



# Financial Aid

## Principles of Financial Aid

- Each student will be given careful consideration and the college will determine financial assistance based on federal, state, private and institutional guidelines.
- Financial assistance includes Federal Second Chance Pell Grants.
- Selection of students to receive financial aid will be made without regard to age, sex, race, color, religion, national origin, or disability.
- In determining a student's resources, several items are considered:
  - Family income
  - Family issues
  - Student assets and earnings
  - Number in household
- The total amount of financial assistance offered to a student shall not exceed his/her need for financial assistance after considering all other resources available to him/her.

### I. Student Consumer Information

The school annually distributes to all enrolled students a notice of availability of the information that is required to be made available to students under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 (FERPA) and under Section 485(a)(1), Section 485(f), Section 485(g), Section 485(h) and Section 485(o). The notice lists and briefly describes the information and includes a statement of procedures required to obtain the information.

### Student Records Policy: Confidentiality and Access

All records and conversations between an aid applicant, his/her family and the financial aid staff are confidential and entitled to the protection ordinarily given a counseling relationship. No public announcement shall be made of amounts awarded to individual students. No information concerning a student's financial records may be released to anyone outside the Financial Aid Office without permission of the student, his/her parents, or Director of Student Financial Aid, as circumstances may dictate.

### Drug-Fee Policy

The college adheres to the Federal Drug Free Schools and Communities Act Amendment of 1989 (Public Law 102-226) Section 22, Drug-Free Schools and Campuses, which was enacted to ensure that any institution of higher education that receives funds under any federal program has adopted and implemented a program to prevent the use of illicit drugs and abuse of alcohol by students. This policy is outlined in the college catalog.

## **II. Federal Second Chance Pell Grant Program**

The Federal Second Chance Pell Grant is a Title IV program that provides eligible students with aid to help meet the cost of postsecondary education. Eligibility is based on need. Undergraduates who attend school full or part-time may apply for the Pell.

Repayment is not required.

Lifetime Eligibility Use (LEU) is tracked and reported via National Student Loan Data Systems (NSLDS). Students are informed by the US DOE of their LEU at time of federal student aid application/report process. No student will be allowed to receive more than 600% Pell funds for a lifetime. Before any student is awarded Pell grant, the aid office must confirm LEU via the NSLDS of Common Origination & Disbursement (COD) web sites.

### **1. Disbursement Policy**

The following disbursement policy is applied to all students receiving financial aid for every term of the academic year. The objective is to deliver eligible financial aid in the timeliest manner possible, with less paperwork required from students.

Official Enrollment Level – Please refer to chart below:

Student Undergraduate Enrollment Levels:

Full-time = 12 credit hours

$\frac{3}{4}$  time = 9-11 hours

$\frac{1}{2}$  time = 6-8 hours

Less than  $\frac{1}{2}$  time = 1-5 hours

Disbursement Policy Summary

Refund disbursement begins after 2 weeks (14 days) of first day of class for each semester, then continues throughout the semester. There will be no refunds provided to students who receive Second Chance Pell. Attendance verification, for students who receive federal aid takes place after the drop and add period for every term.

### **2. Financial Aid Fraud Policy**

Institutions must refer applicants who are suspected of having engaged in fraud or other criminal misconduct in connection with Title IV programs to the Department of Education's Office of Inspector General. The regulations require only that the institution refer the suspected case for investigation, not that it reached a firm conclusion about the propriety of the applicant's conduct.

As stewards of Title IV funds, ISTC is obligated to ensure that processes are developed to protect against fraud by either applicants or staff. All financial aid staff are responsible for detecting and reporting fraud. If, in the financial aid administrator's judgment, the applicant and their family have provided a fraudulent application or documentation, it must be reported immediately to a supervisor.

The Office of Financial Aid must identify and resolve discrepancies in the information received from different sources with respect to a student's application for Title IV aid. Some of these areas include but are not limited to the following

- All student aid applications (e.g., federal, state, institutional, etc.)
- Need analysis documents [e.g., Institutional Student Information Records (ISIRs) and Student Aid Reports (SARs)]
- Copies of federal and state income tax returns
- Information regarding a student's citizenship
- Previous educational experience (e.g., school credentials such as a high school diploma)
- Documentation of the student's Social Security Number (SSN)
- Other factors relating to the student's eligibility for funds under Title IV aid programs (e.g., compliance with the Selective Service registration requirement)

In the context of the financial aid office, fraud is the willful misrepresentation or falsification of information for the purpose of securing financial aid that the individual is not eligible for or not eligible to the extent received. Title IV fraud can take many forms, including but not limited to the following:

- Falsified documents or forged signatures on an application, verification documents, or loan promissory notes
- False statements of income
- False statements of citizenship
- Use of false or fictitious names or aliases, addresses, or SSNs, including the deliberate use of multiple SSNs
- False claims of independent status
- Patterns of misreported information from one year to the next

### **Referrals to the Office of the Inspector General**

If ISTC suspects that a student, employee, or other individual has misreported information and/or altered documentation to increase student aid eligibility or to fraudulently obtain federal funds, it must report those suspicions and provide any evidence to the Department of Education's Office of Inspector General.

### **3. Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy**

The primary responsibility for acceptable standards of academic student success at ISTC rests, with the student. It is up to him/her to maintain their Grade Point Average (GPA) in accordance with established academic standards.

After each review of satisfactory academic progress, students who do meet the progress requirements will be notified by hand mail. The notice will tell the student what type of satisfactory progress issue the student has: satisfactory academic suspension or satisfactory maximum time suspension.

According to 34 CFR 668-16(e), there are two major components of satisfactory academic progress: the qualitative component (cumulative GPA) and quantitative component (timeframe of completion).

### **Qualitative Requirement (Cumulative GPA)**

Students must meet or exceed the following minimum cumulative GPA's based upon total hours attempted:

*The primary responsibility for acceptable standards of academic student success at ISTC rests with the student. It is up to him/her to maintain an appropriate GPA in accordance with established academic standards.*

Semester Credit Hours Attempted	Cumulative GPA
12-21	1.50
22-32	1.75
33 or more	2.00

Quantitative Requirement (Timeframe for Completion) – Eligible students may receive federal financial aid for a period of time not to exceed 1.5 times the normal length of his/her program of study. Students enrolled in the Certificate programs may receive financial aid for a maximum of 45 credits and if enrolled in an Associate degree a student may receive financial aid for a maximum of 90 semester hours attempted. All credits transferred into the college will be counted toward the maximum number of hours attempted. Each student on federal financial aid must earn two-thirds (67%) of all the hours he/she attempts in order to complete a program in the normal length of time allowed. Students who have not passed the required number of hours will be suspended (financial aid suspension) from receiving federal financial aid. Financial aid is reinstated when the student has achieved the minimum cumulative GPA required and earned the required minimum number of credit hours.

If a student repeats a course which was previously successfully completed, the hours obtained the second time the course is attempted do count toward the minimum number of academic hours required for program completion. Failing grades, withdrawals, incompletes and/or repeated classes may result in financial aid suspension because these classes are considered as attempted hours not successfully completed (these hours are included in the maximum number of hours attempted).

For those students not meeting ISTC's Satisfactory Academic Progress requirements, the following will help ensure that students continue making successful progress toward completing their academic degree. Academic Early Alert: In order to continue to receive student financial aid, students must meet the minimum academic requirements outlined above. Student's is not meeting these requirements will be at risk of losing their financial aid award(s).

For this reason, any student whose grades fall below a 2.4 overall GPA and/or who drop below a 67 percent completion rate, they will receive written notification at the end of the academic term alerting them to the -potentially negative impact of not meeting SAP requirements. The notification will also include information on the impact of falling below acceptable Satisfactory Academic Progress standards, as well as strategies to help ensure they meet SAP requirements needed to continue receiving financial aid awards.

Warning: At the end of each academic term, the financial aid and academic standing of each student receiving financial aid will be verified. Those students receiving financial aid and failing to meet SAP requirements for financial aid eligibility will be placed on financial aid warning.

**Suspension:** Students placed on SAP warning will be allowed to continue to receive financial aid, and be enrolled at ISTC the following semester, but if at the end of that semester the student is still not meeting the SAP requirements, the student will be suspended from receiving any additional financial aid until he/she complies with the SAP rules and regulations. Students who fall below the academic standards by not meeting their minimum GPA requirements will also be suspended for non-compliance. Students still have the right to amend ISTC's requirements, if eligible to re-enroll based on academic standing. This must be done at their own expense until they once again meet the requirements to receive financial aid assistance.

A suspended student has the right to appeal a suspension, and may do so by appealing to the Satisfactory Academic Progress Appeal committee. Students placed on suspension after the spring semester, and not granted a successful appeal, must meet with the Dean of Students to determine the academic options of the student. Summer sessions are not included in this time frame.

Students can use the summer sessions to make up course work and GPA requirements during summer sessions if they choose to do so. If a student manages to improve their overall GPA and completion rate to the minimum acceptable standards or above, they regain their good standing status.

**Probation:** Students who have been suspended from attending ISTC for not meeting SAP academic requirements, or have lost their financial aid eligibility, have the right to appeal a suspension for financial aid ineligibility, or poor academic standing. Appeals may be granted to students when special circumstances have precluded the student from doing well academically, and not meeting the SAP rules/regulations. If a student appeals his/her suspension successfully, they will be placed on probation.

Students placed on probation may qualify to receive student financial aid. Probationary status can be in place, as needed, to allow the student to re-establish full financial aid eligibility, as long as the student is making forward progress toward the completion of a degree/program.

This entails meeting a minimum GPA of 2.0 and successfully completing a minimum of 67 percent of all courses attempted for each semester they are placed on probation.

The probationary period will be in place until the student's overall GPA and completion rate meet the SAP rules and regulations.

The appeal must be in writing and must be submitted in accordance with the standards set forth by the Committee on Satisfactory Academic Progress. A student requesting an appeal must also provide appropriate documentation in his/her appeal request that illustrates what changes have taken place. In the circumstance that caused the student to fall below the minimum SAP standards, the appeal

submitted by the student must contain the reasons why he/she did not do well academically and more importantly, what will change for the following semester(s) that will help ensure academic student success.

Appeal letters will be reviewed by the committee and notifications will be sent to students by mail informing them of the decision made by the committee along with the steps to be taken to complete the probationary process. Students who successfully appeal a suspension and are placed on probation will be placed on a mandatory academic improvement plan that outlines keys to student success. This academic improvement plan will outline, in detail for the student what needs to take place in order to continue on probationary status and receiving financial aid assistance.

Once placed on an academic improvement plan, the student must continue to meet the requirements of the academic improvement plan, until they re-establish eligibility by reaching at a minimum an overall GPA of 2.0 and successfully completing at least 67% of the academic course work they attempt. If a student fails to meet the specified requirements set forth in the academic improvement plan, the student forfeits their financial aid eligibility.

Students can stay on an improvement plan, as long as they are meeting all requirements and are attaining the minimum standards of a 2.0 GPA and passing 67% of the courses they attempt each term, until their overall standing is back in compliance with campus SAP guidelines. There are no limits on how many terms a student can remain on probation as long as they are making forward progress each session. They must continue to have a minimum GPA of 2.0 and successfully complete a minimum of 67% of classes they attempt each term.

#### **Re-Establishing Eligibility**

A student will re-establish their full eligibility once their overall GPA is above a 2.0 and their overall attempted hours are completed at a percentage rate of 67 percent or better. It is the financial aid recipient's responsibility to determine or inquire about his/ her financial aid status at the end of each semester. A student at ISTC is eligible to receive financial aid after completing and submitting a FAFSA application and meeting all federal rules and regulations pertaining to federal financial aid programs.

#### **4. Scholarships**

##### **5. Title IV funds**

##### **Return of Title IV Funds**

Per federal law, if a student who has been awarded Title IV aid withdraws, is withdrawn, stops attending, or fails to earn a passing grade in a semester, ISTC must calculate the amount that must be returned by the Institution and/or student to Title IV programs. If the amount awarded to the student is greater than the amount the student earned, unearned funds must be returned. If the amount awarded to the student is less than the amount the student earned, and for which the student is otherwise eligible, the student is eligible to receive a post-withdrawal disbursement of the earned aid that was not received.

Students who completely withdraw from classes and who received federal financial assistance MUST refund to the appropriate program(s) a percentage of their aid after tuition, fees, and other institutional charges or credits have been paid.

This Return to Title IV (R2T4) refund policy goes into effect when the student completely withdraws at or before the 60% point in time (of the semester) or approximately nine (9) weeks into the semester or six (6) weeks into the summer sessions. Students who receive an F as a grade for all courses will also be considered for a Return to Title IV (R2T4) calculation, unless the student can provide documentation of attendance throughout the full 60 percent of the semester. Financial Aid personnel make every effort to verify the student's attendance, but ultimately it is the student's responsibility to provide ISTC with evidence that he/she attended the classes.

Failure to return the funds will result in an administrative "hold" being placed on all student records and the student will be ineligible for future financial assistance at any institution.

Students should contact an ISTC Financial Aid Counselor for the specific calculation used in determining the amount required to be refunded to the federal government.

## **6. Verification**

Verification is the federally required process of checking the accuracy of information that students supply on their financial aid applications. Verification is completed based on the Federal Title IV verification guidelines. The Institution receives the ISIR. If a student is selected for verification by the Federal Processor, the applicant must submit required documents. (Ex: his/her tax transcript, his/her spouse's tax transcript and/or his or her parents' tax transcripts, (If he/she is determined to be dependent according to the dependent student definition).

## **7. Contact Information**

Office of Financial Aid  
Post Office Box 220350  
Deatsville, AL 36022

Monday through Friday, 7:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Telephone: 334-514-4040

Fax Number: 334-514-4026