



OPPORTUNITY GRANT

PRIVATE CAREER COLLEGES

PROGRAM GUIDELINES

2011-2012

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2011-2012 OPPORTUNITY GRANT PROGRAM MANUAL

PRIVATE CAREER SCHOOLS

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UPDATES FOR 2011-12

OPPORTUNITY GRANT PROGRAM MANUAL

2011 HHS Poverty Level: Determination of family income at or below the 200 percent of the federal level must use the 2011 Health and Human Services Poverty Level chart through 2011.

Opportunity Express: A one-time \$1 million allocation to the Opportunity Grant program was added to the funding for FY11 only. This funding was removed from the 2011-12 allocation.

State General Fund Budget Cuts: The State General Fund Budget cut was 8.68% for the community and technical college system. The Board, however, chose to continue the 'earmark' on the Opportunity Grant program and did not cut these student aid funds, including the allocations to the private career colleges.

CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND AND OVERVIEW

In 2006, the Washington State Legislature appropriated \$4 million to the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges to create the Opportunity Grant pilot program. The 10 pilot programs showed excellent results with 73 percent retention and approximately 843 low-income students participating in training for high-wage, high-demand career pathways.

In 2007, the Legislature expanded the Opportunity Grant program by \$7.5 million for a total of \$11 million per year for all 34 community and technical colleges. The legislation also included \$500,000 for State Need Grant (SNG) eligible Private Career Colleges to implement an Opportunity Grant program. The dollars were distributed through a competitive request for proposal (RFP) process.

In 2007-08 the Private Career Colleges Opportunity Grant program served over 150 full-time equivalent students (FTES) or 159 full-time and part-time students. Student persistence exceeded expectations with an 89.9% fall to spring retention rate.

By 2008-09, the program had grown slightly to serve 163 full- and part-time students equivalent to 158 full-time equivalent students (FTES). Again, student retention remained strong at 88.3%.

For the 2010 academic year, the Opportunity Express program added a one-time \$1 million (FY11) allocation spread across the 34 community and technical colleges and the eight grant eligible private career colleges.

The program remains fully funded for the 2011. The Board chose to continue the 'earmark' on the Opportunity Grant program and did not cut these student aid funds, including the allocations to the private career colleges.

The goal of the Opportunity Grant is to help low-income adults reach the educational [tipping point](#) — and beyond — in high-wage, high-demand careers. Reaching the tipping point allows the least prepared individuals to complete 45 credits, receive a credential, an increase job skills and knowledge through career pathways. The approved high-wage, high-demand career pathways provide a minimum beginning wage of \$13.00 per hour in Washington State, except a minimum \$15.00 per hour in King County.

Eligible colleges will receive \$2,800 (maximum) per FTES for tuition and mandatory fees (prorated if the student is less than full time), and up to \$1,000 (maximum) per FTES for actual costs of books, tools, and supplies (prorated if the student is less than full time). Individual student support services are an important part of the program and may include: a single point of contact, one-on-one tutoring, career advising, and college success classes.

The retention target for the program is 70% for a full year -- students who start in summer/ fall and finish spring term.

CHAPTER 2

COLLEGE ALLOCATIONS AND PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

Each college's Opportunity Grant (OG) allocation for 2011-12 will revert to their original allocation from 2007-08. The one-time \$1 million allocation from the Opportunity Express legislation for FY11 was not funded for FY12. The total 2011-12 allocation recommendation assumes the following distribution of funds:

1. Eligible colleges will receive \$2,800 (maximum) per FTES for tuition and mandatory fees (prorated if the student is less than full time), and up to \$1,000 (maximum) per FTES for actual costs (receipts required) of books, tools, and supplies (prorated if the student is less than full time).
2. The college's budget amount is set up in the On-line Budget and Invoicing System (OBIS) and the college is responsible for submitting invoices quarterly with the final invoice due July 14, 2011. Payment to the college will be made by SBCTC within 30 days of receipt of the invoice.
3. The college may move money from 'goods and services' by requesting a budget revision in OBIS.
4. The Opportunity Grant funds must be expended by June 30th of each fiscal year. Current year funds may pay for summer tuition and fees if the published tuition due date is prior to July 1 of the current fiscal year.

College	FY12 Allocation
Digipen	\$ 38,000
Divers Institute	\$ 38,000
Everest College (Everett)	\$ 38,000
Gene Juarez	\$ 38,000
Interface College	\$ 102,600
ITT Technical-Everett	\$ 76,000
ITT Technical-Spokane	\$ 76,000
Perry Technical College	\$ 91,200
Emergency Reserve	\$ 2,200
Total	\$ 500,000

GENERAL PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS

- The college must maintain a retention program for Opportunity Grant students. A program may include, but not limited to: a single point of contact, student success workshops or classes, attendance tracking, intrusive advising, counseling, mentoring, tutoring, early alert systems, automated communication systems, graduation acknowledgment, and cohort based models.
- Students may receive Opportunity Grant funding up to \$2,800 (maximum) for tuition and \$1,000 (maximum) for books/supplies/ tools for a total of one academic year of eligibility funding.

Colleges should follow the appropriate academic term chart below for awarding guidelines.

College Academic Term and funding limits-

Quarters	45 credits	15 credits/quarter	\$ 933/quarter
Semesters	30 credits	15 credits/semester	\$1400/semester
Trimesters	36 credits	12 credits/trimester	\$ 933/trimester
Clock Hours-Quarters	944 hours	236 hours/quarter	\$ 700/quarter
Clock Hours-Trimesters	474 hours	158 hours/trimester	\$ 933/trimester
Block	Program Length	9 month maximum	\$2800/Block

- Students attending less than full time may receive pro-rated funding up to the maximums, but for no more than three years from initial receipt of grant funds. (See FAQs at the end of this document for more information).
- Students may not receive the maximum award based on anticipated continued enrollment for subsequent enrollment periods.
- The student must maintain a minimum cumulative 2.0 grade point average or equivalent and meet the college's satisfactory academic progress policy. If a student's cumulative grade point average falls below this threshold, the student may petition the college. The college has the authority to establish a probationary period until such time as the student's grade point average reaches required standards.
- Additional Opportunity Grant-eligible programs of study must be approved by the State Board for Community and Technical Colleges (see [Criteria for Program Approval](#)).

CHAPTER 3

STUDENT ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION

STUDENT ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

An eligible student must meet the following definitions:

- Washington resident student as defined in RCW 28B.15.012.
- Enrolled in an Opportunity Grant-eligible program of study (see [Criteria for Program Approval](#)).
- Family income that is at or below 200% (gross income) of the federal poverty level using the most current guidelines available from the United States Department of Health & Human Services. See [HHS Poverty Guidelines](#) for the 2011-12 academic year.
- Financial need based on federal methodology from the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) – see below for more information.

To be eligible for Opportunity Grant (OG) consideration, the student must **NOT**:

- Be in an unsatisfactory academic progress
- Owe a repayment to the OG program
- Receive funds beyond an academic year, unless enrolled less than full time
- Have exceeded any of these limits:
 - \$2800 of tuition/fees
 - \$1000 per year for books/supplies
 - Student's OG award, in combination with other forms of aid, may not exceed the calculated need.

Students must complete a formal application for the Opportunity Grant program. Each college has the authority to create their Opportunity Grant application. The application must include at least one of the following; a personal interview, an essay, or written responses to questions. Please include a release in the application so that student may be contacted in the future either for an exit interview, media contact, or data tracking purposes.

INCOME SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES

If a student's current or projected future income is less than their previous year income, they should complete and submit the FAFSA along with an institution special circumstances or appeal letter. Financial aid officers may use professional judgment and base the student's FAFSA on future income if they have special circumstances such as loss of employment, separation, or divorce.

FAFSA ELIGIBILITY

Students are required by the legislation to submit a FAFSA to document financial need. The FAFSA is used as an income eligibility measure. There are many students who are financially eligible for traditional aid resources, but don't receive aid because other factors make them ineligible. For example, they don't pass ability to benefit tests, they are in programs of study that aren't eligible for state and federal aid, they are in default status due to prior financial aid awards, etc. Therefore, many students who may not be eligible for traditional aid resources may be eligible for Opportunity Grant funding and participation.

CHAPTER 4

REFUNDS, RE-AWARDS, DE-OBLIGATIONS, RE-ALLOCATIONS, AND PENALTIES

REFUNDS

Any student receiving Opportunity Grant funding who officially or unofficially withdraws will have funds returned to the Opportunity Grant institutional account based on the college refund policy. All Opportunity Grant funds collected from student refunds may be re-awarded to other Opportunity Grant eligible students if refunds are received in the same fiscal year as disbursed. Please follow your college's standard refund policy.

Should the student re-enroll at a later date, those funds surrendered will apply and count toward the academic year Opportunity Grant tuition/fees funding maximum.

There typically are no refunds for books/supplies purchased.

RETRO-ACTIVE PAYMENTS

Retroactive payments may be made to an eligible student as long as the payments are made for the current fiscal year. The value of the retroactive payment shall be based on the student's rate of satisfactorily completed credits at the end of the term or when payments are made. The student does not have to be enrolled at the time of the retroactive payment.

DE-OBLIGATIONS

Colleges not expecting to meet their Opportunity Grant annual enrollment targets should notify the SBCTC for re-allocation to other colleges. Remaining funds not expended by June 30 will not be carried forward.

Colleges should de-obligate Opportunity Grant funds each year by completing and submitting an Opportunity Grant "Additional Funds Request/Return of Funds" form. The form will be sent electronically to the Opportunity Grant managers each January. Amounts to be returned for re-awarding are due to the SBCTC electronically by February 15.

Enrollment targets will be adjusted for colleges de-obligating funds.

RE-ALLOCATIONS

Colleges may request additional Opportunity Grant funds each year by completing and submitting an Opportunity Grant "Additional Funds Request/Return of Funds" form. The request form will be sent electronically to the Opportunity Grant managers each January. Requests are due to the SBCTC electronically by February 15.

Any de-obligated funds will be re-allocated on a formula basis. Historically, requests exceed fund availability.

PENALTIES

Per legislation, the SBCTC is accountable for student retention and completion rates of opportunity grant-eligible programs of study. The SBCTC is required to set annual performance measures and targets. Legislation also requires the SBCTC to reduce funding at the colleges that do not meet retention targets for two consecutive years.

Retention data will be collected annually each summer. A retained student is defined as a student who:

1. Began summer/fall term and was enrolled spring term, or
2. Began summer/fall term and completed program of study any term within the year

Should a college not meet the retention target for two consecutive years, Opportunity Grant funding will be reduced.

CHAPTER 5

PROGRAM REPORTING

ANNUAL REPORTS

Legislation requires SBCTC to track student retention, enrollment targets, and general student statistics annually. The data collected will assist with common legislative questions regarding student participation and program funding. A year-end 'Data Collection Report' will be due by July 15 following the end of each academic year.

Opportunity Grant: Private Career Colleges Program Statistics

Grant Eligible Colleges	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11
Total Private Colleges Opportunity Grant Budget	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$500,000	\$540,000**
Number of Enrolled Students	159	163	204*	257*
Percent Attending Full Time	96%	94%	99%	94%
Percent Over the Age of 25	60%	61%	65%	68%
Percent Female	52%	36%	45%	41%
Percent Parents of School Aged Children	45%	32%	40%	44%
Percent Students of Color	33%	25%	36%	29%
Retention Rate (Fall to Spring)	90%	88%	87%	87%
Includes both completers and continuing students				

*Awards shifted to books/supplies/tools to accommodate more students

**One-time \$40,000 from Opportunity Express legislation

STUDENT PROGRAM COMPLETIONS

As student retention is measured by continued enrollment and/or program completion, it is essential that each Opportunity Grant recipient be tracked accordingly. Beginning fall 2009, employment and wage data was required for all public community and technical college Opportunity Grant Program completers. It is expected that the private career college may be asked to follow suit.

CHAPTER 6

LAWS AND RULES

RCW 28B.50.271

Opportunity grant program.

(1) The college board shall develop and implement a workforce education program known as the opportunity grant program to provide financial and other assistance for students enrolled at qualified institutions of higher education in opportunity grant-eligible programs of study as described in RCW [28B.50.273](#). Students enrolled in the opportunity grant program are eligible for:

(a) Funding for tuition and mandatory fees at the public community and technical college rate, prorated if the credit load is less than full time, paid directly to the educational institution; and

(b) An additional one thousand dollars per academic year for books, tools, and supplies, prorated if the credit load is less than full time.

(2) Funding under subsection (1)(a) and (b) of this section is limited to a maximum forty-five credits or the equivalent in an opportunity grant-eligible program of study, including required related courses. No student may receive opportunity grant funding for more than forty-five credits or for more than three years from initial receipt of grant funds in one or a combination of programs.

(3) Grants awarded under this section are subject to the availability of amounts appropriated for this specific purpose.

RCW 28B.50.272

Opportunity grant program — Student eligibility — Funding — Performance measures — Documentation — Annual summary.

(1) To be eligible for participation in the opportunity grant program established in RCW [28B.50.271](#), a student must:

(a) Be a Washington resident student as defined in RCW [28B.15.012](#) enrolled in an opportunity grant-eligible program of study;

(b) Have a family income that is at or below two hundred percent of the federal poverty level using the most current guidelines available from the United States department of health and human services, and be determined to have financial need based on the free application for federal student aid; and

(c) Meet such additional selection criteria as the college board shall establish in order to operate the program within appropriated funding levels.

(2) Upon enrolling, the student must provide evidence of commitment to complete the program. The student must make satisfactory progress and maintain a cumulative 2.0 grade point average for continued eligibility. If a student's cumulative grade point average falls below 2.0, the student may petition the institution of higher education of attendance. The qualified institution of higher education has the authority to establish a probationary period until such time as the student's grade point average reaches required standards.

(3) Subject to funds appropriated for this specific purpose, public qualified institutions of higher education shall receive an enhancement of one thousand five hundred dollars for each full-time equivalent student enrolled in the opportunity grant program whose income is below two hundred percent of the federal poverty level. The funds shall be used for individualized support services which may include, but are not limited to, college and career advising, tutoring, emergency child care, and emergency transportation. The qualified institution of higher education is expected to help students access all financial resources and support services available to them through alternative sources.

(4) The college board shall be accountable for student retention and completion of opportunity grant-eligible programs of study. It shall set annual performance measures and targets and monitor the performance at all qualified institutions of higher education. The college board must reduce funding at institutions of higher education that do not meet targets for two consecutive years, based on criteria developed by the college board.

(5) The college board and higher education coordinating board shall work together to ensure that students participating in the opportunity grant program are informed of all other state and federal financial aid to which they may be entitled while receiving an opportunity grant.

(6) The college board and higher education coordinating board shall document the amount of opportunity grant assistance and the types and amounts of other sources of financial aid received by participating students. Annually, they shall produce a summary of the data.

(7) The college board shall:

(a) Begin developing the program no later than August 1, 2007, with student enrollment to begin no later than January 14, 2008; and

(b) Submit a progress report to the legislature by December 1, 2008.

(8) The college board may, in implementing the opportunity grant program, accept, use, and expend or dispose of contributions of money, services, and property. All such moneys received by the college board for the program must be deposited in an account at a depository approved by the state treasurer. Only the college board or a duly authorized representative thereof may authorize expenditures from this account. In order to maintain an effective expenditure and revenue control, the account is subject in all respects to chapter [43.88](#) RCW, but no appropriation is required to permit expenditure of moneys in the account.

RCW 28B.50.273**Identification of job training programs — Designation as opportunity grant-eligible programs of study — Marketing.**

The college board, in partnership with business, labor, and the workforce training and education coordinating board, shall:

(1) Identify job-specific training programs offered by qualified postsecondary institutions that lead to a credential, certificate, or degree in green industry occupations as established in chapter 14, Laws of 2008, and other high demand occupations, which are occupations where data show that employer demand for workers exceeds the supply of qualified job applicants throughout the state or in a specific region, and where training capacity is underutilized;

(2) Gain recognition of the credentials, certificates, and degrees by Washington's employers and labor organizations. The college board shall designate these recognized credentials, certificates, and degrees as "opportunity grant-eligible programs of study"; and

(3) Market the credentials, certificates, and degrees to potential students, businesses, and apprenticeship programs as a way for individuals to advance in their careers and to better meet the needs of industry.

CHAPTER 7

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

1. What are the retention expectations of the program?

The retention target is 70 percent for a full year -- students who start in summer/ fall and are enrolled spring or start summer/fall and complete their program of study at anytime during the academic year.

2. Does the student need to be 18 years old to receive the grant?

The student does not need to be 18 but needs to be matriculated into the college as an adult. Dual enrolled high school students are not eligible to receive the grant.

3. Does a student need to have less than an associate's degree to be eligible for Opportunity Grants?

The intent of the legislation is to recruit and retain underserved students for high-wage, high-demand pathways. The best definition of underserved would be a student without higher education experience or less than an associate's degree. While there are no specific legislative restrictions in awarding Opportunity Grant funds to students with associate degrees and/or higher, it would be advisable to award these students on a funds available basis.

Students holding a baccalaureate degree or higher and who qualify for federal student loans would not be eligible for Opportunity Grant funds as their financial need would most likely be met.

4. How can I award the student the \$1,000 for books, supplies and tools?

The Washington Financial Aid Association has determined the average cost of books and supplies is \$972 a year. Opportunity Grant students may receive up to \$1,000 an academic year for books, supplies and required tools. It is acceptable for a full-time student to receive an award divided evenly between the number of terms in the academic year. This disbursement can be made directly to the student upon proof (receipt(s), voucher, or similar). If the student attends less than full-time then the award must be prorated.

Programs with higher initial term books or supplies/tools costs may adjust the award accordingly.

5. Should we use previous year income or current year income to determine eligibility?

The institution may make its own policy to determine which year of income to use. With typical federal financial aid, the aid is based on the previous calendar year of income. However, your financial aid office may use Professional Judgment and base the aid on current calendar year income (with the remainder of the year projected).

6. Can a student receive the Opportunity Grant before they apply for the FAFSA?

While the student is applying for the FAFSA, they may receive the Opportunity Grant if they meet the eligibility guidelines:

- Washington resident student as defined in RCW 28B.15.012

- Enrolled in an Opportunity Grant-eligible program of study
- Family income that is at or below 200% (gross income) of the federal poverty level using the most current guidelines available from the United States Department of Health & Human Services
- Financial need based on the FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid)

7. Does the student need to be eligible for the FAFSA to receive Opportunity Grant funding?

Students are required by the legislation to submit a FAFSA to document financial need. The FAFSA is used as an income eligibility measure. There are many students who are financially eligible for traditional aid resources, but don't receive aid because other factors make them ineligible. For example, they don't pass ability to benefit tests, they are in programs of study that aren't eligible for state and federal aid, they are in default status due to prior financial aid awards, etc. Therefore, many students who may not be eligible for traditional aid resources may be eligible for Opportunity Grant funding and participation.

8. Do I need to determine independency/dependency on the initial Opportunity Grant application? If my student meets the definition of a dependent student on the FAFSA, do I need to gather parental income?

On the initial Opportunity Grant application, the college may make the determination if they would like to collect independency/dependency information. If the college chooses not to determine dependency initially, they may base the first quarter Opportunity Grant award on their standard application and then future quarters of Opportunity Grant will be determined from financial need from the FAFSA.

If the student is deemed dependent on the FAFSA, then family income will be taken into consideration in determining financial need. If there are extenuating circumstances, the financial aid office has the option of using Professional Judgment to override dependency and use only student income.

9. When does a student's clock start ticking on using the one year of Opportunity Grant eligibility?

A student may receive Opportunity Grant funding for one year (full time) of eligibility but no more than three years from initial receipt of grant funds for students enrolled less than full time. Therefore a student's eligibility may be separated out from the student's three years of eligibility. A student will begin to use his or her eligibility when grant funds have paid for those 45 credits (or equivalent) of tuition and fees. Once a student has been identified as an Opportunity Grant student either by receiving grant funds for tuition and/or books/supplies/tools, the student's three years of eligibility begins to diminish.

An example would be a student whose tuition is being paid by another source but the Opportunity Grant is paying for books. The student's academic year of tuition eligibility has not been used, but the student has begun to use his or her three years of eligibility. The student's academic year of eligibility will begin to diminish when the Opportunity Grant has been used to pay directly for the tuition and fees. Keep in mind that a student may not receive more than \$1,000 an academic year for books, supplies and mandatory tools.

Another example is a student who is in a program that requires a credit (or equivalent) overload. The college can make the decision to use Opportunity Grant funds to pay for the overload, diminishing the funds for subsequent terms, or the college can equally fund each term with the student's overload being paid by the student or other financial aid/outside source funds.

10. What are the funding maximums and time frames for awarding the Opportunity Grant?

The student may receive \$2,800 for tuition and fees for a maximum of one academic year. Program guidelines use the language 'FTES' or 'full-time equivalent student' but if the student is considered more than a FTES, such as enrolled in a program greater than one academic year, they do not get more than \$2,800.

Examples:

1344 clock hour cosmetology program

Funding: \$2800 for tuition and mandatory fees; maximum of \$1000 for required books, tools, equipment, not to exceed the disclosed purchase amount

90 Quarter Credit Associate Degree Program in Graphic Arts

Funding: \$2800 for tuition and mandatory fees; maximum of \$1000 for required books, tools, equipment, not to exceed the disclosed purchase amount

60 Semester Credits Associate Degree Program in Computer Network and Systems

Funding: \$2800 for tuition and mandatory fees; maximum of \$1000 for required books, tools, equipment, not to exceed the disclosed purchase amount

11. What if books, tools, and equipment are included in the tuition price?

If these items are included in the cost of tuition and can be documented as such, the student's tuition can be paid for student books, tools and equipment costs, up to the disclosed amount of those items, but in no event more than \$1000.

12. Can on-line courses be paid for by Opportunity Grants?

Yes. On-line or blended classes are eligible for funding if they are a required course in the program of study.

13. What "fees" may be included?

The \$2800 for tuition and fees includes fees that are mandatory; however in most private career colleges the tuition alone will exceed \$2800.

14. How do we meet the requirement of "student commitment to success?"

The student needs to show evidence of a commitment to the program, either by filling out an application, writing a request letter, or through a personal interview.

15. Opportunity Grants must be given with priority to under-represented populations. What is the definition of “under-represented populations?”

Underrepresented student populations used for Opportunity Grant eligibility is defined as: students with low income, with a high school education or less, first generation college student, non-English speaking, ethnic minority, and individuals facing multiple barriers to higher education completion.

16. May we add an additional family member to the poverty guidelines if two family members are in college?

The college may make the decision to add a family member to the poverty guidelines if a sibling is under 24 years old is in college at the concurrently. Just make sure you define your policy and consistently apply it.

17. What type of Satisfactory Progress Policy (SAP) must my college implement?

The OG legislation indicates that a student must maintain a cumulative 2.0 grade point average (or equivalent). If a student's cumulative grade point average falls below 2.0, the student may petition the college. The college has the authority to establish a probationary period until such time as the student's grade point average reaches required standards.

Other than the guidelines above, your college may decide on a complete policy. Your college may decide to use the same policy as traditional financial aid, or your college may allow OG students to receive OG even if they are on suspension for traditional financial aid. Your Opportunity Grant team will decide the process. Make sure you define your policy and consistently apply it.

18. Are all classes within an approved program offered at the college eligible for funding?

If the student is taking a class, the class must be required for the program of study and be credit/clock hour bearing. “Credit bearing” means the class is required toward program completion.

19. Can we add high-demand, high-wage pathways to our approved programs list?

Yes, please see [Criteria for Program Approval](#) for more information.