

# FINANCIAL AID

Sierra College's Financial Aid programs stem from a belief that student aid services should facilitate and foster the successful academic participation of financially needy students. As part of the commitment to help students have a positive college experience, the Financial Aid Office provides this information to help students better understand their relationship with financial aid.

State and federal regulations allow community colleges participating in financial aid programs discretion when establishing college specific policies and procedures. It is the goal of the Financial Aid Office to provide students with the most current policy information affecting their financial aid while at Sierra College. As new state or federal regulations take effect or college practices evolve, this policy will be updated and posted on the website.

The main financial aid office is located at the Rocklin campus; for information call (916) 660-7310. For assistance at the Nevada County campus, call (530) 274-5346.

## Application Process

To apply for financial aid, all students must complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The FAFSA uses federal formulas to establish financial need. Sierra College's Federal School Code is 001290.

## Who Should Apply

Any student who plans to attend Sierra College and is either a citizen or an eligible non-citizen of the United States may apply for financial aid. All financial aid recipients must maintain the Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress standards of the College.

## Priority Dates

Some financial aid funds are limited. Therefore, Sierra College has established a priority filing date of March 2. Students whose FAFSAs are completed by this date are considered for all financial aid programs available at Sierra College. Those filed after March 2 will typically only be considered for a Pell Grant and/or a Direct Student Loan. The FAFSA should be filed as soon as possible to assure availability of funds when registration fees are due.

## Document Requirements

A set of federally-defined criteria identify those students who must provide documentation to support information reported on the FAFSA. This selection is referred to as "Verification." Students selected for Verification will be notified by the Federal Processor and the Financial Aid Office via the students' mySierra accounts, and will be asked to verify income and other information. Non-U.S. citizens will also be asked to show proof of eligibility.

## California Dream Act

Sierra College participates with the California Dream Act to help determine financial aid eligibility for students admitted under AB 540 regulations. The California Dream Act application may be completed at <https://dream.csac.ca.gov/>.

## Academic Year

Academic programs are calculated in units and measured by semesters. Sierra College has established two 16-week semesters (fall and spring),

and one 8-week summer session per academic year. This meets the federal 30-week minimum academic year definition.

This definition is important for financial aid purposes because it affects calculation of payment periods. Sierra College makes financial aid payments based on the semester rather than by weeks or classes attended.

## Financial Aid Programs

When students apply for financial aid, the funds usually come from more than one source (federal, state, private, etc.). This combination of financial resources is referred to as packaging. State programs are always subject to an approved State budget.

Sierra College participates in the following financial aid programs:

- Federal Pell Grant;
- Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG);
- Federal Work Study (FWS);
- William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan Program;
- Board of Governors Fee Waiver Program (BOGFW);
- Cal Grants B and C;
- Extended Opportunity Programs and Services Grants (EOPS); and
- Scholarships.

## Pell Grant Lifetime Maximum

Effective fall 2012, students can only receive Pell Grants for 6 years or 12 semesters of full-time enrollment at all 2 and 4 year schools across the nation. Sierra College defines full-time enrollment as 12 or more units. Students enrolled less than full-time will have their lifetime eligibility adjusted accordingly. Students may monitor their lifetime eligibility at [https://www.nslds.ed.gov/nslds\\_SA/SaFinShowSummary.do](https://www.nslds.ed.gov/nslds_SA/SaFinShowSummary.do). The maximum students can use in a lifetime is 600%.

## Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress

Federal regulations require that all financial aid recipients make financial aid satisfactory academic progress and remain in good academic standing. At Sierra College, academic progress is reviewed at the end of each semester. Students who do not complete any units in the semester will be terminated from financial aid as soon as grades are available.

## Determining Enrollment Status

Prior to each financial aid disbursement, the Financial Aid office verifies the number of units in which students are enrolled. For fall 2016, students must be enrolled in all units by September 5, 2016. For spring 2017, students must be enrolled in all units by February 5, 2017.

Enrollment status is defined as the number of units in which a student is enrolled at the final disbursement for the semester. Completed units mean that credit was received for the enrolled classes. Classes in which a student receives an "F," "I," "NP," "MW," or "W" are not counted as completed units for satisfactory academic progress, but are counted as units attempted.

To be considered as making satisfactory progress, students must complete 75% of all enrolled courses with a 2.0 cumulative GPA. Units earned through credit by examination are not counted for financial aid purposes.

## Maximum Time Length and 90 Unit Limitation

Federal regulations allow students to receive aid for 150% of the published length of an undergraduate program. Because students can earn a degree by completing 60 units, students may receive aid for a maximum of 90 units, including accepted transfer units. Up to 30 units of remedial coursework, including ESL courses, are deducted. Students terminated from financial aid due to the maximum unit limit may appeal to the Financial Aid Advisory Committee (FAAC).

## Repeated Coursework

Repeated coursework that falls under the following conditions cannot be included in enrollment status for Title IV Federal Aid eligibility:

- Repeating a previously passed course more than twice. A grade of D or better is considered passing.
- Repeating a previously passed course due to failing other coursework.

## Remedial (including ESL) Coursework

Remedial and ESL courses are considered the same as credit courses for tuition, full-time academic standing, and SAP, and are included in the 75% completion requirement. Financial aid may be paid for a maximum of 30 remedial units.

## Transfer Units

It is the student's responsibility to request transcripts from previously attended institutions if choosing to apply any units toward the current educational objective. Upon the student's request, transcripts from regionally accredited colleges will be evaluated and all units applicable to the current educational objective will be counted when calculating the maximum time length for financial aid. All units attempted, even if earned before the student was receiving financial aid will be considered toward the maximum time length.

## Definitions

**Good:** Students are considered in good standing if they complete at least 75% of all enrolled units and earn a 2.0 GPA or higher for the semester.

**Warning:** Students are placed on warning status if they complete less than 75% of all enrolled units for the semester, but complete at least .5 unit. Students are removed from warning at the end of the next semester if they complete at least 75% of their units with a 2.0 GPA.

**Termination:** Students are terminated if they complete zero units or if they were on warning from a previous semester and then completed less than 75% of the courses for which aid was provided or if their cumulative GPA was less than 2.0.

**Probation:** Students are placed on probation if they receive an approved reinstatement petition. Students may continue on probation if their cumulative GPA is below 2.0 but their term GPA is above 2.0. This is considered making progress term-by-term. Students may be removed from probation if they complete at least 75% of their units and achieve a cumulative GPA of 2.0. Students placed on financial aid reinstatement probation are not eligible for student loans. Students placed on maximum unit probation may receive federal student loans.

**75% Completion Rate:** Students must pass at least 75% of their coursework each semester.

**Financial Aid Termination:** Students exceeding their maximum time length (90 attempted units), not completing the required number of

units, or earning a cumulative grade point average of less than 2.0 will be terminated from financial aid. Students terminated because of insufficient units completed or a GPA deficiency will not receive further financial aid until they have filed and received an approved Reinstatement Petition.

**Appeal Procedures:** Any student who has been terminated from financial aid may submit a written appeal to the Financial Aid Advisory Committee (FAAC). Appeals are reviewed and approved or denied based on individual circumstances and the student's proposed course of action. If approved, financial aid may only be provided for courses listed on the Student Education Plan.

Students reaching the maximum time length of 90 units attempted may submit a written appeal to the FAAC. If approved, financial aid will be given for a specific length of time.

## Financial Aid Disbursement and Refunds

All financial aid is refunded to students through the Bursar's Office. Financial aid funds will first be used to satisfy any student debt owed to Sierra College. Any remaining balance goes directly to the student by the refund method selected by the student (direct deposit to a bank account, direct deposit to a BankMobile VIBE account, or paper check). Checks are sent to the mailing address on file with admissions and records.

The first refund of financial aid (grants, federal student loans, and scholarships) to eligible students is the week following the add/drop period. For the fall and spring semesters, this is the end of the third week of the semester. For students who apply or complete their files after the third week, financial aid is usually ordered once a week. Orders are processed Monday mornings and direct deposit is normally completed by Thursday evening of the same week. Allow additional time for paper checks to be received in the mail.

Pell Grants must be paid at the level of units in which students are enrolled at the end of the add/drop period for the semester. Students adding a class after the add/drop deadline will not receive Pell funds for the additional units.

Federal Direct Student Loans are issued in two refunds. If a student loan covers fall and spring, the second refund will be available the third week of the spring semester, as long as the student is eligible and enrolled in 6 or more units. If the student loan covers only one semester, the second refund will be available after the withdrawal deadline has passed, as long as the student is still enrolled in 6 or more units.

Students who are first-time, first-year borrowers must wait until 30 days after the semester has begun to receive their first refund.

Scholarships are issued in two refunds; half for fall and half for spring.

## Selective Service

All males under the age of 26 must register with the Selective Service. Failure to do so may jeopardize student eligibility for federal financial aid.

Reference: Sierra College Board Policies/Administrative Procedures Chapter 5 (<http://www.sierracollege.edu/about-us/board/policies/chapter5.php>) .