

Sonny Perdue
GOVERNOR



Timothy A. Connell
PRESIDENT

September 8, 2005

Dear Colleagues:

We are aware that many students and postsecondary institutions were impacted by the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina. Many of you have asked questions about eligibility for state funded scholarships, grants and loans for students that attended impacted institutions that are now relocating to Georgia to continue their education. (An impacted institution is an institution whose operations have been significantly impaired by the hurricane. Please rely on the same list and/or criteria that you utilize for the Department of Education.) As you know, many of the rules for the programs that GSFC administers are set by state law so we do not have the flexibility to waive the requirements.

Generally, like the U.S. Department of Education, we encourage you to enroll these students as regular transfer students. Students enrolled as transient/visiting students are generally not eligible to receive state scholarships, grants or loans. In addition, depending on the applicable program, a student may be required to:

- Meet Georgia residency requirements.
- Meet specific GPA requirements. For example, HOPE students should be evaluated based their eligibility at the last entry checkpoint. The end of spring and three term checkpoints must still be applied to these students. A student with 63 semester hours and a GPA of 3.2 would have been checked at the 60 semester hour checkpoint and deemed eligible to receive HOPE. If applicable, he/she would have been checked again at the end of spring or three term checkpoint. On the other hand, all freshmen that graduated from an eligible high school with a 3.0 would be eligible to receive HOPE if they have not reached a checkpoint.
- Complete the appropriate application form.

We recognize that because of the storm, students that attended an impacted institution may not have the documentation to prove eligibility. In those instances, for terms beginning prior to January 1, 2006, institutions are authorized to accept the attached student self-certification form as documentation that the student is eligible. (The form is available on our website.)

It is important that the students realize that once received, the documentation may be reviewed and that if he/she is determined to have been ineligible, the law requires that they refund the money to GSFC. A student could be determined ineligible on several grounds, such as not having registered with the selective service, not meeting the residency requirement or not having the required GPA when it is calculated using the HOPE formula. An institution that relies on this form to award a state funded scholarship, grant or loan will not be held responsible for the award if it is later determined that it was improperly made. However, we do expect institutions to counsel students before they sign the self-certification, attempt to obtain the information from students and to evaluate it when it becomes available. The form should not be used if a student's documentation is available.

In addition, we plan to request that our Board extend the deadline for submission of applications for state funded scholarships, grants and loans for **all** students. The new deadline will be the end of the spring term instead of the end of the fall term for fall applications. We hope you will encourage students from impacted institutions to utilize this extra time to attempt to obtain the required documentation to verify eligibility rather than signing the form and possibly being required to repay the funds.

Finally, please note the following program specific guidelines:

HOPE

- We will not count any hours taken during the Fall 2005 term at an impacted institution as attempted hours.

GOVERNOR'S SCHOLARSHIP

- A student that graduated from high school in 2005 and was eligible to receive a Governor's Scholarship can still receive his/her award if he/she began attending an eligible Georgia institution by winter quarter or spring semester of 2006.

As always, our office is available to assist you and your students with any questions. I encourage you to check our website and/or call us for assistance. We will continue to keep you updated as we respond to this natural disaster.

We thank you for your patience, cooperation and willingness to assist those impacted by Hurricane Katrina.

Sincerely,



Timothy A. Connell

Attachment



**Georgia Student Finance Commission
Student Self-Certification**

I certify that I was admitted to or enrolled in an academic program leading to a degree, certificate or other recognized educational credential for the 2005 – 2006 academic year as a (Year in school) _____ at (Name of institution) _____. I also certify that I have reviewed the Georgia scholarship, grant and loan rules and regulations and that I am eligible to receive the following Georgia scholarships, grants or loans:

I understand that I am giving this certification because information to verify my eligibility is currently unavailable and I agree to provide any required information or documentation should it become available at a later date. Further, I acknowledge and agree that I have reviewed and agree to abide by the applicable scholarship, grant or loan program rules and regulations. (A copy of all scholarship, grant and loan rules and regulations is available at www.gsfc.org or can be requested by calling or writing GSFC at the address or number below.) I understand that the applicable scholarship, grant or loan program regulations may contain specific eligibility requirements, including procedures to calculate grade point average and determine residency. I also certify that this information is true, correct, complete and accurate to the best of my knowledge and that the Georgia Student Finance Commission, the Georgia Student Finance Authority and/or the Georgia educational institution that I have enrolled at may verify and/or review my eligibility for the scholarships, grants or loans that I receive and that I may be required to repay any funds given to me if it is determined that I was ineligible to receive them.

I authorize release and exchange of information between the Georgia Student Finance Authority, the Georgia Student Finance Commission, educational institutions, and state agencies, and agree that such information exchanged may include financial, enrollment, academic status, identification, legal residency, and location information necessary to assure proper administration of the applicable scholarship, grant or loan program. I understand that any willfully false statements made herein may result in prosecution for violation of Georgia Laws 1978, pp. 1249, 1310, which states that false swearing shall be punished by a fine of not more than \$1,000 or imprisonment for not less than one or more than five years or both.

Signature _____ Social Security Number _____ Date _____

This form should be signed in duplicate. One copy should be retained by the institution and one copy given to the student.

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