

**GEAR UP SCHOLARSHIP GUIDELINES
2010-2011**



GEAR UP SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

**Guidelines & Procedures
for
Participating Institutions**

**Academic Year
2010-2011**

Version 2011.0

GEAR UP SCHOLARSHIP GUIDELINES

2010-2011

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IMPORTANT NOTE:

THE BENEFITS DESCRIBED HEREIN ARE GOVERNED BY FEDERAL LAW AND REGULATION (“LAW”). TO THE EXTENT THAT ANY PROVISION HEREIN IS INCONSISTENT WITH SUCH LAW, THE LAW WILL GOVERN. THIS GUIDE IS INTENDED FOR THE USE OF PARTICIPATING INSTITUTIONS, IS SUBJECT TO CHANGE, AND SHOULD NOT BE RELIED UPON BY APPLICANTS FOR OR RECIPIENTS OF THE BENEFITS DESCRIBED HEREIN.

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GENERAL INFORMATION

FAME is a partner to the Maine Department of Education in Maine's GEAR UP program, processing scholarships for eligible students who graduate high school, meet academic criteria, demonstrate financial eligibility, and enroll in an eligible postsecondary Institution. The Department's GEAR UP administrator is currently Syntero (formerly known as Maine Support Network.) For more information on Maine's GEAR UP program, visit the Maine GEAR UP website at:

<http://www.gearupme.org/index.php>

FAME's ONLINE Processing System (EPIC)

FAME requires Institutions to process GEAR UP scholarship funds through FAME's online system, EPIC (Education Portal Information Center). Students who list Maine as their legal state of residency on the FAFSA will be downloaded into our EPIC system. Syntero provides the names of students who have met the minimum requirements for the scholarship program. Provided the student is enrolled at least half time, the student will display as eligible for the scholarship in the EPIC system. This is the only method FAME will accept for processing for GEAR UP scholarship funds.

To use EPIC, Institutions must sign a Participation Agreement and assign an individual to act as the Institution's designated administrator. The designated administrator is responsible for keeping FAME up to date on eligible users at their Institution and assuring that valid users at the Institution understand the program eligibility requirements. Sharing of user ID's and passwords is not allowed. Schools can obtain a copy of the Participation Agreement, EPIC Online Authorization Form, or view the EPIC user guide by contacting FAME or visiting FAME's website at http://www.famemaine.com/files/Pages/education/aid_administrators/Education_Finance_Login.aspx.

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Notifications

Student Notifications: Syntero currently notifies students of their scholarship eligibility with a qualifying statement indicating that the final determination of eligibility is made by the Institution's financial aid office, based on enrollment status and other financial aid.

Institutional Notifications: FAME routinely notifies Institutions using the email addresses provided on the EPIC Online Authorization Form submitted by the Institution's designated administrator. Notification types include but are not limited to:

- System Upgrades
- Policy Clarification
- Process Reminders

PROGRAM INFORMATION

Institution

An eligible Institution is a State-approved public, private, independent, for profit or nonprofit Institution authorized to offer undergraduate degrees, certificates or diploma programs and that is also approved by the U.S. Department of Education to administer Title IV programs. This scholarship is portable throughout the United States.

Program of Study

Any eligible program of study is a degree or certificate/diploma program of at least one academic year in length offered by the Institution leading to a Certificate, Associate's, or Bachelor's Degree.

Enrollment Status

Traditional Semester Institutions: Minimum of 12 credits hours per semester is required for full time status. Half time status is defined as at least 6 credit hours per semester.

Mod Institutions: FAME acknowledges that Mods are the division of a traditional semester into two equal parts during each of which a student takes not less than 3 credit hours and during both of which a student takes not less than 12 credit hours for full time status and 6 credit hours to be considered at least half time.

Clock Hour Institutions: For programs administered using clock hours, FAME uses the following conversion to establish full time student eligibility:

- Complete a minimum of 24 clock hours per week
AND
- Complete a minimum of 320 hours during the period of July 1 – December 31 to be considered full time and receive a fall disbursement
AND/OR

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- c. Complete a minimum of 320 hours during the period of January 1 – June 30 to be considered full time and receive a spring disbursement

Qualified Student

- a. In addition to having been determined eligible for the scholarship by the GEAR UP program, a student must:
- b. Be eligible for Title IV financial aid – is not in default or does not owe a refund on federal/state aid and is meeting the Institution’s Satisfactory Academic Progress standards;
- c. Be enrolled at least half time as an undergraduate student and has not previously earned a Bachelor’s Degree or its equivalent;
- d. File the 2010-2011 FAFSA and have a valid Expected Family Contribution within the ranges identified in the Awarding Parameters section of this guide;
- e. Have not exceeded the maximum of 8 full-time semesters. FAME uses points to track maximum award eligibility as outlined in the Awarding Parameters section of this guide.

Expected Family Contribution

FAME uses the results of the FAFSA’s Expected Family Contribution (EFC) calculation to determine the highest need students. FAME imports the results of Maine student FAFSA’s daily whenever possible beginning as soon after January 1 as possible. In determining EFC range eligibility, FAME recognizes the valid Primary Expected Family Contribution assigned to the student. FAME sets the EFC range annually as close to March 1 as possible for the upcoming academic year.

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AWARD PARAMETERS

Award Points/Maximum Award Periods

Students are assigned points based on the enrollment status for the period for which they are receiving a disbursement. The maximum number of points a student may earn is 16 points (the equivalent of 8 full time semester awards). Points will soon be tracked in the EPIC system on individual student records. Currently, students who have reached their maximum points do not show in the EPIC system. Institutions may contact FAME if additional information on a student's point status is needed. Points are assigned as follows:

Enrollment Status	Points Assigned
Full Time	2
Three Quarter Time	1.5
Half Time	1

Award Amounts for 2010/2011

Award amounts are set annually according to federal guidelines which currently require the scholarship to match the Pell Grant award. FAME sets an annual EFC cutoff amount and determines the semester awards based on available funding.

For 2010/2011 the EFC cutoff is \$7500 and the awards are as follows:

Enrollment Status	Fall	Spring	Academic Year
Full Time	\$2775	\$2775	\$5550
Three Quarter Time	\$2082	\$2081	\$4163
Half Time	\$1388	\$1387	\$2775

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CERTIFICATION AND DISBURSEMENTS

FAME recognizes two enrollment periods for processing of GEAR UP Scholarship funds: Fall and Spring semesters. Currently FAME does not allow payment for summer enrollment.

Certification

Institutions are required to certify to students' disbursement eligibility requirements each semester. See the Academic Year Timeline section for more information on specific functionality dates.

Disbursements

Institutions can request payments for certified students. Checks and payment rosters are mailed directly to Institutions at the address indicated by the designated administrator. Funds must be applied to the awarded student's account. FAME generally processes disbursement requests on Tuesdays and Thursdays.

AWARD ADJUSTMENTS

Partial Eligibility

Institutions may make partial awards if making a full award would exceed the student's maximum need.

Refund Processing

Refunds may occur for a variety of reasons including:

- Changes to ISIR data related to the calculation of the EFC
- Changes to a student's budget or other financial aid funds
- Changes to enrollment status
- Withdrawal or approved leave of absences

FAME requires that Institutions calculate refunds due to withdrawals and approved leaves of absence according to their Institutional policies.

Institutions do not necessarily need to return refund funds immediately to FAME if a "wash" opportunity exists. See "Transfer of Funds (WASH)" below for more information. If returning a refund check to FAME, please:

- Process the request(s) in EPIC
- Include the name(s) of the student(s) that the check is refunding with the check
- Make check payable to "Finance Authority of Maine"
- Mail check to:

FAME
Attn: Education Grant Refunds
PO Box 949
Augusta, ME 04332-0949

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Transfer of Funds (WASH)

If an Institution has processed a change resulting in a refund, the funds may be held at the Institution if additional students may be paid. The EPIC system will automatically move the funds to the next student that is certified and eligible for payment. Note that funds can only be transferred to another eligible student within this program. Funds are not transferrable to other FAME-administered programs.

If the amount refunded equals the amount to be paid, a wash report will be created for the Institution to update the students' accounts under the disbursement history once the Institution approves the "wash" when processing payment request. See the EPIC manual for additional information.

If the amount refunded is only a partial payment to be paid towards the next student, funds will still show as applied to the new eligible student on the regular payment roster when the balance of the funds is requested. See the EPIC manual for additional information.

RECONCILIATION REQUIREMENTS

FAME requires that Institutions ensure that the financial information in EPIC is reconciled with the Institutions' records by the end of each academic year. All corrections must be entered by the deadline indicated in the Academic Year Timeline section. Institutions should confirm that both EPIC and the Institution's financial aid system agree on both the number of students paid and total dollars disbursed. Any payments due the Institution or refunds due FAME must be processed by the indicated reconciliation deadline. Institutions may download cumulative rosters in the EPIC system for assistance with this process.

AUDIT REQUIREMENTS

FAME may periodically conduct a review of an Institution's participation in the program and may offer technical assistance to the Institution. Institutions must maintain and retain documents as outlined by the applicable federal financial aid guidelines.

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ACADEMIC YEAR TIMELINE

ACTIVITY	ACADEMIC YEAR 2010-2011	ACADEMIC YEAR 2011-2012 TENTATIVE
Maximum EFC & Award Amounts Announced	N/A	March 15, 2011
System Opened for viewing of eligible students	NOW OPEN	March 15, 2011
Fall Certification and Payment Requesting Opened	August 30, 2010	August 29, 2011
Fall Payment Processing Closed for Year End Processing (Institutions may still certify students)	December 1, 2010	December 2, 2011
Fall/Spring Certification/Payment Processing Opened	January 3, 2011	January 3, 2012
Begin Reconciliation/Final Adjust Processing	April 1, 2011	April 2, 2012
Complete Reconciliation Process and Finalize Adjustments (Payments/Refunds) System Closed except for viewing.	May 27, 2011	May 25, 2012

CONTACT INFORMATION

Institutions are encouraged to contact one of our Education Team Members with any questions or comments. FAME maintains a financial aid administrator's email box that is monitored throughout the day to ensure quick responses.

The email address is: faadmin@famemaine.com

The team can also be reached by phone at: 1-800-228-3734, option 1

For all correspondence via mail:

Finance Authority of Maine
Att: State Education Programs
5 Community Drive
PO Box 949
Augusta, ME 04332

FAME'S STATE EDUCATION PROCESSING TEAM:

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