



THE OREGON OPPORTUNITY GRANT



WHEN \$ IS THE KEY: JANUARY IS PRIME TIME TO START APPLYING TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF MAJOR STATE INCREASES IN COLLEGE FINANCIAL AID

“Don’t just dream about college: go” is the state’s key message to spread the word about the increases in Oregon’s primary need-based financial aid program, the Oregon Opportunity Grant (OOG). And now is the time to act. The Governor’s Office, Oregon Student Assistance Commission (OSAC), Oregon colleges and universities, community organizations, and many other partners are working to encourage current and future Oregon college students to take advantage of the increased funds. The FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) can be submitted through June in order for students to learn about state and federal aid for which they may be eligible; however, many grants and scholarships that also use the FAFSA have January or February priority deadlines, so now is a key time to submit the application.

Under the Governor’s leadership, the 2007 legislature approved a historic increase in the grant program, doubled funding to \$72 million, making college education more affordable for Oregon families. The increase will support larger grants to more low- and moderate-income students, including part-time students, enrolling in fall 2008. For many, it may mean the difference between going to college or not. For others, it may reduce student borrowing and work, and help current students to be able to stay in college and complete a degree.

Approximately 33,000 students will qualify for the grants this fall, which are administered by OSAC, and which vary according to the students’ estimated financial need. The grants will go to students of Oregon community colleges, Oregon public universities, and eligible Oregon independent colleges. Maximum grant awards have doubled on average, and the maximum family income for eligibility has risen from approximately \$31,000 to about \$70,000 for a family of four.

Many students will receive increases in the grant, and some who were not eligible for help before will now receive aid. For example, a 27-year old full-time student with a \$10,000 income at a public university who would not have been eligible for any grant funds before, but will now be eligible for an estimated \$2,208. A 43-year old married father with an income of \$30,000 attending a public university full time previously would have received no grant funds, but now is estimated to receive \$1,030. A single mother attending a community college half time, with an income of \$10,000 would see nearly a doubling of her grant. An 18-year-old dependent student with a \$45,000 family income previously would have received no state grant support for college, but now is eligible for an estimated \$1182 toward expenses at a public or eligible independent university in Oregon, or \$902 at a community college.

Tamara Henderson, executive director of the Oregon Student Association, says, “This will open the doors of access for communities traditionally underrepresented on our campuses. From a first-generation student just out of high school to student parents hoping for a better future for their family, this program will truly increase college access for all Oregonians.”

Anyone who wants to know if they are in the ballpark for a grant can get an immediate answer online at www.GetCollegeFunds.org. The site hosts a “grant estimator” into which users can plug financial information and find out if they are likely to receive a grant, and if so, how much. **To apply: complete the FAFSA at fafsa.ed.gov** (or for those who are unable to apply online, request a paper copy at 1-800-4-FED-AID). All Oregon residents who submit a FAFSA are *automatically* considered for an Oregon Opportunity Grant, and will be notified by e-mail if they appear to be eligible. Actual grant amounts will be provided by the college financial aid offices as part of students’ total financial aid packages. For more information on the Oregon Opportunity Grant and other grants and scholarships, go to www.GetCollegeFunds.org.

MORE INFO AT WWW.GETCOLLEGEFUNDS.ORG

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