

**Georgia HERO Scholarship
(Helping Educate Reservists and their Offspring)**

REGULATIONS

2008 - 2009 Award Year



Effective Date – July 1, 2008



**Georgia Student Finance Commission
2082 East Exchange Place
Tucker, Georgia 30084**

2008- 2009 AWARD YEAR
GEORGIA HERO SCHOLARSHIP
(HELPING EDUCATE RESERVIST and their OFFSPRING)
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GEORGIA HERO SCHOLARSHIP

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The Georgia HERO (Helping Educate Reservists and their Offspring) Scholarship Program was created to provide financial aid to students seeking a postsecondary education, who are:

1. Current members of the Georgia National Guard and United States Military Reserves who were deployed overseas on active service, on or after February 1, 2003, to a location designated as a combat zone;
2. The children of Georgia National Guard members and United States Military Reservists who were deployed overseas on active service, on or after February 1, 2003, to a location designated as a combat zone;
3. The spouses of Georgia National Guard members or United States Military Reservists who were deployed overseas on active service, on or after February 1, 2003, to a location designated as a combat zone, and who were killed in the combat zone, or died as a result of injuries received in the combat zone, or sustained 100 percent disability in the combat zone, or became 100 percent disabled as a result of injuries received in the combat zone.

The Georgia HERO Scholarship Program is funded by State Appropriations. The maximum amount awarded to an eligible student is \$2,000 per award year, for no more than four award years. The award amount is subject to change during the award year.

The Georgia HERO Scholarship Program is administered by the Georgia Student Finance Commission, in accordance with the Official Code of Georgia Annotated §20-3-485, §20-3-486, and §20-3-487, et. seq., in its entirety.

I. DEFINITIONS

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

“Acceptable Documentation” means an official document from the Georgia National Guard or United States Military Reserves certifying a Georgia National Guard Member’s or United States Military Reservist’s deployed date and location of deployment. An example of acceptable documentation is a letter signed by a Georgia National Guard Member’s or United States Military Reservist’s Commanding Officer that indicates the Georgia National Guard Member’s or United States Military Reservist’s deployed date and location of deployment.

“Alternative Study” means course work included in postsecondary credit-earning programs of study that includes travel outside of the State of Georgia, but within the United States.

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

“Associate Degree” means a two-year college level Degree conferred on students by a postsecondary institution upon completion of a unified program of study in an academic discipline or major at the Undergraduate level. Associate Degrees typically require a student to earn at least 60 semester or 90 quarter hours of college Degree credit.

“Award Year” means four consecutive quarters or three consecutive semesters, beginning with the summer term and ending with the spring term. No student shall receive HERO payment for more than two semesters of three quarters per Award Year.

“Award-Year Reconciliation” means a final student-by-student reconciliation for an Award-Year conducted by Eligible Postsecondary Institutions with the Commission, immediately following the completion of an Award Year.

“Baccalaureate Degree” means a four-year college level Degree conferred on students by a postsecondary institution upon completion of a unified program of study in an academic discipline or major at the Undergraduate level. Baccalaureate (Bachelor’s) Degrees typically require a student to earn at least 120 semester or 180 quarter hours of college Degree credit.

“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.

“Child” means the son or daughter of a Parent who is or was a qualifying member of the Georgia National Guard or United States Reserves. Such son or daughter must have been born prior to the Qualifying Term of Service, or within nine months of the

beginning of the Qualifying Term of Service, and was 25 years of age or younger at the time of the Qualifying Term of Service.

“Commission” means the Georgia Student Finance Commission, the agency responsible for administering certain postsecondary educational student financial aid programs offered by the State of Georgia, and other programs for which funds may be appropriated or assigned to it by the State Legislature, or from other sources, from time to time.

“Cost of Attendance” means the estimated expenses, both direct and indirect, which may be 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 postsecondary institution and as defined by Federal Title IV Program regulations.

“Degree” means a two-year Associate Degree or four-year Baccalaureate Degree conferred on students by a postsecondary institution, upon completion of an organized program of study at the Undergraduate level.

“Deployed Date” means the date on which a Georgia National Guard Member or United States Military Reservist arrived on duty or continued to be on duty in a location or locations outside of the United States and its territories designated by the United States Department of Defense as a combat zone. The Georgia National Guard Member or United States Military Reservist must certify his or her deployed date by providing acceptable documentation.

“Diploma” means a credential indicating satisfactory completion of training in an organized technical program of study offered by a postsecondary institution, which is not an Associate or Baccalaureate Degree.

“Distance Learning” means an educational process that is characterized by the separation, in time or place, between instructor and student. It may include courses offered principally through the use of television, audio, video cassettes/discs, correspondence, audio/computer conferencing, and transmission by computer, Internet, open broadcast, closed circuit, cable, microwave, or satellite.

“Eligible Non-Citizen” means a person who, in accordance with the Federal Title IV Regulations, is a United States permanent resident with a Permanent Resident Alien Card (I-551); or a conditional permanent resident (I-551C); or the holder of an Arrival-Departure Record (I-94) from the Department of Homeland Security showing any one of the following designations: “Refugee”, “Asylum Granted”, “Parolee” (I-94 confirms paroled for a minimum of one year and status has not expired); or “Cuban-Haitian Entrant”. Victims of human trafficking, in accordance with the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act, may also be considered Eligible Non-Citizens. Persons with an F1 or F2 student visa, a J1 or J2 exchange visitor visa, or a G series visa are not Eligible Non-Citizens.

“Eligible Postsecondary Institution” means a unit of the University System of Georgia or a unit of the Technical College System of Georgia, or a private nonprofit postsecondary institution eligible to participate in Georgia’s HOPE Scholarship Program, in accordance with the provisions of the Official Code of Georgia Annotated §20-3-519 through 20-3-519.12.

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

“Full-Time” means enrollment for the equivalent of at least 12 quarter or 12 semester hours, per school term, of postsecondary credit at an Eligible Postsecondary Institution.

“Georgia National Guard Member” means a civilian soldier currently serving in the organized militia of the Georgia Army National Guard or Georgia Air National Guard, in accordance with the Official Code of Georgia Annotated §38-2-3. The National Guard is a branch of the United States 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 United States Armed Forces.

“Georgia Resident” or “Georgia Residency” means an individual or the status of such individual who is a United States citizen or Eligible Non-Citizen and is domiciled in the State of Georgia and meets the criteria of the *Georgia Residency Requirements for State Programs Regulation*, as specified and limited by these regulations.

“Graduate Level” means the postsecondary academic level at which a student is Enrolled in a program of study beyond the Baccalaureate Degree level or in a non-undergraduate degree program.

“Home Institution” means an Eligible Postsecondary Institution in which the student is normally enrolled.

“HOPE” means Helping Outstanding Pupils Educationally, a State of Georgia student financial aid program that provides non-repayable scholarship and grant assistance to Georgia Residents attending Eligible Postsecondary Institutions in Georgia. The components that comprise HOPE are the HOPE Scholarship Program, HOPE Grant Program, and HOPE GED Grant Program. HOPE is authorized by the Official Code of Georgia Annotated § 20-3-519, funded by Georgia Lottery appropriations, and administered by the Commission in accordance with the *HOPE Scholarship Program Regulations*, *HOPE Grant Program Regulations*, and *HOPE GED Grant Program Regulations*.

“Host Institution” means a postsecondary institution a student is temporarily attending as a Transient student.

“Parent” means the biological parent, adoptive parent, or United States court-appointed legal guardian of a person 25 years of age or younger during the Qualifying Term of Service.

“Part-Time” means enrollment for the equivalent of 1 through 11 quarter or semester hours, per school term, of postsecondary credit at an Eligible Postsecondary Institution.

“Qualifying Term of Service” means deployment overseas for active service on or after the Deployed Date of February 1, 2003, 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 for a cumulative period of at least 181 days or, in the case of an individual who was killed, 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. Any such person, who failed to serve the full 181-day period because he or she was evacuated from such combat zone due to severe injuries, shall be deemed to have completed a Qualifying Term of Service.

“Satisfactory Academic Progress” means the academic standards required of students by their postsecondary institutions in order to be eligible to receive payment from Federal Title IV Programs, in accordance with Federal Title IV Program regulations. The standards must include a qualitative component, such as grades, and a quantitative component with a maximum time frame for completion of a student’s program of study (no longer than 150% of the length of the program).

“Spouse” means an individual who was legally married to a qualifying member of the Georgia National Guard or United States Military Reserves, and officially recognized by the Georgia National Guard or United States Reserves as the wife or husband of such member, at the time that such member was killed in a qualifying combat zone, or died as a result of injuries received in a qualifying combat zone, or sustained 100 percent disability in a qualifying combat zone, or became 100 percent disabled as a result of injuries received in a qualifying combat zone.

“Study Abroad” means postsecondary course work that includes travel outside the United States and for which a student earns credit that is accepted toward a program of study. Study Abroad programs are also referred to by some institutions as International-Intercultural Studies.

“SURFER” means the Commission’s web-based system used by Eligible Postsecondary Institutions to electronically transmit and receive student data, award information, and conduct other administrative activities related to the Commission’s scholarship and grant programs.

“Technical College System of Georgia” or “TCSG” means the State of Georgia’s unified system of public technical colleges, formerly known as the Department of Technical and Adult Education (DTAE), which is governed by the Board of Commissioners of the Technical College System of Georgia.

“Term-Reconciliation” means an official acknowledgement by an authorized official of an Eligible Postsecondary Institution, at the end of each school term, that the number of students submitted for payment and amount invoiced by the institution, and the number of students awarded and amount issued by the Commission, according to the SURFER system, are accurate on the date of such acknowledgement.

“Transient” means a student is attending a Host Institution and is granted temporary admission for the purpose of completing course work and earning postsecondary credit to transfer back to his or her Home Institution.

“Tuition” means the charges to a student for instruction without regard to other fees such as technology, activity, athletic, health, etc.

“Undergraduate” means a student who is in attendance at an Eligible Postsecondary Institution and who is in the process of obtaining an Associate Degree, Baccalaureate Degree, Diploma, or Certificate.

“United States Military Reservist” means a civilian military members currently serving in a reserve component of Armed Forces of the United States. United States Military Reserve units are completely controlled by the Federal Government and are an adjunct to the active-duty United States Armed Forces.

“University System of Georgia” or “USG” means the State of Georgia’s unified system of public colleges and universities, which is governed by the Board of Regents.

“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.

II. STUDENT ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

NATIONAL GUARD AND RESERVIST CRITERIA

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

1. The student must be a current member of the Georgia National Guard or the United States Military Reserves who was deployed overseas on active duty service, on or after the Deployed Date of February 1, 2003, to a location designated as a combat zone by the United States Department of Defense, and who completed at least one Qualifying Term of Service.
2. The student must be a Child of a Parent who was a member of the Georgia National Guard or the United States Military Reserves who was deployed overseas on active duty service, on or after the Deployed Date of February 1, 2003, to a location designated as a combat zone by the United States Department of Defense, and who completed at least one Qualifying Term of Service. Such Child must have been born prior to the Qualifying Term of Service, or within nine months of the beginning of the Qualifying Term of Service, and was 25 years of age or younger during the Qualifying Term of Service.
3. The student must be the Spouse of a member of the Georgia National Guard or the United States Military Reserves who was deployed overseas on active duty service, on or after the Deployed Date of February 1, 2003, to a location designated as a combat zone by the United States Department of Defense, and who was killed in the combat zone, or died as a result of injuries received in the combat zone, or sustained a 100 percent disability in the combat zone, or became 100 percent disabled as a result of injuries received in the combat zone, and who completed at least one Qualifying Term of Service.

CITIZENSHIP

The student must be a United States citizen or an Eligible Non-Citizen, according to Federal Title IV Program requirements, for a minimum of 12 consecutive months immediately preceding the first day of classes for the school term for which the HERO Scholarship is sought.

RESIDENCY

The student must be a Resident of Georgia, in accordance with the *Georgia Residency Requirements for State Programs Regulations*, for a minimum of 12 consecutive months immediately preceding the first day of classes for the school term for which the scholarship is sought.

ELIGIBLE POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTION

The student must be enrolled in a postsecondary institution that is a unit of the University System of Georgia or a unit of the Technical College System of Georgia, or a private 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 or Graduate Level 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.

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 Federal Title IV or State of Georgia student financial aid program, nor in any other way be in violation of Federal Title IV Regulations or State of Georgia student financial aid program regulations. If such student has repaid the defaulted loan or refund due in full, or resolved the default status, then he or she may be eligible to receive TEG payment beginning with the school term in which repayment was made in full, but not retroactively for previous school terms. A student's default status can be resolved by one of three ways: 1) complete an acceptable rehabilitation plan, 2) having the loan repurchased by the original lender and the default status reversed, 3) by consolidating the loan out of a default status.

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.

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 Eligible Postsecondary Institutions in Georgia. HERO payment must take place through the Host Institution. Students taking course work through more than one Eligible Postsecondary 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 an Eligible Postsecondary Institution in Georgia. Students taking course work through more than one Eligible Postsecondary Institution during the same term are eligible to receive HERO payment from each institution.

STUDY ABROAD PROGRAMS

A student enrolled in an Eligible Postsecondary Institution in Georgia may qualify for HERO payment while participating in a Study Abroad program. The student's Home Institution must be an Eligible Postsecondary Institution in Georgia, and 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 Home Institution, unless the student is participating in a Study Abroad program via another Eligible Postsecondary Institution, then the process described in the above section entitled *Transient Students* may be followed as an alternative. The 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-Home Institution may have an arrangement with an out-of-state institution's Study Abroad Program.

ALTERNATIVE STUDY PROGRAMS

A student enrolled in an Eligible Postsecondary Institution in Georgia may qualify for HERO payment while participating in an Alternative Study program. Alternative Study programs may be in conjunction with postsecondary institutions in other states. For example, a student's Home Institution, which must be an Eligible Postsecondary Institution in Georgia, 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 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 Home Institution.

III. APPLICATION PROCESS

1. The applicant must complete the "Student Section" of a Georgia HERO Scholarship Program application and include the appropriate documentation as described below.
 - a. If the applicant is serving in the Georgia National Guard or United States Military Reserves, then official documentation of the applicant's Qualifying Term of Service must be provided with the HERO application. The applicant must also submit acceptable documentation certifying his or her deployed date. (Refer to the section entitled *Award Limitations*.)
 - b. If the applicant's Parent served in the Georgia National Guard or United States 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 HERO application. The applicant must also submit acceptable documentation certifying his or her Parent's deployed date. (Refer to the section entitled *Award Limitations*.)
 - c. If the applicant's Parent served in the Georgia National Guard or United States 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 HERO application. The applicant must also submit acceptable documentation certifying his or her Parent's deployed date. (Refer to the section entitled *Award Limitations*.)
 - d. If the applicant was or is the Spouse of a member of the Georgia National Guard or United States Military Reserves who was killed in a combat zone, or died as a result of injuries received in a combat zone, or sustained 100 percent disability in a combat zone, or became 100 percent disabled as a result of injuries received in a combat zone, then official documentation of the member's Qualifying Term of Service, proof of the member's death or disability, and proof of the legal marriage at the time of death or disability, must be provided with the HERO application. The applicant must also submit acceptable documentation certifying the deployment date of the deceased or disabled member of the Georgia National Guard or United States Reserves. (Refer to the section entitled *Award Limitations*.)
2. The applicant must forward the application and all required documentation to the financial aid office of his or her Eligible Postsecondary Institution.

3. Upon receipt of a HERO application and documentation, the institution must certify the following eligibility requirements and forward the application and documentation to the Commission.
 - a. United States citizenship or Eligible Non-Citizen.
 - b. Georgia Residency.
 - c. Enrollment.
 - d. Satisfactory Academic Progress.
 - e. Selective Service Registration.
 - f. Loan Default and Refund Due.
 - g. Drug-Free Postsecondary Education Act.
4. The applicant 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. Only one application per Award Year is required. (Refer to the section entitled *Award Limitations*.)
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 institution of the determination.
6. In order to renew a HERO Scholarship, the student must continue to make Satisfactory Academic Progress and meet all of the other eligibility requirements set forth in 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.

IV. 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 Award Year or a maximum amount as specified in the General Appropriations Act. The maximum award of \$2,000 per Award Year shall be provided on a school term basis, as follows:

- \$1,000 per semester for any two semesters (Summer, Fall, or Spring); or
- \$700 per quarter for the first two quarters awarded for the Award Year and \$600 for the third quarter awarded for the Award Year.

No eligible student shall receive payment for more than two semesters or three quarters for an Award Year.

AWARD AMOUNTS FOR PART-TIME ENROLLMENT

The 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 Part-Time award is \$83.33 per semester hour, or \$55.55 per quarter hour, or as specified in the General Appropriations Act. No eligible student shall receive payment for more than two semesters or three quarters for an Award Year.

AWARD AMOUNT REDUCTIONS

The 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. A student's HERO award, plus any other student financial aid, must not exceed the student's Cost of Attendance.

AWARD LIMITATIONS

1. The maximum HERO assistance, for which any student is eligible to receive, shall not exceed a total of \$8,000 for the equivalent of four Award Years.
2. A current member of the Georgia National Guard or United States Reserves who completed a Qualifying Term of Service is eligible for the equivalent of four Award Years of HERO assistance, for a total of \$8,000. A Qualifying Term of Service for such a student is a cumulative period of at least 181 days of deployment overseas on active service, on or after the Deployed Date of February 1, 2003, to a location or locations, outside the United States and its territories, designated as a combat zone by the United States Department of Defense. If such student did not serve the full cumulative period of 181 days, because he or she was evacuated from the combat zone due to severe injuries, such student shall be deemed to have completed a Qualifying Term of Service. In order to receive HERO payment, he or she must file an application for HERO with the Commission before July 1, 2010, or within two years (24 consecutive months) after the date he or she returned from the combat zone in which the Qualifying Term of Service was completed, whichever is later. In addition, eligibility for HERO funds shall terminate eight years (96 consecutive months) after the date that he or she returned from the combat zone in which the Qualifying Term of Service was completed.
3. A Child of a Parent who is or was a qualifying member of the Georgia National Guard or United States Reserves is eligible for one Award Year of HERO assistance for each period of 181 cumulative days that his or her Parent was

deployed overseas on active service, on or after the Deployed Date of February 1, 2003, 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. If such Parent did not serve the full cumulative period of 181 days, because he or she was evacuated from the combat zone due to severe injuries, the Child shall be deemed to have completed one Qualifying Term of Service, and therefore is eligible for one Award Year of HERO assistance. In order to receive HERO payment, such student must file an application for HERO with the Commission before July 1, 2010, or within two years (24 consecutive months) after such student became eligible for a HERO Scholarship, whichever is later. In addition, eligibility for HERO funds shall terminate eight years (96 consecutive months) after the Child became eligible for the HERO Program.

4. A Child of a Parent who is or was a qualifying member of the Georgia National Guard or United States Reserves, and such Parent was killed in a qualifying combat zone, or died as a result of injuries received in a qualifying combat zone, or received a 100 percent disability as a result of injuries received in a qualifying combat zone, is eligible for the equivalent four Award Years of HERO assistance, regardless of the length of time his or her Parent was on active service in such combat zone. In order to receive HERO payment, such student must file an application for HERO with the Commission before July 1, 2010, or within two years (24 consecutive months) after such student became eligible for a HERO Scholarship, whichever is later. In addition, eligibility for HERO funds shall terminate eight years (96 consecutive months) after the Child became eligible for the HERO Program.
5. A Spouse of a member of the Georgia National Guard or United States Reserves who was killed in a qualifying combat zone, or died as a result of injuries received in a qualifying combat zone, or sustained a 100 percent disability in a qualifying combat zone, or became 100 percent disabled due to injuries received in a qualifying combat zone, is eligible for the equivalent four Award Years of HERO assistance. Such Spouse must file an application for the initial HERO Scholarship award prior to July 1, 2010, or no later than two years (24 consecutive months) following the death or 100 percent disability of the member, whichever is later. In addition, no award shall be issued later than eight years (96 consecutive months) after the initial award was issued.

INVOICING

The Georgia HERO Scholarship Program is available for Summer, Fall, Winter and/or Spring terms. However, a student shall not be awarded for more than two semesters or three quarters per Award Year.

1. HERO funds shall be paid to the Eligible Postsecondary Institution by 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 institution to the Commission through the use of the SURFER 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.

V. 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. 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. 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 submitted for payment and the amount invoiced by the institution, and the number of students awarded and amount issued by the Commission, 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 August 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).

VII. RECORDS RETENTION

1. An Eligible Postsecondary Institution shall maintain accurate records, books, documents and other evidence concerning the HERO Program, including, but not limited to individual student files for the later of three years after the Award Year in which the aid was awarded; or for such other period as required by an applicable statute, rule, or regulation; or such other time as requested in writing by the Commission.
2. Documentation contained within an individual student file or record, which supports the original determination of a student's eligibility, made by the institution, should be transferred to the student's file or record for the most current Award Year must be retained by the institution and available for review by the Commission on the institution's campus, located within the State of Georgia, for at least three calendar years after the most recent Award Year for which the student received HERO funds. Institutions are permitted to maintain these documents in an imaged media format. The imaged media format must be capable of reproducing an accurate, legible, and complete copy of the original document.
3. Such documentation may include, but is not limited to, copies of Permanent Resident Alien Cards, Georgia State Income Tax Returns, student financial aid applications and academic transcripts from previous institutions. Documentation regarding a student's eligibility is not limited to files, records, and other information received and maintained by the institution's Student Financial Aid Office. Documentation supporting a student's eligibility that is received and maintained by the institution's Admissions Office, Registrars Office, Business Office, and other administrative operations of the institution must be available to the Commission for the purpose of Program Reviews. It is the institution's responsibility to resolve any inconsistencies

or conflicting information within a student's records, prior to awarding or disbursing HERO funds to the student.

4. An institution may be required to retain student records involved in a program review, audit, or investigation for more than the three-year retention period described above. If the three-year retention period expires before the issue in question is resolved, the institution must continue to retain all associated records until resolution is reached.

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