



## **Don't Lose HOPE!**

*Georgia high schools are preparing for changes in HOPE policy*

This Fall, every high school in Georgia is participating in a challenging new undertaking called the Transcript Exchange Process. It's an important effort, because it will facilitate the process of determining which high school seniors will receive HOPE Scholarships when they start college.

### **Background –new academic guidelines**

In 2004, the Georgia General Assembly revised the law governing the HOPE Scholarship Program. One change affects the method used to determine which graduating high school seniors will be eligible to receive HOPE as college freshmen. The new method applies to anyone beginning college after April 30, 2007. The first big group to be affected will be the high school Class of 2007.

The 2004 law significantly revises the guidelines used to evaluate high school academic achievement to determine HOPE eligibility. Briefly:

- All attempted core academic coursework will be counted. Previously, failing grades were not counted and other low grades were not counted if the student re-took the course and received a higher grade.
- Only Advanced Placement and International Baccalaureate courses will be weighted (given extra credit), and that weight will be standard statewide. Previously, Honors courses also could be weighted, and schools and systems decided how much extra credit to give to weighted courses.
- All grades will be converted to GPAs based on a traditional 4.0 scale, and then an overall average GPA will be calculated. A student's overall numeric grade average will no longer be considered.

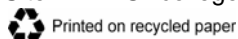
### **Transcript Exchange – a new process**

The law also mandates that, beginning with the Class of 2007, the Georgia Student Finance Commission (GSFC) will be the party responsible for collecting transcripts for all graduating seniors in the state and calculating GPAs, according to the new guidelines, to determine HOPE eligibility.

GSFC has dubbed this effort the Transcript Exchange Process. It all will be done electronically, primarily using School Information Systems (SIS) and [GAcollege411.org](http://GAcollege411.org), the State of Georgia website designed to help Georgians prepare for college. GSFC has provided schools with customized software that enables an SIS to transmit transcript information to a [GAcollege411](http://GAcollege411.org) database. Other information will be entered by each

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school, also via the website. GSFC then will be able to pull the appropriate data from the database and calculate each student's GPA.

This has proven to be a tremendous task, requiring many months of initial planning by GSFC, followed by more months of working closely with schools and school systems to ensure effective implementation. Obviously, it's critically important that every high school stay on track and successfully complete the implementation process, so their students can be properly assessed for HOPE eligibility. In September, GSFC began mailing monthly progress reports, advising each school on where it stands. In November GSFC will begin sending updates to school board Chairs, system superintendents, PTAs, and other interested parties.

In the meantime, district level leaders are encouraged to contact their high schools directly to determine whether adequate progress is being made. It cannot be over emphasized: GSFC will not be able to determine whether a student is HOPE-eligible unless that student's school is successfully engaged in the Transcript Exchange Process.

Georgia students are working hard to earn HOPE. Georgia schools and the Georgia Student Finance Commission must work just as hard to recognize each student's academic achievement.

This article was prepared by the Georgia Student Finance Commission. For more information about the Transcript Exchange Process, call Demi Fogle, GSFC Transcript Exchange Liaison, at 770-724-9336.