

# FINANCIAL AID AND SCHOLARSHIPS

## Purpose and Eligibility

USC Upstate offers a full range of financial assistance programs designed to assist students and their families with the cost of education. These programs provide financial aid resources in the form of grants, scholarships, loans and employment opportunities. These resources are awarded to students based on financial need, academic promise, leadership potential, special talents, or a combination of these criteria. Descriptions of these programs and their requirements may be found in the following pages of this catalog. In prior years, more than \$65-million in financial aid was awarded to USC Upstate students.

Eligibility for assistance based on financial need is determined by completing a federally approved needs analysis form, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Students may complete the FAFSA electronically at [www.studentaid.gov](http://www.studentaid.gov) (<http://www.studentaid.gov>). The Title IV school code for USC Upstate is 006951. The FAFSA calculates the Student Aid Index or SAI. The difference between the FAFSA SAI and the cost of education is the student's financial need. USC Upstate seeks to identify and provide funds to meet the financial needs of its students, to the extent resources are available. It is intended that no student be denied an education because of financial need.

Financial assistance programs have individual requirements in addition to a demonstration of financial need through completion of the FAFSA. These requirements generally include, but are not limited to, enrolled in good standing in a program of study leading to a degree or teaching certificate, enrollment in a minimum number of hours each semester, and maintenance of satisfactory academic progress. Students receiving state, federal or institutional financial aid must be enrolled in 12 or more USC Upstate hours to be considered full-time for financial aid purposes.

## Satisfactory Academic Progress

Institutions participating in Title IV federal financial aid programs are required by the U.S. Department of Education to establish institutional policies that define satisfactory academic progress. All students who receive federal, state or institutional financial assistance at USC Upstate are expected to maintain satisfactory progress toward completion of their programs of study in a reasonable period of time.

Financial assistance programs covered by this policy include all federal financial aid programs (Federal Pell Grant, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant, TEACH Grant, Federal Subsidized and Unsubsidized Direct Loans, Federal Parent Loans for Undergraduate Students, and Federal Work-Study), Private Loans, South Carolina Teacher Loans, State Need Based Grant and institutional financial assistance programs (athletic grants, academic scholarships, stipends, minority incentive grants, and student employment).

The USC Upstate Financial Aid Committee has approved the following policy. Students are considered to be making satisfactory academic progress if they:

1. Are admitted and enrolled as a degree seeking or teacher certification student.
2. Maintain a cumulative USC system GPA of 2.0.

3. Complete requirements for a degree or certificate within a reasonable length of time as specified below: The total number of hours attempted at any post-secondary institution does not exceed 180 hours.
4. Earn at least 67% of all total attempted hours (including hours from all USC campuses and all other previous colleges).

## Certification Students

Students seeking a teacher certification with an undergraduate degree will be granted aid for a maximum of four full-time equivalency semesters or anticipated graduation date.

## Transfer Students

Transfer students receiving admission to the University will be considered to be making satisfactory academic progress for financial aid at the time of enrollment unless the total number of hours attempted at all post-secondary institutions exceeds the equivalent of 180 hours.

Transfer students gaining admission through the Admissions and Petitions Committee must attain a minimum 2.0 grade point ratio on the first twelve hours attempted to maintain further financial aid eligibility. Eligibility for financial assistance is limited to a total of the equivalent of 180 hours of enrollment at all post-secondary institutions attended.

## Academic Suspension

Students serving suspensions will not be eligible for financial aid during periods of open enrollment. Students not making satisfactory academic progress are not eligible for financial aid.

## Appeal Process

If a student's ability to meet these standards was affected by extenuating circumstances, he or she may appeal this determination. Information concerning the appeals process is available in the USC Upstate Financial Aid Office. Students not meeting these standards at the end of spring term may attend summer school to meet satisfactory academic progress requirements. Incomplete appeals will be returned upon receipt. During the student's matriculation, the student will not be allowed to successfully appeal more than three (3) times. The committee's decision is final and cannot be further challenged.

## Grants

**Federal Pell Grants** are designed to be the foundation of financial aid. Their purpose is to ensure that all eligible students use these funds to continue their education after high school. The amount of a Federal Pell Grant award depends on a student's financial need as calculated by the FAFSA, the cost of the student's education, and the amount of time the student is enrolled during the school year.

**Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (SEOG)** are awarded to a very limited number of students with the greatest financial need. The grants are restricted due to the shortage of appropriated federal funds, with preference to Federal Pell Grant recipients.

**TEACH Grant Program.** Through the College Cost Reduction and Access Act of 2007, Congress created the Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) Grant Program that provides grants of up to \$4,000 per year to students who intend to teach in a public or private elementary or secondary school that serves students from low-income families. Students are required to sign an agreement to

serve. Please go to the USC Upstate Financial Aid website for additional information.

## Loans

### Federal Direct Loan Program

**Federal Subsidized Direct Loan Program** is a need-based program that allows students to borrow for educational expenses. The federal government pays the interest on these loans as long as students are enrolled on at least a half-time basis. Loan eligibility is based on financial need, class standing, and anticipated graduation date. Freshman students may borrow up to \$5,500 annually (\$3,500 subsidized, \$2,000 unsubsidized). Students with sophomore class standing may borrow up to \$6,500 annually (\$4,500 subsidized, \$2,000 unsubsidized) and those classified as juniors and seniors may borrow up to \$7,500 annually (\$5,500 subsidized, \$2,000 unsubsidized).

**Unsubsidized Federal Direct Loan Program** is available for students who do not qualify, in whole or in part, for the Federal Subsidized Direct Loan. The terms for this loan are the same as those described for the Federal Subsidized Direct Loan Program with the following exceptions.

- The annual loan limits for dependent, undergraduate students are the same as those for the Subsidized Direct Loan. The annual loan limits for independent, undergraduate students are as follows (subsidized and unsubsidized): \$9,500 for students who have not completed the first 30 hours of an undergraduate degree, \$10,500 for students with sophomore class standing, and those students classified as juniors and seniors may borrow up to \$12,500 annually.

**Federal Parent Loans for Undergraduate Students (PLUS)** allow parents to borrow up to the cost of education less other aid received each year without regard to income. A credit check is required of all parent borrowers. Repayment of principal and interest begins within 60 days after the final loan disbursement. The interest rate will be determined by the U.S. Secretary of Education according to the formula prescribed by Congress.

## Alternate Sources of Assistance

**American Opportunity and Lifetime Learning Education Credits** were created to assist families to offset tuition costs. Families who benefit are middle and lower middle-income families who do not receive enough gift aid to cover tuition payments. The American Opportunity tax credit is valued at \$2500 per eligible student and available only for the first 4 years of undergraduate study. The Lifetime Learning Credit is valued up to \$2000 per tax return and available for all years of postsecondary education, and for courses to acquire or improve job skills. To be eligible, a taxpayer must file a tax return and claim the student as an exemption. Additionally, married filers must file jointly. These credits phase out on modified adjusted gross income. Tax filers should consult their tax advisor for details.

## State Financial Aid Programs

**Legislative Incentives for Future Excellence (LIFE) Scholarships**<sup>1</sup> is a renewable \$5,000 scholarship for residents of South Carolina who are enrolled full time and seeking a first baccalaureate degree. Students must meet state residency requirements upon initial college enrollment. There is no scholarship application for the LIFE scholarship. The award is granted by the Office of Financial Aid based on data provided by the Office of Admissions and the Office of the Registrar. Students must meet two of the following three criteria to qualify:

- earn a 3.0 GPA on a uniform grading scale
- score a minimum of 1100 SAT or 22 ACT
- rank in the top 30 percent of their graduating class

To retain the scholarship, recipients must have completed:

- first year students complete at least 30 hours and earn a minimum cumulative 3.0 GPA
- second year students complete at least 60 hours and earn a minimum cumulative 3.0 GPA
- third year students complete at least 90 hours and earn a minimum cumulative 3.0 GPA

**Note: remedial work is not counted in the hours earned or the GPA.**

Additionally, students must sign an affidavit certifying that they have not been adjudicated delinquent, convicted or pled guilty or nolo contendere to any felonies, or to any alcohol or drug-related offenses. Recipients must certify they are not in default on any federal or stated educational loans and they do not owe an overpayment on any federal or state grants. Certain majors may qualify up to \$7500. Go to the financial aid page of the USC Upstate website for more information. For complete information, you may access the Commission on Higher Education at [www.che.sc.gov](http://www.che.sc.gov) (<http://www.che.sc.gov>).

**S.C. Hope Scholarship**<sup>1</sup> offers a nonrenewable \$2,800 scholarship for entering freshman that achieve academically, but are not eligible to receive the LIFE Scholarship. Residency requirements and other restrictions are similar to the LIFE Scholarship, except eligibility is based solely on the grade point average. Entering freshmen must have:

- earned a 3.0 GPA on a uniform grading scale upon high school graduation.

Recipients who complete a minimum of 30 hours their freshman year and earn a minimum cumulative 3.0 GPA may be eligible for the LIFE Scholarship the following year.

**Note: Palmetto Fellows and LIFE recipients are not eligible for the HOPE scholarship.**

**Palmetto Fellows Scholarship**<sup>1</sup> offers up to \$6,700 in renewable scholarship assistance to outstanding freshman who are residents of South Carolina. Applicants must meet the following criteria:

- earn a 3.5 GPA on a uniform grading scale
- score a minimum of 1200 SAT or 25 ACT
- rank in the top 6 percent of their junior or senior class **OR**
- earn a 4.0 GPA on a uniform grading scale
- score with a minimum of 1400 SAT or 31 ACT

Students should contact their high school guidance counselor for application procedures. Recipients must complete a minimum of 30 credit hours each academic year and must earn a minimum 3.0 GPA for renewal of this award. Recipients must certify that they have not been adjudicated delinquent, convicted or pled guilty or nolo contendere to any felonies, or to any alcohol or drug-related offenses.

**Note: remedial work is not counted in the hours earned or the GPA.**

Certain majors may qualify up to \$10,000. Go to the financial aid page of the USC Upstate website for more information. For complete information,

you may access the Commission on Higher Education at [www.che.sc.gov](http://www.che.sc.gov) (<http://www.che.sc.gov>).

**South Carolina Income Tax Credit for College Tuition** allows South Carolina residents to claim a refundable tax credit of up to \$1500. Students must complete 15 credit hours each semester and may not receive the LIFE, Palmetto Fellow or any other state scholarship. The credit is available to offset out-of-pocket tuition payments only. Instructions are included in the S.C. income tax return.

**Future Scholar 529 College Savings Plan** allows families to save for college through a state-sponsored plan created under Section 529 of the Internal Revenue Code. These plans offer special tax benefits and have no income or age restrictions. Accounts can be used at almost any accredited school to pay for tuition, room, board, books and computers. For more information, call 1-888-244-5674 or visit [www.futurescholar.com](http://www.futurescholar.com) (<http://www.futurescholar.com>).

**S.C. State Need Based Grant**<sup>1</sup> is designed for South Carolina residents who are enrolled full time seeking their first baccalaureate degree and have demonstrated financial need. Students must complete the FAFSA annually to apply. Priority is given to those students whose files are complete by the March 1 priority deadline. Students must certify that they have not been adjudicated delinquent, convicted or pled guilty or nolo contendere to any felonies or to any alcohol or drug-related offenses. Continuing students must complete a minimum of 24 credit hours per academic year, and earn a minimum cumulative 2.0 GPA. Students may receive a maximum of \$14,000 of the grant from all institutions. For complete information, you may access the Commission on Higher Education at [www.che.sc.gov](http://www.che.sc.gov) (<http://www.che.sc.gov>).

**S. C. Teacher Loan Program** was established to provide loan assistance to qualified students in education. This may be cancelled at a rate of 20 percent or \$3,000, whichever is greater, for each full year of teaching in either an eligible critical subject area or a critical geographic area in South Carolina. Teaching in both types of critical areas increases the cancellation benefit to 33 percent or \$5,000. Available only to South Carolina residents. Freshmen and sophomores may borrow \$5,000 per year. Students who qualify as "career changers" may borrow up to \$15,000 per year. Applicants should submit the S.C. Teachers Loan Application by April 30. Funds are limited with renewal applicants given priority. Additional information, including academic criteria and critical areas/critical subjects, is available from the S.C. Student Loan Corporation website at [www.scstudentloan.org](http://www.scstudentloan.org) (<http://www.scstudentloan.org>).

**Teaching Fellows Program**—In 1999, the S.C. General Assembly, recognizing the shortage of teachers in our state, funded the Teaching Fellows Program for South Carolina. The mission of the South Carolina Teaching Fellows Program is to recruit talented high school seniors into the teaching profession and to help them develop leadership qualities. Each year, the program provides Fellowships for up to 200 high school seniors who have exhibited high academic achievement, a history of service to the school and community, and a desire to teach South Carolina's children.

The scholarship provides up to \$5,700 for tuition and board and \$300 for summer enrichment programs (contingent on funding from the S.C. General Assembly) administered by the Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement (CERRA). A Fellow agrees to teach in South Carolina one year for every year he/she received the Fellowship.

Applications are available from high school guidance counselors, teachers, and counselors, and may be downloaded from the CERRA website at [www.cerra.org](http://www.cerra.org) (<http://www.cerra.org>).

<sup>1</sup> Changes may occur for these programs. Access the Commission on Higher Education website at [www.che.sc.gov](http://www.che.sc.gov) (<http://www.che.sc.gov>) for the latest information available. Awards are contingent upon fund availability to be appropriated by the South Carolina legislature.

## Work Opportunities

Job opportunities are available to USC Upstate students through a variety of programs: Federal Work-Study, Community Services Program, Job Location and Development Program, and the Student Assistant Program. The primary purpose of these programs is to provide a financial resource to students for educational expenses; however, these jobs may also provide valuable work experience. USC Upstate students work in a variety of jobs on and off campus. The pay scale is determined by the specific job description and the skills or experience of the student being hired. Students employed on campus are generally limited to working no more than 20 hours each week during periods of regular enrollment. To view job opportunities, go to [www.uscupstate.edu/employment](http://www.uscupstate.edu/employment) (<http://www.uscupstate.edu/employment/>).

## Other Aid

### Veterans' and Dependents Benefits

Educational benefits are available to qualified veterans and children of deceased and disabled veterans. Inquiries should be made to the veterans' affairs office in the student's home county seat and the USC Upstate Office of Records, Registration and Veterans Affairs.

### Vocational Rehabilitation

This award is to conserve the working usefulness of persons with impairments who have reasonable expectations of becoming employed. Students who might qualify for vocational rehabilitation assistance should contact the Office of Vocational Rehabilitation in their home county seats.

**Attention: All award notifications are sent electronically and may be viewed through Self Service Carolina.**

### Out-of-State Fee Waivers

Students who are not residents of South Carolina and who receive USC Upstate Athletic or Foundation Scholarships, or USC Upstate Undergraduate Assistantships valued at \$250 or more each semester may qualify for a waiver for out-of-state fees. The following conditions must be met to qualify for the fee waiver.

The award must be made in writing to the student before the end of late registration for each semester and prior to the student paying a tuition bill.

Notification of the award must be forwarded to the Financial Aid Office prior to the end of late registration for each semester. Scholarships or undergraduate assistantships that are awarded after the end of late registration for each semester will not result in a refund of out-of-state fees.

### Undergraduate Assistantships

Undergraduate assistantships are designed to attract students in areas such as publications, music, and drama. Eligible students may receive financial assistance ranging from \$250 to the cost of tuition and books

each semester based upon the activity, level of responsibility, and expected workload. Assistantships are available for participation in the Gordon-Colloms Gospel Choir, University Vocal Ensemble, USC Upstate Theatre, and The Carolinian (newspaper). Many of these assistantships require prior involvement in the activity or organizations. Please contact the Division of Fine Arts and Communication Studies at 864-503-5689 for additional information.