

A Pilot Program: The Silver State Opportunity Grant



*Year One Results for
Nevada's First
State-Supported,
Need-Based Financial
Aid Program*



February 2017

The Nevada System of Higher Education

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Silver State Opportunity Grant (SSOG) is Nevada's first state-supported, need-based financial aid program for students attending a community college or state college within the Nevada System of Higher Education. The 2015 Legislature created the SSOG program under Senate Bill 227 (Chapter 387, *Statutes of Nevada 2015*), and under Senate Bill 514 (Chapter 534, *Statutes of Nevada 2015*) appropriated \$5 million for the biennium (\$2.5 million per fiscal year) for grants to eligible students. The SSOG program is a pilot program, and at the time of publication of this report, Year One (2015-16) is completed, and Year Two (2016-17) is currently underway.

Students from low-income families are a growing share of K-12 and higher education enrollments in Nevada, and their success in higher education is important, not only to the individual student and the public higher education institutions, but also to the State as a whole. It will not be possible to reach the college attainment goals necessary for a healthy state economy without the success of Nevada's low-income students. The SSOG program is an aggressive first step by Nevada to encourage more low-income students to attend college, take 15 credits per semester, and ultimately earn a degree or credential of value.

The SSOG program provided financial assistance to 1,064 students in Year One and 896 students in Year Two (as of 1/20/2017). In both years, the SSOG grant predominantly served minority students, meeting and, in many cases, exceeding the percentage of minority students at each of the institutions. For example, in Year Two, 74.1 percent of SSOG recipients at NSC and 64.7 percent of SSOG recipients at CSN were minority students, compared to an overall minority population of 53.5 percent at NSC and 60.5 percent at CSN. Also in Year Two, the percentage of eligible students served went down to 50.5 percent from 55.6 percent the prior year, demonstrating continued high need by Nevada's low-income college-ready population for state grant assistance supporting full-time enrollment.

In this first biennium of the pilot program, several outcomes related to the success and persistence of SSOG recipients are of particular note. First, an examination of prior enrollment by SSOG recipients revealed that 73.7 percent of Fall 2015 SSOG recipients who were also enrolled in Fall 2014 carried less than 15 credits in the earlier term. Second, of all Fall 2015 SSOG recipients, 93.5 percent either graduated or persisted to Spring 2016 versus 83.6 percent of a comparison group enrolled in less than 15 credits. Third, within three semesters after receiving the SSOG award in Fall 2015, 33.1 percent of recipients graduated with a degree or certificate. Finally, the percentage of students losing eligibility between semesters decreased from 35.7 percent in Year One to 28.9 percent in Year Two.

As originally established by the Legislature in 2015, the goals of the Silver State Opportunity Grant program include providing more low-income students with both the incentive and financial means to attend college, take 15 credits per semester, and ultimately earn a degree or credential of value. Based on the demonstrated success of the SSOG program in achieving

these goals in the first two years alone, the Board of Regents and Governor Brian Sandoval are recommending continuation of the program with an increased appropriation of \$10 million for the 2017-19 biennium to serve more eligible students. NSHE is also proposing two technical revisions. The first would allow eligible institutions to fund students enrolled in less than 15 credits in their final semester prior to graduation, and the second would allow the student to count a course taken at a university within the System toward the 15-credit requirement if that course is not available at the college. In addition, the Board of Regents and NSHE are not opposed to expanding the program to serve students enrolled in 12 credits or fewer if adequate funds are available. However, it would be a disservice to students to change the eligibility criteria to 12 or fewer credits and not have sufficient funds to cover such costs, essentially creating a false promise.

BACKGROUND

The Silver State Opportunity Grant (SSOG) is a state-supported financial aid program created by the 2015 Legislature pursuant to [Senate Bill 227](#) (Chapter 387, *Statutes of Nevada 2015*). Under the SSOG Program, need-based grants are awarded to eligible low-income students who are college-ready to pay for a portion of the cost of education at a community college or state college within the Nevada System of Higher Education (NSHE). This unique program is built on a shared responsibility model and guided by a philosophy for awarding grant aid based on the total cost of attendance (tuition and fees, books and supplies, room and board, and other living expenses) being shared by partners (the state, the federal government, the family, and the student). The 2015 Legislature appropriated the sum of \$2.5 million for Fiscal Year 2015-16 and \$2.5 million for Fiscal Year 2016-17 to support the program under [Senate Bill 514](#) (Chapter 534, *Statutes of Nevada 2015*).

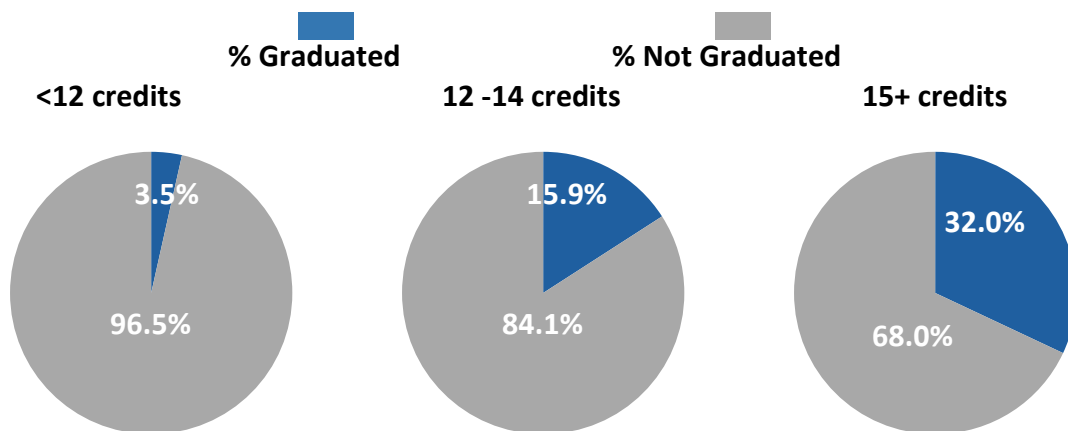
The SSOG Program is the first step to supporting low-income students in an effort to meet the state's college attainment goals. Students from low-income families are a growing share of K-12 and higher education enrollments in Nevada. Students from the lowest income families have the lowest high school graduation rates, the lowest college continuation rates, and the lowest bachelor's degree attainment rates. Nevada's two-year college participation rate for students from low-income families was 6.4 percent in 2012—well below the national average of 15.0 percent (Postsecondary Education Opportunity, September 2013, *College Participation Rates for Students from Low-Income Families by State, 1993-2012*).

While improving college affordability for low-income Nevadans is a primary factor that led to the development of the program, it is not the only reason the program was created. The State of Nevada continues to focus on improving its college attainment level, which remains among the lowest in the country for young adults (age 25 to 34) at 30.1 percent of the population with an associate's degree or higher (U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, 2012). Governor Brian Sandoval, in the [2016-2020 Strategic Planning Framework](#), established an aggressive goal: "By 2025, 60 percent of Nevadans aged 25-34 will have attained some form of

postsecondary degree, certificate or credential.” The Governor went a step further in establishing a statewide goal that is aligned with the mission of Complete College America, an alliance of states in which Nevada is a participant, by declaring that the State’s college attainment gap for traditional underrepresented populations will be closed by 2025. Notably, however, these goals cannot be achieved unless low-income students graduate in significantly greater numbers. Hence, the need for the Silver State Opportunity Grant program.

With the goal of graduating more low-income students in mind, the State and NSHE have had to address the harsh reality that students who enroll part-time, particularly at our community colleges, struggle to graduate. The following data indicate that, of those students whose enrollment load in their first term was less than 12 credits, only 3.5 percent graduated within 200 percent of time to degree (for example, within four years for a 60-credit associate’s degree or two years for a 30-credit certificate). In other words, 97 out of 100 students failed to achieve their goal of graduation. In stark comparison, students who enrolled initially in at least 15 credits graduated at a rate of 32.0 percent.

FIGURE 1: GRADUATION RATES BY CREDIT LOAD – NSHE TWO-YEAR INSTITUTIONS



Note: Fall 2012 cohort, first-time, degree-seeking students who earned a certificate or associate’s degree at a community college within 200 percent time to degree. Enrollment load based on first term.

In creating the SSOG program, the Nevada State Legislature acknowledged that low-income students struggle to support themselves and their families, and, as a result, often attend college part-time, thereby decreasing their likelihood of graduating at all, let alone on time. The premise is that between a reasonable student contribution, federal aid, the family contribution, and a contribution from the State in the form of the SSOG award, these low-income students will be able to support themselves and attend college on a full-time basis, significantly increasing their likelihood of graduation. In other words, the State, by making a substantial investment in these low-income students, is giving them both the incentive and the financial means to complete 15 credits per semester. In return, the State is expecting a return on their investment in terms of improved time to degree and more graduates.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

Eligible institutions include the NSHE state college and community colleges:

- Nevada State College (NSC);
- College of Southern Nevada (CSN);
- Great Basin College (GBC);
- Truckee Meadows Community College (TMCC); and
- Western Nevada College (WNC).

To be eligible for an SSOG award, a student must attend an eligible institution and:

- Be enrolled in a program of study leading to a degree or certificate;
- Enroll in at least 15 credit hours that apply to the student's chosen program of study;
- Must not have previously completed a bachelor's degree;
- Be college ready based on placement or completion of entry-level, college-level mathematics and English;
- Be classified as a resident for tuition purposes;
- Complete the [Free Application for Federal Student Aid](#) (FAFSA) and have an Expected Family Contribution (EFC) of 8500 or less; and
- Meet institutional Title IV Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress requirements.

Completion of the FAFSA is a critical step toward receiving an SSOG award. Funds for the SSOG program are limited and are awarded to the students with the most financial need first. In other words, funds are awarded to eligible students in ascending EFC order, starting with 0 EFC up to 8500 EFC, until funds are exhausted. Financial need is based on the expected family contribution, which is determined through completion of the FAFSA. By requiring FAFSA completion for eligibility, the program allows the State to leverage federal aid to the greatest extent possible.

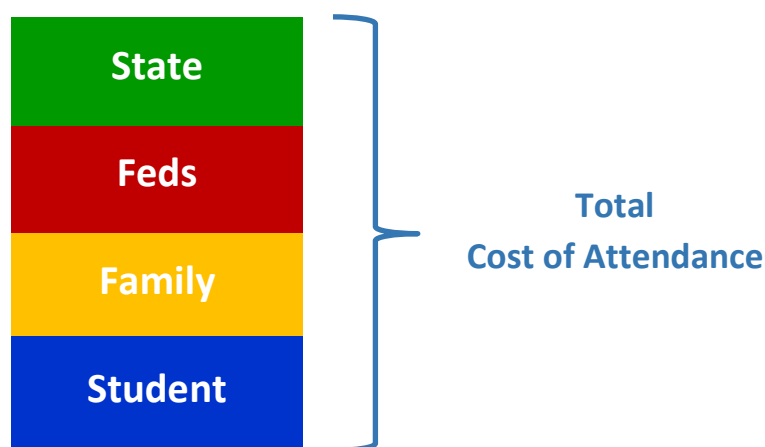
The SSOG program was deliberately designed around FAFSA completion for two reasons. First, it is important that all low-income students fill out the FAFSA in order to avail themselves of any federal aid available, and there are already efforts throughout the state to encourage students to do so. Adding a secondary application for the SSOG program would unnecessarily increase the burden on the student and could also potentially create situations where students who were otherwise SSOG-eligible do not get awarded because they were not aware of the secondary application. Second, by utilizing the FAFSA in order to leverage income data already collected by the federal government, which includes a verification process, the Legislature has ensured that NSHE is able to efficiently implement the program without additional administrative resources. This is different from most states that have a separate application process as they generally have a centralized staff dedicated to processing the specialized state application. In addition, utilizing the FAFSA also ensures the integrity of the student's financial data used to determine financial need.

HOW IS THE AWARD CALCULATED?

The SSOG program is modeled on a philosophy of shared responsibility, where the award is based on the total cost of attendance (tuition and fees, books and supplies and living expenses) being shared by partners (the state, the federal government, the family, and the student). Based on best practices for state grant programs, the shared responsibility model is described in detail in the report, [*States in the Driver's Seat: Leveraging State Aid to Align Policies and Promote Access, Success, and Affordability*](#) (WICHE, 2014).

The SSOG award amount is calculated by subtracting from the total cost of attendance (COA) the student contribution; expected family contribution (determined from completion of the FAFSA); and federal awards received (including the Pell Grant, the Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG), and the federal TEACH grant). The amount remaining, up to \$5,500 annually, is the SSOG award amount.

FIGURE 2: SHARED RESPONSIBILITY MODEL



The total cost of attendance varies by student living circumstance (living off campus, living on campus [GBC only], or living with parent). It is calculated by the institutions based on a federal methodology provided for in 20 U.S.C. § 1087 II. For the purpose of the SSOG award calculation, a single cost of attendance based on the average of all eligible institutions is used for each housing category.

TABLE 1: TOTAL COST OF ATTENDANCE*		
	Year One: 2015-16	Year Two: 2016-17
Living Off Campus and not with parent	\$18,233	\$18,830
Living with Parent	\$12,088	\$12,717
Living on Campus	\$15,175	\$15,280

*Based on the average of COA amounts for the eligible institutions and used for purpose of the SSOG award calculation.

As the principle beneficiary, the student is expected to contribute toward his/her own education costs. Based on the expectation of a reasonable work commitment (15 hours of employment throughout the year less estimated federal income tax), the student contribution for 2015-16 and 2016-17 was set at \$5,500. The reasonable work commitment is used solely for the purpose of determining the student share under the SSOG calculation and should in no way be construed as requiring a student to seek or obtain employment as a condition of eligibility for the SSOG award. The student share may be covered by a number of other sources, including but not limited to: student earnings or savings; private, institutional, state or federal scholarships (including the Governor Guinn Millennium Scholarship); veterans' education benefits; student loans; and financial assistance from family or friends.

While the student contribution for the SSOG program is based on a reasonable work commitment, the program is designed to ensure that recipients have financial resources that will allow them to not work full-time and therefore be in a better position to focus on their coursework. For example, an eligible student living off campus and not with a parent, who has a 0 EFC and receives the maximum Pell Grant (\$5,815 in 2016-17) will receive the maximum SSOG award of \$5,500. This means that the student will have at least \$11,315 for the fall and spring terms, enough to cover tuition and fees and books and supplies (totaling on average \$4,628 for the community colleges or \$6,430 at NSC), with funds left over to partially cover living expenses. This amount excludes other financial aid they may receive, which would count towards the student's contribution and further cover living expenses.

CONTINUING ELIGIBILITY

Students who receive an SSOG award remain eligible for future semesters, providing they complete a minimum of 15 credits during the semester they received the award and continue to meet Title IV Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress requirements. However, due to limited funding, SSOG awards are made according to program requirements on an annual basis, and maintaining eligibility is not a guarantee of receiving an SSOG award in subsequent years. SSOG recipients who wish to receive an award in subsequent years are encouraged to file their FAFSA and complete all additional financial aid requirements as early in the cycle as possible.

Students who receive an SSOG award and either do not complete 15 credits or fail to maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress lose eligibility for future terms. Students who are not making Satisfactory Academic Progress may appeal with the financial aid office at their institution and, if their appeal is approved, will be eligible for continued SSOG funding. However, not completing 15 credits is not an appealable condition. Students may regain eligibility for SSOG funding in future semesters by completing 15 credits in a single semester without the grant and maintaining Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress. Regaining eligibility, again due to limited funding, is not a guarantee of receiving an SSOG award in future semesters.

GRANTS AWARDED FOR YEAR ONE (2015-16)

Academic year 2015-16 marked the first academic year of the SSOG pilot program. Funds for awarding purposes were originally allocated to the eligible institutions based on official undergraduate FTE for the prior fall term. (However, Year One funds were re-allocated to serve all eligible students at all NSHE institutions as of 8/7/15. See the Appendix for additional explanation.) The following table indicates for the fall and spring an unduplicated number of students awarded that is based on the availability of state funding as of the end of the award year.

TABLE 2: YEAR ONE SSOG AWARDS AND ELIGIBILITY				
Fall 2015 and Spring 2016				
Institution	Total Dollars Awarded*	Eligible Students Awarded	Eligible Students <u>Not</u> Awarded	% of Eligible Students Awarded
NSC	\$365,103	121	171	41.4%
CSN	\$1,368,414	655	335	66.2%
GBC	\$176,842	51	64	44.3%
TMCC	\$352,007	142	192	42.5%
WNC	\$237,634	95	87	52.2%
Total	\$2,500,000	1,064	849	55.6%

*Final allocation of funds.

The distribution of funds based on student race/ethnicity indicates that the percentage of minority students who received the grant was generally higher than the overall minority student population across all eligible institutions.

TABLE 3: YEAR ONE SSOG RECIPIENTS BY RACE/ETHNICITY (2015-16)*									
	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian	Black, Non-Hispanic	Hispanic	Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	Two or More Races	White, Non-Hispanic	% Minority SSOG	% Minority Institution**
NSC	0.8%	12.6%	7.6%	30.3%	3.4%	5.9%	39.5%	60.5%	53.5%
CSN	0.3%	11.3%	13.4%	31.6%	1.5%	7.3%	34.7%	65.3%	60.5%
GBC	7.8%	0.0%	2.0%	23.5%	2.0%	7.8%	56.9%	43.1%	28.1%
TMCC	2.9%	9.4%	0.0%	29.0%	0.0%	5.1%	53.6%	46.4%	38.0%
WNC	0.0%	1.1%	0.0%	36.8%	0.0%	4.2%	57.9%	42.1%	28.6%

*Percentages exclude unknown race/ethnicity categories.

**IPEDS, Fall 2014. Minority category includes all ethnicities included in the table except White, Non-Hispanic.

For Year One, eligible students were initially identified prior the beginning of the fall term and were awarded for both fall and spring terms in early August. For the first year of the program, 691 students were initially awarded the grant, as of September 1, 2015. Some students lost

eligibility or graduated at the end of the fall term. For those students, the SSOG funds originally awarded to them were redistributed in the spring to other eligible students. This resulted in the unduplicated total of 1,064 students served for academic year 2015-16 (Year One).

Overall, 35.7 percent of students awarded in Fall 2015 lost eligibility for Spring 2016. The loss of eligibility occurred most often as a result of not successfully completing the 15-credit requirement. The percentage of students that lost eligibility ranged from a low of 15.5 percent at NSC to a high of 45.2 percent at CSN. The following table indicates by institution the number and percentage of students that lost eligibility.

TABLE 4: YEAR ONE SSOG RECIPIENTS INELIGIBLE AFTER FALL 2015			
	Recipients as of 9/1/2015	# Ineligible as of 2/12/2016	% Ineligible as of 2/12/2016
NSC	97	15	15.5%
CSN	394	178	45.2%
GBC	37	7	18.9%
TMCC	100	29	29.0%
WNC	63	18	28.6%
Total	691	247	35.7%

OUTCOMES FOR FALL 2015 RECIPIENTS

For effective evaluation of the SSOG recipient data, it is important to establish specific comparison groups. One comparison group, referred to herein as “SSOG eligible non-recipients,” met the same eligibility requirements, having been enrolled in at least 15 credits and determined to be college-ready under the program definitions. The “SSOG eligible non-recipients” comparison group was also limited to students in the same EFC range targeted by the program, 0 to 8500. In other words, for all practical purposes the two groups are essentially the same, except one group received an SSOG award and the other did not (due to limited funding). This provides for the purest and most conservative comparison possible in order to determine the impact of the SSOG on time to degree and graduation. The remaining comparison groups, referred to simply as “comparison group” along with a specific enrollment level, also met the college-ready requirement and EFC range of 0 to 8500, but were not enrolled in 15 credits. These other comparison groups are also informative, primarily in reinforcing the positive effect of enrolling in 15 credits on student persistence and graduation.

Likewise, it is difficult to tell from any program data if improved student success is due to a financial aid award or having taken 15 credits, because it is already well established in current and historical data that students who take 15 or more credits have significantly higher graduation rates when compared to their part-time counterparts. It is also important to keep in mind that the premise of the SSOG program is to provide financial assistance in an amount

substantial enough to offset the need for students to work more hours than is conducive to successfully completing a 15-credit course load. It is clear from the data that the program was successful in providing students the incentive to enroll in 15 credits and giving students the financial means to progress toward graduation in a timely manner. Of all Fall 2015 SSOG recipients who were enrolled at any NSHE institution in Fall 2014, 73.7 percent were enrolled in fewer than 15 credits a year earlier (see Table 12 in the Appendix for detail by institution).

TABLE 5: FALL 2015 SSOG RECIPIENTS ENROLLMENT LEVEL IN PRIOR FALL TERM	
Enrollment Level in Fall 2014	% of Fall 2015 Recipients
15 or more	26.3%
12-14.5	49.0%
Less than 12	24.7%
Less than 15	73.7%

Overall, of all Fall 2015 SSOG recipients, 93.5 percent either persisted to Spring 2016 or graduated with a certificate or degree by the end of that term versus 83.6 percent of the comparison group enrolled in less than 15 credits (see Table 11 in the Appendix for detail by institution). This figure for SSOG recipients is indicative of the success expected of students who enroll in 15 or more credits and comparable to the figure for SSOG eligible non-recipients. In other words, nine out of ten SSOG recipients succeeded by traditional definitions for student success (graduation or persistence towards graduation). Extending this analysis out to the following fall semester, 83.4 percent of the SSOG recipients from Fall 2015 either persisted to Fall 2016 or graduated with a certificate or degree by the end of that term versus 72.1 percent of the comparison group enrolled in less than 15 credits.

Looking solely at the percentage of students from the SSOG recipient and comparison groups who graduated by the end of the Fall 2016 semester, it is evident the SSOG award positively impacted time to degree as a greater percentage of students who received an SSOG award graduated (33.1 percent) compared to either SSOG eligible non-recipients (30.3 percent) or comparison group students who enrolled in less than 15 credits (22.7 percent) in Fall 2015.

TABLE 6: YEAR ONE SSOG RECIPIENTS AND COMPARISON GROUPS PERSISTENCE AND GRADUATION BY ENROLLMENT LEVEL			
Recipient/Enrollment Status	Persisted or Graduated		Graduated by 12/2016
	Spring 2016	Fall 2016	
SSOG Recipients	93.5%	83.4%	33.1%
SSOG Eligible Non-Recipients	94.7%	83.5%	30.3%
Comparison Group – Less than 15 Credits	83.6%	72.1%	22.7%
12 to 14.5 Credits	88.4%	76.9%	26.1%
Less than 12 Credits	81.1%	69.6%	21.0%

GRANTS AWARDED FOR YEAR TWO (2016-17)

Academic year 2016-17 marked the second year of the SSOG pilot program. At the time of this publication, the second year of the program is underway, but not complete. In other words, while data is available for the Fall 2016 awardees, at the time of this publication awardees for the Spring 2017 term are continuing to be identified and will not be finalized until later in the spring semester, once re-awarding is complete. In comparison to Year One, the percentage of eligible students awarded decreased substantially, from 55.6 percent to 50.5 percent, which indicates continued high need by Nevada's low-income college-ready population for state grant assistance specifically supporting full-time enrollment.

TABLE 7: YEAR TWO SSOG AWARDS AS OF 1/20/17				
Fall 2017 and Spring 2017				
Institution	Total Dollars Awarded	Eligible Students Awarded	Eligible Students Not Awarded	% of Eligible Students Awarded
NSC	\$180,000	64	224	22.2%
CSN	\$1,477,500	542	324	62.6%
GBC	\$145,000	46	81	36.2%
TMCC	\$510,000	173	156	52.6%
WNC	\$187,500	68	93	42.2%
Total	\$2,500,000	894	878	50.5%

Similar to Year One data, the distribution of funds based on student race/ethnicity in Year Two indicates that the percent of minority students who received the grant was generally higher than the overall minority student population across all eligible institutions. In some cases, the percent of minority students awarded SSOG is significantly higher than percentage of minority students in the general population; notably, at NSC 74.1 percent of SSOG recipients were minority students versus 53.5 percent of the overall population.

TABLE 8: YEAR TWO SSOG AWARDS BY RACE/ETHNICITY (2016-17)* AS OF 1/20/17									
	American Indian or Alaska Native	Asian	Black, Non-Hispanic	Hispanic	Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander	Two or More Races	White, Non-Hispanic	% Minority SSOG	% Minority Institution**
NSC	1.7%	15.5%	12.1%	34.5%	0.0%	10.3%	25.9%	74.1%	53.5%
CSN	0.2%	9.8%	13.1%	33.7%	2.2%	5.8%	35.3%	64.7%	60.5%
GBC	7.3%	0.0%	4.9%	29.3%	0.0%	4.9%	53.7%	46.3%	28.1%
TMCC	0.6%	8.8%	2.3%	38.0%	0.0%	4.7%	45.6%	54.4%	38.0%
WNC	0.0%	0.0%	3.0%	34.8%	1.5%	3.0%	57.6%	42.4%	28.6%

*Percentages exclude unknown race/ethnicity categories.

**IPEDS, Fall 2014. Minority category includes all ethnicities included in the table except White, Non-Hispanic.

System-wide, 28.9 percent of students awarded in Fall 2016 lost eligibility for the spring, demonstrating a marked improvement over Year One (35.7 percent). The following table indicates by institution the number and percentage of students that lost eligibility, typically as a result of not successfully completing the 15-credit requirement. At the time of this publication, additional outcomes data for Year Two are not available.

TABLE 9: YEAR TWO SSOG RECIPIENTS INELIGIBLE AFTER FALL 2016			
	Recipients as of 8/2/2016	# Ineligible as of 1/20/2017	% Ineligible as of 1/20/2017
NSC	52	8	15.4%
CSN	408	118	28.9%
GBC	33	8	24.2%
TMCC	121	45	37.2%
WNC	46	12	26.1%
Total	660	191	28.9%

THE STUDENT PERSPECTIVE

The SSOG program was developed with students in mind—reducing their financial burdens so they can focus on school full-time. The students served by the SSOG program during its pilot phase come from varied backgrounds and face unique challenges in achieving their educational goals. Despite their differences, SSOG recipients have one thing in common: they were able to focus more on their college coursework and work less outside of school because of the shared responsibility approach of the program. The reports from students have been overwhelming in their gratitude for a program that is designed to help them succeed and rewards them for full-time enrollment. Following are testimonials from SSOG recipients on the impact the program has had on their lives and their college goals.

NSC SSOG Student Luis Montanez: *I was born in Guadalajara, Mexico and was brought to the United States as a toddler. I was fortunate enough to qualify for the DACA executive actions the President took a couple years ago that have allowed me to start my college career. The Silver State Opportunity Grant has been essential in helping me pay my way through school. I plan on graduating with a B.S. in Business Administration and a minor in English Literature. I plan on graduating Summa Cum Laude during the Fall 2017. I would like to thank the members of the Nevada Legislature for passing the Silver State Opportunity Grant legislation. It is the reason why I have been able to succeed throughout my time at Nevada State!*



CSN SSOG Student Rainier Navarro: *The Silver State Opportunity Grant (SSOG) was genuinely an apparitional blessing; and I'd like to share a short and gritty story. It was the beginning of my third and final year at CSN before graduating the Physical Therapist Assistant (PTA) program when I found myself mystified in emotions. Drenched in sweat caused by the rigorous college typhoon and enveloped in thorns of stresses early twenty year-olds commonly confront; my soul was melting like a Hershey's Kisses left inside a car in a sunny day.*



During Fall 2015 semester, I was originally taking 14 credits as per the PTA program and working part time in order to afford a daily pack of Oreos. One random day, I got an e-mail stating I qualified for the SSOG but only if I were to take 15 credits. It's like walking down the street and a random stranger gives you a bag of money, or even better, a bag of Oreos. I was baffled in joy that there was a great cause in the community providing students with a grant to encourage him/her to take extra courses and graduate sooner. Without hesitation, I added extra classes for the Fall 15 and Spring 16 semesters to satisfy SSOG requirements. Not only did I receive a substantial financial aid and got a step ahead in my academic career, but the SSOG enabled me to decrease my work hours and focus more on my academics; and I'm proud to say I maintained a 4.0 GPA in 33 credits during Fall 15 and Spring 16 semesters and graduated with high honors in May. Presently, I'm a full-time PTA at Boulder City Hospital and part-time student at UNLV; but this is all fruition from the momentum I received from numerous resources including the SSOG. The SSOG was truly an amazing gift and opportunity, and I dearly hope other motivated students gets a taste of this euphoric award.

GBC SSOG Student Mark Koppe: *I am currently pursuing an Associate's Degree in Engineering at Great Basin College with the intent to transfer to a state university. Prior to my enrollment, I spent ten years in the United States Marine Corps with multiple overseas deployments. In addition, I am a devoted husband and father of two elementary aged sons. When I am not at the college or at home, I can be found volunteering as a Cub Scout leader, a WATCH Dog parent in the local elementary school's volunteer program, and being active within the local veterans' community*



As a military veteran and a nontraditional student, education would not be possible without the assistance of financial aid. Having a family and going back to school had been a financial concern since prior to my transition we were a single-income family. These concerns, however, have been lessened by the grants I am grateful to have received, including the Silver State Opportunity Grant. The grant requirements have added a challenge to my academic pursuits, and they create the motivation I need to complete my degree faster than just taking the minimum full time requirements.



TMCC SSOG Student Paige Richard: *I am a first generation college student who has done a great deal of traveling, lived in seven different states, and eventually settled in the beautiful state of Nevada. Financially times have been hard on my family and me due to the recent death of my mother. This grant offers a chance for me to move forward in my life through my education. The SSOG gave me the opportunity to stay in college by paying for my tuition and books as well as transportation for the year. Without this grant I was considering a second job, but because this grant offered me the money I needed I could focus more on my education. To me, this grant relieved me of the financial difficulties and stresses associated with college. It made the decision to continue my education easier. This grant was the doorway to my diploma.*

WNC SSOG Student Kennadie Frias: *As a child that was born and raised in Carson City, Nevada; this small town community has had a great impact on what I have and want to become. The school system here has helped me develop a passion for photography, graphic communications, and American Sign Language. I am currently attending Western Nevada College to complete a degree in Graphic Communications as well as American Sign Language. I hope to get a job with a company as a graphic designer and also interpret for the Deaf. The SSOG has made a positive impact on my daily life by not having to worry about making ends meet and I can focus more on achieving my educational goals.*



COST ESTIMATES FOR EXPANDING THE PROGRAM

Since the SSOG program was approved by the Nevada Legislature in 2015, there have been many discussions across the State about expanding the program to serve students who enroll in fewer than 15 credits per semester. The reality is that funding the program to support students enrolled in fewer than 15 credits will significantly increase the cost of the program depending on the credit level required for eligibility. The following cost estimate assumes that eligible students enrolled in 15 credits would be funded first, followed by students enrolled in 12, 9 and 6 credits who meet all other program eligibility requirements. Cost estimates are noted incrementally for each 3-credit reduction in the required credit load and were calculated using actual 2015-16 student record level data, assuming no change in student behavior. Changes in student behavior will likely result in increased costs. Similarly, these cost estimates include projections for fall and spring only, as this is consistent with the current program design.

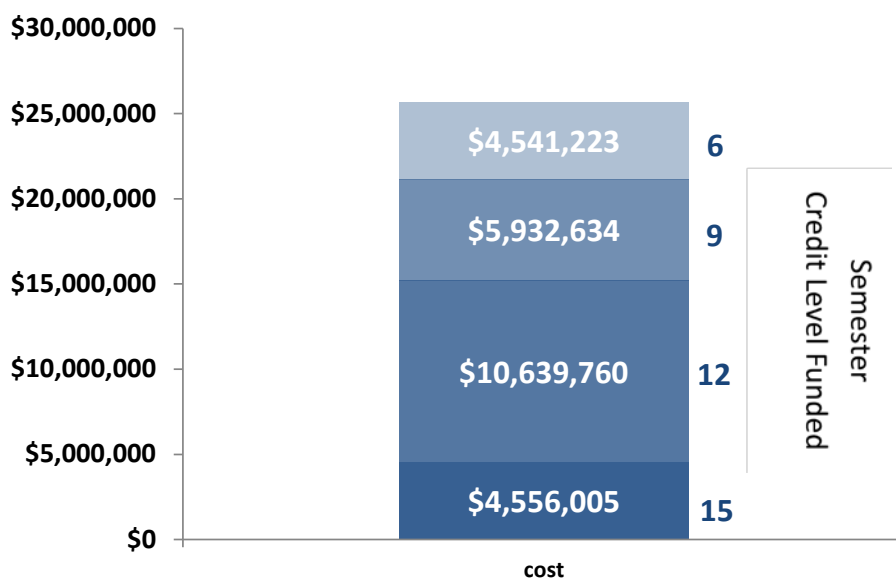
The maximum award amounts for students enrolled in fewer than 15 credits are based on the current program provisions that set the maximum award for a 15-credit student at \$5,500 per year or \$2,750 per semester and prorated for the purpose of the cost estimates. Prorated award maximums are as follows.

TABLE 10: PRORATED SSOG MAXIMUM AWARD AMOUNTS FOR PROGRAM EXPANSION CALCULATION		
Enrollment Level	Semester Award Amount	Annual Award Amount
15 credits	\$2,750	\$5,500
12 credits	\$2,200	\$4,400
9 credits	\$1,650	\$3,300
6 credits	\$1,100	\$2,200

The current SSOG appropriation for 2015-16 and 2016-17 of \$2.5 million each year was insufficient to award all eligible 15-credit students. Based on data indicating that 73.7 percent of SSOG recipients who were enrolled at an NSHE institution were enrolled in less than 15 credits in the prior fall term, SSOG influenced student behavior to enroll in 15 credits per semester as was the primary goal of the program. However, the estimates provided at lower credit eligibility levels do not account for possible changes in student behavior. These cost estimates assume that at each credit level all eligible students would be funded. Likewise, it is assumed that under any expansion of the program funds would be expended until depleted. In other words, if there is a change in student behavior that increases the costs beyond these estimates, funds would be expended until depleted and some eligible students would go unfunded, as was the case under the pilot program.

Assuming no change in student behavior, funding all eligible 15-credit students will require approximately \$4.6 million annually or \$9.1 million for the biennium. Expanding the program to serve all eligible 12-credit students in addition to the eligible 15-credit students will require approximately an additional \$10.6 million for a total of \$15.2 million annually or \$30.4 million for the biennium. Further expanding the program to serve all eligible 9-credit students in addition to the 12- and 15-credit eligible students will require an additional \$5.9 million for a total of \$21.1 million annually or \$42.3 million for the biennium. Finally, expanding the program to serve all eligible 6-credit students in addition to the 9-, 12-, and 15-credit students will require an additional \$4.5 million for a total of \$25.7 million annually or \$51.3 million for the biennium. In comparison, the actual annual Millennium Scholarship disbursement for Fiscal Year 2016 was \$30.4 million. These cost estimates do not assume the technical change that NSHE is recommending to allow students to enroll in fewer credits in their final term to graduate and receive a pro-rated SSOG award.

FIGURE 3: INCREMENTAL ANNUAL COSTS FOR SSOG PROGRAM EXPANSION



The SSOG pilot program was established to encourage students to enroll in 15 credits, therefore increasing their likelihood of graduating, while at the same time providing low-income students with sufficient funds so they do not have to work full-time. In other words, the State, in investing in these low-income students, was expecting a return on their investment in terms of improved time to degree and more graduates. Expanding the program to include credit levels below the original 15 credits will likely impact the return on investment incrementally as the credit load requirement is reduced. However, expansion of the program to at least 12-credit students would be a strong step towards supporting many of Nevada's low-income students seeking a college degree or credential in this state, while encouraging and financially supporting behavior that breeds success. In addition, as the SSOG program attempts to financially support low-income college-ready students, it is a targeted approach to allocating scarce state resources to those students of the greatest need who are adequately prepared for the rigors of college.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR CONTINUING THE PROGRAM

The Nevada System of Higher Education is requesting and Governor Brian Sandoval, in his budget for Fiscal Years 2017-19, recommends that funding for the SSOG program be made a permanent part of NSHE's base funding and the funding level be increased to \$10 million for the biennium. At a \$10 million funding level, the Board of Regents recommends continuing to fund students who are enrolled in 15 credits. The Board of Regents and NSHE are not opposed to expanding the program to 12 credits or fewer if the funds are available. However, it would be a disservice to students to change the eligibility criteria to 12 or fewer credits and not have sufficient funds to cover such costs, essentially creating a false promise.

In addition, NSHE is proposing two technical revisions. The first would allow eligible institutions to fund students enrolled in less than 15 credits in their final semester prior to graduation, and the second would allow the student to count a course taken at a university within the System toward the 15-credit requirement if the course is not available at the college. Since the current statute does not grant the NSHE authority to make exceptions to the 15-credit requirement and Board policy requires that all credits funded must apply to a student's program of study, it is possible that students who are on-track to graduate and otherwise in good standing with SSOG program requirements might not qualify for funding in their final semester prior to graduation or in a semester where a needed course is unavailable. If granted this specific and limited authority to make exceptions to the 15-credit requirement, NSHE would ensure that students who are working hard toward graduation are not penalized in their final semester of enrollment and have expanded access to the courses required for their program of study.

APPENDIX

**TABLE 11: YEAR ONE SSOG RECIPIENTS
PERSISTENCE AND GRADUATION BY INSTITUTION**

Institution	Persisted or Earned Award		Earned Degree or Certificate by 12/2016
	Spring 2016	Fall 2016	
NSC	98.9%	91.0%	30.3%
CSN	92.1%	80.4%	28.8%
GBC	100.0%	94.7%	57.9%
TMCC	94.8%	81.4%	29.9%
WNC	89.1%	87.5%	53.1%
NSHE	93.5%	83.4%	33.1%

**TABLE 12: YEAR ONE SSOG RECIPIENTS
PRIOR SEMESTER ENROLLMENT**

Institution	Enrollment Level Fall 2014			
	Less than 12	12 to 14.5	Less than 15	15 or more
NSC	22.1%	39.0%	61.0%	39.0%
CSN	28.3%	52.3%	80.6%	19.4%
GBC	17.2%	41.4%	58.6%	41.4%
TMCC	25.9%	51.7%	77.6%	22.4%
WNC	8.7%	45.7%	54.3%	45.7%
NSHE	24.7%	49.0%	73.7%	26.3%

TABLE 13: YEAR ONE SSOG ALLOCATIONS* AS OF 8/7/2015

Institution	Original Allocation	% of Students Funded As of Initial Allocation	Reallocation of Dollars	Final Allocation
NSC	\$175,000	47.67%	\$190,103	\$365,103
CSN	\$1,515,000	100.00%	-\$146,586	\$1,368,414
GBC	\$137,500	75.68%	\$39,342	\$176,842
TMCC	\$487,500	100.00%	-\$135,493	\$352,007
WNC	\$185,000	82.54%	\$52,634	\$237,634
NSHE	\$2,500,000	90.25%	\$0	\$2,500,000

*Note: Original allocations based on percentage of total Fall 2014 FTE, but, prior to the initial round of awarding on 8/7/15, funds were reallocated to ensure that 100 percent of eligible students at all five institutions were awarded. The two largest institutions, CSN and TMCC, saw reductions while the remaining three had increases and, as a result, were able to serve all eligible students as of the initial round of awarding. CSN and TMCC retained \$27,714 and \$20,000 respectively to serve additional eligible students identified after 8/7/15.

CHAPTER.....

AN ACT relating to education; creating the Silver State Opportunity Grant Program; providing for the calculation and award of grants under the Program to qualified students enrolled in community colleges and state colleges of the Nevada System of Higher Education; requiring the Board of Regents of the University of Nevada to submit to the Legislature a biennial report on the Program; and providing other matters properly relating thereto.

Legislative Counsel's Digest:

This bill creates the Silver State Opportunity Grant Program. Under the Program, the Board of Regents of the University of Nevada is required to award grants to eligible students who are enrolled in community colleges and state colleges that are part of the Nevada System of Higher Education to pay for a portion of the cost of education at such institutions. **Section 3** of this bill sets forth the criteria for eligibility for such a grant. **Section 4** of this bill requires the Board of Regents or a designee of the Board to: (1) calculate the maximum amount of the grant which a student is eligible to receive; (2) determine the actual amount each eligible student will receive; and (3) make grants to all eligible students. **Section 4** provides that any money awarded under the Program must be used only to pay the cost of education of a student and not for any other purpose. **Section 5** of this bill requires the Board of Regents to adopt regulations prescribing the procedures and standards for determining eligibility, the methodology for calculating the financial need of a student and the process by which a student may meet certain requirements for eligibility for a grant. **Section 6** of this bill authorizes the Board of Regents to accept gifts, grants, bequests and donations to fund grants awarded under the Program.

Section 7 of this bill requires the Board of Regents to submit a biennial report on the Program to the Legislature. The report must include information regarding: (1) the number of grants awarded under the Program; (2) the average amount of each grant; and (3) the percentage of students awarded grants who remained in school and who eventually earned a degree or certificate.

EXPLANATION – Matter in *bolded italics* is new; matter between brackets ~~omitted material~~ is material to be omitted.

THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF NEVADA, REPRESENTED IN
SENATE AND ASSEMBLY, DO ENACT AS FOLLOWS:

Section 1. Chapter 396 of NRS is hereby amended by adding thereto the provisions set forth as sections 2 to 7, inclusive, of this act.

Sec. 2. *As used in sections 2 to 7, inclusive, of this act, unless the context otherwise requires, "Program" means the Silver State Opportunity Grant Program created by section 3 of this act.*



Sec. 3. 1. *The Silver State Opportunity Grant Program is hereby created for the purpose of awarding grants to eligible students to pay for a portion of the cost of education at a community college or state college within the System.*

2. The Board of Regents shall administer the Program.

3. In administering the Program, the Board of Regents shall for each semester, subject to the limits of money available for this purpose, award a grant to each eligible student to pay for a portion of the cost of education at a community college or state college within the System.

4. To be eligible for a grant awarded under the Program, a student must:

(a) Be enrolled, or accepted to be enrolled, during a semester in at least 15 credit hours at a community college or state college within the System;

(b) Be enrolled in a program of study leading to a recognized degree or certificate;

(c) Demonstrate proficiency in English and mathematics sufficient for placement into college-level English and mathematics courses pursuant to regulations adopted by the Board of Regents for such placement;

(d) Be a bona fide resident of the State of Nevada for the purposes of determining pursuant to NRS 396.540 whether the student is assessed a tuition charge; and

(e) Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid provided for by 20 U.S.C. § 1090.

Sec. 4. 1. *For each eligible student, the Board of Regents or a designee thereof shall:*

(a) Calculate the maximum amount of the grant which the student is eligible to receive. The maximum amount of such a grant must not exceed the amount equal to the cost of education of the student minus the amounts determined for the student contribution, family contribution and federal contribution to the cost of education of the student.

(b) Determine the actual amount of the grant which will be awarded to each student, which amount must not exceed the maximum amount calculated pursuant to paragraph (a), but which may be in a lesser amount if the Board of Regents or a designee thereof, as applicable, determines that the amount of money available for all grants for any semester is insufficient to award to all eligible students the maximum amount of the grant which each student is eligible to receive.



(c) Award to each eligible student a grant in the amount determined pursuant to paragraph (b).

2. Money received from a grant awarded under the Program must be used by a student only to pay for the cost of education of the student at a community college or state college within the System and not for any other purpose.

Sec. 5. 1. The Board of Regents:

(a) Shall adopt regulations prescribing the procedures and standards for determining the eligibility of a student for a grant from the Program.

(b) Shall adopt regulations prescribing the methodology by which the Board of Regents or a designee thereof will calculate:

(1) The cost of education of a student at each community college and state college within the System, which must be consistent with the provisions of 20 U.S.C. § 1087ll.

(2) For each student, the amounts of the student contribution, family contribution and federal contribution to the cost of education of the student.

(3) The maximum amount of the grant for which a student is eligible.

(c) Shall adopt regulations prescribing the process by which each student may meet the credit-hour requirement described in paragraph (a) of subsection 4 of section 3 of this act for eligibility for a grant awarded under the Program.

(d) May adopt any other regulations necessary to carry out the Program.

2. The regulations prescribed pursuant to this section must provide that:

(a) In determining the student contribution to the cost of education, the student contribution must not exceed the amount that the Board of Regents determines the student reasonably could be expected to earn from employment during the time the student is enrolled at a community college or state college within the System, including, without limitation, during breaks between semesters. This paragraph and any regulations adopted pursuant to this section must not be construed to require a student to seek or obtain employment as a condition of eligibility for a grant under the Program.

(b) Determination of the family contribution to the cost of education must be based on the family resources reported in the Free Application for Federal Student Aid submitted by the student.

(c) Determination of the federal contribution to the cost of education must be equal to the total amount that the student and



his or her family are expected to receive from the Federal Government as grants.

Sec. 6. *In addition to any direct legislative appropriation from the State General Fund, the Board of Regents may accept gifts, grants, bequests and donations to fund grants awarded under the Program.*

Sec. 7. *On or before February 1 of each odd-numbered year, the Board of Regents shall submit to the Director of the Legislative Counsel Bureau for transmittal to the next regular session of the Legislature a written report on the Program which must include, without limitation, information regarding:*

1. The number of students during the immediately preceding school year who were awarded grants under the Program.

2. The average amount of each grant awarded under the Program for the immediately preceding school year.

3. The success of the Program, including, without limitation, information regarding the percentage of students awarded grants since the creation of the Program who have remained enrolled at a community college or state college within the System and the percentage of students awarded grants since the creation of the Program who have been awarded a degree or certificate.

Sec. 8. The provisions of subsection 1 of NRS 218D.380 do not apply to any provision of this act which adds or revises a requirement to submit a report to the Legislature.

Secs. 9 and 10. (Deleted by amendment.)

Sec. 11. This act becomes effective:

1. Upon passage and approval for the purpose of adopting regulations and performing any other preparatory administrative tasks necessary to carry out the provisions of this act; and

2. On July 1, 2015, for all other purposes.



Board of Regents *Handbook*, Title 4, Chapter 18, Section 10

Section 10. Silver State Opportunity Grant Program

The 2015 Nevada Legislature created the Silver State Opportunity Grant Program under Senate Bill 227 (Chapter 387, *Statutes of Nevada 2015*) for the purpose of awarding need-based grants to eligible low-income students who are college-ready in order to pay for a portion of the cost of education at a community college or state college within the Nevada System of Higher Education. The Chancellor is directed to establish procedures and guidelines to comply with the requirements of the Silver State Opportunity Grant Program pursuant to Senate Bill 227. The Chancellor will report to the Board such steps that have been taken to implement the program. (B/R 9/15)

NSHE *Procedures and Guidelines Manual*, Chapter 11, Section 2

Section 2. Silver State Opportunity Grant Program

Title 4, Chapter 18 of the Board of Regents' Handbook directs the Chancellor to establish procedures and guidelines to comply with the requirements of the Silver State Opportunity Grant Program created by Senate Bill 227 (Chapter 387, *Statutes of Nevada 2015*) and codified under Chapter 396 of *Nevada Revised Statutes*. Rev. 60 (06/16) Chapter 11, Page 5

1. Eligible Institutions. Eligible institutions include each NSHE community college and state college that shall award grants under the SSOG Program according to procedures established herein.
2. Apportionment of Funds between Eligible Institutions.
 - a. State funding for the SSOG program will be allocated to each community college and state college annually, and shall be based on the proportion of undergraduate FTE during the prior fall term. Institutional allocations shall be reviewed and approved by the Chancellor.
 - b. Institutions shall not award funds exceeding the amount allocated pursuant to this section.
 - c. Dollars that are in jeopardy of not being awarded and disbursed at the institution where originally allocated shall be divided among the remaining eligible institutions based on the distribution of unawarded SSOG eligible students.
3. Eligibility Requirements. To be eligible for the SSOG Program, a student must:
 - a. Enroll in at least 15 credit hours each semester of award at a community college or state college;
 - b. Be enrolled in a program of study leading to an undergraduate degree or certificate;

- c. Be placed into college-level English and mathematics courses in accordance with Title 4, Chapter 16, Section 1;
- d. Be classified as a resident in accordance with Title 4, Chapter 15;
- e. Complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA); and
- f. Meet institutional Title IV financial aid satisfactory academic progress requirements. For the purposes of continuing eligibility, a student must successfully complete 15 credits during the prior term in which an SSOG disbursement was received. In addition:
 - i. A student who loses eligibility for SSOG may reinstate during a subsequent semester by successfully completing 15 credits in a single semester without the grant and maintaining financial aid satisfactory academic progress. Subject to available funds, this student would be eligible to receive SSOG in future semesters, provided all eligibility requirements for the program are met.
 - ii. Each institution shall utilize its existing federal Title IV satisfactory academic progress appeals process to allow SSOG recipients who are not making satisfactory academic progress to appeal their status. A student who is approved through the institutional appeals process to receive Title IV aid may also receive SSOG during the semester for which an appeal is approved, providing the eligibility requirements set forth under this Section are met. Although students with Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) status do not qualify to receive Title IV aid, such students who are not making satisfactory academic progress may appeal their status under an institutional appeals process for the purpose of the SSOG award.

4. Amount of the SSOG Award

- a. Grant awards are subject to the limit of the funds available for the SSOG Program and are intended to pay for a portion of the Cost of Attendance at a community college or state college.
- b. Maximum SSOG Award. The maximum annual amount of the grant each student is eligible to receive shall be equal to the Cost of Attendance established for the purpose of the SSOG program minus the amounts determined for the student contribution, family contribution, and federal contribution, as defined and calculated pursuant to this section, and shall not exceed \$5,500 for Academic Year 2016-17.
- c. Minimum SSOG Award. Students who are not eligible to receive an annual SSOG award of at least \$200 for Academic Year 2016-17 based on the SSOG award calculation shall not receive the grant.

5. Cost of Attendance

- a. For purposes of calculating SSOG awards, the annual Cost of Attendance (COA) for all eligible institutions for Academic Year 2016-17 shall be:
 - i. \$18,830 for students living off-campus and not with a parent;
 - ii. \$12,717 for students living with a parent; and
 - iii. \$15,280 for students living on campus.

- b. The institution may pro-rate the COA in cases where a student enrolls for a single semester.
- c. Under no circumstances shall the grant received under the SSOG Program, along with other financial assistance received, exceed institutional COA.

6. Student Contribution

- a. A standard student contribution that will be used by each community college and state college in the calculation of all grants awarded under the SSOG Program will be calculated by determining what a student could earn by working at minimum wage a reasonable number of hours during the school year and over the summer. This calculation should in no way be construed as requiring a student to seek or obtain employment as a condition of eligibility for the SSOG Program.
- b. For purposes of calculating SSOG awards, the student contribution shall be set at \$5,500 for Academic Year 2016-17. The institution shall pro-rate the student contribution in cases where a single semester cost of attendance is utilized.
- c. The student contribution may be covered by, but is not limited to, the following:
 - i. Student earnings or savings;
 - ii. Private, institutional, state or federal scholarships, including the Governor Guinn Millennium Scholarship;
 - iii. Grants not listed under Subsection 6 of this section;
 - iv. Veterans education benefits;
 - v. Student loans; and
 - vi. Financial assistance from family or friends.

7. Family Contribution. The family contribution shall be equivalent to the federal nine-month Estimated Family Contribution (EFC), as calculated by the U.S. Department of Education based on FAFSA data and reported on the Institutional Student Information Record (ISIR). The EFC may be prorated for an award period of less than nine months.

8. Federal Contribution

- a. The federal contribution shall be equivalent to the total of federal grant aid a student is awarded during the same award year from the following programs only:
 - i. Federal Pell Grant;
 - ii. Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG); and
 - iii. Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) Grant.
- b. Under no circumstances shall the federal contribution include the amount the student is awarded in student loans.

9. Guidelines for Awarding and Disbursing SSOG funds

- a. Only students who are enrolled in 15 or more credits that count toward their program of study are eligible to receive an SSOG disbursement.

- b. A student who previously earned a bachelor's degree is not eligible to receive the SSOG award.
 - c. A student with Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) status may be eligible for the SSOG award. Such students must complete the FAFSA and identify themselves to the institutional financial aid office as having DACA status. DACA students must provide documentation they have been granted Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals before they can be awarded an SSOG grant.
 - d. A student placed into remedial math or English pursuant to Title 4, Chapter 16, Section 1 of the *Handbook* is not eligible for SSOG until all such remedial coursework is completed. However, enrollment in corequisite coursework where academic support is provided to students while enrolled in college gateway courses shall be considered college level courses for purposes of SSOG eligibility.
 - e. Each institution shall award SSOG funds to eligible students in ascending EFC order up to 8500 EFC, until available funds are exhausted. This order shall apply each time SSOG funds are awarded and applies only to the population of students meeting all eligibility requirements as of the date awarding is carried out.
10. Award Date. For academic year 2016-17, institutions shall make initial SSOG awards no earlier than July 1, 2016, and no later than July 8, 2016. Future award dates shall be set by the Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs in consultation with institutional financial aid offices.
11. Course Availability to Meet the 15-Credit per Semester Requirement
- a. Each community college and state college shall ensure that adequate courses are offered each semester so that a student otherwise eligible for the grant and desirous of enrolling in 15 credits is able to do so. If situations arise where such a student is, due to course availability, unable to enroll in 15 credits that count toward the student's program of study, the institution shall consider feasible alternatives, including, but not limited to:
 - i. Course substitutions;
 - ii. Adjustment of a student's academic plan; and
 - iii. Opening a new course section.
 - b. Credits taken at another eligible institution to meet degree requirements at the student's home institution shall count towards the eligibility requirement of Subsection 1(a). In order to take advantage of this provision, a student must complete the NSHE SSOG Co-Enrollment form by the end of the semester for which he or she is requesting funding. For purposes of this subsection, "home institution" means the institution at which the student is enrolled in a program of study leading to a recognized degree or certificate and, if eligible, is receiving Title IV Federal Student Aid.
 - c. Each community college and state college shall ensure advisors are available to assist SSOG students who experience difficulty in registering for 15 credits that count toward their program of study.

12. Reporting Requirements. On an annual basis, the Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs shall request from institutions data necessary to evaluate the success of the SSOG program.
13. Communications Strategies. Institutions shall establish strategies to communicate the availability of the SSOG to students. Type and method of communications may vary by institution; however, all institutions in jeopardy of not expending all allocated funds must send targeted communications to students in an effort to encourage more students to become eligible by taking action (e.g. adding a class, taking the placement test, completing the FAFSA).
14. Definitions. The following definitions apply for purposes of this Section:
- a. Award – The SSOG amount offered to a student on their Financial Aid Award letter. In order to receive the funds offered, a student must meet all eligibility requirements at time of disbursement.
 - b. Disbursement – The SSOG amount actually paid by the institution to a student account.
- (Added 6/15; A. 9/15, 3/16, 6/16)