

# **Governor's Scholarship Program**

## **REGULATIONS**

**2007- 2008 Award Year**



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**Georgia Student Finance Commission  
2082 East Exchange Place, Suite 200  
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## 2007 - 2008 AWARD YEAR

# GOVERNOR'S SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM REGULATIONS

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## **GOVERNOR'S SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM**

### **OVERVIEW**

The Governor's Scholarship Program was established in 1985 (Fiscal Year 1986) for students who graduated from Eligible High Schools in Georgia as Georgia Scholars. The program was expanded in 1991 (Fiscal Year 1992) to include students who graduated as the Valedictorian, Salutatorian, or STAR Student of their Eligible High School. In 2005 (Fiscal Year 2006), the program was restructured so that one Valedictorian and one STAR Student from each Eligible High School are eligible for a Governor's Scholarship award as entering freshmen at Eligible Postsecondary Institutions in Georgia. The purpose of the Governor's Scholarship Program is to recognize and reward academic achievement and to encourage Georgia's best and brightest students to attend Eligible Postsecondary Institutions in Georgia.

The Governor's Scholarship Program award amount received by eligible students and the total amount of State funds appropriated for the program, are established each year by the Georgia General Assembly during the preceding legislative session, and are subject to change during the Award Year.

The Georgia Student Finance Commission administers the Governor's Scholarship Program and is authorized to use its own discretion in the administration of these regulations and may make exceptions to such regulations and policies when they are warranted, as determined by the Commission.

## I. INITIAL ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

To be eligible to receive a Governor's Scholarship as an entering freshman attending an Eligible Postsecondary Institution in Georgia, a student meet all the following requirements:

1. A student must be named the Valedictorian or STAR Student by his or her Eligible High School in Georgia. Each Eligible High School is limited to submitting information regarding one Valedictorian and one STAR Student from each high school graduating class to the Commission for purposes of the Governor's Scholarship Program.
2. A student must be a resident of Georgia, as defined by the Georgia Student Finance Commission (Commission), for a minimum of 12 consecutive months, immediately preceding the first day of classes of the school term for which the Governor's Scholarship is sought. A student who graduates from an Eligible High School in Georgia, whose Parent is classified as non-resident Military Personnel stationed in Georgia at the time of such high school graduation, meets the residency requirements of the Governor's Scholarship program. Once any Governor's Scholarship recipient correctly meets the residency requirements and begins receiving the Governor's Scholarship, he or she will continue to be treated as a resident of Georgia, even if his or her Parent moves from the State of Georgia.
3. A student must be a United States Citizen or an Eligible Non-citizen according to Federal Title IV requirements for the 12-month period immediately prior to the school term for which the Governor's Scholarship is sought.
4. A student must comply with the United States Selective Service System requirements for registration, if such requirements are applicable, prior to the application deadline, in order to receive payment for that school term.
5. A student must be enrolled Full-Time at an Eligible Postsecondary Institution in Georgia in a Matriculated status seeking an Undergraduate Degree within nine calendar months following graduation from an Eligible High School in Georgia. Any Part-Time or Full-Time enrollment in an Eligible Postsecondary Institution or an ineligible postsecondary institution prior to that time shall not act as a disqualifier for receipt of a Governor's Scholarship award.
6. A student must complete the application process for the Governor's Scholarship Program, as established and instructed by the Commission.
7. A student must not be receiving non-repayable federal, state, college, university or privately funded scholarship and grant aid, inclusive of aid to be received under the Governor's Scholarship Program and aid to be received under the North Georgia College and State University Military Scholarship Program, which total more than the Cost of Attendance budget of the Eligible

Postsecondary Institution. An individual student's award may not exceed Tuition at the Eligible Postsecondary Institution in which he or she is enrolled.

8. A student must be in compliance with the Georgia Drug-Free Postsecondary Education Act of 1990.
9. A student must not have been charged with or convicted of the commission of a felony, unless such felony charge has been dismissed or the student has been acquitted of the charge. Once a student loses eligibility for the Governor's Scholarship, due the requirements of this section of these regulations, such eligibility cannot be regained.

## **II. MAINTAINING ELIGIBILITY**

In addition to the Initial Eligibility Requirements of these regulations, in order to maintain eligibility and to be eligible to apply for successive renewals of a Governor's Scholarship, a recipient must also meet the following requirements:

1. A student must complete the renewal application process for the Governor's Scholarship Program, as established and instructed by the Commission for subsequent periods of study at such times as designated by the Commission. Such student must also contact his or her Eligible Postsecondary Institution to have an official academic transcript forwarded to the Commission that includes the credit hours and grades for his or her most recently completed coursework.
2. A student must be enrolled Full-Time (12 hours) at an Eligible Postsecondary Institution in order to receive Governor's Scholarship payment for that school term.
3. A student must have at least a 3.0 Postsecondary Cumulative Grade Point Average on a 4.0 scale, after completion of three quarters or two semesters for which the preceding Governor's Scholarship award was made. Failure to have a 3.0 Postsecondary Cumulative Grade Point Average on a 4.0 scale at each such point of determination will result in the student becoming ineligible to receive any further aid under the Governor's Scholarship Program. Once a student loses academic eligibility for a Governor's Scholarship, such eligibility cannot be regained.
4. A student must have earned a cumulative 30 semester or 45 quarter hours of Degree credit after two semesters or three quarters of receiving Governor's Scholarship funds. Degree credit hours earned prior to such school terms may be included in the cumulative hours total. A one-time exception is given to freshmen recipients who have a 3.0 Postsecondary Cumulative Grade Point Average, but have not earned a cumulative 30 semester or 45 quarter hours of Degree credit, after receiving two semesters or three quarters of Governor's Scholarship assistance. Under this exception, a freshman

recipient may attend his or her next school term, at his or her own expense, to earn the cumulative 30 semester or 45 quarter hours. In order to renew his or her Governor's Scholarship, such freshman recipient must have a 3.0 Postsecondary Cumulative Grade Point Average after completion of such school term. Once a student loses eligibility for the Governor's Scholarship, due to a lack of earned credit hours or Postsecondary Cumulative Grade Point Average requirements, such eligibility cannot be regained.

5. A student must have earned a cumulative 60 semester or 90 quarter hours of Degree credit with a 3.0 Postsecondary Cumulative Grade Point Average after four semesters or six quarters of receiving the Governor's Scholarship. There is no standard provision in these regulations for exceptions to this requirement. Once a student loses eligibility for the Governor's Scholarship, due to a lack of earned credit hours or Postsecondary Cumulative Grade Point Average requirements, such eligibility cannot be regained.
6. A student must have earned a cumulative 90 semester or 135 quarter hours of Degree credit with a 3.0 Postsecondary Cumulative Grade Point Average after six semesters or nine quarters of receiving the Governor's Scholarship. There is no standard provision in these regulations for exceptions to this requirement. Once a student loses eligibility for the Governor's Scholarship, due to a lack of earned credit hours or Postsecondary Cumulative Grade Point Average requirements, such eligibility cannot be regained.
7. A student must not, at any time, be dismissed from an Eligible Postsecondary Institution for a disciplinary reason. Once a student loses eligibility for the Governor's Scholarship, due to disciplinary reasons, such eligibility cannot be regained.
8. 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 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 Governor's Scholarship assistance beginning with the school term in which repayment was made in full, but not retroactively.
9. Subject to the availability of funds, an qualifying student is eligible to receive a Governor's Scholarship award for not more than 12 quarters or 8 semesters of Full-Time study, including summer school terms, within a five-year period of time dating from the first day of classes of the school term for which the student first received a Governor's Scholarship award. Such student must be eligible and receive Governor's Scholarship payment for at least one school term during the Award Year in order to continue his or her eligibility for the following Award Year. Once a student loses eligibility for the Governor's Scholarship, due to the requirements of this section of these regulations, such eligibility cannot be regained. The Commission is authorized to approve

exceptions to this requirement, for justifiable reasons, as determined by the Commission.

10. A Governor's Scholarship award may not be made nor used for study beyond the Baccalaureate Degree level, except for programs of study designed to allow students to enroll in Graduate Level coursework, without first earning a Baccalaureate Degree. Such programs of study must be approved by the Board of Regents or the eligible private college or university
11. A student who was determined to be ineligible to receive aid under the Governor's Scholarship Program, due to the amount of non-repayable aid he or she is received for an Award Year, may reapply for the subsequent Award Year, provided all other eligibility requirements of these regulations are met.

### **III. INITIAL APPLICATION PROCEDURES**

1. Upon receipt of the Valedictorian and STAR Student information from the Eligible High Schools, the Commission will furnish such Valedictorians and STAR Students with information regarding the Governor's Scholarship Program and instructions regarding the application process.
2. A student must file the application on or before the last day of the school term (semester or quarter) or the student's withdrawal date, whichever occurs first, in order to be paid for that school term. The last day of the school 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 without jeopardizing the student's eligibility.
3. In addition to obtaining information from the applicants, the Commission may obtain information from the Eligible Postsecondary Institutions, such as, but not limited to, enrollment status information, Cost of Attendance information, and information regarding other non-repayable scholarship and grant aid applicants may receive.

### **IV. SUCCESSIVE ANNUAL RENEWAL APPLICATION PROCEDURES**

1. The Commission will provide renewal application information and application instructions to each Governor's Scholarship recipient prior to the ending date of the school period covered by the current Governor's Scholarship's award.
2. The recipient should complete the renewal application process within 30 days, or by such other later date as may be prescribed by the Commission in order to receive priority consideration for renewal of the Governor's Scholarship. Regardless, a student must file the application 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, whichever occurs later.

3. All other renewal application procedures will be the same as stated in Section III of these regulations, but the Commission may incorporate into the renewal application process such information that must be certified to the Commission by the Eligible Postsecondary Institution.

## **V. DETERMINATION AND NOTIFICATION OF AWARDS**

1. The maximum Governor's Scholarship award amount is set by the Georgia General Assembly each year, and is subject to change during the Award Year.
2. An individual student's award may not exceed Tuition at the Eligible Postsecondary Institution in which he or she is enrolled.
3. If the total amount of non-repayable scholarship and grant aid known to be available to a student exceeds the recipient's Cost of Attendance budget, the recipient's Governor's Scholarship award shall be reduced by the amount of aid in excess of the recipient's Cost of Attendance budget in order to prevent an over-award of aid. If the recipient chooses to decline receipt of the excess amount in one or more of the other non-repayable aid programs under which he or she is eligible for assistance, then he or she may receive the full amount of his or her Governor's Scholarship award.
4. The Governor's Scholarship Program is a non-need based program, meaning that the financial ability of the recipient, or recipient's parents or family, to defray costs to be incurred while enrolled in an Eligible Postsecondary Institution is not a factor to be considered in the awarding of Governor's Scholarships.
5. Applicants are notified by the Commission, or by their Eligible Postsecondary Institution, of the award or denial of their Governor's Scholarships at the earliest practicable date each Award Year.
6. A recipient transferring from one Eligible Postsecondary Institution to another Eligible Postsecondary Institution, during a period of study for which a Governor's Scholarship has been awarded, must reapply for his or her Governorship Scholarship award for the remainder of the period, due to a possible variation in tuition costs and/or total non-repayable aid awarded at the second Eligible Postsecondary Institution.

## **VI. DISBURSEMENT OF FUNDS**

1. The Commission will disburse funds in one of three ways, determined by the Eligible Postsecondary Institution:
  - a. Individual checks made payable to each recipient, for each school term covered by the recipient's Governor's Scholarship award.
  - b. Single check made payable to the Eligible Postsecondary Institution for all students receiving the Governor's Scholarship at the institution.
  - c. Electronic transfer of funds to the Eligible Postsecondary Institution for all students receiving the Governor's Scholarship at the institution.
2. Along with the individual checks, single check or electronic transfer of funds, the Commission will send a Disbursement Check (ACH) Listing indicating which students are eligible to receive the funds. The Disbursement Check (ACH) Listing will include each recipient's name, social security number, disbursed amount, and the award term(s).
3. The Eligible Postsecondary Institution must deliver the funds to the students or credit the students' accounts toward their Cost of Attendance.
4. If the Eligible Postsecondary Institution or student loses a Governor's Scholarship award check, they must contact the Commission. The Commission will place a stop payment on the check and issue a replacement check.

## **VII. RECORDS RETENTION**

1. An Eligible Postsecondary Institution shall maintain accurate records, books, documents and other evidence concerning the Governor's Scholarship Program, including, but not limited to individual student files for the later of:
  - a. Three years after the award year in which the aid was awarded; or
  - b. For such other period as required by an applicable statute, rule, or regulation; or
  - c. 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. Such documentation may include, but is not limited to, copies of Alien Registration Receipt Cards, Georgia State Income Tax Returns, applications and academic transcripts from previous institutions. As

an alternative to the original hard copies, 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. 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.

## VIII. DEFINITIONS

As used in these regulations and procedures:

**“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 or three quarters of instruction.

**“Accrediting Agency”** means an association or agency recognized and approved by the Commission to function as an evaluator of the quality of the educational institutions and programs as described in these regulations.

**“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 credit.

**“Award Year”** means four consecutive quarters or three consecutive semesters beginning with the summer term and ending with the spring term.

**“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 credit.

**“Board”** means Board of Commissioners of the Georgia Student Finance Commission.

**“Board of Regents”** means the governing body overseeing the University System of Georgia.

**“Commission”** means the Georgia Student Finance Commission.

**“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.

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

**“Department of Technical and Adult Education or DTAE”** means the system comprised of thirty-four technical colleges located in the State of Georgia that

receive public funding and are overseen by the State Board of Technical and Adult Education and the Commissioner of the Department of Technical and Adult Education.

**“Disbursed”** means the student’s account was credited or a check was made available for the student to pick up from the institution.

**“Eligible High School”** means any private or public secondary educational institution in the State of Georgia that is authorized to grant high school diplomas and is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, the Georgia Accrediting Commission, the Georgia Association of Christian Schools, the Association of Christian Schools International, the Georgia Private School Accreditation Council, the Accrediting Commission for Independent Study, or the Southern Association of Independent Schools.

**“Eligible Non-citizen”** means a person who, in accordance with the Federal Title IV definition, is a United States permanent resident with a Permanent Resident 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”. Persons with an F1 or F2 student visa, a J1 or J2 exchange visitor visa, or a G series visa do not meet the definition of an Eligible Non-citizen.

**“Eligible Postsecondary Institution”** means a unit of the University System of Georgia (USG), a branch of the Georgia Department of Technical and Adult Education (DTAE), or a private independent, non-profit college or university located in Georgia, and which is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools. The definition of a private independent college or university also includes any proprietary (for-profit) institution of higher education located in the State of Georgia which: is a Baccalaureate Degree granting institution; is accredited by a regional accrediting agency recognized by the U.S. Department of Education; is not a Bible college; admits as regular students only persons who have a high school diploma, a General Education Development (GED) diploma, or a Degree from an accredited postsecondary institution; has been reviewed and approved for operation and for receipt of Georgia Tuition Equalization Grant funds by the Georgia Nonpublic Postsecondary Education Commission; has been in existence for at least ten years; and whose students are eligible to participate in the Federal Pell Grant program. All eligible institutions must also be approved by the U.S. Department of Education to participate in Federal Title IV programs and be actively participating in at least the Federal Pell Grant program or have applied for approval from the U.S. Department of Education to participate in the Federal Title IV program. Once an eligible institution has been approved by the U.S. Department of Education for participation in the Federal Pell Grant Program and then such approval is

suspended or revoked by the U.S. Department of Education, the institution is ineligible to participate in the Governor's Scholarship Program. Additionally, private colleges and universities, including proprietary institutions must also be eligible to participate in the Georgia Tuition Equalization Grant Program.

**"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 the 12-month period of time commencing each year on July 1<sup>st</sup> and extending through June 30<sup>th</sup> of the succeeding calendar year that represents the State Government of Georgia's annual budgetary cycle.

**"Full-Time"** means enrollment for the equivalent of at least 12 quarter or 12 semester hours of Degree credit of a Matriculated student at an Eligible Postsecondary Institution.

**"Georgia Scholar"** means a graduating senior from an eligible public or private high school in Georgia who has been recognized by the Georgia Department of Education as having exhibited excellence in all phases of school life and in community activities, according to standards prescribed by the Georgia Department of Education. Beginning with the high school graduating class of 2005 (Fiscal Year 2006), being named a Georgia Scholar does not qualify a student for Governor's Scholarship eligibility.

**"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.

**"GSFAPPS"** means the Commission's web-based electronic application process by which students can apply for the scholarship, grant, and service-cancelable loan programs administered by the Commission.

**"GTEG"** means the Georgia Tuition Equalization Grant, a State of Georgia student financial aid program administered by the Commission to provide non-repayable grant assistance to residents of Georgia who are Full-Time Undergraduate students attending private independent (nonprofit and proprietary) Eligible Postsecondary Institutions located in Georgia or college level juniors or seniors attending four-year public colleges or universities located outside the State of Georgia, but within 50 miles of Georgia's borders. The GTEG program is authorized by the Official Code of Georgia Annotated § 20-3-410 and is funded by state appropriations.

**"Matriculated"** means a student is fully admitted and enrolled in an Eligible Postsecondary Institution in a unified academic program of study leading to a

Degree. Retroactively gaining Matriculated status will not establish retroactive eligibility for a Governor's Scholarship.

**“Military Personnel”** means an active member of the Armed Forces of the United States, including members of the Army, Navy, Air Force, Marine Corps, and Coast Guard. Commissioned officers of the Public Health Service or the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration on active duty are also considered to be military personnel.

**“Parent”** means the natural mother or father, adoptive parent, or United States court-appointed legal guardian of a student.

**“Part-Time”** means enrollment for the equivalent of less than 12 quarter or 12 semester hours of Degree credit of a Matriculated student at an Eligible Postsecondary Institution.

**“Postsecondary Cumulative Grade Point Average”** means the calculation of those grades earned at the postsecondary level to establish eligibility for the Governor's Scholarship beyond the freshman year. The Postsecondary Cumulative Grade Point Average is calculated on a traditional 4.00 scale, to the hundredth decimal, without rounding. A traditional 4.0 scale is defined as 4.00 = A+, A, A-, 90.00 or above, 3.00 = B+, B, B-, 80.00 – 89.99, 2.00 = C+, C, C-, 70.00 – 79.99, 1.00 = D+, D, D-, 60.00-69.99 and 0 = F, 59.99 or below.

**“Resident of Georgia”** means a United States Citizen or Eligible Non-citizen who is domiciled in the State of Georgia and meets all of the other residency requirements in the Commission's State Scholarships and Grants Residency Regulations and Section I of these regulations.

**“Salutarian”** means a graduating senior from an Eligible High School in Georgia who has been recognized as the second highest student academically of the graduating class. Beginning with the high school graduating class of 2005 (Fiscal Year 2006), being named as the Salutarian does not qualify a student for Governor's Scholarship eligibility.

**“STAR Student”** means a graduating senior from an Eligible High School in Georgia who has been recognized by such Eligible High School as the student with the highest SAT score of the graduating class.

**“Tuition”** means the charges to a student for instruction without regard to other fees such as technology, lab, activity, athletic, health, book and supplies, 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 or a Baccalaureate Degree.

**“University System of Georgia or USG”** means the system comprised of thirty-five colleges and universities located in the State of Georgia that receive public funding and are overseen by the Board of Regents and the Chancellor of the Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia.

**“Valedictorian”** means a graduating senior from an Eligible High School in Georgia who has been recognized by such Eligible High School as the top student academically of the graduating class.

**“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.