

BOARD OF REGENTS
BRIEFING PAPER
Handbook Revision, Student Access Funds –
Reporting Requirement and Excess Credit Limitation

BACKGROUND & POLICY CONTEXT OF ISSUE:

At its September 2012, meeting, the Board received a presentation on the report of the ad hoc Committee on Access and Affordability, which was appointed by the Chancellor in 2011 in response to Nevada's rising tuition levels and limited financial aid resources. The charge of the Committee was to review the Board of Regents tuition, fee and student financial aid policies in the context of encouraging full time enrollment and degree completion. As discussed in the September presentation, the Committee's report included several recommendations regarding financial aid.

As noted in the Access and Affordability Report, the annual NSHE Financial Aid Report routinely reflects an increase in total financial aid disbursed to students. As higher education is called to demonstrate greater accountability and funding resources remain scarce, NSHE is taking a look at how financial aid has been awarded in the past and what policies might be developed to ensure both state-supported and fee-generated funds are awarded more effectively, with an eye toward encouraging full-time enrollment and increasing degree completion.

Current Board policy provides that Student Access funds, both state-supported and fee-generated, must be allocated in a certain manner (*Handbook, Title 4, Chapter 18, Section 9*), and the Committee made two recommendations to amend this policy:

- First, the Committee recommended establishing a congruent policy for both state-supported and fee-generated Student Access aid. In other words, the proposed policy would establish student eligibility for state-supported and fee-generated Student Access aid for no longer than 150 percent of the published length of the program. Because this policy already exists for Federal Student Aid, it would not add to the administrative burden of institutions, but would provide more guidance for students to ensure they are on track for graduation and not spending valuable time taking courses that will not count toward their chosen degrees or certificates.
- Second, the Committee recommended a policy requiring each NSHE institution to report annually on the success (e.g. degree and certificate attainment) of those students who receive state-supported or fee-generated Student Access aid. This approach would require reviewing the dollars distributed to students over a defined period of years and determining whether or not those students received a degree or certificate of value. This reporting and review of data will assist the institutions in evaluating whether or not Student Access dollars are being distributed in the most effective and beneficial manner over time.

SPECIFIC ACTIONS BEING RECOMMENDED OR REQUESTED:

Amend *Title 4, Chapter 18, Section 9* of the *Handbook* to include the following provisions:

1. Specify that student eligibility for Student Access funds is limited to 150 percent of the published credits required for a program in accordance with Title IV Federal Student Aid guidelines governing satisfactory academic progress. Institutions shall establish an appeals process pursuant to Title IV Federal Student Aid guidelines. (See attached policy proposal)
2. In the annual information reported by the institutions showing how Student Access funds were utilized, institutions must also include such information as defined by the Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs that may be utilized to evaluate student success. This information will be included in the annual NSHE Financial Aid Report. (See attached policy proposal)

(Currently, institutions submit information each year as requested by the Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs that is included in the Financial Aid Report. The template for providing that information

will be revised to include student record-level data that the system office will utilize for the purpose of evaluating the success of students who receive Student Access Funds.)

IMPETUS (WHY NOW?):

These recommendations are brought forward now based on the work of the Access and Affordability Committee, which completed its review of the Board of Regents' tuition, fee and student financial aid policies in May 2012.

BULLET POINTS TO SUPPORT REQUEST/RECOMMENDATION:

- The enhanced reporting requirement will increase accountability and transparency of NSHE financial aid programs and allow NSHE and the Board to evaluate more effectively the use of limited Student Access funds.
- Adopting a policy that mirrors Title IV Federal Student Aid guidelines and limits student eligibility for Student Access funds to 150 percent of the published credits will reinforce existing practice and will provide guidance for students to ensure they are on track for graduation and not spending valuable time taking courses that will not count toward their chosen degrees or certificates.
- The creation of a standard policy that applies to the majority of aid offered at Nevada public institutions will make it simpler for financial aid offices to communicate such information to students.
- Such standardization would afford institutions a greater opportunity to focus on student responsibility and increase awareness of such requirements among students, faculty, and advisors.
- Such a policy will support current efforts underway at all Nevada institutions to encourage timely degree completion in an environment of limited resources as well as send a strong message to the state and other stakeholders about the seriousness of such efforts NSHE-wide.

POTENTIAL ARGUMENTS AGAINST THE REQUEST/RECOMMENDATION:

Any limitations on Student Access Funds may impact a student's ability to attend and earn a degree or certificate from an NSHE institution.

ALTERNATIVE(S) TO WHAT IS BEING REQUESTED/RECOMMENDED:

Maintain the current policy as written.

COMPLIANCE WITH BOARD POLICY:

- Consistent With Current Board Policy: Title #____ Chapter #____ Section #____
- Amends Current Board Policy: Title #_4_ Chapter #_18_ Section #_9_
- Amends Current Procedures & Guidelines Manual: Chapter #____ Section #____
- Other:_____
- Fiscal Impact: Yes____ No__X__
- Explain: *None.*

POLICY PROPOSAL

TITLE 4, CHAPTER 18, SECTION 9

Student Access Funds – Reporting Requirement and Limitation for Excess Credits

Additions appear in *boldface italics*; deletions are [~~stricken~~ and bracketed]

Section 9. Use of Student Access Funds (Effective Fall 2013)

In order to improve the access of all students and to encourage participation in higher education, an amount equal to at least 10 percent of the total registration fee at the community colleges (lower division only) and at least 15 percent of the total registration fee for all other institutions including upper-division at the community colleges, net the amounts distributed to other fee categories, will be dedicated to student financial aid. These percentages are target amounts that must be achieved by academic year 2022-23. For the purposes of this section, “Student Access funds” means budgeted dollars intended for student financial aid, including allocations for such funds from state appropriations and funds generated from registration fees. The guidelines for the use of Student Access funds are as follows:

1. One-hundred percent (100%) of Student Access funds will be used for financial assistance for students. Except for the Regents’ Service Program, funds will not be used for administrative or any other purposes, unless specifically authorized by Board policy. The portion derived from undergraduate student enrollments will be dedicated to undergraduate financial assistance. The portion derived from graduate student enrollments will be dedicated to graduate financial assistance; however this shall not include the funding of base salaries for graduate assistantships.
2. At least eighty percent (80%) of state-funded Student Access funds for each institution each academic year will go to need-based programs [~~according to federal government methodology,~~] for both undergraduate and graduate students. ***Student eligibility for state-funded Student Access funds is limited to 150 percent of the published credits required for a program in accordance with Title IV Federal Student Aid guidelines governing satisfactory academic progress. Institutions shall establish an appeals process pursuant to Title IV Federal Student Aid guidelines.***
3. The remainder of the state-funded Student Access funds (not to exceed 20%) for each institution each academic year will go to other “access-oriented” financial assistance, including but not limited to scholarships, non-need based grants and work study programs, for both undergraduate and graduate students.
4. For fee-generated Student Access funds, at least eighty percent (80%) of undergraduate funds and at least 50% of graduate funds for each institution each academic year will go to need-based programs [~~according to federal government methodology~~]. ***Student eligibility for fee-generated Student Access funds is limited to 150 percent of the published credits required for a program in accordance with Title IV Federal Student Aid guidelines governing satisfactory academic progress. Institutions shall establish an appeals process pursuant to Title IV Federal Student Aid guidelines.***
5. The remainder of the fee-generated Student Access funds (not to exceed 20% for undergraduate and 50% for graduate students) for each institution each academic year will go to other “access-oriented” financial assistance, including but not limited to scholarships, [~~and other~~] non-need based grants ***and work study*** programs.
6. The institutions ***shall*** [~~will present a~~] report each year [~~to the Board of Regents showing~~] ***information on how [the] fee-generated and state-supported Student Access funds were utilized, including such information as defined by the Vice Chancellor for Academic and Student Affairs that may be utilized to evaluate student success. [The findings of the report will be used to evaluate these guidelines.] This information will be included in the annual NSHE Financial Aid Report.***

7. Nothing in this Section precludes an institution from allocating additional funds for general scholarship purposes. Any such additional allocations are not subject to the student access distribution established in this Section.
8. Awards granted to students using Student Access funds shall be named the “Regents Higher Education Opportunity Award.”