



EASTERN CONNECTICUT STATE UNIVERSITY

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2009/10 Financial Aid and Veterans Affairs Office Helpful Hints (Financial Aid, Student Employment, Veterans Educational Benefits)

#1 Contacting the office

The office includes several functional areas such as Client Services and Outreach, Student Employment, Veterans Educational Benefits and Systems and Processing. Questions from students and parents should be directed as follows. Email communication should include the student's full name and Eastern ID number.

- Student Employment, stuemp@easternct.edu, 860-465-4435
- Veterans Educational Benefits, financialaid@easternct.edu, 860-465-5205
- Financial Aid (Client Services), financialaid@easternct.edu, 860-465-5205

#2 Consideration for Need-based aid

Need-Based financial aid eligibility at ECSU is determined by the results of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). The FAFSA may be completed on-line at www.fafsa.gov. Aid is awarded in the form of grants, scholarships, loans and Federal Work-Study employment.

Students who are interested in campus employment and are not awarded Federal Work-Study may be considered for jobs funded by the university (non-need based employment). The pay scales for Federal Work-Study and Campus-employment are the same. The rate of pay offered is based on the level of complexity of the job. All vacant student employment positions are advertised via www.ecsujobs.org beginning August 2009.

#3 Financial Aid, Cost of Attendance

The Financial Aid Cost of Attendance which is an estimate, differs from the "direct" cost of an ECSU education. For financial aid purposes we consider both direct (tuition, fees, room and board,) expenses in addition to indirect (transportation, books and supplies, personal expenses) to determine what the Federal Department of Education believes to be a truer cost of attendance. Students are not billed by the university for indirect expenses, however, they will incur these costs.

#4 Federal Academic Competitiveness Grant and SMART Grants

Pell Grant recipients who qualify for ACG or SMART Grants will be notified of eligibility amounts after the academic evaluations have been performed. These funds are applied toward unmet financial need and should not impact other grants and/or scholarship awards.

#5 Outside Resources

Aid awarded from sources other than the Financial Aid and Veterans Affairs Office must be considered in the overall need-based financial aid package (for example, Admissions Merit Scholarships, ECSU Institutional Advancement scholarships, Veterans Educational benefits, civic organization scholarships, room and board waivers, tuition waivers, etc) These awards first help reduce unmet need. Once a student's unmet need has been addressed, the outside awards reduce loans and/or Federal Work-Study employment. If after unmet need and self-help aid (loans and work-study) has been considered, outside awards will reduce the amount of grants awarded (other than Federal Pell Grants).

If a student is aware of an award that does not appear on the Financial Aid Notification Letter, the student should notify the office in writing as soon as possible so that the aid adjustments, if necessary, can be made in a timely manner.

#6 Master Promissory Notes and Student Loan Entrance Counseling

The first time a student accepts a Federal Stafford Loan (first-time borrower), the student must select a lender/bank to provide the funds. The student may choose a lender from the ECSU Recommended Lender List (refer to Lender Selection Form) or another lender of his/her choice. Before a Federal Stafford Loan can be certified (processed), the first time borrower must identify the lender of choice by completing a Lender Selection Form and the student must complete a Student Loan Entrance Counseling Form <http://www.easternct.edu/finaid/>. Loan funds will not be sent to the university until these requirements have been met.

Continuing borrowers previously selecting the Connecticut Student Loan Foundation (CSLF) as their lender must select a new lender for the 2009/10 school year. CSLF will not serve as a Federal Stafford or Parent Loan lender for this school year. The office will be unable to certify loans for continuing borrowers until a new Lender Selection Form is received from the student. The student will also be required to complete a new Master Promissory note with their selected lender.

#7 Satisfactory Academic Progress

Continuing students must be in compliance with the Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) policy in order to continue to receive need-based financial aid. Each year the SAP process begins in June. The SAP review process involves the review and evaluation of continuing student (aid applicants) academic records.

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Satisfactory Academic Progress (continued)

The SAP policy for 2009/10 continuing students (any student with a prior academic record at ECSU) requires students to have completed at least 67% of the credits attempted at ECSU with a cumulative GPA of at least a 2.0. A complete copy of the 2009/10 Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy will be available from the Financial Aid and Veterans Affairs Office (and website) in late June 2009.

Students awarded need-based aid prior to late June 2009 will be notified if they are not in compliance with the SAP policy. All aid previously awarded for the school year must be canceled for these students unless it is determined that "special or unusual circumstances" contributed to the lack of Satisfactory Academic Progress. Students with special circumstances may submit an appeal for consideration. Appeal decisions apply to the entire academic year (Fall 2009, Spring 2010 and Summer 2010).

#8 Undergraduate Student Academic Levels

Undergraduate academic levels impact a student's financial aid package. Financial aid packages for continuing students and entering transfer students may be adjusted after Spring 2009 grades have been considered (continuing students) and after incoming transcripts have been evaluated (transfer students). Undergraduate academic levels at ECSU are as follows:

- Freshman 0-29 earned credits
- Junior 60-89 earned credits
- Sophomore 30-59 earned credits
- Senior 90-120 earned credits

#9 Enrollment status for need-based aid

Undergraduate :

- 12 or more credits is considered full-time
- 9-11 credits is considered ¾ time
- 6-8 credits is considered half time
- 1-5 credits is considered less than half time (ineligible for federal loans)

Graduate

- 9 or more credits is considered full-time
- 4 ½ - 8 credits is considered half time
- 0 - 4 credits is considered less than half time (ineligible for federal loans)

#10 Housing Status

- On-campus = living in a campus residence hall
- Off-campus = living in an apartment or personal home (dependent students will be asked for a copy of their apartment or house lease in early August)
- Commuter = living in a parent's home

#11 Impact of enrollment status and housing status on aid awarded

The planned housing and enrollment status reported on the FAFSA are both used to determine eligibility for need-based aid. If the planned enrollment status (such as full-time versus part-time) or housing status (such as off-campus versus commuting from parents' home) changes, students should notify the office in writing as soon as possible so that the aid package can be adjusted appropriately.

Each aid recipient's actual housing and enrollment status is reviewed at the end of the add/drop period each semester. If the actual status differs from the planned status reported on the FAFSA, the aid package must be adjusted accordingly. Aid adjustments typically result in a balance due to the university.

#12 Special Circumstance Re-Evaluations

The conditions under which the office will reevaluate a student's financial aid eligibility are outlined on the Special Circumstance Information Sheet available on the website and from the office in late June 2009.

#13 Verification

At ECSU, students aid applications selected for the Verification process are not awarded until the student provides the required documentation and the designated data elements reviewed by the assigned aid administrator. However, at times, based on a student's after the fact update to the FAFSA, the application is selected for verification.

The initial required documents for Verification are as follows. However, after the initial documents are reviewed, an aid administrator may determine that additional documentation is required.

- Federal Verification Worksheet
- Copy of the Federal Income Tax Return, all schedules (student and parent for dependent students; student and spouse for independent students)
- Copy of all W-2 Forms (student and parent for dependent students; student and spouse for independent students)

Students are asked to respond to requests for information within 10 days. If Verification documents are not received within 10 days the student will be sent subsequent reminders requesting the required documents. After subsequent reminders have been sent, the Financial Aid and Veterans Affairs Office will assume the student is no longer interested in being considered for financial aid. If aid was awarded prior to an applicant's selection for Verification, the aid will be cancelled. The university will bill the student for the value of the financial aid previously credited to the student's account.

#14 Parent Loans and Private/Alternative Loans

Students in need of additional funds beyond those initially awarded by the office may consider non-need based loans such as the Federal Parent Loan for Undergraduate Students (parents of dependent undergraduate students), the Federal Graduate PLUS Loan (graduate students) and/or private/alternative loans. Contact the office (or visit the website) for additional information on these programs.