



THE OREGON OPPORTUNITY GRANT



DON'T JUST DREAM ABOUT COLLEGE: GO! JANUARY IS PRIME TIME TO START APPLYING TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF INCREASES IN STATE GRANTS FOR COLLEGE

Here's a pop quiz with something in it for you. What do you know about the Oregon Opportunity Grant? Do you know that it is the state's major need-based financial aid program and provides money for college that you don't need to pay back? And more to the point, are you aware that funds for these grants were recently doubled, meaning **more money for college for more Oregon students?** If you answered no to any of these questions, now is the time to find out! The FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) can be submitted through June in order to learn about state and federal aid for which you 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 Oregon Opportunity Grant program, doubled funding to \$72 million, making college education more affordable for Oregon students. The increase will support larger grants to more 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 can reduce student borrowing and work, and help students to be able to stay in college and complete a degree.

Approximately 33,000 students will qualify for the grants this coming fall, which are administered by the Oregon Student Assistance Commission (OSAC), and which vary according to the students' financial need. 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 20-year old student with a \$30,000 family income, attending a public university full time would see his grant increase from \$1,735 to \$2,153. A 27-year old independent full-time student with a \$10,000 income at a public university who would not have been eligible for any grant funds before, but would now be eligible for an estimated \$2,208. 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 university in Oregon, or \$902 at a community college.

Tamara Henderson, executive director of the Oregon Student Association, says "This truly opens doors to students across the state who previously had limited options to afford college. The increased grant aid will allow low to moderate income students to focus and succeed in college, with reduced stress levels, reduced demand to work many hours or multiple jobs while in school, and less student loan debt."

If you want to know whether you are in the ballpark for a grant, you 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 your financial aid office or www.GetCollegeFunds.org.

MORE INFO AT WWW.GETCOLLEGEFUNDS.ORG

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