

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

**REGULATIONS**

**2007- 2008 Award Year**



**July 1, 2007**

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**Georgia Student Finance Commission**  
**2082 East Exchange Place, Suite 200**  
**Tucker, Georgia 30084**

**2007- 2008 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 educational grant assistance to members of the Georgia National Guard and U.S. Military Reservists who were deployed overseas on active service to a location designated as a combat zone or the children of such members of the Georgia National Guard and U.S. Military Reserves. Beginning with the 2007-2008 Award-Year, the Spouses of qualifying members of the Georgia National Guard or U.S. Military Reservists who were killed in a combat zone or died as a result of injuries received in a combat zone are also eligible to benefit from the Georgia HERO Scholarship program.

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 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 was deployed overseas on active duty service, to a location designated as a combat zone and completed at least one Qualifying Term of Service; or
2. Be a U.S. Military Reservist who was deployed overseas on active duty service, to a location designated as a combat zone and 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 was deployed overseas on active duty service, to a location designated as a combat zone and 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; or
4. Be the Spouse of a member of the Georgia National Guard who was deployed overseas on active duty service, to a location designated as a combat zone and was killed in that combat zone or as a result of injuries received in that combat zone, and such member completed at least one Qualifying Term of Service; or
5. Be the Spouse of a member of the U.S. Military Reserves who was deployed overseas on active duty service, to a location designated as a combat zone and was killed in that combat zone or as a result of injuries received in that combat zone, and such member 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 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 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 that 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 or graduate 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 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 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 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.
  - d. If the applicant was the Spouse of a member of the Georgia National Guard or U.S. Military Reserves who was killed in a combat zone or 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, and proof of the legal marriage at the time of death, 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. Only one application per Award-Year is required.

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

#### **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. An eligible child of a member of the Georgia National Guard or U.S. Reservist is eligible for one Award-Year of assistance for each Qualifying Term of Service that his or her parent served after May 3, 2005.
3. An eligible child of a member of the Georgia National Guard or U.S. Reservist whose parent was killed or received a 100 percent disability as a result of injuries received during a Qualifying Term of Service is eligible for the equivalent four Award-Years of assistance, regardless of the length of time his or her parent was on active service in such combat zone after May 3, 2005.
4. An eligible member of the Georgia National Guard or U.S. Reservist who completed a Qualifying Term of Service is eligible for the equivalent of four Award-Years of assistance.
5. An eligible Spouse of a member of the Georgia National Guard or U.S. Reservist who was killed in a combat zone or as a result of injuries received in a combat zone, and who completed at least one Qualifying Term of Service, is eligible for the equivalent four Award-Years of assistance. Such Spouse must file an application for the initial Georgia HERO Scholarship award prior to July 1, 2009, or not later than two calendar years following the death of the member, whichever is later, and no award shall be issued later than six calendar years after the initial award was issued.

### **INVOICING**

The Georgia HERO Scholarship is available for Summer, Fall, Winter and/or Spring terms. A student may be awarded for two semesters or three quarters per Award-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 Award-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. RECORDS RETENTION**

1. An Eligible Postsecondary Institution shall maintain accurate records, books, documents and other evidence concerning the HERO 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.

## VII. 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 U.S. Military Reserve certifying a Georgia National Guard Member’s or U.S. Military Reservist’s deployed dates and location of deployment. An example of acceptable documentation is a letter signed by a Georgia National Guard Member’s or U.S. Military Reservist’s Commanding Officer that indicates the Georgia National Guard Member’s or U.S. Military Reservist’s deployed dates and location of deployment.

**“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.

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

**“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 allowable expenses as defined by the Federal Title IV Programs regulations.

**“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.

**“Deployed Dates”** means the dates that a Georgia National Guard Member or U.S. Military Reservist was 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 U.S. Military Reservist must certify his or her deployed dates by providing acceptable documentation.

**“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.

**“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 currently 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.

**“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 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 consecutive period of at least 181 days beginning on or after May 3, 2005 or, in the case of an individual who was killed, receives 100 percent disability as a result of injuries received in such combat zone, or was evacuated from such combat zone due to severe injuries, any period of time on active service in such combat zone beginning on or after May 3, 2005. Such deployment may have begun before May 3, 2005 as long as the 181 days begin on or after May 3, 2005.

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

**“Spouse”** means an individual who was legally married to a member of the Georgia National Guard or U.S. Military Reserves, and officially recognized by the military as

the wife or husband of such member, at the time that such member was killed in a combat zone or as a result of injuries received in a combat zone.

**“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.

**“Graduate Student”** means a student who is in attendance at an eligible postsecondary institution and who is in the process of obtaining a non-undergraduate degree beyond the baccalaureate level.

**“U.S. Military Reservist”** means a full-time or part-time civilian military members currently 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.