERSITY's eligibility to provide federal financial aid programs are the Program Participation Agreement (PPA) and the Eligibility and Certification Approval Report (ECAR). The documents are in the Fees office. UNIVERSITY is approved to offer federal financial aid assistance to eligible US students under the following Title IV programs: Federal Direct Loans

UNIVERSITY awards federal financial aid according to federal regulations and guidelines. Financial assistance is viewed only as supplementary. The student and the family of a student, when applicable, are expected to make every effort to assist with educational expenses.

OTHER FINANCIAL AID PROGRAMS

OPTIONAL

DEFINITION OF TITLE IV ACADEMIC YEAR

All programs at UNIVERSITY operate under a traditional semester calendar. This typical calendar includes fall and spring semesters, as well as modules (Mini-Terms) within the semester. The standard academic year includes fall and spring semesters only. Summer term is considered a trailer, or third term of the academic year.

For financial aid purposes, July 1st to June 30th represents the academic year. An academic year is represented 30 weeks and 24 semester hours. Fall and spring semesters are each 15 weeks. Summer semester is 10 weeks.

6.0 STUDENT CONSUMER INFORMATION

To understand the complicated field of financial aid, accurate and timely dissemination of information to consumers is vitally important. Several policies have been implemented to ensure appropriate dissemination is achieved. can be found on our website under XXX In addition, UNIVERSITY Course Catalog includes consumer information for all programs offered at the College.

7.0 APPLYING FOR FEDERAL FINANCIAL AID PROGRAMS STUDENT APPLICATION

Students must complete the “Free Application for Federal Student Aid” (FAFSA). Application forms are free and may be obtained online at [Studentaid.gov](https://studentaid.gov). Information provided on the FAFSA determines the specific types of aid that may be received. UNIVERSITY’s school code is XXX.

Students may file the FAFSA beginning October 1st annually and must be submitted each year. Students are directed to read the instructions carefully when completing the FAFSA. Students will use the tax information from prior-prior year income and tax information. For the 2025-2026 FAFSA, 2023 tax information will be referenced. For 2026-2027, income from 2024 will be used. The deadline to complete any FAFSA is June 30.

Usually, within one week of filing a FAFSA online, a FAFSA Submission Summary (FSS) will be sent to the e-mail address provided on the FAFSA (approximately four weeks for postal mail if no email address is listed). Once the FSS is received, the student should carefully review the entire report for accuracy. If corrections are needed, the student may log into his/her FAFSA and resubmit the corrected information using his/her FSA ID.

In addition to the student receiving a FSS once the FAFSA is completed, the College will receive an Institutional Student Information Record (ISIR). This ISIR will be used to determine the student’s award.

The UNIVERSITY encourages students to start the application process for financial aid early. Keep in mind that some financial aid is limited and can run out. Students who start the financial aid process late may have to assume responsibility for the payment of tuition, fees, and other educational expenses until financial aid is finalized.

To be eligible for US federal financial aid, federal requirements stipulate a student must:

- Complete the FAFSA (<https://studentaid.gov>)
- Be enrolled in classes required for graduation at at least a half time enrollment status
- Be a US citizen, US national or US permanent resident or reside in the US for other than a temporary purpose (documentation may be needed to verify citizenship)
- Maintain satisfactory academic progress.

Not be in default of any loan or owe repayment on a Federal Pell Grant, FSEOG.

High School Diploma or GED Requirement

To be eligible to receive financial aid, students must have a high school diploma or General Educational Development (GED) certificate prior to receiving federal financial aid. In addition, students without a high school diploma or GED may be eligible to receive federal financial aid if they (1) have documented ability to benefit and (2) are concurrently enrolled in career pathway programs, which includes concurrent enrollment in adult education classes. (Students without a high school diploma or GED who enrolled in post-secondary education prior to July 1, 2012, or who have earned at least six college credits are eligible to enroll in certain programs without concurrently enrolling in adult education classes.)

8.0 PROFESSIONAL JUDGMENT

Professional Judgment refers to an institution's authority to make certain adjustments, on a case-by-case basis, to information reported on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). There are limited circumstances in which the use of Professional Judgment is warranted, and all circumstances must be thoroughly documented.

Two of the most common forms are detailed below.

The Professional Judgment process is extensive and requires a thorough review by the Fees office to determine what, if any, changes may be appropriate. In many cases, an adjustment does not increase a student's eligibility for aid.

The Financial Aid Office reserves the right to deny any appeals that would not increase a student's eligibility for aid. The results of a Professional Judgment review are final and cannot be appealed. Request for Professional Judgment does not guarantee approval.

Unusual Circumstances (Dependency Status Review/Dependency Override)

Students who do not meet the federal criteria to be considered Independent based on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) may have unusual circumstances that warrant a dependency status review. If you believe that you qualify for a dependency status review, please follow the steps below.

The following circumstances are not considered unusual and will not warrant a dependency status review:

- A student demonstrates total self-sufficiency (living alone, supporting oneself financially, etc.)
- Parents refuse to financially contribute to the student's education.

- Parents refuse to fill out information necessary to complete the FAFSA or the verification process.
- Parents do not claim the student as a dependent for income tax purposes.

The following circumstances are considered unusual and may warrant a dependency status review:

- Parental abuse or abandonment
- Parental incarceration or death
- Legally granted refugee or asylum status
- Parental contact poses a danger to students.

To request a dependency status review, contact the Fees office. You will be granted access to a form for electronic completion and signature. You must provide a statement of circumstances, as well as third-party documentation. Once **all** required documentation is received, a review will be completed, and you will be notified of the results via your Gadsden State student email account within 14 days.

PROCEDURE TO FOLLOW CONCERNING MISSING INFORMATION

The student must provide the required documentation. No Title IV disbursements will be made when required documents are missing.

PROCEDURE TO FOLLOW CONCERNING CONFLICTING INFORMATION

Conflicting information must always be resolved. When identified, the student will be advised of what conflicts are found and how the conflicts can be resolved.

Documentation to resolve conflicting information will vary depending on the student's situation and what the FA staff feel is necessary to prove the information is accurate and to resolve any such conflict.

Any information, either on the FAFSA or other documentation received, for which the College has reason to believe is discrepant or inaccurate, the student must provide adequate documentation to resolve the conflict. Such conflicting information could be listed on the FAFSA, noted on documents submitted to the Fees office (such as unrequested tax transcripts), and/or information from other college offices (such as validity of high school completion). Examples of conflicting data would include but are not limited to:

- a. An IRS transcript shows single/head of household and on the FAFSA/ISIR shows the same person as married.
- b. The amount of reported income is greater than or equal to the minimum amount required to file taxes.

The Financial Aid Administrator reviews the submitted documentation and ascertains that the student meets general qualifications for financial assistance as listed below.

DEFAULT STATUS

If a student is in default, he/she is not eligible for further Title IV assistance. However, it is possible for the student to obtain satisfactory arrangements for repayment. Student must have a letter from the holder of the loan stating that the student has made satisfactory repayment arrangements and is eligible for Title IV funds before any funds may be disbursed.

C-CODES

An actionable comment code (C-Code) on the FAFSA must be resolved before awarding aid. The student will be notified upon receiving the ISIR of the need to supply additional documentation. This documentation will be reviewed to determine if the issue(s) may be resolved. Common messages that require documentation for resolution include but are not limited to:

- Social Security Administration (SSA): The student is required to submit a copy of the social security card confirming the name and SSN, or to correct the FAFSA if errors were made during the initial FAFSA filing.
- Citizenship: The student is required to bring in a copy of his/her U.S. Passport, Certificate of Naturalization, or a copy of U.S. birth certificate showing birth abroad and confirmation of citizenship status.
- Department of Homeland Security (DHS): If the Department of Homeland Security cannot verify the student's citizenship, the student must submit additional information, such as that mentioned above for citizenship confirmation. Eligible non-citizens with A-numbers not passing secondary confirmation by Homeland Security must bring unexpired immigration status verification documentation in person to the FEES OFFICE. The Financial Aid Administrator will complete form G-845 and make a copy of all relevant information to support the immigration status. The information is sent to DHS for review. No financial aid is awarded until we have received confirmation back from DHS regarding the student's eligibility for financial aid or until 15 business days after the date the documentation was sent.
- Unusual Enrollment History (UEH): According to Dear Colleague Letter GEN-13-09, the purpose of the UEH Flag is to identify instances of potential fraud and abuse of the Federal aid programs. A review of aid received, and classes taken over the past four years is required. Eligibility for all other Title IV aid is either approved or denied based on the results of this review and evaluation. Applicants are notified of the decision.

ATTENDANCE POLICY

Students are expected to attend class on time and are expected to remain in class for the duration of the published class time. Faculty are required to verify attendance (academic engagement) on a specified day to capture census reporting data as required to comply with federal financial aid regulations. Academic engagement in distance education classes is achieved through the submission of an academic assignment, taking an exam, email documentation with instructor regarding academic subject matter, and other academically related activities. INCLUDE INFORMATION IF SCHOOL TAKES ATTENDANCE

11.0 PRIVATE LOANS

University does not maintain a preferred lender list. US students in need of a private student loan will need to work with US lenders to determine which will provide loans for foreign schools.

12.0 CASH MANAGEMENT & FISCAL OBLIGATIONS

UNIVERSITY has the fiduciary responsibility to request, maintain, disburse, and when necessary, return Title IV funds according to established rules and procedures properly and accurately.

SEPARATION OF DUTIES

The function of awarding and packaging aid for a student (authorizing payments) is separate from the function of drawing down funds from G5 and posting to student's accounts (disbursing funds). Authorizing payments is performed by the Financial Aid

Office. The Financial Services Office then credits the disbursements to the student's account.

The Financial Services Office completes all required fiscal reports and financial statements. Monthly reconciliation of all federal programs is completed. This reconciliation includes the Common Origination and Disbursement Web Site (COD), and G5. Once reconciled, a third college employee reviews the supporting documentation for each monthly reconciliation documentation to ensure compliance with accepted accounting principles, including bank account and internal ledger reconciliation procedures.

BANK ACCOUNTS

UNIVERSITY has a separate federal account to receive and return funds and a separate operating account. These funds must be transferred into the operating account from the federal account within three days.

DISBURSING FUNDS

Federal aid is disbursed ten (10) days after the first day of full-term classes. If this date falls on the weekend or holiday, it will be the following workday. As the FAFSA is a snapshot of the student's family situation at the time of application, this date is a snapshot of enrollment for the semester. Based on this enrollment, aid is recalculated as required for students failing to begin attendance in all classes and aid is disbursed accordingly. The Financial Services Office runs the Application of Payments process to post aid student account ledgers, thereby creating credit balances. Credit refund checks are issued and mailed weekly by the XXX as aid is disbursed.

NOTIFICATIONS/AUTHORIZATIONS

The official financial aid award notice describes the total financial assistance that the student will receive.

With a student's written authorization, UNIVERSITY will hold any credit created by the funds to apply to other existing charges on the student's account. This Title IV Authorization Form authorizes UNIVERSITY to hold or release credits from all sources on the student account to pay for future and/or miscellaneous charges. The authorization remains in effect for the entirety of enrollment unless otherwise rescinded. The authorization is voluntary and may be rescinded by submitting a written request to the Fees office. If the authorization is not received from the student, any excess funds will be released to the student within 14 days of being recorded to the student's account ledger.

OVERPAYMENTS

An overpayment is any amount paid directly to the student greater than the student is entitled to receive. This may occur when:

- awards or disbursements are made incorrectly.
- a student reports incorrect information on his/her financial aid application
- a student withdraws from college.
- conflicting information is received by the Fees office and is resolved.

Any information which the aid administrator discovers as incorrect, must be corrected according to procedures outlined in federal regulations. The student will be notified, and collection of these funds will be attempted.

TITLE IV CREDIT BALANCES

UNIVERSITY will determine the amount of Title IV credit balances. If it is determined that a Title IV credit balance has been created, a refund check (or electronic transfer if the student opts) will be issued to the student within 14 calendar days from the date of disbursement. All checks are mailed to the addresses on file with XXX.

Financial Services will void any uncashed checks over 180 days and will notify Financial Aid. Financial Aid will recover the funds and return them to the Department of Education.

WITHDRAWAL/RETURN OF TITLE IV FUNDS/INSTITUTIONAL REFUNDS

A Return of Title IV Funds (R2T4) calculation is processed for a student who begins attending classes, and completely withdraws his/her period of enrollment. The Return of Title IV Funds calculation is a policy of the United States Department of Education that determines the amount of loan funds UNIVERSITY and/or the student are to return to the loan program. The term "Title IV Funds" refers to the Federal Financial Aid Programs authorized under the Higher Education Act of 1965

The student's recalculated loan award amount is used in the Return of Title IV Funds calculation. The percentage of Title IV aid earned is found by dividing the number of calendar days completed by the time of withdrawal date by the number of calendar days in the term. If the student has completed more than 60% of the term, the student is considered to have earned 100% of the Title IV aid. The amount of Title IV aid earned is found by multiplying the amount of aid disbursed for the term plus what could have been disbursed by the percentage of Title IV aid earned. If the amount earned is less than the amount of aid disbursed, the difference must be returned. If the student earned more than what was disbursed, a late disbursement may be due. If the amount earned equals the amount disbursed, no return and no disbursement are to be made.

UNIVERSITY returns the lesser of (a) the total amount of unearned aid or (b) an amount equal to the student's institutional charges multiplied by the percentage of aid unearned. The student is billed for any balance resulting from funds returned by UNIVERSITY.

The amount of aid UNIVERSITY is to return is then subtracted from the amount of Title IV aid to be returned to find the initial amount of unearned Title IV aid for the student to return.

protected is subtracted from the initial amount of unearned Title IV aid for the student to return to find the amount of Title IV grant funds for the student to return. In the event of an overpayment, UNIVERSITY notifies the student, and the student may be allowed 45 days to pay the amount in full to the Gadsden State Business Office. If full payment is not made to UNIVERSITY within 45 days, payments must be made to the U. S. Department of Education. While the overpayment is due, the student remains eligible for financial aid for 45 days from the date of the overpayment. The amounts returned by either UNIVERSITY, or the student are then distributed based upon the following priority schedule: (1) Federal Pell Grants and (2) FSEOG.

The Fees office processes the Return of Title IV Funds calculation. When a student completely withdraws (official) or fails to complete his/her period of enrollment (unofficial), a Return calculation is required. If a student is enrolled in a combination of class offerings that include mini terms, the student must successfully complete his/her full period of enrollment not to be considered an unofficial withdrawal. UNIVERSITY does not request, but will accept, written confirmation of future attendance if a student has a break in enrollment from a class withdrawal the first mini-term but plans to enroll the upcoming mini-term; however, failure to begin that subsequent mini-term will result in an unofficial withdrawal. Based on the timing of the withdrawal, the student may not have earned 100% of the award and aid will be returned to the Department of Education accordingly.

Effective Summer 2021 (5/10/2021), UNIVERSITY opted to early implement the R2T4 Final Rules for modules in the [September 2, 2020, Federal Register](#). These rules allow for withdrawal exemptions listed below. Given these are exemptions, no R2T4 calculations are required given students meeting one or more of these exemptions are not considered withdrawn.

1. Successfully completes one module that includes 49.0% or more of the number of days in the payment period.
 - No rounding to 49% allowed.
 - Percentage based on the number of days in the overall payment period --- thus full semester.
 - Successful completion means a passing grade --- not simply completing the class and earning a grade of F.
2. Successfully completes a combination of modules that when combined contains 49.0% or more of the number of days in the payment period --- excluding scheduled breaks of 5 or more days and all days between modules.
3. Successfully completes coursework of at least a half-time Title IV student load.

- Successful completion means a passing grade.
 - Six TIV hours or more passed.
4. Successfully completes all graduation requirements.

The FEES OFFICE will run the Banner process to determine the portion of aid that needs to be returned by the College. The FEES OFFICE will adjust the student's award according to the R2T4 and send the revised disbursement record to COD for processing. Financial Services will return necessary funds to the Department of Education via G5. If funds have already been paid to the student, the student will receive a statement from the Business Office with the amount to be paid back, for which the student will be responsible. The student will also receive a revised award notification email. Any balance due will cause a HOLD to be placed on the student's account until all outstanding funds have been returned. Holds for outstanding funds prevent students from

registering and/or accessing their records until the balance due has been satisfied. In addition to financial ramifications from the withdrawals, the student's financial aid eligibility will be negatively impacted. Financial Aid stresses that all students "Go to Class, Stay in Class, and Pass the Class!"

ACCOUNTING & RECONCILIATIONS

All accounting transactions, including those involving Title IV funds, are accounted for in accordance with US GAAP and federal regulatory requirements. UNIVERSITY prepares internal financial statements and reconciles general ledger accounts monthly. Each year UNIVERSITY prepares annual financial statements as per GAAP as well as monthly reconciliations of Title IV funds.

14.0 SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS

Students must declare a major and be working toward the completion of that major to receive financial aid. To receive aid, a student must be making satisfactory academic progress (SAP) regardless of whether he or she has previously received aid.

Satisfactory Academic Progress SAP will be measured at the end of each semester of enrollment at University. Students are required under federal regulations to maintain certain standards of progress depending on the number of hours they have attempted in college. It is the student's responsibility to read and understand all policies associated with financial aid funding. The SAP policy is available online at <https://www.gadsdenstate.edu/admissions-aid/sap-guidelines.cms>.

SAP includes three basic components: qualitative Grade Point Average (GPA), quantitative Hours Completed (completion rate), and timeframe. Both the GPA and completion rates are on an increasing tiered scale. The GPA is computed based on a 4.0, with a 2.0 or higher GPA required for graduation. The completion rate is calculated by dividing the cumulative number of credit hours the student has successfully completed by the cumulative number of credit hours the student has attempted. Federal regulations require that students must complete their educational objective within a maximum time frame of one and one-half times the length of the programs in which they are enrolled since the purpose of the Federal Title IV financial aid programs is to assist students in meeting their educational expenses while they progress toward timely completion of their educational objectives.

GPA requirements for long-term certificate and degree seeking students:

- If the student has attempted 0-21 hours, he/she must maintain a 1.5 GPA.
- If the student has attempted 22-32 hours, he/she must maintain a 1.75 GPA.
- If the student has attempted 33 or more hours, he/she must maintain a 2.0 GPA.

Completion rate required by long-term certificate and degree seeking students:

- If the student has attempted 0-21 hours, he/she must maintain a 58% completionrate.
- If the student has attempted 22-32 hours, he/she must maintain a 62% completionrate.
- If the student has attempted 33 or more hours, he/she must maintain a 67% completion rate.

GPA requirements for short-term certificate (24-29 credit hours) students

- If the student has attempted 0-12 hours, he/she must maintain a 1.5 GPA.
- If the student has attempted 13 or more hours, he/she must maintain a 2.0 GPA.

Completion rate required for short-term certificate (24-29 credit hours) students:

- If the student has attempted 0-12 hours, h/she must maintain a 58% completion rate.
- If the student has attempted 13 or more hours, he/she must maintain a 67% completion rate.

Additional Regulations relating to SAP include the following.

- The maximum time for the completion of an undergraduate degree program is defined as no more than 150 percent of the normal time required to complete the degree program. For example, a degree-seeking student can attend Gadsden State for three years, which is 150% of a two-year major. Failure to complete it within this allotted time will result in loss of FA eligibility. All courses attempted (including transfer hours accepted by the institution) are included in the maximum time calculation. A change in major or academic program does not reset the 150% time.
- If a student fails to meet the Qualitative Standard – Grade Point Average (GPA) and/or the Quantitative Standard – Pace of Progression (Pace) for Satisfactory Academic Progress, he/she is given one warning semester in which he/she will be eligible to receive aid.
- If a student fails to regain in good standing, satisfying both the Qualitative Standard – Grade Point Average (GPA) and/or the Quantitative Standard – Pace of Progression (Pace), during his/her warning semester, he/she is placed into a Failing SAP Status and will be ineligible for continued aid.
- There is no warning semester for maximum time.
- If a student has lost eligibility, he/she may appeal – given the student has mitigating circumstances that caused unsuccessful coursework. An appeal cannot be approved for a prior term.
- Additional information follows regarding the treatment of repeated, incomplete, withdrawn, bankrupted, forgiven, and transitional (remedial) courses, as well as transfer credit, grade changes, and clock-hour programs.
 - Repeated courses are factored into the GPA, Pace, and maximum time calculations. The first repeat will not be factored into the GPA calculation. In addition, a student can only repeat a successfully passed course using federal aid once. Only one passed course

counts toward graduation; therefore, the course is counted in passed hours only once, which may affect the Pace.

- Incompletes are factored into the GPA, Pace, and maximum time calculations as failing grades.
- Withdrawals will not be factored into the GPA calculation but will be included in the Pace and maximum time calculations.
- Transfer credits accepted by the institution will not be factored into the GPA calculation, but all accepted credits are included in the Pace and maximum time calculations.

- Following acceptance of transfer credits, an official review of these credits is completed at the end of the next semester of enrollment at UNIVERSITY.
- Periods where Academic Bankruptcy was applied are factored into the GPA, Pace, and maximum time calculations.
- Forgiven courses are factored into the GPA, Pace, and maximum time calculations.
- Transitional (developmental/remedial) classes are factored into the GPA, Pace, and maximum time calculations.
- After a grade change (except an Incomplete) has been instituted for a prior term, SAP is recalculated at that time. When an Incomplete grade is updated to a final grade, it is factored into the SAP calculation at the time of the next formal evaluation.
- There is a 30-hour limit on remedial/developmental courses.
- ESL and Job Corp coursework will not be factored into the GPA, Pace, or maximum time calculations because these classes are not counted toward graduation.
- Dropped courses during the add/drop period are not factored into GPA, Pace, or maximum time calculations.
- Each payment period, clock hours and instructional weeks must be successfully completed to maintain good SAP in a clock-hour program.
- The final Pace result will be rounded based on traditional rounding rules (e.g., 66.5%= 67%)

It is possible for a student who is not meeting SAP to regain eligibility for Title IV aid. Options may include a) paying for classes or b) successfully appealing.

Information regarding financial aid appeals includes the following.

- A student may submit a Financial Aid Appeal if he/she can provide documented proof of mitigating circumstances. Mitigating circumstances are those that are beyond the student's control, such as illness, injury, or death of a relative. If a student files an appeal due to the maximum time, he/she must be meeting the other two components (GPA and Pace). An appeal cannot be approved for a prior term.
- A student should submit the appeal and all documentation pertaining to the appeal in time to ensure aid can be awarded by the end of the drop/add period. Submitting a Financial Aid Appeal is NOT an automatic approval.

- The Financial Aid Appeals Committee will meet each semester to consider completed appeals. The decision of the Appeals Committee is final. Only one appeal will be considered per semester.
- A student will be notified of the decision made by the Committee by e-mail. Students should check OneACCS Self-Service Banner SSB for statuses.
- A student must follow the terms of his/her appeal if approved or lose financial aid eligibility.
- An Academic Plan may be instituted for a student as an opportunity to restore the student to proper

Satisfactory Academic Progress at a specified future point in time. The Plan can be voided if the student has changed majors, or the student does not follow the prescribed academic plan. UNIVERSITY does not allow a plan to exceed maximum time.

15.0 DEPARTMENTAL REQUIRED REPORTING ENROLLMENT STATUS REPORTING PROCEDURES

A student's enrollment status determines deferment eligibility, grace periods and repayment schedules related to Direct Loans. The reporting and confirming the enrollment status of students receiving Title IV aid is completed by the Registrar's Office. The Registrar's Office coordinates with the National Student Clearinghouse for enrollment reporting. Reports are received regularly, and enrollment information provided to the Clearinghouse on a scheduled basis. Reporting errors are identified and corrected immediately.

TRANSFER MONITORING PROCEDURES

The Transfer Monitoring Process of the National Student Loan Data System (NSLDS) monitors all mid-year transfer students (students who transfer from one school to another during the same award year) for factors that could affect eligibility for Title IV federal student aid. Institutions are required to inform NSLDS, through the transfer monitoring process, of all the students transferring into the institution. NSLDS monitors changes in the financial aid history of those students and alerts the college of any relevant changes.

From the date that the latest ISIR for the student was generated and sent to the institution, NSLDS monitors changes to the student's financial aid history. NSLDS checks to see if there have been any changes in the student's financial aid history that may be relevant to the student's eligibility for aid at the new college. NSLDS continues to monitor changes since the last alert is sent. If there are relevant changes to the student's financial aid history, NSLDS will alert the college, which must then review the change to determine if it affects the student's eligibility for FSA. NSLDS will not alert an institution if there are no relevant changes to the student's financial aid history.

Students deemed to be transfers or mid-year awards are placed on the Transfer Monitoring (TM) report and transmitted to NSLDS. A seven-day hold is placed on the student's account to prevent disbursement during the hold period.

If a disbursement is made to an eligible student but later receives an alert from NSLDS, the college must access and review the student's financial aid history to determine whether an action needs to be taken with regards to that disbursement or any subsequent disbursements. Transfer monitoring reports are reviewed regularly, and awards are adjusted when necessary.

16.0 FRAUD & MISREPRESENTATION

There are difficult situations where students and/or parents purposefully misrepresent information in hopes of obtaining additional assistance. The Financial Aid Administrator is required to have a policy of referral when confronted with actual or suspected cases of fraud and abuse. The policy and procedure pertaining to fraud are outlined below.

POLICY FOR FRAUD

Students and parents who willfully submit fraudulent information will be investigated to the furthest extent possible. All cases of fraud and abuse will be reported to the proper authorities including the U.S. Office of Inspector General of the Department of Education, at **1-800-647- 8733** or **1-800-MIS-USED**.

PROCEDURES FOR FRAUD

If, in the Financial Aid Administrator's judgment, there has been intentional misrepresentation, false statements or alteration of documents which have resulted in the awarding or disbursement of funds for which the student is not eligible, the Financial Aid Administrator will notify the student and schedule an appointment to discuss the situation. If the student does not make an appointment, the Financial Aid Administrator may:

- Not process a financial aid application until the situation is resolved satisfactorily.
- Not award financial aid.
- Cancel financial aid.

Referral Procedures

1. The College will forward to the U. S. Department of Education or the College's Business Office, the name, social security number, and other relevant information of an applicant who has received funds based on incorrect information, after a reasonable effort has been made to resolve the discrepancy.
2. The Director of Financial Aid is required to report any known fraud to the Inspector General, U. S. Department of Education.

Fraudulent situations will be forwarded to the Office of the Inspector General.

UNIVERSITY COMMITMENT TO INTEGRITY

UNIVERSITY holds itself to the highest levels of integrity and will not provide any knowingly false, erroneous or misleading statements to a student, prospective student, family member of student or prospective student or the U.S. Department of Education or its affiliates. UNIVERSITY is committed to operating in an environment of integrity. Each Gadsden State employee is responsible for assuring that the actions and activities conducted at the college promote such an environment. Through the hiring, training, and performance review processes, employees learn the culture and official policies of UNIVERSITY and are educated to represent the College with integrity.

17.0 AUDIT REQUIREMENTS

A College is required to have a financial aid compliance audit for Title IV funds at least every year. This requirement appears in regulation, with the exception that this audit is satisfied if the College has had an audit under the Single Audit Act (Chapter 75 of Title 31 United States Code.) Audits will be scheduled and performed by the State Comptroller's Office or qualified accounting firms. [34 CFR 668.12]

Each year, auditors review a sample of student aid files to ensure that the Title IV aid is being administered in compliance with federal, state, and Institutional policies. Any exceptions found during the audit will be addressed. Associated policy lapses will be reviewed and corrected. The Financial Services Office is required to send a copy of the audit report to the U.S. Department of Education.

18.0 NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

University has filed with the Federal Government an Assurance of Compliance with all requirements imposed by or pursuant to Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Regulation issued thereunder, to the end that no person in the United States shall, on the grounds of race, color, or national origin, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be otherwise subjected to discrimination under any program or activity sponsored by this institution. It is also the policy of University to be in accordance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, which provides that “no person in the United States shall, on the basis of sex, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of or be subjected to discrimination under any educational program or activity receiving Federal financial assistance.”

University is committed to equal opportunity in employment and education and does not discriminate because of sex, race, color, religion, disability, or national origin. Gadsden State complies with non-discrimination regulations under Title VI and Title VII, Civil Rights Acts of 1964; Title IV, Education Amendments of 1972; and Section 504, Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Inquiries concerning this policy may be directed to Dr. Tera Simmons, Executive Vice President, University, P.O. Box 227, Gadsden, Alabama 35902-0227, telephone 256.549-8230.

2024-2025 Cost of Attendance (Fall and/or Spring Budget)

LIVING WITH PARENTS		A	T
		N	E
		N	R
		U	M
		A	
		L	
Tuition & Fees		4	2
		'	'
		2	1
		7	3
		2	6
Books, Course Materials, Supplies, & Equipment		1	8
		'	0
		6	0
		0	
Transportation		2	1
		'	'
		4	2
		2	1
		2	1
Living Expenses		1	6
		'	7
		3	5
		5	
		0	
Miscellaneous		4	2
		9	4
		4	7
TOTAL		\$	\$
		1	5
		0	'
		'	0
		1	6
		3	9
		8	
OFF CAMPUS - IN STATE		A	T
		N	E
		N	R
		U	M
		A	

	L	
Tuition & Fees	4	2
	'	'
	2	1
	7	3
	2	6
Books, Course Materials, Supplies, & Equipment	1	8
	'	0
	6	0
	0	
Transportation	2	1
	'	'
	4	2
	2	1
	2	1
Living Expenses	4	2
	'	'
	5	2
	0	5
	0	0
Miscellaneous	4	2
	9	4
	4	7
TOTAL	\$	\$
	1	6
	3	,
	,	6
	2	4
	8	4
	8	

OFF CAMPUS - OUT OF STATE

	<u>A</u>	<u>T</u>
	<u>N</u>	<u>E</u>
	<u>N</u>	<u>R</u>
	<u>U</u>	<u>M</u>
	<u>A</u>	
	<u>L</u>	
Tuition & Fees	7	3
	'	'
	3	6
	6	8
	8	4
Books, Course Materials, Supplies, & Equipment	1	8
	'	0
	6	0
	0	
Transportation	2	1
	'	'
	4	2
	2	1
	2	1
Living Expenses	3	1
	,	,

	6	8
	0	0
	0	0
Miscellaneous	4	2
	9	4
	4	7
TOTAL	\$	\$
	1	7
	5	,
	,	7
	4	4
	8	2
	4	

DORM - IN STATE

	A	T
	N	E
	N	R
	U	M
	A	
	L	
Tuition & Fees	4	2
	'	'
	2	1
	7	3
	2	6
Books, Course Materials, Supplies, & Equipment	1	8
	'	0
	6	0
	0	
Transportation	4	2
	8	4
	0	0
*Living Expenses	6	3
	'	'
	2	1
	2	0
Miscellaneous	0	4
	8	1
	2	2
TOTAL	\$	\$
	1	6
	3	,
	'	'
	3	6
	9	9
	6	8

DORM - OUT OF STATE

	A	T
	N	E
	N	R
	U	M
Fees office		

	A	
	L	
Tuition & Fees	7	3
	,	,
	3	6
	6	8
	8	4
Books, Course Materials, Supplies, & Equipment	1	8
	,	0
	6	0
	0	
Transportation	4	2
	8	4
	0	0
Living Expenses	6	3
	,	,
	2	1
	2	1
	0	0
Miscellaneous	8	4
	2	1
	4	2
TOTAL	\$	\$
	1	8
	6	,
	,	2
	4	4
	9	6
	2	

(*) Living Expenses include both housing and food. 1,020 annually, 510 a term is for weekend meals for on campus students.

Professional Organizations

Through membership in professional organizations, the Director of Financial Aid and Financial Aid Staff are provided with the information that is needed to successfully run the College's financial aid programs. The Fees office has broad responsibility for awarding, administering, and coordinating all financial aid funds from government and private sources. Critical to successfully performing these responsibilities is a thorough understanding and continuous monitoring of regulations, legislations, and philosophies that affect the delivery of student aid. Being current on these issues, the Fees office can recommend appropriate action to the Dean of Student Services and to speak with authority in disseminating information to other departments of the College.

Two professional organizations to which the Financial Aid Director and staff belong include the Alabama Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (AASFAA) and the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA). Through membership in these organizations, the Director of Financial Aid will be provided the most current information on the administration of financial aid on a timely basis. The organizations also provide many guides and manuals on developing an effective Fees office, as well as periodic workshops.

Without the assistance these organizations provide, it would be exceedingly difficult to run an efficient Fees office.

In addition to federal financial aid associations, FEES OFFICE staff belong to various associations based on job duties. For example, certifying officials belong to the Alabama Association of Veterans' Affairs and those running software processes belong to the Alabama Banner Users Group (ALBUG). Through active participation in these professional organizations, one will encounter a vast network of financial aid administrators who can serve as resource persons or as sounding boards in many instances. This interaction helps the administrator to be effective.

INSTITUTIONAL ELIGIBILITY

Institutional Eligibility

The Director of Financial Aid is responsible for submitting a timely and complete Eligibility and Certification Approval Report (ECAR) to the Department of Education. A copy of the E-App is kept in the Fees office along with a signed copy of the Program Participation Agreement. When changes to program offerings are approved, the FA office is notified to ensure eligibility.

Admissions

The admission policy at University is set by the Alabama University System (ACCS). To be eligible for federal financial aid, a student must be clear with the Admissions Office and be classified as a certificate- or degree-seeking student. Any student without a high school diploma or General Education Diploma (GED) must be eligible to receive federal aid through the Ability to Benefit (ATB) regulations as a career pathways student or by meeting the ATB grandfather criteria.

Program Participation Agreement

According to Federal Regulations, each institution must update the Title IV Program Participation Agreement (PPA) no less than every four years; however, interim updates are required to obtain Department of Education approval for the following changes: Administrative Personnel; additional locations; and addition of new programs.

Eligibility and Certification Approval Report

The summary of UNIVERSITY's eligibility/certification information is kept in the FEES OFFICE and is updated as needed when required changes are made.

Accounting and Reconciliation Hints

The Director of Financial Aid should keep the Banner Financial Aid Software and processes up to date, on an award year basis. This administrative software system provides a means to produce listings of all transactions by dates for Title IV funds. These listings can indicate allocations, de-obligations, and actual disbursements. Disbursement entries detail the date, name, student number, and the amount and type of aid disbursed for each transaction. The Director of Financial Aid and the Business Office work together to reconcile monthly and yearly on all Title IV funds awarded and disbursed through the Banner Financial Aid and Accounts Receivable modules to the Common Originations and Disbursements (COD) and G5 systems.

Program Eligibility

If an eligible College is conducting a program, it would have to meet the same requirements for an eligible program as any other program at the College for students to receive Title IV financial assistance. There are three major components to the eligible program definition for the Title IV funds.

1. Regular or provisional student status
2. Degree, Diploma, or Certificate program
3. Minimum length of instructional time

Should an eligible College offer a program of study that does not meet the regulatory definition of an eligible program; that program of study is not eligible for purposes of Title IV Funds, etc.

Student Eligibility

For a student to receive financial assistance from federal or state financial aid programs he/she must:

- Be enrolled as a regular or provisional student in an eligible program.
- Be a U.S. citizen/national or an eligible non-citizen.
- Show that he/she has need (except for institutional scholarships, which are non-need based)

- Be making satisfactory academic progress in accordance with policy.
- Not be in default on a Perkins/National Direct Student Loan, Stafford/Guaranteed Student Loan, PLUS, Supplemental Loan for Students, Income Contingent Loan, or a Consolidated Loan
- Not owe a refund on a Title IV program and sign a statement to that effect.
- Have a signed statement of educational purpose (saying that the student will use the money only for expenses related to attending College)
- Have a high College diploma, GED, or meet the ability to benefit requirements (ATB).

PACKAGING PROCEDURES AND COST OF ATTENDANCE

Packaging:

Student financial assistance encompasses a variety of sources. Packaging refers to evaluating a student's financial need and awarding campus-based aid in an equitable and consistent manner. These may be offered as one program or through a combination of programs known as a financial aid package. A student's financial aid package can include one or more of the following.

- Federal Title IV Programs – Student financial aid programs authorized by the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended (HEA). This includes the Federal Pell Grant, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG) and Federal Work-Study (FWS).
- Other Federal Aid Programs – These include veteran's assistance for veterans and their eligible dependents, Workforce Investment Opportunity Act (WIOA), and Trade Adjustment Assistance (TAA) through the Trade Readjustment Act (TRA/TAA).

State – These include the Alabama Student Assistance Program (ASAP) and several types of board approved state waiver/scholarships. Scholarships are offered for academic, technical, health services, performing arts, leadership, among others. Institutional scholarships are non-need based.

Packaging refers to evaluating a student's financial need and awarding distinct types of aid in an equitable and consistent manner. A student's financial aid package may often be a combination of scholarships, grants, and employment.

All students are automatically assigned to the "UG" packaging group. Awards are offered based on the assumption of full-time enrollment. Students are budgeted for the fall and spring semesters. Following the last registration period for each semester, students not enrolling full time are re-budgeted accordingly and revised award notifications are sent.

Determining a student's financial need consists of the College's cost of attendance (COA) less the student's aid index (SAI). Based on the student's need, the FEES OFFICE will evaluate available aid resources for which the student may be eligible to receive.

Federal Pell Grant, FSEOG, FWS, and Alabama Student Assistance Program (ASAP) funds are awarded when all financial aid requirements are met, and verification (if selected) is complete. Other forms of assistance may be awarded prior to the completion of financial aid requirements.

Federal Work-Study will be awarded as funds are available. Applications for FWS positions are available July 1st each school year. To apply, a student must complete the FAFSA, satisfy all verification requirements, and be making satisfactory academic progress (SAP). Once eligibility has been established, the FEES OFFICE will complete a determination of remaining need to ascertain the number of hours eligible to work weekly. Applicants will be selected based on their skills and availability for the positions. Jobs will first be awarded to returning FWS students. Remaining open positions are then awarded to other eligible applicants.

FSEOG will be awarded to Federal Pell Grant eligible students with zero SAIs (expected family contribution) and exceptional need. Priority will be given to students in converted credit hour programs.

Students who are Federal Pell Grant eligible and residents of Alabama may be eligible to receive ASAP funds. These grant funds will be awarded to students with minus 1500 SAI (student aid index) and exceptional need. Priority will be given to students in converted credit hour programs.

Students will be notified via email of any financial aid.

Student Budgets:

Student budgets are the basis for estimating the cost of attendance for each category group of students. Student budgets will be calculated on a 12-month basis. Budgets will be categorized as follows based on tuition rates and other factors:

- Dependent Alabama Resident living with Parent.
- Independent Alabama Resident
- Dependent Non-Alabama Resident
- Independent Non-Alabama Resident

The following procedures are used in the awarding and packaging process:

- The electronic Institutional Student Information Record (ISIR) is received prior to determining the student's budget type. The ISIR is used to obtain the student aid index (SAI).
- The Student Aid Index is subtracted from the predetermined budget. The difference is the "financial need" which is the maximum amount of financial assistance a student may receive.
- The Federal PELL Grant, applicable State Grants, etc., are estimated and subtracted from financial need.

- If there is still a remaining financial need, then campus-based monies may be awarded to the student.
- The student is offered a financial aid package via their financial aid award notification.

Budget Components:

A. Transportation Costs

In determining transportation costs, the College uses the Local Standards for Transportation reported by the IRS. The Operating Cost includes the amount spent monthly on operating cost for one car.

- IRS Local Standards: Transportation: <https://www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/local-standards-transportation>

B. Living Expenses

Based on the federally set allowance for a 9-month budget; prorated to meet a 12-month allowance:

- Dependent students living at home with parents.
- Independent students with or without dependents

The College will determine the average costs for a student's room and board while attending for a full academic year. These calculations are determined using the following sources of information:

- HUD Fair Market Rent guidelines for existing housing for the prior year:
www.huduser.org/portal/datasets

C. Tuition and Fees

The Alabama University System approves the tuition and fees for University annually. Mandatory fees are defined as those generic fees that are required across the board for registration purposes only. Mandatory fees do not include program specific fees for selected program areas.

D. Cost of Books, Course Materials, Supplies, & Equipment

The College surveys the cost of Books, Course Materials, Supplies, & Equipment required for eligible programs based on an academic year and averaged by the number of programs. An allowance is defined as those funds that will be used to purchase books and/or supplies required for a student's course of study.

E. *Miscellaneous*

This estimated budget component represents additional expenses a student may incur such as computers, liability insurance, other equipment, state board testing, child/dependent care, and additional personal care.

Federal PELL Grant Budgets

The budget components for the cost of attendance are the same for all financial aid programs (PELL, Campus Based, etc. .).

Federal PELL Grant Calculation Procedures

1. July 1st to June 30th represents the academic year.
2. An academic year is represented by 30 weeks and 24 semester hours.
3. The scheduled award is based on a full-time student attending a full academic year and is made according to the official PELL Payment Schedule.
4. Students enrolling for less than an academic year or less than full-time will be awarded on a prorated basis.
5. For financial aid purposes, the payment period and semester award will correspond to the hours for which the student will enroll and pay fees as described above.
6. For financial aid purposes, the payment period will be established on a semester system.
7. The scheduled award for PELL Grant is determined by using the appropriate federal PELL Payment Schedule either for a full-time, three-quarter time, half-time or less than half-time student.
8. The students will be paid only for the terms of actual enrollment.
9. Should the student be enrolled for less than full-time, then one of the other PELL Payments Schedules must be used that represents the enrollment status, SAI and Cost of Attendance of that student.
10. PELL awards will be disbursed to student accounts 14 calendar days after the Pell Recalculation Date (PRD), at which time credit balances are created.
11. Pell funds will be applied to tuition, fees, and book charges in the UNIVERSITY bookstore. Any remaining funds will be refunded to the student in the form of a check (or electronic transfer for those students opting) within 14 days of a credit balance on the student's account.
12. Campus-based aid will be determined by using the appropriate campus budgets by deducting the expected family contribution and the Pell Award.

DISBURSEMENT PROCEDURES

Students are allowed to use their financial aid awards each term to defer their tuition, fees, and book charges. Financial Aid awards are authorized to student accounts upon completion of files and student registrations. Any Title IV financial aid (Pell, SEOG) remaining after all tuition, fees, and book charges are assessed is disbursed to the student by check or direct deposit within 14 days of a credit balance on the student's account.

Adjustments to aid packages and to tuition, fee and bookstore charges may occur when a student fails to complete courses, withdraws, or a course is dropped.

REFUND POLICIES

A refund is money due a student or financial aid source when a student has withdrawn or drops a class. The refund policy used varies depending on the type of aid a student is scheduled to receive or if they have completely withdrawn from college or have been dropped.

FEDERAL STUDENT AID PROGRAMS

Federal PELL Grant Program (PELL)

The Federal PELL Grant (PELL) is a federally funded Title IV Grant Program available to students who meet certain income guidelines of postsecondary education. The PELL Grant does not typically require repayment. It is not available to a student who has received a bachelor's degree, owes a refund to any Title IV Aid Program, or is in default on a student loan.

The amount of the Pell Grant award will depend on the student aid index (SAI) amount shown on the FAFSA Submission Summary, whether the student is full or part time, the number of credit hours in which the student is enrolled, the cost of attendance, and the size of federal appropriations. Students must reapply each fiscal year (July 1st – June 30th) by completing the renewal application of the FAFSA for the new award year. Pell is available to students who are in learning support classes if they are either regular or provisional admits to their program of study.

To be eligible to receive a Pell grant, students must meet the following general eligibility criteria: (34 CFR 668.32)

- Have a high school diploma, recognized equivalent (GED), or achieve minimum scores on an approved ability to benefit test (ATB).
- Be enrolled as a regular or provisional student in an eligible program.
- Meet citizenship requirements.
- Demonstrate financial need.

- Attending a participating College.
- Be working toward a degree, diploma, or certificate.
- Maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress as defined by the College.
- Not be in default or owe a refund on any Title IV funds.
- Not have earned a bachelor's degree.
- Satisfy all required statements and certifications.
- Have satisfied any verification requirements that may be applicable.

Pell Grant Procedures

- The Institutional Student Information Record (ISIR) is received in electronic format through EDConnect from the federal processor. This data is downloaded into BANNER Financial Aid Software as received with the current date. This electronic ISIR is kept in the BANNER for no less than three academic years.
- Through the budgeting process in BANNER, each student's application is assigned to the appropriate Budget Group.
 - In-state Living with Parents
 - In-state Off Campus
 - In-state On Campus
 - Out-of-state Living with Parents
 - Out-of-state Off Campus
 - Out-of-state On Campus
- Through the tracking process in BANNER, each student's application is assigned to a Tracking Group.
 - NOISIR - No ISIR on File
 - REJSIG - Rejected ISIR, No Signature
 - NOFFND - Not Eligible for Fed Aid
 - REJSAR - Rejected SAR
 - NV - Not Selected for Verification
 - V1DBM - V1 Dep Mar Par/Stu DRT 3/1
 - V1DBS - V1 Dep Single Par/Stu DRT 2/1
 - V1DB - V1 Dep Both St/Par IRS Retrieval
 - V1DP - V1 Dep Parent IRS Retrieval
 - V1DS - V1 Dep Student IRS Retrieval
 - V1DN - V1 Dep Neither IRS Retrieval
 - V1DNF - V1 Dep Par Did Not File
 - V1IS - V1 Ind Student IRS Retrieval
 - V1I - V1 Ind MarriedStu DRT 2/1
 - V1INF - V1 Ind Non-Filer

- V1IN - V1 Ind No IRS Retrieval
- V4D - V4 Dep Verification Group
- V4I - V4 Ind Verification Group
- V5DB - V5 Dep Both St/Par IRS Retrieval
- V5DP - V5 Dep Parent IRS Retrieval
- V5DS - V5 Dep Student IRS Retrieval
- V5DBS - V5 Dep Par/Stu DRT 2/1
- V5DBM - V5 Dep Mar Par/Stu DRT 3/1

- V5DN - V5 Dep Neither IRS Retrieval
 - V5DNF - V5 Dep Par Did Not File
 - V5IS - V5 Ind Student IRS Retrieval
 - V5I - V5 Ind Single Stu DRT 1/1
 - V5IM - V5 Ind Married Stu DRT 2/1
 - V5INF - V5 Ind Non-Filer
 - V5IN - V5 Ind No IRS Retrieval
 - ERROR - RORGRPS-RORRULE Error-Review
 - DUAL - Dual Enrolled
- Through the batch posting process in BANNER, verification requirements and any items needed to resolve C-flags or REJECT codes are assigned to the student's record for verification. ISIR's are reviewed and any items needed to process verification or resolve conflicting information are added to the student's tracking record.
 - If the student's ISIR has been selected for verification, specific items reported by the student on the ISIR must be verified against supporting documentation, such as tax returns, statements, and specific proof of untaxed income. A tracking email with a list of required forms is sent to the student. Students can also view ACCS Banner to see the list of missing documents and to download forms.
 - Once required documentation is submitted, verification is completed. If the result of verification is a change in the student's eligibility or an error of \$25 or more, the corrections must be submitted to the Federal Processor. A valid SAR/ISIR will be generated and re-sent to the student and the College.
 - Once the valid ISIR is received, and verification requirements are satisfied in BANNER, the packaging and awarding processes in BANNER will assign the student to the READY packaging group and place Pell Grant award amounts on RPAAWRD for the aid year.
 - Pell awards are calculated in two equal payments (on the semester system) assuming full- time enrollment. Actual disbursement amounts are based on enrollment intensity status for each term. Students enrolled less than full-time will have their awards prorated.
 - Transfer students who have received Pell funds at another College within the aid year will have

their award amounts manually adjusted on RPAAWRD to ensure that the student does not receive more than 100% of their scheduled award.

- A transfer student will be allowed to receive 100 percent of a Scheduled Award. She/he may find that having received a portion at another College could lower the standard amount for the term enrolled here.
- For those students withdrawing (officially or unofficially), a Return of Title IV Fund calculation will be completed using the CPS Online Return of Title IV calculator or the BANNER R2T4 process. The revised award amount will be posted in BANNER. The student will be sent an email informing them of a reduction in award amounts and potential balance due. If applicable, the Business Office will also bill the student.

- Following the Pell Recalculation Date, Pell Grant awards will be posted to the student accounts in BANNER.
- Students may defer mandatory institutional charges toward their Pell Grant at the beginning of the term. The Business Office will calculate student refunds after tuition, fees, and book charges are assessed and mail Pell refund within 14 days of a credit balance on the student's account.
- Payment origination and disbursement records will be generated through BANNER as necessary and submitted to the Department of Education Common Origination and Disbursement (COD) Web Site using EDConnect.
- The Fees office will reconcile its Pell awards with the Pell records on the COD website and the Business Office each month. The Business Office will reconcile student accounts with G-5 each month.
- At the end of the aid year, a final reconciliation report between the records in the Fees office, COD Pell records, the Business Office, and G-5 records will be created and maintained.
- Federal aid is disbursed based on the following formulas.
 - Formula 1 for credit-hour, term-based programs: All degree programs and certificate programs in which all classes in the program are fully acceptable into a degree program.
 - Formula 1 for clock-to-credit conversion non-degree programs: Certificate programs in which one or more classes are not fully acceptable into a degree program.

Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG)

The Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG) will be awarded to eligible students with demonstrated exceptional financial need. Students must be undergraduates enrolled in an eligible program leading to a degree, diploma, or certificate at an eligible College. Students must meet citizenship requirements as required for all Title IV Programs, as well as all other eligibility listed in the Federal Student Financial Aid Handbook. Priority for supplemental grants will be given to converted credit hour students. These students may receive Pell and ASAP in the same term.

The Fees office will use ISIR to consider all eligible students for FSEOG. Awards are made on a first come first served basis to students meeting all eligibility criteria until the allocation for the year has been exhausted. Checks will be issued and disbursed by check or direct deposit by the Business Office to eligible students within 14 days of a credit balance on the student's account.

Maximum FSEOG Award - The maximum FSEOG a student may receive per academic year at the College will depend on the availability of funds but will not exceed \$1000 (without approval and justification).

A student's total aid may not exceed the student's financial need. $\text{Need} = \text{Cost of Attendance} - \text{SAI}$.

Federal Work-Study (FWS)

The Federal Work-Study program provides part-time employment to students who need the income to help meet the costs of post-secondary education. Work-study awards are made on a term basis depending on available funds.

Selection of Students

The Federal Work-Study (FWS) program is designed to offer students with a remaining financial need the opportunity to obtain work experience while pursuing higher education. Students desiring to participate in the FWS program must meet the following requirements:

- Be enrolled in a Pell-eligible program.
- Be making satisfactory academic progress (SAP)
- Have remaining need

➤ Awarding of Students

Eligible students are awarded FWS funds based on the number of weeks in semester and the remaining funds in the current College budget. The student's cost attendance (COA) and remaining budget are also considered when awarding work-study funds.

➤ Assigning Jobs

Prior to awarding FWS awards, needed positions are solicited from faculty and staff at the college. Positions are reserved for community service positions, such as reading tutors at area elementary schools. A Federal Work-Study Agreement is on file from off-campus community service positions. All FWS job requests include the job responsibilities, duration of the position, and the number of positions desired.

Candidates are required to complete and submit their employment application online. Students may submit a resume and transcript with the application; however, they are not required. After the application window has ended, the student's SAP, remaining need, and enrollment are verified to ensure eligibility to participate in the FWS program.

➤ Fiscal Procedures and Records

All candidates selected for FWS positions must complete a new hire packet containing authorization for the College to conduct a criminal background check. Once a student receives a clear background check and submits their paperwork, the Fees office will complete orientation. Confidentiality, work ethics, and harassment are discussed. Harassment, workplace violence, campus conduct, and campus conduct are also stressed during the orientation to make sure students have a clear understanding of FWS expectations.

Once hired FWS students are required to submit monthly timesheets to the Fees office by the 15th of every month. The timesheets are completed by the student and approved by their supervisor prior to being submitted to the Fees office. A copy of the timesheet is

maintained in the Fees office and processed for the pay period.

To ensure separation of duties while administering the FWS funds the following procedures have been put in place:

- FWS positions are awarded to the students by the Fees office.
- Disbursements are distributed in the form of a paycheck or direct deposit through Human Resources for the hours worked during the pay period.
- FWS funds are drawn down by the Business Office through the G5 screen based on hours worked and the College allocation.

Federal Work Study awards are reported on the FISAP.

STATE STUDENT AID – ASAP PROGRAMS FOR ALABAMA RESIDENTS

The Fees office will administer the ASAP Grant in accordance with regulations issued by the Alabama Commission on Higher Education (ACHE). Any changes to ACHE regulations and guidance will supersede the information below.

To qualify for ASAP funds, students must meet the general Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) requirements described in this manual, as well as the program specific residency and eligibility requirements outlined below.

Appendix – Acronyms and Common Terms

Term	Acronym	Explanation
Ability to Benefit	ATB	One of the criteria used to establish student eligibility to receive Title IV program assistance is that a student must have earned a high college

		<p>diploma or its equivalent.</p> <p>Students who are not high school graduates (or who have not earned a General Education Development [GED] certificate) can demonstrate that they have the “ability to benefit” from the education or training being offered by passing an approved ability-to-benefit (ATB) test.</p>
Adjusted Gross Income	AGI	All taxable income minus IRS allowable adjustments to income.
Academic Year	AY	Represents 30 weeks and 24 semester hours
Base Year	BY	The year of income used as the basis for need analysis.
Campus-Based Programs	CB	The federal student aid programs (Federal Work-Study and Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant), within Title IV, administered directly by the institution.
Central Processing System	CPS	The Central Processing System, or CPS, is ED’s application data processing facility. The CPS uses student information from the FAFSA processors to calculate the student’s official SAI. It returns the students eligibility information to the student and the colleges the student indicated on his or her FAFSA.
Code of Federal Regulations	C.F.R.	The codification of the rules published in the Federal Register by agencies of the federal government. Each volume of the C.F.R. is updated once each calendar year and issued quarterly. The volume for Education, Title 34, is updated on July 1 of each year. Cited as 34 C.F.R.
Common Origination	COD	ED database that includes the process of origination and disbursement reporting for Federal Pell Grant Education, as

n and Disbu rsem ent		well as student-level reporting for Federal Campus- Based awards.
Cost of Atten danc e	C O A	An estimate of the student's educational expenses.

Eligibility and Certification Approval Report	E C A R	A summary of an institution's eligibility/certification information (Title IV program participation, institution's accreditor, state authorization, staff, additional locations, and eligible vocational programs).
United States Department of Education	E D D e p a r t m e n t	A Federal agency of the US Government that regulates and enforces policies and procedures for the US Education System.
Electronic Application for Approval to Participate	E - A P P	The Electronic Application used by colleges to apply or re-apply for participation in the Title IV programs.
FAFSA Processing System	F P S	The FAFSA Processing System, or FPS, is ED's application data processing facility. The FPS uses student information from the FAFSA processors to calculate the student's official SAI. It returns the students eligibility information to the student and the colleges the student

		indicated on his or her FAFSA
FAFSA Submission Summary	F S S	A federal “output” document sent directly to a student from ED’s FAFSA Processing Center summarizing a student’s application and eligibility status.
Famil y Educational Rights and Privacy Act	F E R P A	FERPA restricts the disclosure of student records to other parties and requires the college to give a student the opportunity to review his or her records.
Finan cial Aid Administra tor	F A A	FAA An individual employed by an institution to administer and coordinate student financial aid programs.
Fiscal Oper ation s Repor t and Appli catio n to Partic ipate in Camp us-Based Progr ams	F I S A P	An annual report of expenditures in the campus-based programs during an award year, combined with an application to participate in campus-based programs in the upcoming award year. Must be submitted to ED via the web by any college receiving campus-based funds.
Free Appli catio n for Feder al Stude nt Aid	F A F S A	An application completed by students and parents to apply for federal student aid.

General Educational Development Certificate	G E D	Students who are beyond the age of compulsory attendance, but who do not have a high school diploma or General Educational Development Certificate (GED), must pass a written test to be eligible for Title IV.
Federal Pell Grant Program	P e l l G r a n t (P e l l)	A federal program that provides grants for (1) undergraduate students with the greatest financial need and have not received a bachelor's degree or a first professional degree and (2) eligible students with baccalaureate degrees who are enrolled in state-required teacher certification programs.
Federal Student Aid	F S A	Financial help to those enrolled in an eligible program as a regular student at an institution participating in our federal student aid programs. (An "institution" is a four-year or two-year public or private college, university, career institution, or a trade school.)
Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant	F S E O G (S E O	A campus-based program that provides grant assistance to undergraduate students with need. Priority is given to students who have exceptional financial need and are Federal Pell Grant recipients.

	G)	
Federal Work-Study	F W S	A Federal funded, campus-based employment program providing jobs for students with financial need.
G5	G 5	A central repository for payment transactions of institutions that receive full financial management support to facilitate and support activities (i.e., award authorizations, disbursing and refunding and final grant close out) from the ED's Office of the Chief Financial Officer (OCFO).
Higher Education Act	H E A	Federal legislation passed in 1965, with amendments and reauthorizations subsequently passed, authorizing Federal postsecondary student financial aid programs, and mandating that the programs be regulated and administered by the U.S. Secretary of Education.
Information for Financial Aid Professionals	I F A P	The Information for Financial Aid Professionals (IFAP) Web site consolidates guidance, resources, and information related to the administration and processing of Title IV federal student aid into one online site for use by the entire financial aid community.

Institutional Student Information Record	ISIR	A summary of information from the student's Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) submitted electronically to institutions and state agencies.
National Student Loan Data System	NSLDS	EDs integrated database system that collects and maintains student loan and grant data on Title IV federal student aid recipients, available to the financial aid community.
Fees office	FEESOFFICE	The office that processes and oversees Student Aid.
Office of Postsecondary Education Identification	OPERID	An eight-digit number assigned to an institution upon approval for participation in Title IV programs.

Number		
Professional Judgment	P J	A provision in the law allowing financial aid administrators to make individual adjustments to override a student's dependency status (from dependent to independent), to adjust the components of a student's cost of attendance and to adjust the data elements used to calculate the student's expected family contribution.
Program Participation Agreement	P P A	A signed agreement between the Secretary and the President/Owner/CEO of an institution allowing participation in the Title IV programs. Institutions may not award Title IV funds until the PPA has been signed and countersigned.
Return of Title IV Funds	R 2 T 4	When a student withdraws (official or unofficial) from an institution without completing a payment period or period of enrollment, the institution must determine the amount of Title IV funds "earned" for the student's attendance. Unearned federal student aid must be returned. Earned grant funds that the student has not yet received must be paid to the student by the institution as a post-withdrawal disbursement.
Student Aid Index	S A I	An eligibility Index number that fees office uses to determine student's federal aid.
Satisfactoriness Academic Progress	S A P	A sufficient rate of student course-completion determined using qualitative and quantitative measures.

Social Security Number	SSN	A nine-digit number assigned by the Social Security Administration (SSA). The SSN helps SSA to maintain an accurate record of wages or self-employment earnings that are covered under the Social Security Act, and to monitor records once a person begins to start receiving Social Security benefits.
Selective Service	SS	Students must register, or arrange to register, with Selective Service to receive financial aid. This applies only to males 18 years and older born on or after 1/1/1960.
Title IV Federal Student Aid	Title IV (TIV)	Financial aid programs for postsecondary students, authorized under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended (Title IV, HEA) and administered by the U.S. Department of Education.
United States Code	USC	The United States Code is the codification by subject matter of the general and permanent laws of the United States. It is divided by broad subjects into 50 titles and published by the Office of the Law Revision Counsel of the U.S. House of Representatives. Since 1926, the United States Code has been published every six years. In between editions, annual cumulative supplements are published to present the most current information. Documents are available only as

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