

College Opportunity Fund Institutional Implementation FAQs

Colorado Commission on Higher Education

August 28, 2006

Credit Hour Allocation/Initialization File

1. Under the initialization file, what credit hours were counted toward the student level for a continuing student?

The eligibility of a continuing student to receive stipend payments from the College Opportunity Fund was based on the student level a student had achieved during the Academic Year 2004-2005 as specified in Commission Agenda Item III, H (June 2, 2005). Credit hours for determining student level included all credit hours counted toward a student's degree or certificate program. All credit hours meeting these standards regardless of what institution a student obtained them were counted toward the student level.

2. How is a continuing student defined for the purpose of COF? Will continuing students registered for COF who are attending a participating private college and have never attended a public college in Colorado have credits assessed against them?

As outlined in Commission Agenda Item III, H from June 2, 2005, a "continuing student shall be defined as any student who was enrolled at a Colorado **public or participating private institution** of higher education during the Academic Year 2004-2005." Therefore, the initialization file treats all continuing students who are participating in COF, regardless of whether they attended a public or private institution, equal.

3. A student is in the pre-load from CCHE and has graduated with less than 145 credits. We load the student's information in our system. Does this student have an additional 55 undergraduate credit hours plus the 30 post-baccalaureate hours?

Yes. All students who were in the pre-load (Academic Year 2004-2005) will receive all hours remaining up to the lifetime-credit-hour limit (145 credits). If a student is working on his or her baccalaureate, upon graduation, the student will also receive an additional 30 undergraduate post baccalaureate hours. Therefore, under the example, a student receiving an associate's degree or certificate would have 55 undergraduate credits, while a student receiving a baccalaureate degree would have 55 undergraduate credits plus the 30 undergraduate post-baccalaureate hours.

See the chart provided in Question 6 for further details regarding the calculation of a student's remaining lifetime-credit-hour limit.

4. If a student is concurrently enrolled at multiple institutions, how will the student's class level be determined under COF?

Each institution will submit a file to CCHE with the student level of all students. Following CCHE's consolidation of the institutional files, students enrolled at more than one institution will receive the highest student level.

5. How will the payment of partial credit hours earned by students for courses that go toward an undergraduate degree be treated?

Pursuant to SB05-132, Section 1, the College Opportunity Fund will make payments regarding partial credit hours.

6. How many hours will be available to those students whose credit hours accrued to date exceeds 145 credit hours?

The following table details the number of credit hours that an in-state undergraduate student who was enrolled fall 2004 and/or spring 2005 and included in the system pre-load is eligible to receive stipend funding for under the College Opportunity Fund.

Accrued Hours	Previously accrued hours that will count toward a student's 145 credit hour limit	Credit hours a student can receive under COF Payment
0 to 29	0	145
30 to 59	30	115
60 to 89	60	85
90+	90	55

Once these students earn their baccalaureate degree, they become eligible for an additional 30 credit hours of post-baccalaureate stipends.

Students who have completed an undergraduate degree program prior to July 1, 2005 or students who are returning to complete a degree following a period of leave from an institution and were not included in the system pre-load during Academic Year 2004-2005 will begin with 0 credit hours accrued and will receive the full 145 credit hours.

Students who have completed an undergraduate degree program prior to July 1, 2005 and were not included in the system pre-load are not eligible for the 30 post-baccalaureate degree credits until they earn an additional bachelor's degree under the COF program. These students will begin with 0 credit hours accrued. Once these students earn a baccalaureate degree through COF, they then become eligible for the 30 post-baccalaureate stipend hours.

7. If a student has a bachelor's degree earned after July 1, 2005 and is pursuing an associate's degree or certificate, does the student qualify for the additional 30 undergraduate post-baccalaureate degree credits?

Yes. All students who earned a bachelor's degree after July 1, 2005 and are returning for additional degree work at any undergraduate degree level will qualify for an additional 30 undergraduate post-baccalaureate degree credits.

Waivers

8. How is the five percent figure for determining the school waivers calculated by an institution?

A Governing Board may bill the College Opportunity Trust Fund for the actual number of credit hours provided to eligible undergraduate students each semester in accordance with predetermined billing cycles. In addition, Governing Boards may bill the trust fund for up to five percent more of the total credit hours billed in a fiscal year for eligible undergraduate student credit hours. Governing Boards may not bill for additional credit hours based upon student headcount. For example:

Governing Board A bills for 3,000 credit hours or 100 FTE for FY 2005. ***Governing Board A*** is then able to bill for up to an additional 5% of the 3,000 credit hours.

100 students x 30 credit hours per student = 3,000 credit hours
5% waiver = 150 credit hours
Total credit hours plus 5% waiver = 3,150 total billable hours

This policy only refers to public institutions. All participating private institutions are ineligible for the five percent waiver.

9. If all seniors are assumed to have used 90 credits, then is it correct that there will be no need for waivers to be issued in the first year, as no students will have exceeded 145 credits? If there are waivers in place for 2005-06, how will the process work?

There should be no waivers in the first year. However, if a waiver is needed, an institution must first utilize its five percent waiver allocation.

10. How many waivers may a student receive from an institution? Does a student seek a waiver from the institution first or from the Commission?

An institution may grant a one-time waiver to a student and should precede the waiver process conducted by the Commission. For differences between the institutional and Commission waiver processes, refer to Commission Policy II, D, 4.04.

11. Beginning in FY06-07, students who participate in the PSEO or Fast Track programs will use COF stipends for these courses and will receive priority for waivers from an institution (if needed). Are students who participated in the PSEO or Fast Track programs prior to FY06-07 prioritized for waivers from an institution or does the prioritization only apply to students who used COF stipends while participating in these programs?

Only students who participated in the PSEO or Fast Track programs after July 1, 2006 and consequently used COF stipends for these courses shall receive priority for institutional waivers.

Tuition Rates

12. Currently military personnel on “Permanent Change of Station” in Colorado and their family members can attend an in-state institution for the cost of in-state tuition. This is also true for Olympic trainees. With implementation of the College Opportunity Fund, what will be the in-state tuition rate for these individuals? Should it be only the student’s portion, or like the Western Undergraduate Exchange program, could it be up to the total stipend portion and student portion? This same question will apply to the tuition for “cash-funded” programs. CCHE guidelines suggest that tuition for “cash-funded” programs may not be less than the in-state resident tuition. Which tuition rate should this calculation be based on?

All students who are currently submitted as state-funded FTE under CCHE’s policy will be eligible to receive a stipend. Therefore, military personnel and Olympic trainees will be charged in the same manner as all other stipend eligible students.

New Mexico students attending Adams State College, Fort Lewis College, Lamar Community College, Pueblo Community College, Trinidad State Junior College, Colorado State University, Pueblo, or Western State College during Academic Year 2005-06 as part of the New Mexico/Colorado Reciprocity Agreement will be paid for through the Fee-For-Service contract funds as agreed upon in Agenda Item II, D at the Commission’s June 2, 2005.

Stipend Shortfall

13. What is the process for decisions when funds are short? How will they know when the decision has been made and what that decision is? Does CCHE or COF notify the institutions?

For FY 2006, the Commission is confident that its enrollment projections for COF-eligible students are accurate. If by some huge fluctuation in the economy the projections increase, the Commission would know that in the spring and would present the issue before the General Assembly in the form of a Supplemental Budget Request. Again, barring a major disruption in the Colorado economy, the Commission is confident its enrollment projections are accurate.

Beginning in FY 2007, SB05-132, Section 3 (4) (b), requires the Colorado Student Loan Program to “reduce the amount of the stipend per credit hour for all students to match the available funds, subject to Joint Budget Committee approval.”

Student Application

14. How can students under thirteen years of age who are attending college apply for the College Opportunity Fund?

Because of privacy laws, students younger than thirteen who attend college may not have their personal information entered into the College Opportunity Fund database through either an online or paper application. Institutions serving these students should contact the Commission in writing regarding the situation and to ask for an exemption on these students. All correspondence should be sent in care of the *Colorado Commission on Higher Education, COF-Under 13*.

15. Are institutions allowed to submit College Opportunity Fund Applications on behalf of their students?

No. C.R.S. 23-18-201 (4), states, “The Colorado student loan program shall direct all state and participating private institutions of higher education to require resident undergraduate students to apply for the program.” The statute does not specify any exception that would allow for an institution to complete an application on behalf of a student.

16. Are students attending a participating private institution eligible to receive a stipend if they have received a GED?

Commission Policy F, Section 5.03.03 states that “the GED test is a test of equivalency for the high school diploma,” and establishes criteria for cut scores on the GED equivalency to a high school diploma. While private institutions are not directed to follow Commission policy, they may choose to refer to its language regarding clarification of the Commission’s intent on certain issues.

17. Students receiving the stipend at private colleges must have graduated from a Colorado high school. If a student graduated from a high school that has since closed where can the participating information go to receive information on the student’s high school?

If the student graduated from a public high school or charter school, the institution should contact the corresponding school district to obtain all necessary information.

If the student graduated from a private high school, the institution can verify the school’s information through the National Center for Education Statistics.

18. Will there be a paper application process? When will the application be available? Will the application only be in English? Who is responsible for entering these applications into the system?

Paper applications in both English and Spanish are available in a PDF format to download from the College Opportunity Fund website, www.CollegeInColorado.org.

Students who apply through the paper application, instead of the electronic form, must return the completed and signed application to CCHE for system processing. To receive a notice of confirmation, students will need to provide a mailing address or an email address.

Paper applications will follow the same format as the electronic form and require the student to enter the same identifying information. Additionally, students will have the option to provide a Permanent Resident Card Number instead of a Social Security Number, which is required on the electronic application.

19. If a student refuses to enter a Social Security Number, can he or she receive a stipend?

Students who already have their SSN on file with their college should also use their SSN when applying for COF. Students who do not have an SSN can apply for COF by using their Permanent Resident Card Number (available on paper application only). All student data held in the College Opportunity Fund database is subject to privacy regulations and is not accessible through any public website or data system.

20. May a qualifying student apply or authorize for a stipend after the census date but before the end of the term and still receive the stipend for that term, provided the institution has determined that the student is also eligible for in-state tuition for the same term?

As long as a student is eligible for in-state tuition for the term under CCHE requirements and the application authorization is completed before the institution's transmission of

COF reconciliation data for the term to the Colorado Student Loan Program, then yes a student can apply for the program following the census date.

The following tables provides the dates by which institutions must submit all invoice and reconciliation files for the 2005-06 Academic Year:

Semester Schools—2005-06 Academic Year	
Fall 2005	Invoice File – July 15, 2005 – October 31, 2005 Reconciliation File – December 1, 2005 – January 31, 2006
Spring 2006	Invoice File – February 1, 2006 – February 28, 2006 Reconciliation File – May 1, 2006 – June 16, 2006
Summer 2006	Invoice File – June 19 (earliest date to submit) Reconciliation File – By September 15, 2006

Semester Schools—Subsequent Academic Years	
Fall 200X	Invoice File – September 18 (earliest date to submit) Reconciliation File – January 31 (latest date to submit)
Spring 200X	Invoice File – February 1 (earliest date to submit) Reconciliation File – May 31 (latest date to submit)
Summer 200X	Invoice File – June 1 (earliest date to submit) Reconciliation File – September 15 (latest date to submit)

Quarter Schools—All Academic Years	
QTR1	Invoice File – October 1 – October 31 Reconciliation File – December 1 – December 31
QTR2	Invoice File – January 1 – January 31 Reconciliation File – March 1 – March 31
QTR3	Invoice File – April 1 – April 31 Reconciliation File – June 1 – June 31
QTR4	Invoice File – July 1 – July 31 Reconciliation File – August 1 – August 31

21. Must a student authorize COF stipend payments each term?

C.R.S. 23-18-202(5)(a) states: “After an undergraduate student has applied for, been approved for the program, and enrolled in a state or participating private institution of

higher education, the institution shall request that the Colorado student loan program make a stipend payment from the college opportunity fund to the institution on behalf of the eligible undergraduate student. The stipend payment shall be paid to the institution upon receipt by the institution of the eligible undergraduate student's authorization."

Statute does not specifically require the student to authorize each term prior to a stipend payment. At their discretion, institutions may create a policy to allow students to only authorize COF stipend payments once at their institution and for this authorization to apply to subsequent terms. This policy must:

- Clearly explain to students that they are authorizing COF stipends for the current as well as future academic terms; and
- Provide a simple and easy method for students to "un-authorize" future terms if they choose to do so.

Use of Stipend

22. Are students who register for a course after census date eligible to receive a COF allocation?

In order to use their stipend, students must be registered for a course before the course census date. However, as explained in the COF Reporting Guidelines, "legitimate administrative decisions or errors may occur that may allow COF eligibility. In these situations, the institution should maintain adequate paper trails to justify COF eligibility decisions made at the institutional level."

23. If an institution allows a student, who has not attended any of the course sessions to date, to "late add" a course after course census date and there is no legitimate administrative reason to do so, the COF Reporting Guidelines prohibit an institution from submitting the credit hours to CAN for stipend payment. Can the institution pass this cost on to the student and in effect charge Total Tuition to the student for the added course?

If an institution allows a student, **who has not attended any of the course sessions to date**, to add the course after the course census date, they cannot charge the student for the lost COF funding.

24. Are courses without a standard meeting time, such as modules, independent study, senior thesis, or intensive courses eligible for COF stipend funding?

Yes, these types of courses are eligible for stipends when taken by COF-eligible students.

25. Are non-degree seeking students eligible to receive a stipend from COF?

Yes, as long as they are taking courses that are eligible to receive COF funding.

26. Can students pick and choose the classes they want to use the stipend for each term?

In general students may choose to have the stipend apply to all of their credits or none of their credits within a specific term at institutional discretion. Institutions, at their discretion, may allow students the flexibility to apply the stipend on an individual credit hour basis.

Additionally, students attending multiple institutions can request that the stipend apply toward their credit hours at both, one, or neither institution following the same protocol as if the student is only attending one institution.

27. Will graduate credits accrued by undergraduate students who have not completed a bachelor's degree be eligible for stipend payments?

Under SB05-132, "an eligible undergraduate student may use the stipend for undergraduate courses and graduate-level courses that apply toward the student's undergraduate degree that are taken at a state or participating private institution of higher education at a fixed rate per credit hour, set annually by the general assembly."

28. How are PSEO students to be handled during the 2005-06 Academic Year with the COF stipend and Fee-For-Service contract?

Fee-For-Service contracts do not cover PSEO classes for home-schooled students. Home-schooled high school students who take classes should use their COF stipend for these courses.

PSEO students who take more than two classes must use their COF stipend to pay for the classes above the allotted two classes paid for with the Fee-For-Service contract.

All other concurrent enrollment not reported as PSEO or FastTrack is invoiced using the COF stipend.

29. Are all PSEO courses taken by an individual student eligible for COF stipends beginning in FY06-07 or are only the first two PSEO courses taken by a student eligible?

Beginning in FY06-07, all PSEO courses taken by a COF-eligible student may be submitted for COF stipend reimbursement. The only exception is for PSEO courses run through an institution's off-campus, extended studies program as defined in C.R.S. 23-1-109 (see FAQ # 30 below). PSEO credit hours submitted for COF stipends will count towards the student's 145 lifetime credit hour limitation.

30. Beginning in FY06-07, can an institution receive COF stipend support for PSEO credit hours for courses taken off-campus, or must the institution get these off-campus programs approved as outlined in CCHE Policy 7.03.01.

If the course is run through an institution's off-campus, extended studies program as defined in C.R.S. 23-1-109, the PSEO course taken off-campus is not eligible for COF stipend support. The COF statute specifically prohibits COF stipend support for off-campus, extended studies, or continuing education courses (C.R.S. 23-18-202(5)(d)(I)(F)).

However, C.R.S. 23-1-109(3) states: "The general assembly declares its intent that all instruction at two-year institutions, including the first two years of instruction at Adams state college and Mesa state college, shall be funded throughout the institution's commission-approved service area on the same basis as on-campus instruction." Therefore, the community colleges, Adams State College, and Mesa State College are exempt from the requirement of the statewide extended studies program and the off-campus PSEO courses offered by these institutions are eligible for COF stipend support.

For the four year institutions that offer off-campus instruction to students enrolled in the PSEO program, these courses may be submitted to the Commission to receive approval for state (COF stipend) support. This process is outlined in CCHE Policy IV Part B "General Policies for Extended Studies Instruction." If approved these courses would be eligible for COF stipend support.

All off-campus courses that receive state funding through the COF stipend program must comply with CCHE Policy IV Part B Paragraph 7.05 which states: "Tuition for instruction delivered off-campus that utilizes state funding, through COF stipends or a fee-for-service contract, will be comparable to tuition charged for the on-campus program, including resident and non-resident, unless the institution's governing board has formally established a different tuition rate."

Refunds/Account Reconciliation

31. If the invoice and reconciliation results files and the electronic fund transfer that accompanies them do not list the dollar amount of funds provided for each student on the file (only a grand total), how will the institution be able to reconcile the cash received with the cash requested?

The payment will be processed in a summary form. However, a detailed report of hours approved response payment file and sent back to college after processing of files made available to each individual institution.

32. If a student withdraws entirely from the institution after census date, and the institution's refund policy would produce a refund consisting of some amounts originally paid by a COF stipend, is the institution required to return a portion of the refund to COF? If yes, are the hours still counted against the student's lifetime limit since only a portion of the stipend received for each credit hour would be returned?

Under current CCHE FTE policy, the institution would not refund the stipend following census date and the student would be assessed the hours. This policy will remain in affect, and institutions will not submit a partial refund to the Colorado Student Loan Program and a student's credit hours will not be reinstated.

33. What if an institution realizes they received payments for ineligible credit hours after the final reconciliation file is submitted?

The institution can submit one post-reconciliation correction file each term to CSLP when the institution discovers an error in their reconciliation submission after the fact. For example, an institution discovers that ineligible credit hours were submitted to CSLP for reimbursement and would like to return the funds to the College Opportunity Fund. The request must be submitted by the end of the term following the term in which the error occurred. In other words, the institution can submit an adjustment to their fall term reconciliation up until June 15 (the due date for the final spring term reconciliation).

Financial Aid

34. How should Cost of Attendance be treated for students who are residents and ineligible or do not apply for COF? On what basis should financial aid be calculated?

The formula for calculating the Student Share of tuition remains the same. In other words: Total Tuition – COF = Student Share of Tuition.

If a student is ineligible or does not apply, the formula would be:
Total Tuition – \$0 = Total Tuition

The total tuition is then the basis on which to use for Cost of Attendance.

Miscellaneous

35. Are institutional employees and their dependents who enroll in classes under an "institutional tuition waiver" eligible to receive funding from the College Opportunity Fund stipend?

Under the Commission's Full-Time Equivalent (FTE) Reporting Guidelines and Procedures, institutional employees and their dependents are eligible to receive the COF

stipend if they “pay the tuition and fees when registering for the course and there is a published application process under which the recipients qualify.”

Additional information on the College Opportunity Fund is available at:
<https://cof.college-access.net/cofapp/FAQs.jsp>