

FINANCIAL AID AND SCHOLARSHIPS

The financial aid programs of the University of South Carolina Union make it possible for many students to attend the University who could not do so if left entirely to their own resources. Scholarships, grants, loans, and part-time employment are available to qualified undergraduate students.

Eligibility for most types of aid except academic scholarships depends on the applicant's financial circumstances. The University uses the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to determine the amount of assistance each applicant is eligible to receive. We recommend that you complete the FAFSA (p. 1) via the Web; however, paper applications may still be obtained from most high-school guidance offices or the Financial Aid Office. Your application must be received by the application processor by June 30.

General Guidelines for Financial Aid

1. The student should have applied and been accepted for admission to USC Union as a regular student working toward a degree.
2. The student must have a high-school diploma or a General Education Development (GED) certificate.
3. Each applicant should complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid indicating the University of South Carolina Union as the school of attendance.
4. A Student Aid Report (SAR) will be sent from the U.S. Department of Education to the student.
5. If corrections are necessary, they should be made in the Financial Aid Office. Corrections are electronically transmitted. An ISAR (Institutional Student Aid Report) with the updated information will be sent to the student.
6. Information concerning federal financial aid programs, such as Federal Work-Study (FWS), Federal Perkins Loans, Federal William D. Ford Direct Loans (DL), and Federal Grants, may be obtained from the financial aid office.
7. The student must be making satisfactory academic progress toward completing a degree or certificate program.
8. The student must sign a statement of purpose/certification statement on refunds and default.
9. Awards of financial assistance are made in the summer prior to the beginning of the fall semester. An award notification will be sent to the student once the file is complete.
10. In order to be considered for some type of federal financial assistance, a student must be enrolled at least half time (6 semester hours); the Pell Grant program is an exception to this requirement.
11. Awards will be based only on a student's enrollment status during the official registration period.
12. The Financial Aid Office staff is available for counseling with students and parents concerning any financial aid program.

Financial Aid and the Extended Graduate Campus Program

Financial aid for graduate students who are admitted and registered through The Graduate School on the University's Columbia campus will have their financial aid administered by the Columbia campus financial aid office regardless of the student's campus location. As such, graduate

students in this category should list the University of South Carolina Columbia as their school of choice on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid form. All financial aid related correspondence should be directed to the Columbia campus financial aid office.

Satisfactory Academic Progress

All students receiving federal financial aid must adhere to the University's policy on satisfactory progress. The intent of this policy is to ensure that students who are receiving federal and/or state financial aid for their education are making measurable progress toward completion of a degree in a reasonable period of time.

Undergraduate students are considered to be making satisfactory progress if they:

1. are admitted and enrolled as degree-seeking students;
2. meet the University standards for continued enrollment;
3. complete requirements for a degree within a reasonable length of time as specified below:
 - a. The total number of semesters of full-time enrollment (12 or more semester hours attempted) at any post-secondary institution does not exceed 180 hours for a four-year degree or 90 hours for a two-year degree.
 - b. The total number of semesters of part-time enrollment (less than 12 semester hours attempted) does not exceed the equivalent of 180 hours for a four-year degree or 90 hours for a two-year degree.
4. earn no fewer than 67% of all coursework if enrolled as a full time student. The academic year for Satisfactory Academic Progress is comprised of the fall, spring, and summer terms.
5. maintain a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 2.00 on all coursework.

Explanation

Under these standards, students will be ineligible to receive federal financial aid funds if any of the following occurs:

1. The total number of semesters of enrollment as a full-time student (12 or more semester hours attempted) exceeds 180 hours for a four-year degree or 90 hours for a two-year degree. These limits include all work done at any post-secondary institution, whether or not financial aid was received.
2. The total number of earned hours falls below the prescribed number based upon enrollment in undergraduate or graduate study.
3. Complete requirements for a degree or certificate within a reasonable length of time as specified below:
 - a. The total number of semesters of full-time enrollment (12 or more semester hours attempted) at any postsecondary institution does not exceed 180 hours for a four-year degree or 90 hours for a two-year degree or certificate.
 - b. The total number of semesters of part-time enrollment (less than 12 semester hours attempted) does not exceed 180 hours for a four-year degree or 90 hours for a two-year degree or certificate.
4. The cumulative GPA falls below 2.00.

In other words, students who accumulate a yearly or cumulative GPD that subjects them to suspension, who have been enrolled for more than the equivalent of 10 full-time semesters for a four-year degree program, who do not maintain a cumulative GPA of 2.00 after attempting 48 credit hours, or who do not earn the minimum number of semester hours required will become ineligible to receive federal financial aid funds. This

determination applies without regard to any financial aid award letter that may have been sent or received prior to the time the determination is made.

Financial Aid Programs Covered by These Standards

- Federal Pell Grant
- Federal Work-Study
- Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants
- Palmetto Fellows Scholars
- William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan Program:
 - Direct Subsidized Loan
 - Direct Unsubsidized Loan
 - Federal PLUS
- South Carolina LIFE Scholarship
- South Carolina Lottery Tuition Assistance Program
- South Carolina Need-Based Grant
- Other federal or state programs as required
- Some select private loans (as determined by the lender)

Appeals

Students who are ruled ineligible for financial aid may appeal this determination under specifically prescribed conditions. Deadlines for receipt of appeals are 20 days prior to the end of the semester for which aid is requested. Information concerning the appeal process is available in the financial aid office.

Reinstatement

Students shall be reinstated for financial aid eligibility at such time as they successfully complete sufficient hours and have a sufficient grade point average to meet the minimum requirements for eligibility as set forth in this policy.

Academic Forgiveness

The Satisfactory Academic Progress policy standards will not automatically apply to any hours forgiven under the University of South Carolina Academic Forgiveness Program. However, if you have been granted academic forgiveness under this policy you must contact the Financial Aid Office for further assessment.

Grants

Federal Pell Grant

The Federal Pell Grant is the largest federally funded student financial aid grant program. It serves as the foundation upon which all other undergraduate aid is awarded. Typically, it is available only to undergraduate students who have not earned a baccalaureate degree. Federal Pell Grant eligibility is determined according to federal law and is based on the financial information you and your family provided on your FAFSA.

You are notified of your possible eligibility to receive a Federal Pell Grant via the Student Aid Report (SAR). The financial aid office will receive this information directly from the federal processor and determine the amount of your Federal Pell Grant. You should carefully review the information on your SAR and, if it is correct, keep it for your records. If you discover mistakes, follow the instructions and submit corrections as soon as possible.

If you or your family experiences a major change in your financial situation after your Pell Grant eligibility has been determined, you should

notify the financial aid office immediately. A counselor will be able to determine if you qualify for an adjustment of your Pell Grant award and/or other financial aid.

Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG)

The FSEOG is a grant that does not need to be repaid. The financial aid office awards USC's limited allocation of FSEOG funds. Recipients must be undergraduates who have not already earned a baccalaureate degree and who demonstrate exceptional financial need. FSEOG recipients must be eligible to receive a Pell Grant and have the lowest EFC's from among those students being considered for an award.

Palmetto Fellows Scholarship

The Palmetto Fellows Scholarship is a **merit-based** program recognizing the most academically talented high school seniors and encouraging these students to attend college in the state. Palmetto Fellows may receive up to **\$6,700 their freshman year** and up to **\$7,500 for their sophomore, junior and senior years**. Half of the scholarship is awarded in the fall term and half in the spring term.

The scholarship must be applied directly toward the cost of attendance, less any other gift aid received. Eligible Palmetto Fellows may receive scholarship funding for a maximum of eight full-time terms of study toward their first bachelor's degree at an eligible four-year institution in South Carolina.

The **Palmetto Fellows Scholarship Enhancement** was established in 2007 to increase the number of students who **major in mathematics and science** in South Carolina. The **Palmetto Fellows Scholarship** participation in select SC 2-year institutions started in fall 2021.

For enhancement eligibility, Palmetto Fellows must declare a major in an approved math or science program and must also successfully complete at least 14 credit hours of instruction in mathematics **or** life and physical science **or** a combination of both by the end of the first academic year. Eligible students may receive **up to \$10,000** (combined funds from the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship and the Scholarship Enhancement) per year beginning with their second/sophomore year of college enrollment. Students may receive enhancement funding for a maximum of six full-time terms of study toward their first bachelor's degree at an eligible four-year institution in South Carolina.

PLEASE NOTE THAT ONLY SCHOOL COUNSELORS CAN SUBMIT APPLICATIONS FOR PALMETTO FELLOWS SCHOLARSHIPS. SUBMISSIONS FROM STUDENTS OR PARENTS WILL BE REJECTED. IF YOU ARE A PARENT OR STUDENT AND WISH TO APPLY FOR A PALMETTO FELLOWS SCHOLARSHIP, YOU MUST CONTACT YOUR SCHOOL COUNSELOR.

South Carolina Educational Resources State Need-Based Grant Program (SNBG)

The South Carolina Need-Based Grant is a state-funded grant for undergraduates attending public and independent colleges and universities within South Carolina. Recipients may not have already earned a baccalaureate degree. To be considered, you must be a South Carolina resident, be admitted or currently enrolled with a minimum GPA of 2.00, complete the FAFSA, demonstrate financial need, be of good moral character, and have no felony and/or alcohol or drug convictions for a period of one year. Additionally, to renew a state grant award, you must maintain an annual 2.00 GPA and complete 24 semester hours during the fall and spring semesters if enrolled full time or an equivalent

number of hours based on enrollment if less than full time. Awards are made for the entire academic year (fall and spring semesters) only. The State Need-Based Grant does not need to be repaid.

South Carolina Legislative Incentives for Future Excellence Scholarship

The South Carolina Legislative Incentives for Future Excellence Scholarship (LIFE) was established by the General Assembly during the 1998 legislative session. To be eligible for a LIFE Scholarship, you must have graduated from a high school located in South Carolina on or after May 1995 and be a full-time, undergraduate, degree-seeking student. You must be a South Carolina resident for in-state tuition purposes at the time of enrollment and have no felony, alcohol, or drug convictions. If, however, you have been judged delinquent or have been convicted or pled guilty or nolo contendere to an alcohol or drug misdemeanor, you are ineligible for one calendar year from the date of the conviction. You must also be a U.S. citizen or a permanent resident under state laws. You may not be in default or owe a refund on any federal or state financial aid program.

If you are a first-time entering freshman, you must have graduated from high school with a minimum 3.00 cumulative grade point average (GPA) on a 4.00 scale.

For initial LIFE Scholarship eligibility, if a currently enrolled student, you must have earned a cumulative 3.00 USC GPA at the end of the academic year. You must also have earned a minimum of 30 credit hours, or the annual equivalent at all institutions attended, for the previous academic year if completing your first year; 60 credit hours must have been earned if completing your second year; and, 90 credit hours must have been earned if completing your third year. Students at USC Regional Campuses are only eligible to receive the LIFE Scholarship for four consecutive semesters.

You may receive the LIFE scholarship for not more than eight semesters for a four-year degree or 10 semesters for a five-year degree. Funds from this program may not be used for remedial courses or continuing education classes. If you are receiving South Carolina’s Palmetto Fellows Scholarship, you are not eligible for a LIFE Scholarship.

To retain the LIFE Scholarship you must earn an average of 30 credit hours for each academic year and earn a 3.00 cumulative USC GPA by the end of the academic year. The financial aid office, using data from the admissions and records offices, is responsible for awarding LIFE Scholarships.

Please note that the LIFE Scholarship statutes and regulations are subject to change by the South Carolina Legislature.

South Carolina Lottery Tuition Assistance Program

During the 2002 legislative session, the South Carolina General Assembly established the Lottery Tuition Assistance Program. Its purpose is to provide resources that supplement, not supplant, existing resources for educational purposes to South Carolina’s students. The program assists students who wish to attend two-year public or independent college in the state. In calculating the amount awarded, any and all federal grants and need-based grants must first be awarded before determining the amount a student is eligible to receive. A student may receive up to the cost of tuition minus Pell, SEOG, and SNBG. The college at which the student is enrolled will notify each student of the exact award amount.

In order to qualify for lottery tuition assistance, a student must meet the following requirements:

- file the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and complete the process to determine eligibility for federal student aid each academic year
- be a legal resident of South Carolina as defined in applicable state statutes governing the determination of residency for tuition and fee purposes
- be enrolled at the time of the grant disbursement in a minimum of 6 credit hours for the term and be making satisfactory academic progress toward an associate’s degree
- verify that the student does not owe a refund or repayment on a state grant, Federal Pell Grant, or Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG) and is not in default on a loan under the Federal Perkins Loan or Federal Stafford Loan programs
- must not be eligible for or a recipient of the LIFE scholarship.

To retain program funds, a student must have a 2.00 GPA by the end of the academic year.

In addition, students shall not be eligible to receive lottery tuition assistance for more than one certificate, diploma, or degree earned within any five-year period.

The financial aid office administers the South Carolina Lottery Tuition Assistance Program, and the exact award amount is dependent upon the number of eligible recipients and the amount of funding each academic year. Please note that program statutes and regulations are subject to change by the S.C. Legislature.

Loans

The Federal Direct Stafford Loan Program (Subsidized and Unsubsidized)

The Federal Direct Stafford Loan Program provides low-interest, long-term loans to eligible students through the U.S. Department of Education.

Subsidized Stafford Loans are awarded based on financial need. The federal government pays the interest on these loans while the student is enrolled in school at least half-time (6 semester hours), during the grace period and during deferment periods.

Unsubsidized Stafford Loans are not based on financial need. Interest begins accruing after the first disbursement. Students have the option of paying the interest monthly or quarterly while in school and during the grace period, or can have the interest capitalized and added to the principal amount of the loan upon entering repayment.

Maximum Loan Amounts

Classification	Loan Amount
Freshmen	\$5500 for dependent students (maximum \$3500 subsidized)
	\$9500 for independent students (maximum \$3500 subsidized)
Sophomore	\$6500 for dependent students (maximum \$4500 subsidized)
	\$10,500 for independent students (maximum \$4500 subsidized)
Junior and Beyond	\$7500 for dependent students (maximum \$5500 subsidized)
	\$12,500 for independent students (maximum \$5500 subsidized)

Aggregate Loan Limits

Classification	Loan Amount
Undergraduate	\$31,000 for dependent students (maximum \$23,000 subsidized)
	\$57,500 for independent students (maximum \$23,000 subsidized)
Graduate	\$138,500 (maximum \$65,500 subsidized)

The graduate limit includes Stafford Loans received for undergraduate study.

Federal Direct Parent Loan for Undergraduate Students (PLUS)

Federal Direct Parent Loan for Undergraduate Students (PLUS) provides long-term loans to parents for their dependents through the U.S. Department of Education. Loan amounts under this program are limited to the student's cost of education minus other financial aid awards. Parents may be denied a PLUS loan due to adverse credit history. If the PLUS Loan is denied, the student is eligible for an additional Unsubsidized Loan.

The repayment period for each Direct PLUS Loan begins on the date the final loan disbursement is made. There is no grace period for Direct PLUS Loans. Parents have the option of postponing payments until six months after the student ceases to be enrolled at least half time. Parents must contact the Direct Loan Servicing Center to request a postponement of payments. Interest will accrue during the postponement period. The loans have a fixed rate of 7.9%. PLUS Loan funds will be disbursed in two equal payments, one at the beginning of each semester (Fall - August, Spring - January). One semester loans are disbursed at the beginning of the semester for the full loan amount.

South Carolina Teacher Loan Program

This program is available only to residents of South Carolina who are attending college for the purpose of becoming certified teachers employed in the state's school system in areas of critical need as defined by the State Board of Education. For loan recipients who become certified and teach in an area of critical need, the loan shall be cancelled at the rate of 20 percent for each full year of teaching, up to 100 percent. Loan recipients who do not become certified and/or do not teach in an area of critical need shall be responsible for repaying the entire amount of loan funds borrowed plus interest. Contact the Office of Student Financial Aid and Scholarships for application information and deadlines.

Work Opportunities

Federal Work-Study Program

The Federal Work-Study Program provides part-time employment for needy students to meet their educational expenses. To be eligible for employment under this federal program, a student must be enrolled in the University or fully accepted for admission and demonstrate financial need.

Students who are enrolled at least half-time work an average of 12 to 20 hours per week. During vacation periods it is sometimes possible to work up to 40 hours per week. Pay rates vary with the job assignment.

Refunds and Financial Aid

The official University policy and procedure concerning refunding of University tuition and fees which result from withdrawal or reduction

in hours is contained in the "Fees and Refunds" section of this bulletin. Students who withdraw or reduce hours may be eligible to receive a refund as provided by the official University policy; however, recipients of financial aid generally do not receive the refund.

When students who are recipients of federal financial aid withdraw from all classes, they are only entitled to retain a percentage of the federal financial aid received that is proportional to the time they remained enrolled. If, for example, a student withdraws after completing 30 percent of the semester or summer term, they can only retain 30 percent of the federal financial aid they received. The balance, 70 percent, must be returned to the financial aid programs. The Office of the Bursar performs this calculation and students are notified by mail of the outcome.

When funds are applied back to the federal financial aid programs, loan funds are always returned first, thereby reducing the student's repayment obligation. If funds remain after repaying federal loans, they are then repaid to the Federal Pell Grant and the Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG) programs. After all federal funds are repaid, state-sponsored grant programs then receive any remaining payments.

Veterans Benefits

The following policies and procedures are of primary concern to veterans, servicepersons, members of guard and selected reserves, and other eligible persons who receive VA educational benefits while enrolled at the University.

Please note: Academic standards of progress and attendance are covered under school standards of progress as specified by the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education, License Division, and are required by the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA).

Enrollment Certification

Certification by the University VA certifying official in the Office of Financial Aid, Scholarships, and Veterans Affairs is required for eligible students who wish to receive VA educational benefit checks. Students must initiate their own requests for enrollment certification. The certifying official will complete certifications and forward other forms to the VA only for those students who have made such requests and have completed the necessary paperwork.

Normally, the VA requires that eligible students must have completed full University admissions requirements and matriculation into degree-seeking status before they may receive VA educational benefits. However, those students admitted as "Provisional," "Military Special," or "Transient," or students enrolling for prerequisite courses required for admission into a professional degree program or school may request VA certification if they provide appropriate documentation. Any VA students in these categories should contact the VA certifying official for details. In these and all other admissions categories, only the federal VA has the final authority to award or to deny military educational benefits.

Undergraduate veterans or servicepersons should contact the Office of Admissions for consideration of receiving college credit for military schools.

Students can best ensure receipt of benefits by informing the school VA office of their intent to register for classes and by supplying the number of credit hours for which they will enroll each session. Eligible VA students may request certification on a semester basis and should

recertify for each new semester at least 45 days prior to the first day of class of their next semester.

Normally, VA payments are authorized only for those courses which are required by the academic department for the student's current degree program. All students receiving educational benefit checks from the VA are responsible for notifying the VA certifying official of any changes in their degree programs and/or course loads during a semester, to include drop/add, withdrawal, changing from credit to audit status, invoking the Pass-Fail option in a course, or enrolling in any distance education course, independent study, internship, or practicum.

Appropriate forms and benefits-related information are available at the Office of Financial Aid, Scholarships, and Veterans Affairs. Each student request will be handled individually according to their VA benefit program and enrollment status at the University.

USC Union Scholarships

Detailed information and an updated listing of scholarships can be found here (https://sc.edu/about/system_and_campuses/union/apply/scholarships/).