

# Policies for the Office of Student Financial Aid

## Subject State Grants (G)

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The purpose of this policy is to insure the External funded awards are processed and distributed with the necessary controls. This policy has the further purpose of formalizing those procedures used by the University in coordinating with outside agencies, disbursement to student accounts and reconciliation's of accounts. This program shall be administered through the Office of Student Financial Aid with the concurrence of the respective external organization and NSU Business Affairs Office. The Director of Student Financial Aid shall be responsible for the development and implementation of procedures to assure compliance with this policy.

### I. AWARD CATEGORIES

1. Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS)
2. Rockefeller Wildlife Scholarships
3. START (Student Tuition Assistance and Revenue Trust Program)
4. Go Grant
5. Early Start Program

State Grants will be applied to student's accounts upon verification of eligibility. NSU will bill each category according to category rules.

The following are recognized grants from the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA).

#### 1. Louisiana Taylor Opportunity Programs (TOPS)

The TOPS Program was enacted in the Regular Session of 1997 to create a comprehensive program of student awards to promote academic persistence and to reward academic merit. TOPS replaces the Tuition Assistance Plan (TAP) and the Louisiana Honors Scholarship Program, formerly the state's primary student aid programs and creates an additional award, for students enlisted in National Guard a National Guard Stipend. Along with TOPS those students who have demonstrated exceptional Academic merit may qualify for an Honors Stipend or a Performance Stipend.

Legislative Authority: R.S. 17:3021 – 3036

R.S. 17:3042.1

R.S. 17:3048.1

Students are determined eligible for the Taylor Opportunity Program for students hereinafter referred to as TOPS, by the Louisiana Student Financial Assistance Commission (LOSFA). Upon eligibility determination, it is the post secondary institution's responsibility to administer the TOPS program to all qualified applicants. This policy has the purpose of formalizing procedures and institution controls in coordinating and administering the TOPS award.

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### **Certification of Student Data**

Information Systems receives LOSFA'S Master Roster listing all students who qualify for TOPS. Using the Master Roster, eligible students are verified by LOSFA status codes to determine eligibility and award level. Awards are offered to qualified students enrolled at NSU.

A TOPS reconciliation report is ran to verify the accuracy of the award offer to the students account; students are also verified for full-time enrollment status.

### **Program Billing**

Each term institutions shall bill LOSFA for students who are recipients

1. Institutions may only bill for students who have been certified by LOSFA as eligible for a TOPS award; and
2. Institutions will bill LOSFA based on their certification that the recipient of a TOPS Award is enrolled full time, as of the fourteenth class day, and for any qualifying summer sessions as of the last day to drop and receive a full refund for the full summer session. Institutions shall not bill for the students who are enrolled less than full time on the fourteenth class day, and for qualifying summer sessions as of the last day to drop and receive a full refund for the summer session, unless the student qualifies for payment for less than full-time enrollment.
3. Students failing to meet the full-time enrollment requirement are responsible for reimbursing the institution for any awards received.
4. Annually, two and four year institutions are required to provide LOSFA a current fee schedule. The schedule must include an itemized description of the composition of the mandatory fees listed on the fee schedule;
5. Certify that the institution will reimburse LOSFA for any award funds incorrectly disbursed to ineligible students; and
6. Upon the school's certification that a recipient of a TOPS Award is enrolled full time, institutions shall bill for and LOSFA will reimburse the institution for each such recipient as follows:
  - a. Public two and four-year colleges and universities may bill for an amount up to the maximum tuition for that institution;
  - b. For recipients of the Performance, Honors and National Guard awards, institutions may bill LOSFA for the stipend that accompanies these awards.

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A bill of all TOPS awards is prepared and forwarded to LOSFA using the LOSFA Portal. In the event that a manual bill is necessary, the Financial Aid Office uses either the Manual Payment Request form or the Web to process.

**C. Disbursement of Funds**

Upon EFT deposit or receipt of the check, the dollar amount is compared to the payment roster received through the LOSFA portal to ensure that all approved payments have been accounted for.

**D. Reporting of Academic Data**

At the conclusion of each semester, and for the purpose of determining an applicant's eligibility for a program award, an institution will report the following student data: the institution will complete and return to LOSFA, a College Academic Grade Report including, but not limited to the following data elements:

1. Semester hours attempted; and
2. Semester hours earned; and
3. Semester quality points earned
4. Academic standing, and if applicable, date of placement on academic probation; and
5. upon graduation, degree, date and type of degree as determined by LOSFA

**E. Records Retention**

Records pertaining to the students listed on the billing certification form will be subject to audit as required by state statute. Such records will be maintained for a minimum of three years and be available upon request to LOSFA and the Louisiana legislative auditor.

Appeal process for TOPS is handled through LOSFA.

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### Procedures for Simultaneous Enrollment in Two or More Schools

It is necessary for the student to gain access to the courses required for completion of the degree in the chosen discipline and where the total number of hours earned at all institutions during the academic year is the equivalent of carrying a full-time academic workload as determined by the institution which will award the degree.

Student attending two or more Louisiana public two or four-year colleges or universities shall receive a total amount not to exceed the amount that would be paid at the school with the highest tuition among those at which the student is simultaneously enrolled.

### Procedures for Dual Billing

- a. Student enrolled full time and billed at the maximum rate at one institution are not eligible for TOPS funding at another institution for the same term.
- b. Students whose enrollment at multiple institutions is necessitated by the program of study pursued and whose enrollment at any one institution is not considered full-time, may be considered eligible for TOPS funding if the combined number of enrolled hours from the multiple schools are equivalent to full-time enrollment as determined by the home institution. These students will be termed "dual enrolled students".
- c. The Student is responsible for securing verification of necessity for dual enrollment from the appropriate university official and providing this verification to the financial aid officer at the home (degree granting) and guest institution(s). Verification provided to the guest institution should include where they are to forward enrollment verification and Manual Payment Rosters. School may develop forms to gather this information.
- d. The TOPS Counselor at the student's home institution (degree granting) is designated as the billing coordinator for that student.
- e. The TOPS Counselor for the guest institution is responsible for forwarding enrollment verification after the 14<sup>th</sup> class day to the home institution along with a Manual Payment Request (MPR) for the tuition charged at the guest institution.
- f. The billing coordinator collects verification of the 14<sup>th</sup> class day enrollment from the guest institution(s) along with their Manual Payment Request (MPR), and confirms the following:
  - a. Total number of hours enrolled at both (all) institutions totals 12 or more semester hours and 8 or more at quarter schools.
  - b. The total funding requested does not exceed the highest TOPS tuition of the institutions involved.
- g. The TOPS Counselor completes a Manual Payment Request (MPR) for the home institution and forwards ALL MPR's to LOSFA.
- h. Upon processing of the MPR's, LOSFA will forward by EFT or checks and Tuition Payment Rosters directly to all institutions.
- i. Each institution is responsible for retaining documentation necessary to support billing.

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**2. Rockefeller Wildlife Scholarships**

The Rockefeller Scholarship Program, established in 1980, is funded with dedicated monies and offers a Scholarship valued at \$1,000 per academic year for a maximum of \$7,000 and is available to both the undergraduate and graduate students majoring in forestry, wildlife, or marine science as it pertains to wildlife.

Upon receipt of award funds and prior to their disbursement to students, the institution shall:

1. for Rockefeller Wildlife Scholarships;
  - a. verify that the recipient is enrolled full-time in forestry, wildlife or marine science with the intent of obtaining a degree from a Louisiana public college or university offering a degree in one of the three specified fields.
  - b. If at time of application, the student has earned less than 24 hours of graded college credit since graduating from high school, then the applicant must have earned a minimum cumulative high school grade point average of at least 2.50 on a 4.0 scale for all courses completed in grades 9 through 12 and have taken the ACT or SAT and received test score results.
  - c. If at the time of application, the student applicant has earned 24 or more hours of college credit, then the applicant must have at least a 2.50 cumulative college grade point average.

**Maintaining Eligibility**

To continue receiving the Rockefeller State Wildlife Scholarship, recipients must meet all of the following criteria;

1. Have received the Scholarships for not more than seven academic years (five undergraduate and two graduate); and
2. at the close of each academic year (including the spring semester) have earned at least 24 hours total credit, (excluding summer sessions)
3. achieve a cumulative grade point average of at least 2.50 at the end of the first academic year and each academic year thereafter; and
4. continue to enroll each subsequent semester (excluding summer sessions) at the same institution unless granted an exception for cause and /or approval for transfer of the award by LOSFA; and
5. continue to pursue a course of study leading to an undergraduate or graduate degree in wildlife, forestry or marine science.

**Release of Funds**

- a. Recipient signs Disbursement Acknowledgment and funds are accepted toward recipients school account.
- b. Funds must be released within 30 days of receipt by the school or be returned to LOSFA.

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**3. START (Student Tuition Assistance and Revenue Trust Program)**

Start is an innovative college saving plan designed to help families contend with the future high cost of their children's post-secondary education. The program is administered by the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance under the direction of the Louisiana Tuition Trust Authority, or LATTA. The LATTA is a public body composed of representatives from the state's higher education governing board.

A savings account, called an Educational Assistance Account, may be opened on behalf of a child by a parent, grandparent, legal guardian or a person claiming the child as a dependent on their tax return. Participants in the program are able to save at their own pace, in amounts they can afford, and still have their money professionally managed. In addition, as an incentive to save, the State of Louisiana will annually match a portion of the deposits made to your account, depending upon the amount you deposit and your adjusted gross income.

START sends the institution an Enrollment Verification Form with names of students and term the student intends to enroll in at the institution. The institution completes the Enrollment Verification Form and sends back to LOSSFA. A notification form stating the amount that has been authorized to be disbursed for each student is received by EFT or Check and applied to the students account for the designated semester.

Funds must be released within 30 days of receipt by the school or be returned to LOSFA.

GO Grant is a State program administered by the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) in accordance with the approved program and a memorandum of understanding by and between the Louisiana Board of Regents and the Louisiana Student Financial Assistance Commission. The Louisiana GO Grant assists those students who can demonstrate financial need to pay for the cost of postsecondary education. The GO Grant is used to pay a portion of the cost of attendance at an eligible Louisiana postsecondary institution.

***Eligibility Requirements-***

1. Be a Louisiana Resident – as of the date of FAFSA is complete
2. Be a First time freshman (of any age) beginning with Fall 07 or 25 years or older not having enrolled at least one year
3. Be a Federal Pell Grant recipient for the same award year
4. Must have remaining Financial Need of > \$0 based on COA-EFC-Pell=Need
5. Enrolled at an eligible institution in an eligible program leading to an undergraduate degree
6. Maintain satisfactory academic progress
7. Have not used all Go Grant eligibility at another institution

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### **4.) GO GRANT**

GO Grant is a State program administered by the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) in accordance with the approved program and a memorandum of understanding by and between the Louisiana Board of Regents and the Louisiana Student Financial Assistance Commission. The Louisiana GO Grant assists those students who can demonstrate financial need to pay for the cost of postsecondary education. The GO Grant is used to pay a portion of the cost of attendance at an eligible Louisiana postsecondary institution.

#### ***Eligibility Requirements-***

1. Be a Louisiana Resident – as of the date of FAFSA is complete
2. Be a Federal Pell Grant recipient for the term awarded Go
3. Must have remaining Financial Need greater than 60% of their total financial need
4. Enrolled at an eligible institution in an eligible program leading to an undergraduate degree
5. Maintain satisfactory academic progress
6. Have not used all Go Grant eligibility at another institution

#### ***Awarding of GO Grant-***

1. Students must have a completed the Title IV aid application process as defined in the application section of this manual,
2. Verification must be completed if selected,
3. Student must be a Pell Grant recipient for term awarded Go
4. Student must be a Louisiana resident
5. Need must be determined using the following formula

Cost of Attendance

Less Expected Family Contribution

Less Pell Grant

Remaining Need x 60% = the required 60% Financial Need base

\*Remaining Need +Go Gran Award cannot exceed 60% of Financial Need

(Priority is given to those whose remaining need is >60% and is 25 years or older)

6. GO Grant can be awarded through packaging process and/or on a case by case basis by running a report to identify qualifying students,
7. To allow more students to receive the GO Grant, award amounts are a maximum of \$1200/year for fulltime or \$600 per semester; \$600/year for half time or \$300 per semester, which is less than the authorized maximum amount established in LOSFA's framework.
8. RPEDISB is the program used to feed Go Grant to the student accounts

#### ***Shortfalls in funding –***

1. During any year a shortfall in funding exists, NSU will award students on a 1<sup>st</sup> come 1<sup>st</sup> serve basis. NSU will continue to award up to the allocation provided by LOSFA

#### ***Billing of GO Grant***

1. The Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) will be billed for all students awarded GO Grant beginning after the 14<sup>th</sup> day of enrollment but prior to the LOSFA Billing deadline.