

**FAQs Related to the State Programs Update Presentation
August 30 - 31, 2008**

RESIDENCY

1. **Q:** If a dependent student graduates from a Georgia high school, and he has lived here for two years but his parents live in another state, is it true that he would not be considered a Georgia resident and not be eligible for HOPE?

A: That is correct. As a dependent student whose parent(s) are not Georgia residents, he would not be considered a resident of Georgia and, therefore, he would not be eligible for HOPE.

2. **Q:** Does the new two year residency policy only apply to tier 1 and is GSFC going to track tier 1?

A: The new two year residency policy applies to every student who is not a Georgia resident when they graduate from high school, regardless of tier.

3. **Q:** Since GSFC now has access to the information that is used to determine residency on most students (as reported on either the FAFSA or GSFAPPS), would it be possible to make sure that students meet the residency requirements before they are initially entered on SURFER as eligible for the HOPE Scholarship?

A: It would not be possible for GSFC to determine whether every student meets the residency requirements primarily because we do not have access to a student's complete set of records. Therefore, we would not necessarily know if a student has provided conflicting information that must be resolved prior to making an eligibility determination.

4. **Q:** Do the changes to the residency policy affect the Military waiver granted students for the HOPE scholarship?

A: No, it does not. According to the HOPE Scholarship regulations, "If the USG or TCSG institution, according to the USG or TCSG policy, grants a Military Personnel out-of-state tuition waiver for a First-Tier student and such student graduated from an Eligible High School in Georgia as a HOPE Scholar, then the student meets the Georgia Residency requirements of the HOPE Scholarship as a First-Tier student."

5. **Q:** Will the GSFAPPS be updated to collect a student's residency at high school graduation?

A: A question will be added to the GSFAPPS application asking if the student was a resident of Georgia at the time of high school graduation.

6. **Q:** What documentation would be needed to signify 24 months of residency?

A: The type of documentation needed to determine 24 months of residency is no different than what is required to determine 12 months of residency. Several types of documentation can be used to verify residency (for example, location of employment, location of voter registration, address on driver's license and state of issue, location of

bank accounts, state to which income taxes were paid, etc.), but no single factor should serve as full documentation of a person's domicile.

7. **Q:** Is the date the student ENTERED High School reported on the GSFAPPS application or in SURFER? This would help when determining residency.

A: The date a student entered high school is not captured on GSFAPPS or SURFER because such a date would not help substantiate whether a student was a resident of Georgia on the day he or she graduated from high school.

8. **Q:** If I understood correctly, a student could establish Georgia residency without residing in Georgia for 12 months prior to high school graduation. Were you making a distinction between establishing domicile in Georgia as opposed to Georgia residency for state programs?

A: A student could establish residency without having lived in Georgia for 12 months prior to high school graduation. There is no time requirement for being considered a resident at the time of high school graduation. For example, a dependent student and his parents could have moved to Georgia in December of 2007 and immediately took steps to establish residency. If they established residency in January 2008, and the student graduated high school in May 2008, then that student would be considered a Georgia resident at the time of his high school graduation. We were not making a distinction between establishing domicile in Georgia and establishing residency in Georgia. For purposes of this discussion, it is important that there is sufficient documentation to support an intent to maintain permanent residency in Georgia.

9. **Q:** A student lived with her grandparents for the past two years in Georgia, she graduated from a Georgia high school, works in Georgia and is now 20 yrs old. She has a Georgia driver's license & voter registration, and filed Georgia income taxes (with a Tennessee address). Her parents live in Tennessee, but they did not claim her as a dependent. Would she be considered a resident of Georgia?

A: Assuming the grandparents were not her court-appointed legal guardians, and her parents did not claim her as a dependent on their taxes, she would be classified as an Independent Student. As such, she would have to document her residency independent of her grandparents or parents. Since some conflicting residency information exists (she filed her Georgia taxes using a Tennessee address), you should obtain further documentation to resolve the apparent conflict.

10. **Q:** If a student is not claimed by her parents as a dependent on their taxes, it does not make the student independent automatically according to federal regulations. If information on the FAFSA contradicts that on the GSAPPS, do we not determine independency status via FAFSA and other information? This is referring to the prior question of student living with grandparents in Georgia while parents are residents of Tennessee.

A: Regardless of the information that may be included on the FAFSA, for purposes of HOPE, a student is independent if he or she is not claimed as a dependent on income taxes filed by the parent or legal guardian.

11. **Q:** If an out-of-state high school student sends his high school transcript to GSFC before

he has lived in Georgia for two years, then GSFC could post eligibility for HOPE based on his GPA before his eligibility based on residency has been determined, correct?

A: Yes. We are only verifying that the graduate of an out-of-state high school has a GPA of 3.0 or higher. It continues to remain the responsibility of the college to determine if the student has met the residency (and other) requirements for HOPE.

12. **Q:** How do we determine the residency status of a permanent resident alien under the age of 24 whose parents live in another country if that alien does not file a federal tax return?

A: A Dependent Student is one who is under the age of 24 and whose parent or legal guardian claims the student as a dependent on his or her federal or state tax return. If the parents or legal guardian do not file a tax return, then the student must be considered to be Independent. As such, you would need to obtain appropriate documentation to support the student's residency status, independent of the parents' or legal guardian's residency.

13. **Q:** Assume that a permanent resident alien who became a permanent resident on 6-1-07 graduates from a Georgia high school in May of 2009 and appears on SURFER as a final HOPE Scholar. His parents live in a foreign country. He has lived with his brother, who is not his legal guardian, for the past three years. The HOPE applicant does not work and does not file a tax return. Will he meet the Georgia residency requirements for HOPE Scholarship purposes? Now assume the same scenario with the following facts changed: the applicant is a US Citizen. His parents live in New York but did not file a federal tax return.

A: As with the answer to the previous question, if the parents do not file a state or federal tax return, then the student must be considered Independent. As such he will need to provide you with adequate documentation to support his permanent residency as the State of Georgia. This is true whether the student is a US Citizen or an Eligible Non-Citizen.

14. **Q:** We thought that the 24-month rule only applies to students that graduated on or after July 1, 2008. Therefore, if a student graduated from high school prior to this date would he continue under the 12-month rule? Please clarify.

A: (1) If a student graduated from high school prior to July 1, 2008, then the student will need to have established residency in Georgia for at least 12 consecutive months prior to the first day of class for which he is seeking the HOPE Scholarship.

(2) For students who graduated from high school on or after July 1, 2008, and were not residents of Georgia at the time of high school graduation, they will need to have established residency in Georgia for at least 24 consecutive months prior to the first day of class for which the HOPE Scholarship is being sought.

(3) For students who graduated from high school on or after July 1, 2008, and were residents of Georgia at the time of high school graduation, they will need to have established residency in Georgia for at least 12 consecutive months prior to the first day of class for which the HOPE Scholarship is being sought.

85TH PERCENTILE

15. **Q:** If a student takes the Institutional SAT, can those scores count? If so, does the

institution send the scores?

A: Only SAT (and ACT) scores obtained from the College Board (or ACT) will be considered when determining HOPE Scholarship eligibility based on the new 85th percentile provision in the law.

16. **Q:** How can we tell when a final decision is made on a SAT score? For example, how will we know if it has been reviewed or denied?

A: Once GSFC determines that a student has met the 85th percentile requirement on the SAT or ACT, that student's information will be added to SURFER as being HOPE-eligible. A distinction will be made between those students who are HOPE-eligible based on SAT/ACT scores and those who are eligible based on his or her GPA.

17. **Q:** If a home-schooled student does not meet the 85th percentile to get 1st Tier can they still get paid retroactively for HOPE after they attempt 30 hours?

A: Yes, a student who completes a home study program that is ineligible for HOPE now has two ways to enter the HOPE Scholarship program. She can either maintain a 3.0 postsecondary cumulative GPA after having accumulated 30 semester or 45 quarter Attempted-Hours of college credit and receive HOPE retroactively, or she can meet the new 85th percentile requirement and receive HOPE at the First Tier.

18. **Q:** We have a home schooled student starting Fall 2008. She does not meet the 85th percentile but she has been attending AP classes at her local high school. Since she is not a graduate from a HOPE-eligible high school, can we count the AP classes toward her attempted hours to pay her retroactively for HOPE?

A: No. Only college degree level classes taken prior to high school graduation are counted as HOPE Attempted-Hours and only if (a) those hours are accepted as credit by the entering freshman student's postsecondary institution, and (b) the student was not a HOPE scholar upon high school graduation based solely on his or her grade point average. Among other possible reasons, your student was not HOPE-eligible upon graduation from high school because he or she did not graduate from an Eligible High School.

19. **Q:** Does the composite SAT score include all components – including the Writing?

A: Yes, it includes all components, including the writing, if the writing portion of the test was administered.

20. **Q:** Is the student notified if they have met the 85% percentile requirement?

A: Yes, GSFC will notify the student by letter.

21. **Q:** How will GSFC notify the schools concerning students who are eligible under the 85% percentile requirement?

A: Students who meet the 85th percentile eligibility criteria will be included on SURFER.

DUAL ENROLLMENT/JOINT ENROLLMENT

22. **Q:** How is GSFC notified that a student is dual enrolled so that the HOPE Grant hours are not counted on a cap report?

A: The Institution must identify dual credit enrolled students as part of the invoicing process for the HOPE Grant.

23. **Q:** Student will graduate from high school in May 2009. Student took and received credit at our institution for courses taken during her Junior year (7/1/07 – 6/30/08). Student will be taking and receiving credit at our institution for courses taken during her Senior year (7/1/08 – 6/30/09). If the student is NOT a HOPE Scholar upon graduation from high school, we only count attempted hours taken during her Senior year to determine if she is eligible under this option. Is this correct?

A: Yes. College degree coursework taken by a student prior to high school graduation must be counted as HOPE Scholarship Attempted-Hours if (a) the student does not have a HOPE GPA of at least a 3.0 upon graduation, (b) the college accepts those credit hours, and (c) the coursework was taken during a school term that began on or after July 1, 2008.

24. **Q:** What if the courses the student takes are diploma level classes during high school but then goes to college and the college gives them credit towards the degree they are seeking? For example, they were taking a marketing class and then later entered college in the Marketing Management Degree program?

A: Diploma level classes taken by a student prior to high school graduation are never counted as Attempted-Hours, even if the college gives the student credit for those courses. In addition, the grades earned in the courses are not included in the student's GPA.

OTHER

25. **Q:** GSFC tracks Tier 1, so if a student has met the GPA requirements at an out-of-state high school and lives in Georgia for two years, can this student receive the HOPE Scholarship at the tier 1 level?

A: If a student is not a resident of Georgia when he or she graduates from an out-of-state high school with a 3.0 GPA or higher, and the eligible postsecondary institution determines that the student has met the 24 month residency requirement and that the student has attempted less than 30 semester or 45 quarter hours, then he or she may be eligible for the HOPE Scholarship at Tier 1. Through SURFER, we can track a student's paid hours, but not attempted hours. Consequently, we do not know if a student is at Tier 1 at the time he or she has enrolled at an eligible postsecondary institution.

26. **Q:** Are the Georgia screens in Banner going to be updated to take into account these new legislative and regulatory changes?

A: We have been working with the appropriate staff at USG and TCSG to make sure they are aware of all the new legislative and regulatory changes. Any decisions about what changes will be made to Banner is up to USG and TCSG staff.

27. **Q:** Is the list of eligible High Schools that are not in Georgia available on GSFC's website?

A: Such a list would not be practical to develop or maintain. According to the HOPE Scholarship Program regulations, the definition of an Eligible High School which is located outside the State of Georgia, is one that is "currently accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools or one of the following entities: New England Association of Schools and Colleges, Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, North Central Association of Colleges and Schools, Northwest Association of Accredited Schools (successor to the Northwest Association of Schools and Colleges), Western Association of Schools and Colleges, the Alabama Independent School Association, or the Florida Council of Independent Schools."

28. **Q:** Can a student be considered a "dependent" on the FAFSA for Pell, but be considered "independent" for HOPE for purposes of residency?

A: Yes, and vice-versa.

29. **Q:** Will the student who is eligible for two Governor's award receive one double award or two Governor's Awards?

A: The student will receive one award equal to twice the Governor's Scholarship award amount.

30. **Q:** Is the academic 3.5 GPA for Accel cumulative?

A: Yes. According to the Accel Program regulations for 2008-2009, 9th and 10th graders must "demonstrate academic excellence by having earned a cumulative high school grade point average of at least a 3.50 on a 4.00 scale".