

2005-2006 AWARD YEAR

GEORGIA HERO SCHOLARSHIP (HELPING EDUCATE RESERVIST and their OFFSPRING)

REGULATIONS

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GEORGIA HERO SCHOLARSHIP

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Georgia HERO (Helping Educate Reservists and their Offspring) Scholarship program was created to provide educational grant assistance to members of the Georgia National Guard and U.S. Military Reservists who served in combat zones or the children of such members of the Georgia National Guard and U.S. Military Reserves. The Georgia HERO Scholarship is funded by State Appropriations.

The award amount received by the students each award year, and the total amount of funds appropriated for the program, are established each year by the Georgia General Assembly during the preceding legislative session. The maximum grant assistance for which a student is eligible shall not exceed \$2,000 per award year and a total of \$8,000 for a maximum of four award years.

I. STUDENT ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVIST CRITERIA

To be eligible to apply for a Georgia HERO Scholarship, the student must meet one of the following criteria:

1. Be a member of the Georgia National Guard who completed at least one qualifying term of service; or
2. Be a U.S. Military Reservist who completed at least one qualifying term of service; or
3. Be a daughter or son whose parent was a member of the Georgia National Guard or the U.S. Military Reserves who completed at least one qualifying term of service. Such daughter or son must have been born prior to such qualifying term of service or within nine months of the beginning of such qualifying term of service and was 25 years of age or younger during the qualifying term of service.

CITIZENSHIP

A student must be a U.S. Citizen or a Permanent Resident Alien who meets the definition of an eligible non-citizen under federal Title IV requirements for a minimum of 12 consecutive months immediately preceding the first day of classes for the school term for which the scholarship is sought.

RESIDENCY

The student must be a legal resident of Georgia, as defined by the Commission, for a minimum of 12 consecutive months immediately preceding the first day of classes for the school term for which the scholarship is sought.

APPROVED INSTITUTION

The student must be enrolled or accepted for admission in an institution which is a unit of the University System of Georgia or a branch of the Georgia Department of Technical and Adult Education, or a private independent nonprofit postsecondary institution eligible to participate in Georgia's HOPE Scholarship Program.

ENROLLMENT ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The student must be fully admitted, classified and enrolled as an undergraduate student. Full-time enrollment is not a requirement. In addition, there is no minimum number of hours of enrollment required. A student in attendance as specified in these regulations may be enrolled in courses that are remedial in nature or undertaken to remove entrance conditions. If such remedial and/or non-credit study is required or recommended by the educational institution as part of the regular instructional program for that student, he or she may be considered eligible. However, non-credit courses taken entirely on a personal or voluntary basis by the student shall not be included in determining the enrollment status of the student or purposes of this scholarship program.

MATRICULATED STATUS OF ELIGIBLE STUDENTS

The student must be in a “matriculated status” in an organized program of study leading to a degree, diploma, or certificate. The student is considered “matriculated” when he or she is fully accepted by the institution and enrolled in courses fully recognized at that time as contributing toward requirements for completion of the program. The student, who may be required to complete learning support (remedial) course work to make up for deficiencies in background or training, is eligible to receive HERO payment for those hours.

SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS

A student must maintain satisfactory academic progress in a course of study in accordance with the standards and practices used for federal Title IV programs by the postsecondary institution at which the student is enrolled. To determine student eligibility, the institution must apply the same Satisfactory Academic Progress policy as used for federal Title IV programs.

SELECTIVE SERVICE REGISTRATION

A student must meet federal Selective Service registration requirements.

DEFAULT AND REFUND

A student must not be in default on a federal Title IV or State of Georgia educational loan, nor owe a refund on a Title IV or State of Georgia student financial aid program, nor in any other way be in violation of the federal Title IV or State of Georgia student aid regulations. If the student has repaid the defaulted loan or refund in-full, he or she is eligible to receive HERO assistance beginning with the term in which repayment was made in full, but not for previous terms.

DRUG-FREE ACT

A student is ineligible if, in accordance with the Drug-Free Postsecondary Education Act of 1990, he or she has been convicted for committing certain felony offenses involving marijuana, controlled substances, or dangerous drugs. A student is ineligible to receive a HERO Scholarship from the date of conviction to the completion of the next academic term. Institutions are not required to obtain criminal justice records of HERO applicants.

TRANSIENT STUDENTS

A transient student is eligible to receive HERO payment if all other eligibility requirements are met. Both the home institution and the host institution must be HERO-eligible Georgia institutions. HERO payment must take place through the host institution. Students taking course work through more than one institution during the same term are eligible to receive HERO payment from each institution.

DISTANCE LEARNING STUDENTS

A Distance Learning student is eligible to receive HERO payment if all other eligibility requirements are met. The institution offering the Distance Learning course work must be a HERO-eligible institution. Students taking course work through more than one institution during the same term are eligible to receive HERO payment from each institution.

STUDY ABROAD PROGRAMS

A student enrolled in a matriculating status at a HERO-eligible institution in Georgia may qualify for HERO payment while participating in a Study Abroad program. Study Abroad programs or International-Intercultural Studies program are college credit-earning programs of study that include travel outside the United States. The student's HERO-eligible home institution must approve the Study Abroad program for credit toward the student's degree program prior to the student's departure. The HERO payment must take place through the HERO-eligible home institution, unless the student is participating in a Study Abroad program via another HERO-eligible institution, then the process described in the above TRANSIENT STUDENTS section may be followed as an alternative. The HERO-eligible home institution may coordinate the Study Abroad program through institutions that are not eligible to participate in the HERO program. For example, the student's HERO-eligible home institution may have an arrangement with an out-of-state institution's Study Abroad Program.

ALTERNATIVE STUDY PROGRAMS

A student enrolled in a matriculating status at a HERO-eligible institution in Georgia may qualify for HERO payment while participating in an Alternative Study program. Alternative Study programs are college credit-earning programs of study that include travel outside the State of Georgia but within the United States. Alternative Study programs may be in conjunction with postsecondary institutions in other states. For example, a HERO-eligible institution may have an arrangement with a postsecondary institution in another state in which a group of their students spend the summer term at the out-of-state institution to take advantage of unique resources available to that institution. The HERO-eligible home institution must approve the Alternative Study program for credit toward the student's degree prior to the student's departure. The HERO payment must take place through the HERO-eligible home institution.

II. APPLICATION PROCESS

1. The applicant must complete the "student section" of a Georgia HERO Scholarship application and include the appropriate documentation as described below.
 - a. If the applicant served in the Georgia National Guard or U.S. Military Reserves, then official documentation of the applicant's Qualifying Term of Service must be provided with the Georgia HERO Scholarship application.
 - b. If the applicant's parent served in the Georgia National Guard or U.S. Military Reserve, then official documentation of the parent's Qualifying Term of Service and a copy of the applicant's Certificate of Live Birth or legal

adoption records must be provided with the Georgia HERO Scholarship application.

- c. If the applicant's parent served in the Georgia National Guard or U.S. Military Reserves and was killed or received 100 percent disability as a result of injuries received in a combat zone, then official documentation of the parent's Qualifying Term of Service, proof of death or disability, and a copy of the applicant's Certificate of Live Birth or legal adoption records must be provided with the Georgia HERO Scholarship application.
2. The applicant must forward the Georgia HERO Scholarship application and all required documentation to the Student Financial Aid Office of the eligible postsecondary institution the student plans to attend.
 3. Upon receipt of a Georgia HERO Scholarship application and documentation, the eligible institution must certify the following eligibility requirements and forward the application and documentation to the Commission.
 - a. U.S. Citizenship or Permanent Resident Alien.
 - b. Georgia Residency.
 - c. Enrollment and Matriculation.
 - d. Satisfactory Academic Progress.
 - e. Selective Service Registration.
 - f. Loan Default and Refund Due.
 - g. Drug-Free Postsecondary Education Act.
 4. A student must file the application online or in the institution's financial aid office on or before the last day of the academic term (semester or quarter) or the student's withdrawal date, whichever occurs first, in order to be paid for that academic term. The last day of the academic term is the last day of classes or exams for the institution, whichever occurs later. Supplemental documentation required by the institution or the Commission to support or verify a student's application information may be submitted after the deadline date without jeopardizing the student's eligibility.
 5. The Commission shall review the completed application and all supporting documentation to verify and determine the applicant's eligibility and award. The Commission will notify the applicant and the eligible institution of the determination.
 6. In order to renew a Georgia HERO Scholarship, the student must continue to make Satisfactory Academic Progress and meet all of the other eligibility requirements set forth in Section I of these regulations.
 7. The student must submit a renewal application to the Commission for subsequent periods of study at such times as designated by the Commission and no later than the last day of the academic term or the student's withdrawal date, whichever occurs first.

III. AWARD AND INVOICING PROCESS

AWARD AMOUNTS FOR FULL-TIME ENROLLMENT

The amount of aid payable to an eligible full-time (12 hours) student from the Georgia HERO Scholarship program is a maximum of \$2,000 per academic year or a maximum amount as specified in the General Appropriations Act. The maximum award of \$2,000 per academic year shall be provided on a school-term basis, as follows:

	<u>Semester System</u>	<u>Quarter System</u>
Summer Term	\$1,000.00	\$ 666.66
Fall Term	\$1,000.00	\$ 666.66
Winter Term	-----	\$ 666.66
Spring Term	\$1,000.00	\$ 666.66

AWARD AMOUNTS FOR PART-TIME ENROLLMENT

The Georgia HERO Scholarship award amount for an eligible part-time (less than 12 hours) student is payable on a pro rata basis, based upon the award amount for full time students and the number of hours enrolled. The award for part-time study is \$83.33 per semester hour, or \$55.55 per quarter hour, or as specified in the General Appropriations Act.

AWARD AMOUNT REDUCTIONS

The Georgia HERO Scholarship award amount for a student must be reduced accordingly if the student is receiving any other student financial aid from federal, state, institutional, or private sources which in combination with the maximum HERO award amount would exceed the student's cost of attendance budget. A student's HERO award plus any other student financial aid must not exceed the student's cost of attendance budget.

AWARD LIMITATIONS

1. The maximum HERO assistance for which any student is eligible, shall not exceed a total of \$8,000 for the equivalent of four award years.
2. A recipient of the Georgia HERO Scholarship is eligible for one award year of assistance for each period of 181 consecutive days that his or her parent was deployed overseas on active service, on or after the effective date of Code Section 20-3-486, to a location or locations outside of the United States and its territories designated by the United States Department of Defense as a combat zone.
3. A recipient of the Georgia HERO Scholarship whose parent was killed or received a 100 percent disability as a result of injuries received in such combat zone shall

receive up to a maximum of four award years, regardless of the time his or her parent was on active service in such combat zone.

INVOICING

The Georgia HERO Scholarship is available for Summer, Fall, Winter and/or Spring terms. A student may be awarded for three semesters or four quarters per fiscal year.

1. HERO funds shall be paid to the postsecondary institution in one check or electronic transfer of funds on behalf of eligible students each school term upon submission to the Commission of a HERO Invoice.
2. An institution may submit a HERO Invoice to the Commission as early as 15 days prior to the first day of classes for the school term. HERO Invoices are transmitted from the postsecondary institution to the Commission through the use of the SURFER Internet system. Institutions can use either SURFER to data-enter the student information and transmit it individually to the Commission or extract the student information from their computer system's database and use SURFER to transmit it to the Commission as a file. Regardless of which of these two methods an institution uses, the data transmitted in a given day will be processed by the Commission that night and an award/denial report (when applicable) will be available the next day for the institution to download and funds will be disbursed within two business days.
3. Upon receipt of HERO payments from the Commission, the institution shall credit the amount of payment on behalf of an eligible student to the account of the student.
4. In the event a HERO check is lost by the institution or through the mail, the procedures described below should be followed:
 - a. The appropriate institution official must contact the Commission and request a replacement check.
 - b. After following normal verification procedures that the lost check has not been cashed, the Commission will place a "Stop Payment" order on the original check. A replacement check will then be issued to the school for delivery to the student.
 - c. If the original check should subsequently be found, it should be voided and returned to the Commission.
 - d. If the institution has already reconciled for the fiscal year from which the check has been disbursed, then the institution cannot request replacement of these funds.

IV. REFUND POLICY AND PROCEDURES

If a student withdraws, drops out, drops hours, is expelled, or otherwise fails to complete a period of enrollment, and is entitled to a refund, a portion of such refund may need to be returned to the HERO fund. The institution must determine the amount of the refund by applying the institution's refund policy, and return that amount to the HERO fund. The remainder is retained by the institution to be applied to the institution's cost for the portion of the school term the student was enrolled. In remitting refunds due the Commission, the following information should be given:

1. The name of the student, and the name of the award being refunded.
2. The Social Security Number of the student.
3. The date the student withdrew or dropped a course, and the term being repaid.

The institution must have a procedure in place to ensure that the HERO funds do not go to an unintended third party (i.e. State, institution).

V. RECONCILIATION

TERM RECONCILIATION

A Term-Reconciliation must be conducted by the institution near the end of each school term.

1. A Term-Reconciliation consists of an official acknowledgement by an authorized school official that the number of students and amount invoiced and the number of students and amount disbursed, according to the SURFER system, is accurate as of that date.
2. Funds for the following school term will not be disbursed until the Term-Reconciliation is complete.
3. Surplus funds are not returned to the Commission as part of the Term-Reconciliation process.

END OF YEAR RECONCILIATION

An End of Year Reconciliation must be conducted by the institution prior to July 1 of the award year.

1. The institution must conduct a complete student-by-student reconciliation with the Commission and submit a Reconciliation Certification Form to the Commission by July 1 of the award year.
2. The Commission will provide the institution with a letter to confirm that the reconciliation is complete and final for the award year.

The institution must return to the Commission any HERO funds not utilized according to the final reconciliation by July 1 of the award year. The institution must have a procedure in place to ensure that the HERO funds do not go to an unintended third party (i.e. State, institution).

VI. DEFINITIONS

As used in these regulations, and unless the context requires a different meaning:

“Academic Year” means a period of time, usually eight or nine months, during which a full-time student would normally be expected to complete the equivalent of two semesters, three quarters.

“Application Deadline Date” means the last date on which a student can file an application.

“Approved or Eligible Postsecondary Educational Institution” means a unit of the University System of Georgia or a branch of the Georgia Department of Technical and Adult Education, or a private independent nonprofit postsecondary institution eligible to participate in Georgia’s HOPE Scholarship Program, in accordance with the provisions of Code Section 20-3-519 through 20-3-519.12.

“Board” means Board of Commissioners of the Commission.

“Certificate” means a credential indicating satisfactory completion of training in an organized technical program of study offered by a postsecondary educational institution, which is not an associate or baccalaureate degree.

“Commission” means Georgia Student Finance Commission (GSFC).

“Cost of Attendance” means the expenses, both direct and indirect, incurred by a student and the student’s family to finance the cost of receiving a postsecondary education. These expenses include tuition, fees, room, meals, books, supplies, transportation, and personal expenses as determined by the student’s institution.

“Degree” means a two-year associate degree or four-year bachelor’s degree conferred on students by a postsecondary educational institution upon completion of an organized program of study at the undergraduate level.

“Diploma” means a credential indicating satisfactory completion of training in an organized technical program of study offered by a postsecondary educational institution, which is not an associate or baccalaureate degree.

“Federal Title IV Programs” means student financial aid programs administered by the U.S. Department of Education that are authorized by Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965.

“Fiscal Year” means a 12-month period of time commencing on July 1 of a given calendar year and extending through June 30 of the next succeeding calendar year.

“Full-Time Student” means a matriculated student attending an eligible postsecondary educational institution who is enrolled for the equivalent of at least 12 quarter or semester hours, and meeting all of the other full-time student requirements provided in these regulations.

“Georgia National Guard Member” means a full-time or part-time civilian soldier serving in the organized militia of the Georgia Army National Guard or Georgia Air National Guard, as defined in Code Section 38-2-3. The National Guard is a branch of the U.S. Armed Forces with both federal and state government responsibilities. Georgia National Guard forces are commanded by the Governor through the State Adjutant General and can be activated by the President of the United States to supplement the active-duty U.S. Armed Forces.

“Legal Resident of Georgia” means a United States Citizen or eligible Permanent Resident Alien who is domiciled in the State of Georgia and meets all of the other residency requirements outlined in the State Scholarships and Grants Residency Regulations and Section 1 of these regulations.

“Matriculated Status” means the student is a recognized candidate for an appropriate degree, diploma or certificate at eligible postsecondary educational institutions as outlined in these regulations.

“Parent” means the biological parent, adoptive parent, or legal guardian of a person 25 years of age or younger during the qualifying term of service.

“Part-Time Student” means a matriculated student attending an eligible postsecondary educational institution who is enrolled for the equivalent of 1 through 11 quarter or semester hours, and meeting all of the other part-time student requirements provided in these regulations.

“Permanent Resident Alien” means a student who meets federal Title IV requirements as a permanent resident alien or eligible non-citizen under federal Title IV requirements.

“Qualifying Term of Service” means deployment overseas for active service on or after the effective date of Code Section 20-3-486 to a location or locations outside of the United States and its territories designed by the United States Department of Defense as a combat zone for a consecutive period of at least 181 days or, in the case of an individual who was killed or receives 100 percent disability as a result of injuries received in such combat zone, any period of time on active service in such combat zone.

“School Term” means a typical school semester or quarter.

“Transient Student” means a visiting student enrolled in another institution who is granted temporary admission for the purpose of completing work to transfer back to

the home institution; one who expects to return to the institution in which he or she was previously enrolled.

“Undergraduate Student” means a student who is in attendance at an eligible postsecondary institution and who is in the process of obtaining an associate degree, a bachelor’s degree, a diploma, or a certificate.

“U.S. Military Reservist” means a full-time or part-time civilian soldier serving in a reserve component of Armed Forces of the United States. U.S. Military Reserve units are completely controlled by the Federal Government and are an adjunct to the active-duty U.S. Armed Forces.

“Withdrawal Date” means the date the student withdraws, as determined by the institution. The institution must determine the withdrawal date in accordance with the procedures set forth for determining withdrawal date under the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended.

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