

Policy: HOPE Scholarship Program Reconciliation

CITATION REFERENCE

Official Title: HOPE Scholarship Program Reconciliation

Abbreviated Title: HOPE Scholarship Reconciliation

Volume: CCGA Policies

Responsible Office: Financial Aid Office

Originally issued: February 1, 2011

Effective Date: February 1, 2011

Revised:

Policy Statement

The College of Coastal Georgia will adhere fully to all invoicing, reconciliation and records retention mandates outlined in the HOPE Scholarship Program Regulations.

Reason for Policy

The purpose of this policy is to ensure full compliance with all invoicing, reconciliation and records retention mandates outlined in the HOPE Scholarship Program Regulations.

Entities Affected By This Policy

Employees of the College’s Financial Aid Office and Business Office are covered by this policy.

Who Should Read This Policy

Employees of the Financial Aid Office and and Business Office should be familiar with this policy.

Contacts

Contact	Phone	E-Mail
Marsha Miller	(912) 279-5728	mmiller@ccga.edu

Website Address for This Policy

<http://www.ccgga.edu/Policy/StudentAffairsPolicies.asp>

Related Documents/Resources

HOPE Scholarship Program at Public Institutions Regulations

- [Financial Aid Processing Policy](#)
- [Financial Aid Verification Policy](#)
- [Financial Aid Record Retention Policy](#)
- [Return of Title IV Funds Policy](#)

Definitions

These definitions apply to these terms as they are used in this policy:

- **Award Year:** The term “award year” means four (4) consecutive quarters or three (3) consecutive semesters, beginning with the summer term and ending with the spring term.
- **Award Year Reconciliation:** The term “Award Year Reconciliation” means the final student-by-student reconciliation for an award year conducted by the College with the Commission.
- **Book Allowance.** The term “book allowance” refers to HOPE funds made available to students attending the College to purchase books and/or supplies for their program of study.
- **Commission:** The term “Commission” means the Georgia Student Finance Commission, the agency responsible for administering certain post-secondary educational student financial aid programs offered by the State of Georgia, and other programs for which funds may be appropriated or assigned to it by the state legislature, or from other sources, from time to time.
- **Term-Reconciliation:** “Term-Reconciliation” means an official acknowledgement by an authorized official of the College, at the end of each term, that the number of students submitted for payment and amount invoiced by the College, and the number of students awarded an amount issued by the Commission, are accurate on the date of such acknowledgement.

Overview

The Helping Outstanding Pupils Educationally (HOPE) Scholarship Program is a merit-based scholarship program with specific academic and grade point average eligibility requirements. The purpose of the HOPE Scholarship Program is to encourage the academic achievement of Georgia’s high school students and Georgians seeking degrees from postsecondary institutions located in Georgia.

I. Invoicing Requirements

Prior to the beginning of any award year, and no later than June 30th of each year, the Commission establishes and publishes the invoicing deadline dates for each school term for the upcoming award year.

- a. Submission Dates for Invoices. The Financial Aid Office may submit HOPE invoices to the Commission as early as fifteen (15) calendar days prior to the first day of classes for the College term.
- b. Invoice Submittal and Processing. Invoices must be submitted, processed and approved by the Commission by the invoicing deadline date as established by the Commission. In the event invoices are submitted to the Commission by the College after the invoicing deadline date for a school term, the Commission may issue a notice of failure to meet the invoicing deadline date to the President of the College and the invoices may not be honored.
- c. Payment of Invoices. HOPE funds are paid to the College by check or electronic transfer of funds on behalf of eligible students each school term, upon submission to the Commission of a HOPE invoice.

II. Reconciliation Requirements

Pursuant to HOPE Scholarship Program Regulations, there are a number of reconciliation requirements the College must meet. These are:

- a. Term-Reconciliation. First, the Financial Aid Office must conduct Term-Reconciliations by the end of each term.
 - The Vice President for Student Affairs is authorized to perform the acknowledgement required for Term-Reconciliation.
 - Funds are not returned to the Commission as part of the Term-Reconciliation process.
- b. Award Year Reconciliation. Additionally, the Financial Aid Office must conduct an Award Year Reconciliation.
 - The Financial Aid Office must conduct a complete student-by-student Award Year Reconciliation with the Commission.

- Further, the Financial Aid Office must submit a current year HOPE Scholarship Program Reconciliation Certification Form to the Commission by July 15, immediately following the completion of the Award Year.
- c. Return of Funds. The College must return to the Commission any HOPE funds not utilized according to the Award Year Reconciliation within thirty (30) days of completing the Award Year Reconciliation process.
- This includes any book allowance funds for which students were ineligible.
 - The College must have a procedure in place to ensure that the HOPE funds do not go to an unintended third party (i.e. State, institution).

III. **Records Retention**

The following mandates shall guide the College's retention of records relating to the HOPE Scholarship Program:

- a. Length of Retention. The Financial Aid Office shall maintain accurate records, books, documents and other evidence concerning the HOPE Scholarship Program, including, but not limited to, individual student files for the later of:
- Three (3) years after the award year in which the aid was awarded; or
 - For such other period as required by an applicable statute, rule, or regulation; or
 - Such other time as requested in writing by the Commission.
- b. Documentation. Documentation contained within an individual student file or record, which supports the original determination of a student's eligibility, must be retained by the College and available for review by the Commission on the College's campus, located within the State of Georgia, for at least three (3) calendar years after the most recent award year for which the student received HOPE funds.
- The College is permitted to maintain these documents in an imaged media format; however, the imaged media format must be capable of reproducing an accurate, legible, and complete copy of the original document.

- Such documentation may include, but is not limited to, copies of Permanent Resident Alien Cards, Georgia State Income Tax Returns, student financial aid applications and academic transcripts from previous institutions.
 - Documentation regarding a student’s eligibility is not limited to files, records, and other information received and maintained by the College’s Financial Aid Office. Documentation supporting a student’s eligibility that is received and maintained by the College’s Admissions Office, Registrar’s Office, Business Office, and other administrative operations of the College must be available to the Commission for the purpose of Compliance Reviews.
 - It is the Financial Aid Office’s responsibility to resolve any inconsistencies or conflicting information within a student’s records prior to awarding or disbursing HOPE funds to the student.
- c. Extended Retention. The College may be required to retain student records involved in a Compliance 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 College must continue to retain all associated records until resolution is reached.

Responsibilities

The responsibilities each party has in connection with this policy on H.O.P.E. Scholarship Program reconciliation are:

Party	Responsibility
Financial Aid Office	Ensure compliance with this policy.
Business Office	Ensure compliance with this policy.

Forms

None

Appendices

None