

Financial Aid Information

The purpose of the financial aid program is to assist students who would be unable to attend college without aid (need-based awards) and to recognize students for their accomplishments and potential for achievement (merit-based awards).

Scholarships, grants, and employment are available. Federal and state financial aid programs, external scholarship programs, and scholarships provided by the college through the Athens Tech Foundation, Inc., fund these financial assistance programs. Athens Technical College does not participate in any of the federal loan programs.

Students should contact the Financial Aid Office to schedule an appointment to discuss financial aid opportunities. The telephone number for the Financial Aid Office on the Athens Campus is (706) 355-5009; the telephone number for the Financial Aid Office on the Elbert County Campus is (706) 213-2100. Staff members from the Financial Aid Office on the Athens Campus visit the Greene and Walton County Campuses on a weekly basis to meet with applicants and currently enrolled students in order to assist with financial aid questions and issues. Applicants and currently enrolled students should call these campus locations to schedule appointments. The telephone number for the Greene County Campus is (706) 453-7435. The telephone number for the Walton County Campus is (770) 207-3130.

Federal Aid Programs

Federal Pell Grant – Federal Pell Grant is an entitlement program that provides aid to eligible students to help meet the costs of postsecondary education. Recipients do not have to repay Pell Grants. The U.S. Department of Education determines eligibility using students' expected family income (EFC), a formula developed by the federal government, and the courses for which you are registered under a federally approved program of study. The number of credit hours students take during a given semester affects the actual award disbursement. The grant is not available to students with baccalaureate degrees, in loan default, males not registered with Selective Service, or to high school students participating in dual or joint enrollment programs.

Students who gain admission to the college through the special admission category are ineligible to receive the Pell Grant. Students admitted to the college through the learning support admissions category are ineligible to receive federal financial aid until they reach the minimum of provisional admission status (see *Provisional/Learning Support Admission*).

Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG) – This campus-based grant provides aid to students who meet the Pell Grant eligibility requirements. Students must be enrolled in five or more hours of required courses to receive this grant. Pell Grant recipients receive priority

for FSEOG awards. Recipients of this grant are randomly selected in most scenarios.

Federal Work Study – This campus-based program provides part-time employment for students who need such earnings to meet a portion of their educational expenses. Students must be eligible to receive the Pell Grant and have a remaining, unmet need for financial aid assistance in order to participate in this program. Opportunities are based on available positions and job qualifications.

The supervisor and student determine work schedules based on the student's class schedule and the number of hours they need to work in order to earn their total work-study award. The Office of Finance and Administration directly deposits work-study payments into students' accounts at the end of each month.

How to Apply for Federal Financial Aid

To apply for federal financial aid, students must complete the following steps:

- Submit an application for admission to the college (Students must gain acceptance to financial aid-eligible programs to receive assistance.)
- File a *Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)* online at www.fafsa.ed.gov by the financial aid application deadline as published in the Academic Calendar (see *Academic Calendar*)

The federal processing center will email or mail *Student Aid Reports (SAR)* directly to students. Financial aid applicants must review the information in part two of the *Student Aid Reports* to ensure that the reports are accurate. The Financial Aid Office will send a notification email to students' @student.athenstech.edu email account informing them that the institution has received their FAFSA. If selected for verification by the U.S. Department of Education, the Financial Aid Office will send an email to students' @student.athenstech.edu email and a letter through the United States Postal Service informing them that they must provide signed copies of tax returns to complete the application and to document all untaxed income and benefits reported on the FAFSA. The college cannot award financial aid until students submit the documents requested as part of the verification process.

Disbursement Schedule for Federal Aid Funds

The Financial Aid staff will apply financial aid benefits toward the tuition and fees charged for those courses required by the recipients' programs of study. Students who register for courses not required in their programs of study will be responsible for paying with personal funds the tuition and associated fees charged for those non-required courses. The Financial Aid staff will remove HOPE and/or Title IV funds for any courses not required in students' programs of study.

They remove the funds after the conclusion of the official Drop/Add period. The Financial Aid staff notifies students of the removal of financial aid funds via email at the students' @student.athenstech.edu email account.

The Financial Aid staff must verify student enrollment and attendance by the end of the second week of the academic term. The staff then have 14 days to prepare and distribute federal financial aid funds. Enrollment status at the point the Financial Aid staff disburse funds determines award amounts. Students who withdraw from all classes prior to the completion of 60 percent of the semester may be responsible for repaying some or all of the federal financial aid benefits they received for that academic term. The refund and repayment formulas established by the U.S. Department of Education determine the amount of aid returned. Detailed information on the return of Title IV funds is available on the college website (www.athenstech.edu); select *Current Students* and then *Financial Aid* before selecting *Policies*).

Students receive refund checks if their Pell Grant, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant, and/or HOPE-GED benefits exceed the amount owed for tuition, fees, and/or books. Students may go online via their BannerWeb account to authorize the college to use the excess federal financial aid funds to pay most fees, including late registration fees, instructional and technology fees, NLN testing fees, SAT testing fees, standardized health program placement examination testing fees, and graduation fees. The authorization allows the college to apply excess federal financial aid funds to cover fees for the entire period students are enrolled at the college. Students may change or modify an authorization online via their BannerWeb account at any time.

Students will have credit available from the Pell Grant and/or HOPE-GED at the college's bookstore to purchase required books and supplies prior to the first day of the term if the Financial Aid Office has authorized the disbursement of funds for the term. Students should verify that their federal financial aid benefits are sufficient to cover tuition, fees, and bookstore charges; otherwise, they run the risk of being administratively withdrawn from their classes because they owe money to the college at the Tuition/Fee Payment Deadline as listed in the Academic Calendar (see *Academic Calendar*).

Renewal Application

Students must renew their *Free Application for Federal Student Aid* (FAFSA) online (www.fafsa.ed.gov) each year after January 1 and prior to the financial aid application deadline as indicated on the Academic Calendar (see *Academic Calendar*) in order to receive consideration for assistance during the next academic year. Fall Semester marks the first term of the academic year for financial aid purposes, and the academic year encompasses the Fall, Winter, and Summer semesters. Students receiving financial aid benefits during Summer Semester must renew their FAFSA in order to receive aid for the subsequent Fall Semester.

To use financial aid for tuition and fees, students must submit their FAFSA, and their college financial aid file must be completed by the financial aid application deadline as

indicated in the Academic Calendar (see *Academic Calendar*). Students who fail to meet these deadlines may be responsible for paying all tuition and fees due at the time of registration. Students who fail to meet these deadlines may be administratively withdrawn from their classes if they owe money to the college after the Tuition/Fee Payment Deadline as indicated in the Academic Calendar (see *Academic Calendar*). Once the Financial Aid Office receives all information needed to establish eligibility, the college will reimburse eligible students for the tuition and fees they paid in advance for that term.

State Aid Programs

HOPE (Helping Outstanding Pupils Educationally) is a lottery-funded program that provides financial assistance to eligible in-state students attending Georgia institutions of higher learning. Students do not have to be classified as full-time students to receive HOPE benefits.

A student must be a United States citizen or an eligible non-citizen for 12 consecutive months immediately prior to the first day of classes of the academic term for which HOPE benefits are sought. Full-time employees of the Free Trade Area of the Americas (FTAA), their spouses, and their dependents are not exempt from this requirement.

Students who meet the Georgia residency requirements of the Technical College System of Georgia at the time they graduate from high school, complete a home study program, or successfully pass the GED must also meet the Georgia residency requirements for 12 consecutive months immediately prior to the first day of classes of the academic term for which HOPE benefits are sought.

Students who do not meet the Georgia residency requirements of the Technical College System of Georgia at the time they graduate from high school, complete a home study program, or successfully pass the GED must meet the Georgia residency requirements for 24 consecutive months immediately prior to the first day of classes of the academic term for which HOPE benefits are sought.

Students attending Athens Technical College as joint enrollment or dual enrollment students must meet the Georgia residency requirements of the Technical College System of Georgia for 12 consecutive months immediately prior to the first day of classes of the academic term for which HOPE benefits are sought.

Military personnel on active duty and stationed in Georgia or who list Georgia as their home of record shall be treated as Georgia residents for purposes of HOPE eligibility. This status also applies to the military spouses and dependent children of the military personnel on active duty and stationed in Georgia or who list Georgia as their home of record.

Students who were correctly determined to have met the Georgia residency requirements of the Technical College System of Georgia for purposes of HOPE eligibility and who began receiving HOPE benefits must continue to meet the Georgia residency requirements in order to remain eligible to receive HOPE benefits unless they have a break in enrollment for two or more consecutive semesters and reside

outside of Georgia for 12 or more consecutive months. These students must re-establish Georgia residency for 12 consecutive months before regaining eligibility to receive HOPE benefits.

Students who have a break in enrollment for two or more consecutive semesters and who reside outside Georgia for less than 12 consecutive months will continue to meet the Georgia residency requirements provided they re-enroll in classes within 12 consecutive months from their most recent date of enrollment.

Students who earned the GED credential from the Technical College System of Georgia receive a \$500 voucher they can apply toward the cost of education. Students may use this voucher anytime within 24 consecutive months immediately following the date the Technical College System of Georgia issues the HOPE GED voucher to students. Students who received the \$500 voucher and later earn the HOPE Scholarship may have to return the voucher to the Georgia Student Finance Commission.

Students (except HOPE-GED recipients) must maintain satisfactory academic progress in order to remain eligible to receive HOPE benefits. HOPE Grant/Scholarship regulations do not require students who attend public institutions such as Athens Technical College to enroll full time to receive financial assistance.

Students must be in compliance with the United States Selective Service System requirements prior to the financial aid application deadline as indicated in the Academic Calendar (see *Academic Calendar*) in order to be eligible to receive HOPE benefits.

Students will not be eligible to receive HOPE benefits if they are in default on a federal Title IV or State of Georgia educational loan, owe a refund on federal Title IV or State of Georgia student financial aid program, or are in violation of federal Title IV regulations or State of Georgia student financial aid program regulations.

Students who have repaid a defaulted loan, repaid a refund, or resolved the default status may be eligible to receive HOPE benefits beginning with the academic term in which the repayment was made. Students may resolve their default status by satisfying one of the following means:

- Completing an acceptable rehabilitation plan
- Having the loan repurchased by the original lender and the default status reversed
- Consolidating the loan in order to remove it from default
- Receive an approved Title IV debt settlement, include a compromised setting.

In accordance with the Georgia Drug-Free Postsecondary Education Act of 1990, O.C.G.A. §20-1-24, students convicted for committing certain felony offenses involving marijuana, controlled substances, or dangerous drugs are eligible to receive HOPE benefits from the date of conviction to the completion of the following academic term.

Students are ineligible to receive HOPE benefit while incarcerated. Upon release from prison, they may begin

receiving HOPE benefits if they meet all eligibility requirements.

Technical Certificate and Diploma Programs

Students enrolling in technical certificate and diploma programs of study may be eligible for financial assistance through a HOPE Grant for up to 63 semester hours in which HOPE benefits covered tuition (i.e., HOPE semester paid-hours). Additionally, students may receive a combination of HOPE Grant and HOPE scholarship payments for a maximum of 127 semester hours of attempted coursework at colleges and universities in Georgia.

HOPE Grant recipients must have earned a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.00 at the end of the academic term in which they accumulated at least 30 or 60 semester paid hours (excluding learning support and dual enrollment coursework) in order to remain eligible to receive HOPE benefits.

Students who have earned a baccalaureate degree or higher from any postsecondary institution is ineligible for the HOPE Grant. Special admission students – those students who do not declare a program of study – are not eligible for financial assistance

The Financial Aid Office will not award HOPE Grant benefits for coursework exempted through an exemption examination process; continuing education courses; audited courses; or for testing, training, or experience.

The HOPE Grant will cover tuition according to the year's factor rate for the coursework required by their programs of study. The factor rate is set each year by the Georgia General Assembly.

The HOPE Grant will cover the tuition associated with any required learning support courses students must take in order to gain regular admission status to the college provided the students meet the HOPE Grant eligibility requirements (see *Provisional/Learning Support Admission*).

The credit hours associated with the learning support coursework will count toward students' HOPE Grant paid-hours limit and the HOPE Grant/HOPE Scholarship combined paid-hours limit. Grades for learning support coursework are not considered in the calculation of students' grade point average at the different checkpoints.

State policy specifies that a maximum of 15 semester hours per term will count toward the paid hours limit event if the actual number of hours taken for the term is greater than 15.

Associate Degree Programs

Students may be eligible for financial assistance through the HOPE Scholarship program provided they meet the requirements to be classified as Georgia residents at the time they graduate from an eligible high school or complete an eligible home school program.

Students who received a GED, who graduated from an ineligible high school, or who completed an unaccredited home school program may be eligible to receive the HOPE

scholarship their freshman year (first tier) if they score in the 85th percentile or higher on a standardized college admission test (SAT or ACT). Official examination scores must be sent directly to GSFC for consideration.

Entering first-year students must graduate from an eligible high school with a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale in the college preparatory curriculum or a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.2 on a 4.0 scale in the career/technology curriculum. Information on the high school courses included in the grade point average calculation is available on the Georgia Student Finance Commission website (www.gsfc.org) and from high school counselors.

Students must have a minimum cumulative grade point average (CGPA) of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale at all checkpoints in order to remain eligible for HOPE Scholarship benefits.

Entering first-year students may receive benefits through the academic term in which they accumulate at least 30 semester hours of attempted credit unless they first reach an end-of-spring checkpoint or three-term checkpoint. Entering first-year students who enroll for 12 or more credit hours during one or more of their first three terms of college enrollment must meet the minimum CGPA requirement at the spring checkpoint.

Entering first-year students who enroll in fewer than 12 credit hours in each of their first three terms of college must meet the minimum CGPA requirement at the three-term checkpoint. Thereafter, the Financial Aid Office will conduct end-of-spring checkpoints on these students regardless of the number of credit hours they enroll in during each subsequent academic term.

Entering first-year students who enroll in fewer than 12 credit hours in their first two terms of college enrollment and in 12 or more credit hours in their third term of college enrollment must meet the minimum CGPA requirement at the end-of-spring checkpoint. These students will continue to receive HOPE Scholarship funds until they accumulate 30 semester hours of attempted credit or until the next end-of-spring checkpoint, whichever comes first.

Students who graduated from high school and were not academically eligible for HOPE Scholarship benefits immediately after high school graduation may be eligible for these benefits if they have a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale after completing 30, 60, or 90 semester hours of study at the associate degree level or higher. Once students become eligible for the HOPE Scholarship after attempting 30, 60, or 90 semester hours of study at the associate degree level or higher, they must have a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale at the end-of-spring checkpoint in order to remain eligible for HOPE Scholarship benefits.

HOPE Scholarship recipients who lost their HOPE benefits at the end-of-spring or three-term checkpoints may regain their eligibility if they have a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale at the end of the academic term in which they attempt 30, 60, or 90 semester hours of study at the college-degree level. Students who lose

their HOPE Scholarship eligibility at two different checkpoints cannot regain eligibility for these benefits.

Students who had received HOPE Scholarship benefits prior to Summer Quarter 2011 may continue to receive these benefits until June 30, 2015, provided they continue to meet all other eligibility requirements. HOPE Scholarship-eligible students who did not receive any benefits prior to Summer Quarter 2011 may receive the benefits until seven years from the date of their high school graduation, the date they successfully completed the GED, the completion date for a home study program, or the date they stop pursuing a college credential.

State policy specifies that a maximum of 15 semester hours per term will count toward the paid hours limit even if the actual number of hours taken for the term is greater than 15. The HOPE Scholarship will cover tuition according to the year's factor rate for the coursework required by their programs of study. The factor rate is set each year by the Georgia General Assembly.

The HOPE Scholarship will not cover the tuition associated with any required learning support courses students must take in order to gain regular admission status to the college provided the students meet the HOPE Grant eligibility requirements (see *Provisional/Learning Support Admission*).

The Financial Aid Office includes all attempted hours and corresponding grades earned for degree-level courses at Athens Technical College and all other colleges and universities in the calculation of cumulative grade point averages even if the executive director of registration and records does not accept those courses for transfer credit. Included in the calculation of cumulative grade point averages are all remedial courses completed prior to Fall Semester 2011; courses in which students formally withdraw from courses; and courses in which students received I or IP grades, pass or fail grades, and satisfactory or unsatisfactory grades.

It is the responsibility of students to contact the Financial Aid Office to establish HOPE Scholarship eligibility. It is recommended that students submit a *HOPE Scholarship Evaluation Request* prior to the start of their first term of enrollment. However, students must submit this request to the Financial Aid Office no later than the midpoint of the semester for which they are seeking reimbursement. Requests received after this time will be evaluated for the next semester.

Students may receive HOPE Scholarship benefits for up to 127 semester hours of attempted coursework. Additionally, students may receive a combination of HOPE Grant and HOPE Scholarship payments for a maximum of 127 semester hours of attempted coursework at colleges and universities in Georgia. Students who have earned a bachelor's degree from any college or university are ineligible to receive financial assistance through the HOPE Scholarship program.

Zell Miller Scholarship

High school students who graduate from eligible high schools as valedictorians or salutatorians or who graduate from an eligible high school with a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.7 on a 4.0 scale may be eligible

for the Zell Miller Scholarship. High school students also must obtain a minimum combined score of 1200 on the SAT critical reading and math or a composition scale of 26 on the ACT in order to receive consideration for the Zell Miller Scholarship. They must obtain these scores during a single administration of the SAT or ACT. Students who graduated from high school between 2007 and 2010 and met the requirements for the Zell Miller Scholarship at that time can gain eligibility for the scholarship if they have a minimum cumulative grade point average (CPGA) of 3.3 at their most recent checkpoint.

Students who graduated from ineligible high schools or completed ineligible home study programs may become eligible for the Zell Miller Scholarship if they have a minimum CGPA of 3.3 after successfully completing 30 semester hours of coursework at the degree level. Students must have met Georgia residency requirements at the time they graduated from the ineligible high school or completed the ineligible home study program. Furthermore, they must have obtained the minimum ACT or SAT scores indicated in the preceding paragraph by the time they graduated from high school or completed the home study program.

The Zell Miller Scholarship covers 100 percent of tuition; however, it will not cover any fees. Students may receive Zell Miller Scholarship benefits through the school term in which they accumulate at least 30 semester hours unless they first reach an end-of-spring checkpoint or a three-term checkpoint.

Zell Miller scholars who were enrolled for 12 or more semester hours during at least one of their first three terms of enrollment at Athens Technical College must meet the minimum CGPA requirement at the spring checkpoint. Zell Miller scholars who were enrolled for less than 12 semester hours during each of their first three terms of enrollment must meet the minimum CGPA requirement at the third-term checkpoint. Zell Miller scholars who were enrolled in less than 12 hours during their first two terms of enrollment and were enrolled for 12 or more hours during their third term of enrollment must meet the minimum CGPA requirement at the point they accumulate 30 attempted hours of semester coursework or reaches the next end-of-spring checkpoint, whichever occurs first.

Zell Miller scholars must have a minimum GPA of 3.3 at each subsequent checkpoint to remain eligible for this scholarship program. Students may regain eligibility for the Zell Miller Scholarship if they have achieved a minimum CGPA of 3.3 at subsequent checkpoints. Students who lose their eligibility a second time cannot regain eligibility again. Contact the Financial Aid Office at financialaid@athenstech.edu for additional information.

Students who had received HOPE Scholarship benefits prior to Summer Quarter 2011 may receive Zell Miller Scholarship benefits until June 30, 2015, provided they continue to meet all other eligibility requirements. State policy specifies that a maximum of 15 semester hours per term will count toward the paid hours limit even if the actual number of hours taken for the term is greater than 15. The HOPE

Scholarship will cover tuition according to the year's factor rate for the coursework required by their programs of study. The factor rate is set each year by the Georgia General Assembly.

The Zell Miller Scholarship will not cover the tuition associated with any required learning support courses students must take in order to gain regular admission status to the college provided the students meet the HOPE Grant eligibility requirements (see *Provisional/Learning Support Admission*).

The Financial Aid Office includes all attempted hours and corresponding grades earned for degree-level courses at Athens Technical College and all other colleges and universities in the calculation of cumulative grade point averages even if the executive director of registration and records does not accept those courses for transfer credit. Included in the calculation of cumulative grade point averages are all remedial courses completed prior to Fall Semester 2011; courses in which students formally withdraw from courses; and courses in which students received I or IP grades, pass or fail grades, and satisfactory or unsatisfactory grades.

Students may receive Zell Miller Scholarship benefits for up to 127 semester hours of attempted coursework. Additionally, students may receive a combination of HOPE Scholarship and Zell Miller payments for a maximum of 127 semester hours of attempted coursework at colleges and universities in Georgia. Students who have earned a bachelor's degree from any college or university are ineligible to receive financial assistance.

Financial Aid for High School Students

The Georgia Student Finance Commission (GSFC) administers the ACCEL program to provide high school juniors and seniors at eligible Georgia public and private high schools the opportunity to take certain courses from postsecondary institutions that count for both high school graduation credit and perhaps credit toward a college degree. The ACCEL program will pay 100 percent of the current standard tuition rate, a portion of required fees, and a book allowance.

To be eligible for ACCEL funds, high school students must enroll in associate degree-level courses approved by the Georgia Department of Education in the areas of the core graduation requirements for college preparatory students (English, mathematics, social studies, and science) (see *ACCEL Program Admission*). Georgia residency and U.S. citizenship requirements for HOPE program eligibility apply to ACCEL award eligibility. ACCEL applicants must be in compliance with Selective Service registration requirements as well.

Degree-level college credits attempted by students while in high school will not be included in the semester hours used to determine when students have reached the maximum number of hours for which they can receive payment from any combination of HOPE Scholarship, HOPE Grant, and ACCEL programs provided the students met the academic requirements to be a HOPE Scholar when they graduated from high school and the student's college accepts those credits. The attempted hours will be included in the hours

used to determine the maximum hours for which they can receive HOPE benefits if ACCEL students did not meet the requirements to be a HOPE Scholar when they graduated from high school and were, therefore, ineligible to receive the HOPE Scholarship as entering first-year students.

High school students should carefully consider whether to participate in the ACCEL program in that the GSFC will apply the credit hours for which students receive ACCEL payments toward the maximum number of credit hours of payment they can receive from the HOPE scholarship after they graduate from high school because they have the risk of not meeting the requirements to be a HOPE scholar. High school students and their parents, high school counselors or principals, and postsecondary institution officials should be confident that it is in the best interest of students to participate in the ACCEL program.

The Dual Enrollment-HOPE program offers additional educational opportunities for motivated high school students to earn technical college credit as they meet their high school graduation requirements. Dual Enrollment-HOPE will cover tuition according to the year's factor rate for the coursework required by their programs of study. The factor rate is set each year by the Georgia General Assembly. Dual Enrollment-HOPE does not cover required fees, nor provide students with a book allowance.

If they meet all other requirements, high school students who are simultaneously seeking technical certificates or diploma programs of study at eligible public postsecondary institutions are eligible for the HOPE Grant (see *Dual Enrollment-HOPE Admission*). The credit hours attempted by Dual Enrollment-HOPE students while in high school are not used to determine when students have reached the maximum number of hours for which they can receive payment from any combination of the HOPE Grant and HOPE Scholarship programs.

The credit hours attempted by Joint Enrollment students while in high school are used to determine the maximum hours for which they can receive HOPE Benefits (see *Joint Enrollment Admission*).

Satisfactory Academic Progress

The U.S. Department of Education requires institutions of higher learning to establish standards of satisfactory academic progress (SAP) for students receiving financial aid. The SAP policy must include both a qualitative measure (cumulative grade point average) and a quantitative measure (percentage successfully completed) along with a maximum period for program completion. The qualitative and quantitative measures are defined as:

- **Qualitative**
(Students must maintain semester grade point average of at least 2.0 (C) on a 4.0 scale.)
- **Quantitative**
(Students must successfully complete two-thirds (66.6 percent) of all semester hours attempted to remain eligible for financial aid.)

Students also must show completion rates that allow them to complete their programs of study in no more than 150 percent of the time normally required to do so (as determined by the college catalog).

Successful grades include A, A*, B, B*, C, C*, D, and D*. Unsuccessful grades include F, F*, I, IP, W, WF, WF*, and WP (see *Grading System*).

Failure to maintain satisfactory academic progress will result in the loss of federal (Pell) and state (HOPE) grants and scholarships. The SAP policy applies to all students, regardless of whether they have previously received aid. Financial aid regulations consider new students and transfer students to be making satisfactory academic progress.

The Financial Aid Office will notify students through their @student.athenstech.edu email account if they fail to make satisfactory academic programs for any term.

Financial Aid Warning and Exclusion

The Financial Aid Office initially places students on financial aid warning if they do not maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress as described in the preceding section. Students will continue to receive financial aid benefits while on financial aid warning. Students placed on financial aid warning have one semester to meet satisfactory academic progress standards or the Financial Aid Office will place them on financial aid exclusion. Students on exclusion are not eligible to receive financial aid until they again meet the Satisfactory Academic Progress Standards or file a successful appeal.

Appeals

Students placed on financial aid exclusion may appeal the denial of financial aid if extenuating circumstances are present. Students submit appeal forms to the Financial Aid Office explaining the circumstances, how these circumstances have changed, and their plan to maintain satisfactory academic progress if the appeal is approved. This form is available in the Financial Aid Office on the Athens Campus, the Student Affairs Office on the Elbert County Campus, the Director's Office at the Walton County Center, or the Manager's Office at the Greene County Campus. This form also is available on the college's website (www.athenstech.edu); select and then *Financial Aid* before selecting *Forms* and then *Appeals*. Click on the *Request for Appeal of Financial Aid Exclusion* to access the form.

The director of financial aid must receive appeal letters prior to the end of the semester for which students are appealing their exclusion status. A committee of faculty and staff reviews all financial aid appeals. Students who are successful in appealing their financial aid exclusion will be placed on financial aid warning. During this warning period, they will be eligible to receive financial aid benefits. Students on financial aid warning must be making satisfactory academic progress at the end of the term for which the appeals committee approved the appeal. Otherwise, the Financial Aid staff will again place students on financial aid exclusion. Students who fail to make satisfactory academic progress and are therefore placed on financial aid exclusion will not be eligible to appeal

the resulting financial aid exclusion. Students who are not successful in appealing their financial aid exclusion are not eligible to submit another appeal; all appeals are final.

Withdrawing from or Dropping Classes

Federal financial aid (Pell Grant and Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG)) and Georgia's HOPE Scholarship, HOPE Grant, and Zell Miller Scholarship programs do not consider hours dropped during the drop/add period (usually the first three days of the semester) as registered hours for students. All HOPE funding for tuition of dropped classes is refunded to the Georgia Student Finance Commission.

If students withdraw from classes after the first three days of the academic term, HOPE will cover tuition provided students attended class or attempted to contact their instructors during the first full week of the semester. The Financial Aid Office will recalculate the amount of Pell Grant and FSEOG awarded based on the withdrawal date (see *Disbursement Schedule for Federal Aid Funds*). Please consult with a financial aid counselor prior to withdrawing from a class. Withdrawing affects students' satisfactory academic progress.

Athens Tech Merit-Based Scholarships

The Athens Tech Foundation Inc. provides merit-based scholarships to recognize students who achieve academic excellence. The Foundation funds these scholarships at the rate of tuition and fees for up to two semesters of full-time enrollment. The Foundation awards merit-based scholarships each spring to students already enrolled at Athens Technical College and to graduating high school students in the counties served by the college. Information on the merit-based scholarships is available on the college website (www.athenstech.edu); select *Current Students* and then select *Financial Aid* before selecting the *Scholarships* icon).

Disbursements of merit-based scholarships do not begin until the following semester. The Foundation disburses scholarship funds each semester, and the amount disbursed will not exceed the amount of tuition and fees assessed for a given semester. Scholarship recipients must reimburse the Foundation if they withdraw from classes within seven calendar days after the start of the semester. Scholarship recipients who leave the college for two consecutive semesters or who graduate forfeit any unused portion of their scholarships.

Applicants must have a minimum 3.0 cumulative grade point average to be eligible for merit-based scholarships. The Foundation will permanently withdraw scholarships if recipients' cumulative grade point averages drop below 3.0.

How to Apply for Merit-Based Scholarships

Students are eligible for merit-based scholarships once they complete 16 semester credit hours of coursework at the

college. To apply for merit-based scholarships, students must submit an application, resume, and letter to the Financial Aid Office by the annual application deadline, as well as a letter of recommendation from a program chair or instructor. Merit-based scholarship applications are available from the Financial Aid Office on the Athens Campus, the Student Affairs Office on the Elbert County Campus, the Manager's Office on the Greene County Campus, and the Director's Office on the Walton County Campus. Detailed instructions on each merit-based scholarship are available on the college website (www.athenstech.edu); select *Alumni and Friends* and then select *ATC Foundation* before selecting the *Scholarships* link.

Graduating high school seniors must submit an application, resume, letter, official high school transcript, as well as a letter of recommendation from a teacher or counselor to receive consideration for a merit-based scholarship. The college's selection committee will evaluate applications.

Other Scholarship Opportunities

Many private individuals, companies, and organizations offer their own merit-based and need-based scholarships each year. Students must apply for these scholarships directly through the private individual, company, or organization. The Financial Aid Office posts information on externally-funded scholarships on the college website (www.athenstech.edu) and sends emails to currently enrolled students via their @student.athenstech.edu email account informing them of the scholarships currently available to students; however, students are encouraged to find and apply for this source of funding on their own.

Staff in the Financial Aid Office are available to assist students in completing applications and for obtaining information on different scholarship programs and opportunities. Several search engines are available on the Internet to help students find external scholarship opportunities. Students should begin their searches on the following websites:

- Scholarships.com—<http://www.scholarships.com>
- CollegeBoard.com—http://apps.collegeboard.com/cbsearch_ss/welcome.jsp
- Fastweb.com—<http://www.fastweb.com>

The Financial Aid Office must process and administer external scholarships in order to verify enrollment and other eligibility requirements. Students must meet with the scholarship coordinator each academic term in order to complete the appropriate paperwork. The Financial Aid staff will not disburse scholarship funds without the signature and permission of the student.

Rehabilitation Services

Students above age 16 with certain physical, mental, or emotional disabilities that might prove to be a handicap to employment may be eligible to receive assistance through the Georgia Department of Labor Rehabilitation Services/Vocational Rehabilitation Program, 150 Evelyn C. Neely Drive,

Athens, GA 30601-6007. Students who are interested in receiving more information or in applying for services can contact that office at (706) 354-3900. The disability services coordinator at Athens Technical College also refers students to vocational rehabilitation. Please contact the disability services coordinator at (706) 355-5006. The Disabilities Services Office is located in Room H-716 on the Athens Campus.

Veterans Program

The state approving agency for training veterans and dependents approves instructional programs for which vet-

erans and their dependents may receive veterans benefits. Students may apply for benefits by contacting the Veterans Service Office, Jefferson Professional Park, 855 Sunset Drive, Suite D-1, Athens, GA 30606. The telephone number for the Veterans Service Office in Athens is (706) 369-5630. The toll-free number for the Atlanta office is 1-800-827-1000. Prospective students receiving financial assistance from the Veterans Administration (VA) are personally responsible for paying tuition and fees at the time of registration. Additional information on the veteran's affairs benefits program can be obtained by calling 1-888-GI BILL 1 (1-888-442-4551) or at www.gibill.va.gov.