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GOVERNOR



Timothy A. Connell
PRESIDENT

May 25, 2006

SUBJECT: HOPE Study Abroad Policy

Dear Colleague:

The Georgia Student Finance Commission recognizes the educational value of study abroad programs for Georgia's postsecondary students and the enrichment they ultimately bring to the State's culture and economy. For this reason, the regulations governing the HOPE Scholarship Program allow institutions the flexibility needed to best serve their study abroad students. Recently a group of school officials developed a set of fictional, but plausible, scenarios with questions regarding HOPE Scholarship payment for study abroad students and worked with us to clarify this process. This "Dear Colleague Letter" is the result of that partnership effort. We hope the following scenarios and questions, with their corresponding answers, are helpful to you. A summary of the basic principles reflected in these scenarios is provided at the end.

Scenario One:

Josh Brown graduated from high school in Columbus, Georgia where his parents still live. Josh is a Georgia resident but is pursuing his degree program with the University of Upper Alabama. Josh has applied to a study abroad program sponsored by the University of Central Georgia (a University System of Georgia [USG] institution). Josh has contacted the University of Central Georgia to find out if he will be eligible for a HOPE Scholarship while on the study abroad program, since he graduated from a Georgia high school as a HOPE Scholar.

Question:

Will Josh be eligible to receive a HOPE Scholarship for his study abroad program?

Answer:

Josh will not be eligible for HOPE Scholarship payment because he is not in a matriculated status at a HOPE-eligible institution in Georgia.

Scenario Two:

Tom Smith, a sophomore at the University of Upper Georgia (a USG institution), will be participating in a semester study abroad program sponsored by the University of Central Georgia (another USG institution).

Question One:

What is the process by which Tom can receive his HOPE Scholarship payment, since his home institution (the University of Upper Georgia) and host institution (the University of Central Georgia) are both USG institutions?

Answer:

Tom should receive HOPE payment from the University of Central Georgia (his USG host institution). The University of Central Georgia should invoice the Georgia Student Finance Commission (GSFC) for the amount they normally charge their students, in the same way as transient students receive HOPE payment.

Question Two:

Tom's study abroad program costs at the University of Central Georgia are as follows:

• Tuition:	\$2,000 (12 credit hours)
• Books:	\$500
• Insurance:	\$40
• Airfare, local transportation, housing, meals, and program-related excursions:	<u>\$3,882</u>
TOTAL:	<u>\$6,422</u>

Which of these costs can the HOPE Scholarship cover and what costs can typically be covered by HOPE funds?

Answer:

In the example of Tom attending the University of Central Georgia (his USG host institution), HOPE will cover \$2,000 for tuition (if that is the amount normally charged by the USG host institution for 12 hours, regardless of whether the student is study abroad) and \$150 for books (since the student is enrolled in 6 or more semester hours). If the \$40 insurance fee was included in the HOPE-approved mandatory fees that were capped at the 2003-2004 level, then HOPE will cover it. HOPE funds cannot be used toward the cost of airfare, local transportation, housing, meals, or other expenses associated with study abroad programs.

Question Three:

In this example, does the University of Central Georgia apply the study abroad tuition charges and HOPE-eligible fees to the HOPE Scholarship and disburse any remaining balance to the student, the same way they do for regular classroom courses?

Answer:

There should never be a remaining balance of HOPE funds that are disbursed to students for tuition and fees. In this example, the University of Central Georgia (the USG host institution) should invoice GSFC for the exact amount of the student's charges at the University of Central Georgia. However, with the student's permission the invoicing institution can apply the HOPE book allowance to the student's institutional charges. If the student does not give permission, the institution should disburse the book allowance to the student for the purpose of purchasing books and supplies.

Question Four:

Would the process differ if Tom wished to participate in a study abroad program sponsored by East University (a private/independent HOPE-eligible institution in Georgia)?

Answer:

The basic process describe above would not be different if the host institution was a private/independent HOPE-eligible institution in Georgia, rather than a public institution, except that the private/independent institution (East University) would invoice GSFC for the standard \$1,500 per semester award amount for HOPE recipients attending private/independent institutions.

Scenario Three:

Wanda Johnson is a junior at Northeastern Georgia College (a USG institution). She has registered as a transient student to participate in a study abroad program sponsored by the South Maryland College.

Question One:

Will Wanda be eligible to receive HOPE Scholarship payment?

Answer:

Wanda will be eligible for HOPE Scholarship payment if Northeastern Georgia College (her USG home institution) has approved the study abroad program for credit toward her degree program prior to her departure and she is still considered to be in a matriculated status at Northeastern Georgia College.

Question Two:

If so, describe the process by which Wanda can receive her HOPE Scholarship since the home institution is a USG HOPE-eligible institution but the host institution for the study abroad program is an out-of-state institution (South Maryland College).

Answer:

Northeastern Georgia College would invoice GSFC for the amount they normally charge their students. GSFC would not disburse HOPE funds to South Maryland College. Northeastern Georgia College should devise its own arrangement regarding the transfer of funds to South Maryland College.

Scenario Four:

Susan Miller, a junior at Georgia Eastern College (a USG institution), is enrolling in a non-USG study abroad program at the University of The Caribbean Islands. Since it is not a program that is affiliated with a USG institution or any other HOPE-eligible institution, she will be processed as a direct-enrollment student and will not be in a matriculated status at Georgia Eastern College during her study abroad program.

Question One:

Can she receive the HOPE Scholarship for this enrollment? If so, describe the process by which she can receive her HOPE Scholarship since the home institution (Georgia Eastern College) is a USG institution, but the host institution (the University of The Caribbean Islands) is a foreign school.

Answer:

Susan would not be eligible for HOPE payment because she is not in a matriculated status at Georgia Eastern College or any other HOPE-eligible institution in Georgia. Susan independently applied to the host institution, referred to in this scenario as a "direct enrollment student".

Question Two:

Would the outcome differ if Susan's home institution allowed her to be concurrently enrolled so that she could maintain her matriculated status at Georgia Eastern College while abroad?

Answer:

Since Susan is in a matriculated status at Georgia Eastern College (her USG home institution), she can receive HOPE Scholarship payment if Georgia Eastern College approved the study abroad program for credit toward her degree program prior to her departure. Susan is considered to be matriculated at her home institution, even though she is not actually enrolled for course work at her home institution during the school term in which she is enrolled at the host institution, referred to in this scenario as being "concurrently enrolled". Georgia Eastern College (home institution) would devise its own arrangement regarding the transfer of funds to the University of The Caribbean Islands (host institution).

Summary:

1. If a study abroad student's home institution, which is a HOPE-eligible institution, is offering the study abroad program, then the home institution should invoice GSFC for the amount they normally charge their students.
2. If a study abroad student's home institution is a HOPE-eligible institution but the study abroad program is offered through another HOPE-eligible institution, which is serving as the student's host institution, then the host institution should invoice GSFC for amount they normally charge their students, in the same way transient students receive HOPE payment.
3. If a study abroad student's home institution is a HOPE-eligible institution, but the study abroad program is offered through another institution that is not a HOPE-eligible institution, which is serving as the student's host institution, and the HOPE-eligible home institution has approved the study abroad program for credit toward the student's degree program prior to the student's departure, then the HOPE-eligible home institution should invoice GSFC for the amount they normally charge their students. The HOPE-eligible home institution should devise its own arrangements for reimbursement to the host institution for the study abroad student.
4. If a study abroad student's home institution is a HOPE-eligible institution, but the student is participating in a study abroad program as a direct enrollment student and is not considered to be in a matriculated status at his or her HOPE-eligible home institution, such student is not eligible for HOPE Scholarship payment.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Bill Flook at 770-724-9052. The "Dear Colleague Letters" issued by GSFC can be referenced at www.gsfc.org under the heading of "Financial Aid Professionals – School/Lender Updates".

Sincerely,



Timothy A. Connell
President