



STATE GRANTS AND SCHOLARSHIPS (SGS) GUIDANCE MEMO

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Last Friday, July 17, 2009, Guidance Memo SGS 10-006 regarding the Ohio College Opportunity Grant (OCOG) for the 2009-2010 academic year was distributed. Over the course of the past week, there have been a few questions that have been asked by multiple campuses regarding clarification of some of the OCOG program specifics. The following is a list and further description of some of these items:

Tuition—Private, Non-Profit

An assumption was made that all private, non-profit institutions would have a tuition/general fees structure that would qualify for the maximum private, non-profit OCOG award of \$2,256. For this to be accurate, all schools would have to have a standard tuition/general fees rate (based on 12 credit hours of study over 2 semesters or 3 quarters) equal to or greater than the maximum Federal Pell Grant/EFC combination and maximum OCOG award.

It has been determined this assumption was wrong, and we have identified a few private, non-profit institutions with standard tuition/general fees rates lower than \$7,606 (\$5,350 plus \$2,256). In those cases, we have simply created a unique OCOG award chart for those schools for ease of administration. Since the Ohio Board of Regents does not collect tuition data from private, non-profit institutions as we do from our public institutions, ***I am asking any other private, non-profit schools to whom this applies to contact me directly to set up a similar alternate OCOG chart.*** Of course, this request does not apply to private, non-profit schools whose standard tuition/general fees exceed the \$7,606 threshold—for them, the maximum \$2,256 chart will continue to apply.

Flattened OCOG

The replacement of a declining OCOG scale (OCOG decreases as EFC increases) with a flattened OCOG scale (same OCOG eligibility for all students with EFC of 2190 or less and maximum household income of \$75,000) has taken a handful of folks by surprise.

The flattened OCOG scale is a direct result of the Pell/EFC first concept. In essence, the OCOG formula takes a fixed number (tuition/general fees), subtracts a fixed number (Pell/EFC combo of \$5,350) and results in a fixed number (OCOG eligibility capped at the appropriate maximum award). ***Note the fixed Pell/EFC combo of \$5,350 is arrived at by using the average EFC in any given 100 point range, i.e. an EFC of 50 is assigned to all EFC's between 1 and 100 while an EFC of 1850 is assigned to all EFC's between 1801 and 1900.***

Students who have higher EFC's receive less Pell. In the past, they also received less OCOG. The new OCOG formula recognizes that Pell awards have already 'leveled the playing field' and provided each student with an equal amount of 'buying power' (Pell/EFC combo). A flattened OCOG scale maintains this equalization.

Website Link

Our capacity to communicate directly to OCOG eligible students is limited. Like most financial aid offices, our hotlines have been busy with questions from students about 2009-2010 OCOG eligibility. Additionally, we are updating our OCOG website regularly based upon feedback from schools and students. Schools are encouraged to add our weblink to their sites or highlight it in electronic or paper communications: <http://regents.ohio.gov/sgs/ocog/>.

Maximum Household Income

In addition to an EFC of 2190 or less, students must have a household income of no greater than \$75,000 in order to qualify for OCOG. Household income is an edit we run against individual ISIR records to determine final eligibility on our rosters. Due to the delay in the availability of the eligibility rosters, schools may wish to run an internal edit. The field used to define household income is the FISAP Total Income (FTI) field. In the ISIR Record Description for 2009-2010, this is field #286, starting position 1248 and ending position 1254.

OCOG File Format

Many financial aid offices have already worked with their data administrators to load the updated OCOG HEI submission file format for 2009-2010. This file format has been available online for some time. For those who have yet to make the update, now is the opportune time as we await the availability of the OCOG eligibility rosters before payment submission requests can be made. The file format can be found here: <http://regents.ohio.gov/hei/datasubdoc/finaid/ogfile0910.html>. An additional field for a Verification Switch has been added for 2009-2010. At this point, it is important to have the updated file format loaded although the determination of whether to activate this switch or simply have it default to a set variable has not yet been made. Further guidance will be issued prior to payment submission requests being made.

Influence of other Tuition-Specific Aid

OCOG has always been tuition/general fees specific and will continue to be tuition/general fees specific for the 2009-2010 academic year (since adding the books and transportation costs as originally planned is not feasible). As such, in the past, any student receiving 100% tuition/general fees in the form of a waiver or institutional, athletic, third party, federal or state aid was not eligible for OCOG. That will remain true for 2009-2010. Examples of state aid that covers 100% of tuition/general fees at public institutions are the National Guard Scholarship and the Safety Officers Memorial Scholarship. The Ohio War Orphans Scholarship was formerly in this category, but now covers less than 100% tuition/general fees at public institutions (addressed in the next paragraph).

For students receiving any tuition/general fees-specific aid not equal to 100% of their tuition/general fees, a simple calculation should be performed to determine final OCOG eligibility. Tuition/general fees minus tuition/general fees-specific aid equals OCOG eligibility (up to respective maximum grant award). A student's Pell Grant does not have to be factored in to this equation since it has already been factored in before arriving at the respective OCOG maximum grant award. For ease of administration, a calculator will be added to our website soon for this purpose. In the meantime, attached is a spreadsheet containing a calculator for this purpose. This calculator is designed to calculate annual amounts.

OCOG Refund Calculator

Included in the attached Excel Spreadsheet too is a calculator to aid in determining OCOG refunds. This calculator will soon be available online. This calculator is designed to calculate refunds using term amounts instead of annual amounts.

Financial aid personnel should direct questions to the Ohio College Opportunity Grant Program Administrator, Tamika Braswell, 614.728.8862, tbraswell@regents.state.oh.us