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Academic Affairs  
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Responsible Office:  
[Opportunity Programs](#)

**Policy Title:**

Educational Opportunity Program (EOP), Guidelines for the Operation of

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Community Colleges  
State-Operated Campuses  
Statutory Colleges

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**Summary**

This policy document provides guidance to State University of New York (University) campuses on the intent and purposes of the Educational Opportunity Program, student eligibility and requirements for the structure and operation of the program at the campus level. It includes the following sections:

- Program History and Purpose;
- Administration and Structure;
- Program Services and Evaluation;
- Student Eligibility;
- Program Finances; and
- Record-keeping and Reporting.

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**Policy**

**I. HISTORY AND PURPOSE**

**Background**

The Educational Opportunity Program combines access, academic support and supplemental financial assistance to make higher education possible for students who have the potential to succeed, despite poor preparation and limited financial resources.

Having been in operation for more than a quarter century, the Educational Opportunity Program had its origins in the late 1960's, during the Rockefeller Administration. The Master Plan of the State University for 1964 set forth a long-range commitment that "every student capable of completing a program of higher education shall have the opportunity to do so." This objective was reaffirmed in the 2002-04 Master Plan which states: "As a public institution the University has a strong commitment to ensuring broad access and opportunity for New York State residents." That commitment was reaffirmed in Mission Review.

In 1967, then first-year Assemblyman, Arthur O. Eve, of the 141st Assembly District, gave further force to the principles of access and opportunity by developing the appropriation bill that gave birth to the Educational Opportunity Program. Modeled on the SEEK (Search for Education, Elevation and Knowledge) program that had been instituted by Percy Sutton in the City University in the prior year, the first unit of what would become a university-wide opportunity program enrolled 249 students at the State University College in Buffalo, New York. In the following year, Assemblyman Eve was able to obtain sufficient funding to permit expansion to ten campuses. By the 1970-71 academic year, thirty campuses had enrolled more than 4,600 opportunity students and New York State Education Law §6452 had formally established the provisions of SEEK at the City University of New York, the Educational Opportunity Program in the State University of New York and the Higher Educational Opportunity Program at the independent colleges in New York.

The Educational Opportunity Program now exists on forty-five campuses in the University. Similar programs offer opportunities in the higher education systems of New Jersey, Pennsylvania and California. Today, graduates number more than 44,000. Most continue to live in New York, enriching its economic and social fabric. Among their number are physicians, teachers, scientists, engineers, attorneys, artists, entrepreneurs and public servants. And, many have returned to the University as administrators and counselors who provide support to another generation of opportunity students.

### **Program Intent/Activities**

In order to fulfill the intent of the Educational Opportunity Program, the following program activities have been established:

1. provision of access to the University for disadvantaged students who show the potential to succeed, despite poor preparation and limited financial resources;
2. orientation and preparation of students prior to the freshman year;
3. provision of a structured support and enrichment program, including counseling and tutoring throughout students' enrollment;
4. provision of financial aid to students;
5. collection, analysis and reporting of data pertaining to enrollment and performance; and
6. development of a body of research and publication that documents successful approaches.

## **II. ADMINISTRATION AND STRUCTURE**

Administration, management and development of the Educational Opportunity Program are responsibilities shared between the sponsoring campuses and system administration of the University. Within system administration, the responsibility for opportunity programs is placed under the office of the provost and vice chancellor for academic affairs and is assigned to the associate provost for opportunity programs. The associate provost reports to the provost and leads the Opportunity Programs' staff. Principal among the responsibilities of the office of opportunity programs are:

1. establishment of program structure, objectives, mission, etc., as consistent with legislative intent;
2. conduct of overall fiscal planning (e.g. budget development, allocation planning, and expenditure priorities), funds distribution, monitoring and control;
3. provision of clear guidelines for student eligibility, enrollment, service provision and program structure;
4. development of enrollment targets and accountability measures;
5. monitoring of Educational Opportunity Program structure, expenditure and operation to ensure compliance with student needs and Education Law;
6. review and approval of campus plans, for services, expenditures, and structure;
7. evaluation and monitoring of program effectiveness;
8. provision of direction and assistance in the development of effective programming, services and administrative practices;
9. provision of oversight to ensure compliance with University procedures, objectives and policies;
10. provision of technical assistance and intervention as necessary to resolve programmatic issues and rectify operational problems;
11. provision of data, policy analysis and information necessary for the continued public support and funding of program activities;
12. system-wide communication of university developments, policy directions etc., that impact opportunity programs;
13. orientation of new administrative personnel and the provision of opportunities for professional development and exposure to new techniques or approaches that may improve the effectiveness and quality of Educational Opportunity Program services;
14. coordination of relations between the Educational Opportunity Program and other educational institutions and

- programs;
15. supervision of university-wide initiatives that contribute to and complement the Educational Opportunity Program; and
  16. provision of advice and input in the recruitment, selection and evaluation of Educational Opportunity Program administrators.

The office of opportunity programs carries out a regular schedule of statewide meetings for Educational Opportunity Program directors, visits campuses and also hosts training seminars and conferences in order to share information and to discuss issues related to program operations.

### **The Role of the Sponsoring College**

Educational Opportunity Programs operate on 45 campuses, including University centers, doctoral granting institutions, University colleges, technology colleges, and community colleges. Because program activities take place on the campuses and Educational Opportunity Program students are integrated into all aspects of campus life, sponsoring campuses bear substantial responsibility for program and student success. The responsibilities of the sponsoring campus include:

1. provision of day-to-day supervision of program activities to ensure compliance with program requirements, enrollment targets, University procedures, Educational Opportunity Program guidelines, etc;
2. creation of an environment that endorses and supports program objectives, program staff and program students;
3. provision of administrative support and resources sufficient to ensure that the program is adequately managed, reporting requirements are met and students are well served;
4. facilitation of communication and collaboration among campus offices that affect program operations;
5. assurance of compliance with memorandum of understanding and program plan;
6. assurance that documentation and reporting are adequate;
7. assurance that program funds are used in a manner consistent with the program plan, guidelines and education law.

### **Educational Opportunity Program Personnel and Staffing**

Each campus operating an Educational Opportunity Program must designate a program director. The director is responsible for all aspects of program management (i.e., development of program/service plan, management of program enrollment and finances, eligibility determinations, reporting, etc.). In order to ensure adequate administration of Educational Opportunity Program operations, the director's position should be full-time, should have the administration of the Educational Opportunity Program as its primary function ( 1 ) and should be appointed at an appropriate rank, reporting to a senior officer of the institution (e.g., president, provost, and vice president for student affairs). Program size may also warrant the provision of an associate director and/or multiple secretaries. New York State Education Law §6452 prohibits the use of the Educational Opportunity Program appropriations for administrative purposes at the campus level. Therefore, the director's position, as well as those responsible for other administrative functions, such as secretaries and associate directors, cannot be supported by funds from the Educational Opportunity Program's appropriation. Participating campuses are also expected to provide an administrative budget sufficient for the support of day-to-day operations, travel to meetings and professional development opportunities.

Funding for Educational Opportunity Program counselors in state-operated campuses and community colleges is provided by the Office of Opportunity Programs with the following stipulations:

- Educational Opportunity Program counselors are to be engaged in the provision of counseling services exclusive to Educational Opportunity Program students as described in the approved program plan.
- Funds for the support of Educational Opportunity Program counseling, like all other Educational Opportunity Program funds, are part of a university-wide program and are assigned to campuses in relation to enrollment, program structure and performance. ( 2 )
- Campuses must request approval for personnel and salary changes.
- Full-time counseling lines assigned to the Educational Opportunity Program are not to be divided in function or funding.

Personnel supported by Educational Opportunity Program tutoring funds are to be engaged in the provision of

tutoring and other academic support services for the exclusive benefit of Educational Opportunity Program students in a manner consistent with the approved program plan.

All personnel supported by Educational Opportunity Programs funds must be under the supervision of the Educational Opportunity Program director for purposes of work assignments, day-to-day supervision, evaluation, etc.

### **Advisory Council**

The campus is to establish an advisory council for consultation on Educational Opportunity Program matters. Appointments should be made by the president upon the recommendation of the Educational Opportunity Program director. Composition of the advisory council should include, but may not be limited to program alumni, a current Educational Opportunity Program student, a faculty member, representatives of the local community and representatives of the education community at large.

## **III. PROGRAM SERVICES AND EVALUATION**

### **Campus Program Planning**

Each campus is to submit to the office of opportunity programs, for review and approval, a plan outlining its approach to the administration of the Educational Opportunity Program, that program's position and role on the campus, its organizational structure, its approaches to recruitment and admission, the services to be offered to enrolled students and the coordination of those services with other campus resources.

The Educational Opportunity Program director is encouraged to design the mix of program services so that it best meets the needs of students and to make annual revisions based upon program performance and changes in the overall environment. Proposed changes in any aspect of the plan are to be submitted in writing to the office of opportunity programs for approval.

To assure that the program is an integral part of campus life, every attempt should be made to facilitate cooperation and communication between Educational Opportunity Program personnel and other campus professionals and faculty, both in developing the program plan and in its operation. To encourage such broad involvement, the campus administration should:

- promote collaboration between the opportunity program and other offices directly impacting students (e.g. admissions, financial aid);
- consult regularly with the Educational Opportunity Program director to discuss program and student needs;
- establish an advisory structure which promotes consultation with key department heads, faculty and professionals on matters of policy, procedure and curriculum;
- seek the assistance of faculty in developing learning modules and teaching methods that utilize and reinforce the learning strengths of Educational Opportunity Program students;
- include faculty and professionals in the planning, implementation, and development of research on the Educational Opportunity Program;
- encourage and facilitate informal meetings of faculty, professionals, and Educational Opportunity Program students to discuss topics of mutual interest.

### **Program Content**

Program offerings may include a combination of counseling, tutoring, workshops and pre-freshman services based upon available resources and funds allocated. All services to be provided by the program should be designed to enhance student retention and success.

- Pre-freshman services – offered to students anticipating entry in the following fall semester. Activities may include diagnostic testing and orientation as well as instruction in basic skills, college survival skills, effective communications, academic technology and other subjects that will contribute to student success (e.g., time management, financial aid planning). Where possible, developmental and/or credit-bearing coursework may be included.
- Tutoring – may be provided in a variety of forms (professional tutors, peer tutors, study groups, supplemental instruction, etc.) and should be a primary tool for both the retention and academic success of program students.
- Counseling – services should focus on adaptation to the campus environment, goal development, academic planning, problem resolution techniques and other areas of student need and should have as their objective the increased self-sufficiency and independence of students.

## **Standards and Requirements for Students**

To encourage persistence and achievement, each Educational Opportunity Program is expected to establish and maintain appropriate academic standards and requirements. Recognizing that Educational Opportunity Program students may require a longer period of time to complete a degree, lighter course loads may be recommended for the first and second years.

1. The sponsoring college, in conjunction with the educational opportunity program office, shall make known the academic achievement levels required as evidence of satisfactory progress toward completion of a degree or certificate program as well as procedures for notification of unsatisfactory progress and academic probation status for Educational Opportunity Program students. This information shall be included in the campus plan.
2. Regular meetings between the campus faculty and Educational Opportunity Program staff should be held to discuss ways to enhance the academic performance of Educational Opportunity Program students.
3. The Educational Opportunity Program director should provide to each student a statement of program expectations, criteria for separation from the program, campus probationary procedures and the process for appeal.
4. Educational Opportunity Program staff should participate in the campus committee on academic dismissals, to assure that the committee is aware of any mitigating circumstances concerning individual Educational Opportunity Program students.
5. The Educational Opportunity Program director is to establish specific procedures for counseling students who are being dismissed from the program for academic reasons, or who withdraw voluntarily from it. Counselors are expected to assist students in finding educational or vocational alternatives, appropriate to their interests, needs and capabilities. Records of all departures from the program are to be maintained in the educational opportunity program office.

Educational Opportunity Program students shall be accorded the rights and privileges available to other students enrolled at the campus. They are also expected to meet all responsibilities placed upon other students unless special provisions have been made and identified in the campus plan.

Because Educational Opportunity Program students are accepted into the campus, in part, on the basis of their need for available services and financial support, they are expected to conform to the requirements established within the Educational Opportunity Program with respect to utilization of services, attendance at mandatory activities, etc. Failure to meet these requirements may result in separation from the program and may affect the student's status at the college.

## **Evaluation**

Each campus, following procedures outlined in its plan, will gather information upon which evaluation of the program's effectiveness can be based. Completed internal evaluations are to be maintained at the campus and to be readily accessible.

The office of opportunity programs will selectively review program data, isolating trends and patterns, and request other specific data, as needed. In carrying out evaluations, particular attention should be paid to quantitative measures such as the areas of satisfactory progress toward a degree, the percentage of students at each campus who are "on track," student retention, graduation rates as compared with the overall campus and the relation of these indicators to services provided. Qualitative measures deemed appropriate may also be considered.

## **Research**

Campuses are encouraged to promote research related to opportunity programs, the relative effectiveness of program services, the development of new models and other areas of academic interest. Campuses may assist in this area by supporting study leaves and grantsmanship among Educational Opportunity Program personnel and facilitating collaboration between Educational Opportunity Program personnel and faculty.

## **IV. STUDENT ELIGIBILITY**

The Educational Opportunity Program provides access, support services and financial assistance to disadvantaged students who have the potential to succeed in higher education with such assistance. In order to be eligible for admission through the Educational Opportunity Program, applicants must meet both economic and academic eligibility criteria as outlined in the following sections. In addition, applicants must be New York State residents. It should be noted that students in special categories, who may qualify for in-state tuition, may be considered to meet residency requirements; but must nonetheless meet economic and academic eligibility criteria in order to be

admissible to the Educational Opportunity Program.

Each campus is expected to determine eligibility and to select students in accordance with the established overall criteria and those set forth in its campus plan for the operation of the program. In cases where eligibility is unclear, an opinion may be requested from the Office of Opportunity Programs.

Because need exceeds capacity within the broad eligible population, eligibility, in itself does not provide entitlement to entry. Campuses sponsoring Educational Opportunity Programs are expected to give priority to the recruitment and enrollment of applicants whose life patterns are characterized by historical economic and cultural deprivation. Indicators of such deprivation include evidence that the applicant or the applicant's family has endured long-term economic deprivation, the applicant's membership in a group underrepresented in higher education and/or characterized by a high unemployment rate, a record of inadequate schooling, little or no accumulation of assets, the inability to provide for more than the basic needs of family members or dependence on public assistance. It should be noted that the separation, divorce or death of a wage earner in the calendar year prior to the academic year for which eligibility is being established and a resulting decrease in family income below income guidelines is not, in itself, sufficient to establish historical disadvantage. Such cases should be reviewed carefully in order to determine eligibility.

Because the Educational Opportunity Program is in large part an admission/access program, the determination of eligibility must be made at the time of the student's application for admission as a first-time freshman. A student who is ineligible at the point of first admission cannot be designated as an Educational Opportunity Program student at a later date. A student who is admitted as an Educational Opportunity Program student remains eligible for supportive services throughout his or her semesters of eligibility despite fluctuations in income and academic achievement. Each student's need for direct aid shall be reviewed annually and appropriate adjustments made in the student's financial aid package.

### **Economic Eligibility**

Economic eligibility for the Educational Opportunity Program is established by application of the income guidelines (see Appendix A) issued annually by the Office of Opportunity Programs.

In evaluating eligibility, the following definitions are to be used:

Household size – the number of individuals living in the student's residence who are economically dependent on the income supporting the student.

Total annual income – all taxable and non-taxable funds that are received by the household for general use. Such funds may be derived from such sources as wages, dividends, interest, Social Security, disability pensions, veteran's benefits and unemployment benefits. This amount may be ascertained by determining "Total Income" for federal tax purposes and adding any other sources of income the household may have. The following are not to be included in the total income determination: (1) funds received specifically for educational purposes such as veteran's education benefits, education grants from the Office of Vocational Educational Services for Individuals with Disabilities (VESID) and small scholarships or other support provided by community groups, churches and other such organizations; (2) public assistance payments received through Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF); (3) Earned Income Credits (EIC) provided through the application of the Internal Revenue Service Code; (4) The student's income is not included in total household income unless he or she is the head of household or the second worker supporting the household.

Independent student ( 3 ) - a student may be defined as independent if he or she:

- is 24 years of age or older by December 31 of the prior year; or
- is an orphan or ward of the court; or
- is a veteran of the Armed Forces of the United States; or
- is married and will not be claimed as a dependent for income purposes by parents or guardians for the year in which participation in the opportunity program commences; or
- has a legal dependent other than a spouse; or
- has not been listed and will not be listed as a dependent for federal Income tax purposes by any person, except a spouse, for the calendar year in which aid is to be received and for the two calendar years prior and who demonstrates total self-sufficiency and minimum annual resources (other than from parents) of \$3,050 for those two years; or
- is a student for whom an educational opportunity program and financial aid administrator have made a documented

determination of independence by reason of other unusual circumstances.

**New York State Resident** – An individual who has resided in New York State for twelve months prior to his or her day of registration in college; or who resides in New York State at the time of application and lived in New York State for the last two terms of high school; or who was a resident of New York State when he/she entered military service, Vista or the Peace Corps and re-established New York State residence within six months after completing their term of service.

**Exceptions to Income Guidelines**

1. Reference to the household income scale need not be made if the student falls into one of the following categories and documentation is available:

- The student or his or her family is primarily dependent on public assistance payments from Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (i.e. Family Assistance, Safety Net).
- The student is living with foster parents who do not provide support for college and no such support is provided by the natural parents.
- The student is a ward of the state or county.

2. A maximum of 15 percent of the Educational Opportunity Program students enrolled at any given time may come from households with income exceeding those listed in the income eligibility table. Inclusion in this category should be warranted by unusual and extenuating circumstances (as identified below), documented by a reliable, disinterested third party and judged appropriate by the Educational Opportunity Program director in cooperation with campus officials. Supporting documentation should be obtained prior to enrollment and maintained in original form thereafter.

The following conditions may be considered:

- Serious mismanagement of the family's income which results in little available funds to support the student's educational costs. Written verification must be obtained from a disinterested, reliable party such as a social worker, lawyer, clergyman, counselor or judge, who is knowledgeable about the student's financial status. This provision is subject to an income ceiling equal to 150% of the federal poverty level for the household size.
- A one-time income fluctuation in a family with a history of low income, due to one-time causes such as insurance settlements or severance pay. Satisfactory evidence that a household's income in the calendar year prior to the calendar year used for determining the student's economic eligibility fall within the limits of the applicable household income scale shall be sufficient to establish the existence of a one-time fluctuation in household income, provided that there is satisfactory proof of a history of low income.
- Families for which a United States Education Department approved needs analysis system indicates no contribution other than the minimum expectations from student income for independent students or a zero parental contribution for dependent students.

Justification materials related to the fifteen percent category must be placed in accessible files in the campus financial aid office and the Educational Opportunity Program director's office.

While the preceding sections identify conditions that may provide exceptions to the use of the established income guidelines, all students admitted to the Educational Opportunity Program must meet academic eligibility guidelines as defined in the sections to follow. Inclusion in the 15 percent category or the existence of other factors that mitigate income has no bearing on the need to establish educational eligibility.

**Documentation of Economic Eligibility**

<i>Items</i>	<i>Documentation</i>
1. Income from wages, tips, dividends, interest, rental, business profits	1. IRS forms 1040, 1040A, 1040EZ, a signed copy of 1040TEL or official transcript of tax return; forms W-2, 1099, W9

2. No income	2. IRS form 4506 verification of non-filing
3. Pension, annuity or unemployment benefits disability benefit	3. Letter from the appropriate institution stating applicable year's total award (If not already reported on a tax return.)
4. Social Security, Supplemental Security Income or Veteran's Administration non-educational benefits	4. Letter from the agency stating applicable year's total award for each member of the household
5. Public Assistance	5. Letter from the agency stating applicable year's total award and names of recipients
6. Child Support, Maintenance	6. Signed affidavit, court order
7. Additional members in household	7. Birth certificates, marriage certificates, third party verification, along with proof of income or lack thereof for each member, tax return, school records, custody orders
8. Zero household contribution	8. Needs analysis output from the U.S. Education Department's approved needs analysis system
9. Unusual circumstances	9. Notarized letters, statements, etc., that corroborate claims

**Academic Eligibility**

The Educational Opportunity Program is intended to benefit first time college students whose past educational experiences and deprived life circumstances have resulted in levels of academic preparation and achievement that do not fully reflect their potential, but who, with adequate support, can succeed in higher education. Students who are recipients of associates or baccalaureate degrees are not eligible for services or funding to pursue a second degree at the same level.

In addition to possession of a high school diploma or its equivalent ( 4 ) the two basic criteria for determining academic eligibility are:

1. Failure to meet the admission standard for matriculation to the college or, in the case of community colleges, to the applicant's desired degree program. Factors that may be considered include: high school average, rank in graduating class, and standardized test results (ACT or SAT) as compared to those of students who are accepted through the regular admissions process. Other considerations include the number and nature of high school courses, type of diploma or lack thereof, location of high school, attendance patterns, home circumstances, recommendations from counselors and receipt of remedial preparation from alternative programs such as Upward Bound, Adult Learning Centers and alternative high schools.
2. Because community colleges in New York State are open admission (i.e., residents of the sponsorship area are assured the opportunity to begin study regardless of academic background), educational eligibility determinations may be based upon alternative criteria identified in the campus plan (e.g., failure to meet criteria for major of choice, results of campus-administered tests, lack of high school diploma or need for remedial or developmental work).
3. Potential for successful completion of a program of study at the college given appropriate support. Because Educational Opportunity Program resources, particularly in the community colleges, are limited, it is important to



admit students who may be judged most likely to benefit from services. Campuses are encouraged to make a careful match between student and campus and to use interviews, written statements from qualified observers, participation in extra curricular activities, community involvement, personal responsibility or other special talents to determine applicants' motivational level.

It should be noted that students who have completed a course of study at an Educational Opportunity Center (EOC) are academically eligible for the Educational Opportunity Program, as their disadvantaged status was established at the time of entry to the EOC and their completion of the program suggests motivation and commitment.

### **Transfer Eligibility**

The ability to transfer between Educational Opportunity Programs is intended to facilitate the transition from lower division institutions to upper division institutions, to enable students to make necessary institutional changes that arise from changes in educational or personal needs while maintaining a continuum of services, and to provide an educational path for Educational Opportunity Program students. For this reason, students who begin their educations in the Educational Opportunity Program at the State University of New York should be afforded the highest priority in transfer considerations.

The primary criterion for transfer is the establishment of eligibility at the time of initial entry as a freshman. Subsequent changes in economic status or in level of achievement do not preclude eligibility at the receiving institution, however, the former may, in some instances; mean that the student will not receive direct aid payments.

Students are eligible to transfer between or into Educational Opportunity Programs under the following circumstances:

- they are transferring from a college in New York State where they were enrolled in the Educational Opportunity Program, the Higher Educational Opportunity Program, the SEEK or College Discovery program;
- they were admitted to a New York State community college that did not have an Educational Opportunity Program and they were economically and educationally disadvantaged at the time of admission;

Students in the following categories may be considered for transfer on a space available basis:

- they are New York State residents, as defined above, who were enrolled in opportunity programs that have similar requirements for eligibility but operate at colleges in other states;
- they are New York State residents, as defined above, who were enrolled at a college that has traditionally served under-prepared students without opportunity programs, as defined above, and they were economically and academically eligible at the time of their first admission ( 5 );
- they are graduates of a State University of New York community college that had an Educational Opportunity Program, but limited space precluded their participation though they were economically and academically eligible at the time of their first admission.

Note: College courses taken by high school students while they are attending high school are not considered prior college work. These students are not transfers and should be treated as first-time freshman applicants. Similarly students who were non-matriculated are not considered as transfer students.

In establishing eligibility, there shall be no discrimination based upon race, age, creed, religion, marital status, national origin, color, gender or disability.

### **Part-Time Study**

Educational Opportunity Program support is primarily for full-time students; however, circumstances may make part-time study necessary for individual students for some period of time. Six credit hours constitute the minimum requirement for participation and funding as a part-time Educational Opportunity Program student. The part-time Educational Opportunity Program student is an exception and is expected to undertake or return to full-time study as soon as circumstances permit. After two semesters, continued part-time status must be reviewed by the office of opportunity programs.

All part-time students must be indicated as such on reports that summarize enrollment and expenditure.

Part-time study is automatically authorized for students requiring less than a full-time course load to meet graduation requirements.

### **Period of Eligibility**

Because Educational Opportunity Program students may progress more slowly toward the completion of their

degrees, the period of Educational Opportunity Program eligibility exceeds the normal length of the degree program in which the student is enrolled.

A full-time student enrolled in an associate's degree program is allowed six semesters or its equivalent number of trimesters, quarters or other units of opportunity eligibility. A full-time student enrolled in a four-year baccalaureate program is allowed ten semesters or the equivalent; and a student enrolled in a five-year program is allowed twelve semesters or the equivalent. A student taking less than 9 credit hours in a semester shall be considered to have used half a semester. Additional semesters of funding may be supported with approval from the office of opportunity programs.

## **V. PROGRAM FINANCES**

### **Allowable Costs**

New York State Education Law §6452 permits the use of Educational Opportunity Program funds for the following purposes:

- pre and post-freshman services;
- special tutoring, counseling and guidance for enrolled students;
- direct financial assistance as necessary to meet non-tuition education costs;
- costs of overall program administration at the system level.

Educational Opportunity Program funds must be used solely for the direct provision of support services to Educational Opportunity Program students and may not be used for administration at the campus level or for support of the regular academic program at a campus.

### **Funding of Program and Payment to Campuses**

Within the limits of resources made available in the annual appropriation, the determination of allocation amounts to individual campuses is determined by the office of opportunity programs based upon a variety of factors that may include but not be limited to enrollment, program services' design, performance, compliance with guidelines, reporting requirements, fiscal procedures and variations in cost structure. Adjustments to allocation amounts may be made based upon actual enrollment, utilization of funds, changes in funding needs and policy compliance.

Funds are transmitted to campuses in several installments each year until the campus allocation amount is reached. Transmission of payments will be delayed for programs that have not complied with reporting requirements.

### **Fiscal Planning and Management**

Management of the Educational Opportunity Program at the campus level should be carried out according to University policy and procedures and should also conform to the following:

1. Operating costs for the campus Educational Opportunity Program, including campus support, must be clearly indicated in the annual expenditure plan and the proposed plan of service.
2. The Educational Opportunity Program director should participate in the planning and authorization of Educational Opportunity Program expenditures in accordance with prevailing policies and procedures applicable to the campus's departments and offices.
3. Funds from the Educational Opportunity Program appropriation allocated to the campus remain the fiscal responsibility of the Office of Opportunity Programs. As such, funds that accumulate unexpended during the year may not be used for general purposes nor be stabilized by the campus for future use, whether for the Educational Opportunity Program or not, without authorization from the office of opportunity programs.
4. The office of opportunity programs is responsible for the implementation of budgetary adjustments to Educational Opportunity Program allocations in instances of extraordinary changes in available funding for program operations that are brought about by internal or external fiscal actions and conditions.
5. Students withdrawing from a campus will not receive a refund for fees or other costs paid from Educational Opportunity funds. Funds that become available as a result of such withdrawals should be used in support of other program students or other program needs.

### **Direct Aid and Student Finances**

One major use of the Educational Opportunity Program appropriation is to provide direct financial aid to Educational

Opportunity Program students. Limited funds must be allocated within financial aid guidelines through collaboration between the financial aid director and the Educational Opportunity Program director.

### **Enrollment Management**

Allocations are provided to campuses based, in part, upon planned enrollment. Careful enrollment management in direct relation to available Educational Opportunity Program resources is an important part of responsible program operation and is fundamental to maintaining the integrity of services to students and their relation to program outcomes. Enrollment targets are established by the Office of Opportunity Programs and may be adjusted upward or downward as indicated by such factors as long term patterns, program performance, enrollment management practices or current resources.

### **Meeting Student Financial Need**

The Pell Grant, Tuition Assistance Program (TAP) and Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (SEOG) are the foundations of student financial aid and should be applied first. Educational Opportunity Program students are expected to apply for all available financial aid. After these three programs are considered, the remaining needs of the student may be met from:

- State University Student Assistance (SUSTA)
- Federal Work-Study Program (FWSP)
- other federal programs, including nursing and other special purpose programs
- Perkins loans
- Stafford loans
- self-help, including summer earnings
- Educational Opportunity Program direct aid

The following are guides to be used in the financial aid packaging process:

- Loans should be considered a last resort of financial aid. The campus should assist students with discretionary funds and excessive loans should be avoided, particularly in the first year. Both Educational Opportunity Program and financial aid counselors should counsel students about the consequences of indebtedness.
- State University Student Assistance (SUSTA) is available to certain categories of students. While funds are limited, every effort should be made to provide SUSTA for Educational Opportunity Program students.
- Campuses are encouraged to consider individual circumstances in the determination of Educational Opportunity Program direct aid awards, rather than the formulaic application of a standard grant for each student.

### **Maximum Grant Amounts**

The maximum annual Educational Opportunity Program grant at state-operated campuses is \$2,800 and at community colleges is \$1,500, unless a higher amount has been specifically approved by the Office of Opportunity Programs. When student circumstances (e.g., dependents, non-eligibility for other aid, etc.) warrant a direct aid grant above the established maximum, a written request, signed by the Educational Opportunity Program director and financial aid director may be sent to the office of opportunity programs for approval.

### **Supportive Services Funding**

The provision of supportive services to enable students to overcome the disadvantages with which they enter the higher education arena is a principle responsibility of the Educational Opportunity Program. When an Educational Opportunity Program student is accepted into the sponsoring campus and is thus charged the same tuition and fees as is any other student, that student has the right to access all services available to any other student. The purpose of Educational Opportunity Program supportive services funding is to provide additional assistance designed specifically to meet the needs of the Educational Opportunity Program student. Therefore, funding for Educational Opportunity Program supportive services are to be used in such a way that the services provided to Educational Opportunity Program students exceed those available to non-Educational Opportunity Program students. Similarly, personnel who are supported by Educational Opportunity Program funds are to be clearly identified with and dedicated to the Educational Opportunity Program. Payments of EOP funds into campus-wide learning centers, counseling centers and other services that are generally available to all students is neither necessary nor allowable to permit Educational Opportunity Program students to use such services.

### **Campus Support**

Because Educational Opportunity Program funds are limited in quantity and purpose, the provision of campus-based resources to supplement Educational Opportunity Program funding is essential to the viability of the program.

Campus support in the form of administrative salaries and other costs should be stated clearly in the campus Educational Opportunity Program expenditure plan and should be provided at a level consistent with program size and campus environment. Common forms of support are the provision of additional counseling or faculty positions, waiving/reduction of fees or costs and commitments of campus based financial aid.

## **VI. RECORD KEEPING AND REPORTING**

The collection, analysis, reporting and maintenance of data regarding students, program activities and student outcomes are essential components in the effective administration of the Educational Opportunity Program. Adequate management of records serves three basic purposes:

1. establishment of permanent records of individual student eligibility, enrollment, performance and outcomes; and
2. provision of a statistical basis for evaluation and reporting of program performance; and
3. creation of a database that may facilitate needs assessment, planning, research and program development so that students are better served.

The following sections identify basic data needs; however, individual campuses and programs may wish to augment these data requirements in order to further enhance knowledge of the program and its students. All program data, particularly that pertaining to enrollment, retention and graduation should be carefully reconciled with the records and reports maintained by the campus office of institutional research.

### **Individual Student Data**

The following information is to be collected for each student who has been enrolled. Such data should be maintained in an immediately accessible form for current students and should be retained for specified periods for past students. While it is not essential that all items be physically stored in a central location, a master file that clearly indicates the location of all elements should be established for each student.

#### **Basic Student Data**

Personal

- Name
- Other names used (e.g., maiden name)
- Home address and telephone number
- School or local address and telephone (if different)
- Social Security number
- Date of birth
- Grades
- Ethnicity
- Marital status
- Contact person for emergencies
- Parents' names (if under 21 or dependent)

#### **Eligibility and Admissions**

- High school transcript
- High school rank and average
- Standardized test scores (SAT, ACT)
- Type of diploma
- Documentation of economic and academic eligibility ( 6 )
- Date of first entry to program
- Transcripts of prior college experience (transfers and readmits only)
- Documentation of prior eligibility determinations (transfers and readmits only)
- Letters of recommendation or reference
- Other educational or employment information
- Other application materials

#### **Academic and Program Records**

- Major and academic advisor
- Assigned counselor
- Whether participated in pre-freshman services
- Tutoring received
- Credits attempted/completed – by semester and cumulative
- Grade point average – by semester and cumulative

- Date of departure
- Status at departure (e.g., graduated, transferred, dismissed)
- Summary of exit interview

#### **Financial Aid Records**

- Student budget and award letter by semester or year
- Loans received
- Prior financial aid information (transfers/readmits only)

Because students and the program itself may wish to reference information on past participation as well as eligibility determination, much of the content of the basic student file should be maintained as permanent records. To facilitate storage, some records may be stored on other media or may be stored on computer systems. However, original documentation of eligibility should be maintained for at least six years prior to such storage. Comprehensive listings of past enrolled students should be maintained in an accessible fashion to facilitate verification of enrollment.

#### **Program/Service Data Requirements**

- Pre-freshman summer program: Listing of student participants, courses taken by each, performance during program, tutoring and counseling provided, pre- and post-test results, subsequent student performance and retention, cost of program, including campus contribution.
- Counseling: Statement of counseling objectives, record of counseling contacts, periodic reports summarizing counseling content, student progress and other pertinent matters.
- Tutoring: Nature and subject matter of tutoring provided, total hours of tutoring provided per student and aggregate, performance in courses in which tutoring is provided, aggregate cost of tutoring.
- Other services: Data maintained should reflect services provided, including cost and outcomes.
- Enrollment: Campuses are required to submit enrollment reports for each semester of the academic year and for the pre-freshman summer program.
- Listing of students in 15% category and justification for each.
- Student outcomes: details of graduation, transfer, attrition, etc.
- Annual Report.

In addition, campuses are required to submit data as specified by the Office of Opportunity Programs to meet internal analysis, planning and evaluation functions and to comply with external reporting requirements. The office of opportunity programs may request other data and reports as necessary for adequate oversight, evaluation and planning.

Transmission of allocated funds to programs will be dependent on compliance with reporting requirements.

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## **Definitions**

In support of this policy, the following definitions are included:

Average annual enrollment – the number resulting from averaging the fall and spring enrollment figures.

Duplicated headcount – the number resulting from counting the total number of students in each semester (e.g., total fall students plus total spring students, etc). This is rarely used.

Enrolled Educational Opportunity Program student – a student who has been accepted into the Educational Opportunity Program, has been formally notified of his/her status and is receiving either direct aid or access to Educational Opportunity Program supportive services (i.e., the services are available to the student whether he or she actually participates).

FTE Enrollment – enrollment figure to which an appropriate FTE formula has been applied. This is used to facilitate the expression of total enrollment in terms of full-time units.

Headcount – the actual number of students enrolled at a given time without reference to full-time equivalent (FTE) measures.

Unduplicated headcount – the number resulting from counting each enrolled student only once in an academic year or reporting period (e.g., annual enrollment = total fall enrollment plus spring admissions, re-admits and transfers. This measure is often used to reflect total annual enrollment and in general discussion and analysis of enrollment trends.

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## Other Related Information

In support of this policy, the following links and/or references to additional resources for related information are included:

[State University of New York Application Guidebook](#)

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## Procedures

There are no procedures relevant to this policy.

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## Forms

[Form A](#) - Transfer Verification

[Form B](#) - Personnel Action Forms (Larger Programs)

[Form C](#) - Personnel Action Forms (Smaller Programs & Community Colleges)

[Form D](#) - Personnel Hire Form (All Programs)

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## Authority

Where applicable, this section contains links and/or references to the authority governing this policy:

New York Education Law §6452 (Opportunity for higher education; State University of New York and City University of New York)

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## History

This section contains links and/or references to the history relevant to this policy:

The construction of a policy framework for the structure and operation of the Educational Opportunity Program began soon after program inception in the late 1960's and was first formalized in document form in the early 1970's. The initial thrust was twofold: ensuring compliance with New York State Education Law §6452 and to codifying eligibility criteria. While the principal intent remains the same, the content has grown to address the many new questions and issues that have emerged during the ensuing years.

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## Appendices

[Appendix A](#) - Educational Opportunity Program Income Guidelines for Student Eligibility - For the current EOP income guidelines, visit [www.suny.edu/student/academic\\_eop.cfm](http://www.suny.edu/student/academic_eop.cfm)

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[Appendix B](#) - Educational Opportunity Program End Notes