

YOUR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS)

Read Carefully! Retain for Future Reference! These are your rights and responsibilities for receipt and retention of a TOPS Opportunity, Performance, or Honors Award. This is accurate as of the date it was produced; however, you are responsible for complying with all governing statutes and rules applicable to this program, which may change from time to time, whether disclosed or not. Notices of statutory or regulatory changes are available through the website of the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) at www.osfa.la.gov. You should retain this document for future reference. If you would like a copy of the rules applicable to your TOPS Award or if you do not understand your rights and responsibilities and a further explanation is required, call a Public Information Representative at 1-800-259-5626, extension 1012, or visit LOSFA's website at www.osfa.la.gov.

TOPS Awards are dependent upon an annual appropriation of funds by the state legislature. If an appropriation is insufficient to award all eligible applicants, then the number of recipients will be reduced in accordance with applicable law and rule. Students who used the TOPS On-Line Application or who did not provide financial information on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) will be the first whose awards will be eliminated if insufficient funds are appropriated.

You have established your eligibility for a TOPS Award. To receive the award, the following will apply:

- You must enroll for the first time as a full-time student at an eligible institution by the first regular semester or quarter following the first anniversary of your high school graduation. (For example, if you graduated in May 2011, you must enroll no later than the fall semester or quarter of 2012).
- If you choose to first enroll in an eligible out-of-state institution, and do so by the first semester following the first anniversary of your high school graduation, you may transfer to an eligible Louisiana school and reinstate your award PROVIDED that you have met all requirements for renewal of the award. You will lose one semester (quarter) of eligibility for each semester (quarter) you were enrolled in an out-of-state institution. You must apply for reinstatement by submitting an *Application to Return from an Out-of-State College* no later than July 1 following the academic year you transfer to an eligible Louisiana school. The supporting documentation must be received no later than January 15 of the following year. You can obtain the application at www.osfa.la.gov, "Forms", "Scholarship & Grant (TOPS) Forms" and then click "Download" for the *Application to Return from an Out-of-State College* or you can call a Public Information Representative at 1-800-259-5626, extension 1012. If your application or the required documentation is not received by the applicable deadline, it will **NOT** be considered and you will **NOT** be eligible to receive a TOPS award.
- If you enter on active duty in any of the U.S. Armed Forces within one year after high school graduation and before you enroll as a full-time college student, you can defer enrollment until the first regular semester following the fifth anniversary of your high school graduation **OR** no later than the first regular semester following the one year anniversary of your separation from active duty, whichever is earlier. You must contact this office and provide a copy of your DD Form 214 when you are ready to activate your award.

To retain your TOPS eligibility, you must be registered **each semester or quarter as a full-time student** as of the 15th class day at a semester institution or the 10th class day at a quarter institution. Correspondence courses do not count toward full-time enrollment.

As a TOPS recipient, you are responsible for maintaining current postal, e-mail and instant messaging addresses, and home and cell phone numbers on file with LOSFA. You should monitor your TOPS status throughout your college enrollment by registering for and monitoring an account on the Louisiana Award System (LAS) at www.osfa.la.gov. You can update your contact information on the LAS, or send an e-mail to LOSFA at custserv@osfa.la.gov or call a Public Information Representative at 1-800-259-5626, ext 1012, and LOSFA will update the information.

Your TOPS award may be combined with other financial aid (scholarships, grants or loans) but if your total financial aid package exceeds the "cost of attendance" established by your institution, your TOPS award amount may be reduced. Beginning with Academic Year 2007- 2008, if other aid exceeds your cost of attendance and your TOPS payment is zero, that semester will not be counted toward your 8 semesters (or 12 quarters) of TOPS eligibility. Contact the financial aid office at the institution you are attending for an explanation of how your award may be affected by other aid.

AWARD DURATION:

- You may receive a TOPS Award for a maximum of 8 semesters or 12 quarters. (Summer sessions in academic programs may be paid only under very specific conditions. Intersessions may not be paid. Check with the financial aid office at your school to determine whether your award can be paid for summer enrollment. If you use your TOPS award to pay for a summer session, it will count as one of your 8 semesters or 12 quarters of eligibility.)
- Out-of-state transfer students' eligibility will be reduced by the number of semesters or quarters attended at the eligible out-of-state institution.
- If you have semesters/quarters of eligibility remaining once you complete your first undergraduate degree, you may use any remaining semesters/quarters for **postgraduate study**, provided you enroll in a graduate/professional school no later than the fall semester/quarter following the one year anniversary of completion of your undergraduate degree. You **CANNOT** use remaining semesters/quarters of eligibility to pursue a second undergraduate degree.
- If you complete a non-academic (technical) program of study, you may use remaining semesters/quarters of eligibility to enroll in another technical program or to enroll in an academic program.

PROPRIETARY AND COSMETOLOGY SCHOOLS

- In order to be paid the TOPS award, you must be enrolled full-time according to your school on one of the following dates: September 1, December 1, March 1, and June 1. (Note: If the 1st falls on a weekend or holiday, you must be enrolled prior to that weekend or holiday for your award to be paid for that term).
- In order to maintain your award, you must meet federal grant aid requirements for steady academic progress at your school.

(Over)

TO RENEW YOUR AWARD

You must annually apply for federal grant aid by completing the FAFSA or Renewal FAFSA in its entirety by July 1 each year, unless you determine yourself ineligible for federal grant aid using the software provided for that purpose at www.finaid.org/calculators. If you are not eligible for federal grant aid and you are not concerned about the prospect of your award being eliminated because of a shortfall in funding for the program, then you do not have to file the renewal FAFSA. If your initial application for TOPS was through the TOPS On-Line Application, you are not required to apply for renewal, but your award may be eliminated in the event of a shortfall of funds.

CREDIT HOURS:

- You must enroll full-time each semester or quarter, remain continuously enrolled (except for summer sessions) and **earn (PASS)** at least 24 credit hours during each Academic Year.
- The Academic Year begins with the fall semester or quarter, includes the winter quarter (if applicable) and ends with the spring intersession immediately following the spring semester or quarter. The Academic Year includes any terms/intersessions that are completed after the fall semester or quarter begins and before the spring intersession ends. A spring intersession is any session that begins after the spring semester or quarter, lasts no more than 15 class days, and ends no later than June 15. If you use your award to enroll in a non-academic (technical) program, the Academic Year ends with the summer session.
- If you enrolled as a first-time, full-time student in the middle of the Academic Year (spring semester or winter/spring quarter), you will not be required to meet the 24 hour requirement that year.
- **Credits from Advanced Placement, CLEP, Summer Sessions or Intersessions completed outside the Academic Year, and Credit by Exam are not included in Academic Year Earned Hours.** Correspondence courses are only included in hours earned if completed and credit is given during the Academic Year.
- You must meet the requirement to earn 24 hours even if you drop courses, change majors or transfer to another school. If you do not earn at least 24 hours, your TOPS Award will be canceled at the end of the Academic Year unless you are granted an exception for cause. See "Requesting an Exception" at the bottom of this page.
- If you must leave school completely during the semester or quarter, or if you transfer to another eligible institution after the semester or quarter has begun, you should officially resign with the Registrar's Office so that you do not receive failing grades in all of the courses in which you were enrolled. If you do not, your TOPS Award may be jeopardized. If you resign, your award will be canceled and you must submit a Request for Exception form to be considered for an exception.

STEADY ACADEMIC PROGRESS and CUMULATIVE GRADE POINT AVERAGE REQUIREMENTS:

- You must make Steady Academic Progress (earn a cumulative GPA of 2.00 on a 4.00 scale) at the end of **every** semester, quarter or session for which grades are reported. If you do not earn at least a 2.00, your award will be suspended since you did not make Steady Academic Progress.
- In addition, you must meet the minimum required TOPS Cumulative Grade Point Average (TOPS Cum GPA) for your award at the end of each spring semester or quarter in order to maintain your award. Depending on the hours completed, you must maintain the following Cum GPA:

TOPS OPPORTUNITY AWARD	2.30	with 24 or more total earned hours
	2.50	with 48 or more total earned hours
TOPS PERFORMANCE or HONORS AWARD	3.00	with 24 or more total earned hours

NOTE: Your TOPS Cum GPA is calculated on all coursework you attempted at all schools, including repeated courses, at the end of each spring semester or quarter based on hours, grades and quality points reported by all schools you have attended, so it may be different from that grade point average calculated by the school you attend.

- If you have been awarded the TOPS Performance or Honors award and you have earned at least 24 hours with a TOPS Cum GPA of less than a 3.00 Cum GPA at the end of each spring semester or quarter, your award will be changed to the Opportunity award for the remaining period of eligibility and you will not receive the stipend that goes with the award. Once a stipend is lost, it cannot be regained.
- To continue to receive any TOPS award, you must earn at least the TOPS Cum GPA required for the Opportunity award at the end of the spring semester or quarter, or your TOPS Award will be suspended until you have achieved the required TOPS Cum GPA.

NOTE: If your award is suspended due to grades in one type of program (technical or academic) and you change to the other type of program, your award will remain suspended until the end of the semester or quarter you earn the required TOPS Cum GPA for the program in which you are enrolled.

- If you are enrolled in an academic program and you do not achieve the required TOPS Cum GPA within two years, your award will be permanently canceled.
- If you are enrolled in a technical program, you must have at least a 2.50 TOPS Cum GPA at the end of the spring semester or quarter, regardless of the number of hours you have earned, or your award will be suspended, and if you do not achieve the required TOPS Cum GPA within one year, your award will be permanently canceled.

NOTE: If you have earned hours in an academic program and in a technical program, your grades from each program remain separate for purposes of calculating your Cum GPA. For example, if you have a 3.20 on 12 hours in a technical program and a 2.80 on 12 hours an academic program, your Cum GPA will not be 3.00. It will be 3.20 in the technical program and 2.80 in the academic program.

Exceptions cannot be granted for failure to make Steady Academic Progress or to earn the minimum TOPS Cum GPA.

REQUESTING AN EXCEPTION

An exception for cause to the requirement to enroll for the first time as a full-time student by the deadline, to enroll full-time each semester or term thereafter, to remain continuously enrolled and/or to earn 24 hours may be granted if, by the deadline specified in the letter notifying you of the cancellation of your award, you submit a Request for Exception form with the required supporting documentation sufficient to justify a failure to comply with these requirements. You can obtain the Request for Exception form with instructions and a list of the required documentation at www.osfa.la.gov, "Forms", "Scholarship & Grant (TOPS) Forms" and then click "Download" for the "Request for Exception" form or you can call a Public Information Representative at 1-800-259-5626, ext. 1012, or locally at (225) 219-1012, or send an e-mail to custserv@osfa.la.gov. If your Request for Exception form is not received by the deadline, it will **NOT** be considered.