Financial Aid
Purpose and Eligibility

USC Upstate offers a full range of financial assistance programs designed to assist students and their families with the cost of education. These programs provide financial aid resources in the form of grants, scholarships, loans, and employment opportunities. These resources are awarded to students based on financial need, academic promise, leadership potential, special talents, or a combination of these criteria. Descriptions of these programs and their requirements may be found in the following pages of this catalog. In 2010-2011, more than $57-million in financial aid was awarded to USC Upstate students.

Eligibility for assistance based on financial need is determined by completing a federally approved needs analysis form, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Students may complete the FAFSA electronically at www.fafsa.ed.gov. The Title IV code for USC Upstate is 006951. The FAFSA calculates how much the family should reasonably contribute toward the cost of college from current income and resources. The difference between what the family can contribute and the cost of education is the student’s financial need. USC Upstate seeks to identify and provide funds to meet the financial needs of its students, to the extent resources are available. It is intended that no student be denied an education because of financial need.

Financial assistance programs have individual requirements in addition to a demonstration of financial need through completion of the FAFSA. These requirements generally include, but are not limited to, enrollment in good standing, and meeting academic requirements. Students receiving state, federal or institutional financial aid must be enrolled in 12 or more USC Upstate hours to be considered full-time for financial aid purposes.

Satisfactory Academic Progress

Institutions participating in Title IV federal financial aid programs are required by the U.S. Department of Education to establish institutional policies that define satisfactory academic progress. All students who receive federal, state or institutional financial assistance at USC Upstate are expected to maintain satisfactory progress toward completion of their programs of study in a reasonable period of time.

Financial assistance programs covered by this policy include all federal financial aid programs (Federal Pell Grant, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant, TEACH Grant, Federal Subsidized and Unsubsidized Direct Loans, Federal Perkins Loans, Federal Supplemental Loans for Nursing Students, Federal Parent Loans for Undergraduate Students, and Federal Work-Study), Private Loans, South Carolina Teacher Loans, State Need Based Grant and institutional financial assistance programs (athletic grants, academic scholarships, stipends, minority incentive grants, and student employment).

The USC Upstate Financial Aid Committee has approved the following policy. Students are considered to be making satisfactory academic progress if they:

1. Are admitted and enrolled as degree-seeking or teacher certification students;
2. Meet the university standards for continued enrollment (including GPA requirements) as specified in the "Academic Standing" section of the USC Upstate Catalog (page 52). A waiver granted by the Admissions and Petitions Committee for continued enrollment does not constitute evidence of satisfactory academic progress for financial assistance.
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 post-secondary institution does not exceed ten semesters for a four year degree or five semesters 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 the equivalent of ten full time semesters for a four year degree or the equivalent of five full time semesters for a two year degree or certificate.
4. Earn at least 67% of the overall attempted hours (including hours from all USC campuses and all other previous colleges).

Certification Students

Students seeking a teacher certification with an undergraduate degree are required to appeal. The student must explain why a career change is required, be accepted by the school or division to which the student is applying, and have an anticipated graduation date determined by the faculty advisor. If the student's plan is deemed reasonable and all documentation is provided, an extension of eligibility will be granted for a maximum of four full-time equivalency semesters or anticipated graduation date.

Transfer Students

Transfer students receiving unqualified admission to the University will be considered to be making satisfactory academic progress for financial aid at the time of enrollment unless the total number of hours attempted at all post-secondary institutions exceeds the equivalent of ten full-time semesters.

Transfer students gaining admission through the Admissions and Petitions Committee must attain a minimum 2.0 grade point ratio on the first twelve hours attempted to maintain further financial aid eligibility. Eligibility for financial assistance is limited to a total of the equivalent of ten full-time semesters of enrollment at all post-secondary institutions attended.
Academic Suspension

Students serving suspensions will not be eligible for financial aid during periods of open enrollment. Students not making satisfactory academic progress are not eligible for financial aid.

Appeal Process

If a student's ability to meet these standards was affected by extenuating circumstances, he or she may appeal this determination. Information concerning the appeals process is available in the Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships. Students not meeting these standards at the end of spring term may attend summer school to make up deficit hours or improve the cumulative grade point average. Incomplete appeals will be returned upon receipt. The committee's decision is final and cannot be further challenged.

Grants

Federal Pell Grants are designed to be the foundation of financial aid. Their purpose is to ensure that all eligible students have at least some of the money needed to continue their education after high school. The amount of a Federal Pell Grant award depends on a student's financial need, the cost of the student's education, and the amount of time the student is enrolled during the school year.

Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants are awarded to a very limited number of students with the greatest financial need. The grants are restricted due to the shortage of appropriated federal funds, with preference to Federal Pell Grant recipients.

TEACH Grant Program. Through the College Cost Reduction and Access Act of 2007, Congress created the Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) Grant Program that provides grants of up to $4,000 per year to students who intend to teach in a public or private elementary or secondary school that serves students from low-income families. Students are required to sign an agreement to serve. Please go to the USC Upstate Web site for additional information. Funding for the TEACH Grant Program will end after the 2011-2012 academic year.

Loans

Campus-based Loans

Federal Perkins Loans permit students to borrow money from the federal government through the University based on need as calculated from the FAFSA. Repayment and interest begin nine months after graduation, leaving school, or dropping below half-time enrollment. The interest rate is five percent per year, and repayment may be extended over a period of 10 years.

Federal Direct Loan Program

Federal Subsidized Direct Loan Program is a need-based program that allows students to borrow for educational expenses. The federal government pays the interest on these loans as long as students are enrolled on at least a half-time basis.

Loan eligibility is based on financial need, class standing, and anticipated graduation date. Freshman students may borrow up to $5,500 annually ($3,500 subsidized, $2,000 unsubsidized). Students with sophomore class standing may borrow up to $6,500 annually ($4,500 subsidized, $2,000 unsubsidized) and those classified as juniors and seniors may borrow up to $7,500 annually ($5,500 subsidized, $2,000 unsubsidized).

Unsubsidized Federal Direct Loan Program is available for students who do not qualify, in whole or in part, for the Federal Subsidized Direct Loan. The terms for this loan are the same as those described for the Federal Subsidized Direct Loan Program with the following exceptions.

- The annual loan limits for dependent, undergraduate students are the same as those for the Subsidized Direct Loan. The annual loan limits for independent, undergraduate students are as follows (subsidized and unsubsidized): $9,500 for students who have not completed the first 30 hours of an undergraduate degree, $10,500 for students with sophomore class standing, and those students classified as juniors and seniors may borrow up to $12,500 annually.

Federal Parent Loans for Undergraduate Students (PLUS) allow parents to borrow up to the cost of education less other aid received each year without regard to income. A credit check is required of all parent borrowers. Repayment of principal and interest begins within 60 days after the final loan disbursement. The interest rate will be determined by the U.S. Secretary of Education according to the formula prescribed by Congress.

Alternate Sources of Assistance

The HOPE Scholarship Tax Credit and Lifetime Learning Tax Credit was created from the Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997 to assist families to offset tuition costs. These are non-refundable tax credits, not scholarships, which reduce the amount of federal income tax families must pay. Families who will benefit are middle- and lower-middle-income families who do not receive enough gift aid to cover tuition payments.

The HOPE tax credit is valued at up to $1,500 per tax year, per child, for the first two years of undergraduate study. The Lifetime Learning tax credit is valued at up to $1,000 per year, per family, for an unlimited number of years. The credit varies according to family income, tuition costs and the amount of gift assistance received.

To be eligible, a taxpayer must file a tax return, must owe taxes and must claim the student as an exemption.
(self, spouse or dependent). Additionally, married filers must file jointly. The tax credit is phased out completely for single tax filers with adjusted gross incomes of more than $50,000 and more than $100,000 for joint filers. You may access www.ed.gov/offices/OPE/FPI/HSPE/index.html for complete information. Tax filers should consult their tax advisor for details.

The Taxpayer Relief Act of 1997 provides other educationally related federal incentives including tax-free Educational IRAs, penalty-free withdrawing from IRAs and 401(k)s, and excluded contributions to prepaid tuition plans. Families are strongly advised to consult their tax advisor about these options.

State Financial Aid Programs

Legislative Incentives for Future Excellence (LIFE) Scholarships is a renewable $5,000 scholarship for residents of South Carolina who are enrolled full time and seeking a baccalaureate degree. Students must meet state residency requirements upon initial college enrollment. There is no scholarship application for the LIFE scholarship. The award is granted by the Office of Financial Aid based on data provided by the Office of Admissions and the Office of the Registrar.

Students must meet two of the following three criteria to qualify:
- earn a 3.0 GPA on a uniform grading scale
- score a minimum of 1100 SAT or 24 ACT
- rank in the top 30 percent of their graduating class

To retain the scholarship, recipients must have completed:
- first year students complete at least 30 hours and earn a minimum cumulative 3.0 GPA
- second year students complete at least 60 hours and earn a minimum cumulative 3.0 GPA
- third year students complete at least 90 hours and earn a minimum cumulative 3.0 GPA

NOTE: remedial work is not counted in the hours earned or the GPA

Additionally, students must sign an affidavit certifying that they have not been adjudicated delinquent, convicted or pled guilty or noto contendere to any felonies, or to any alcohol or drug-related offenses. Recipients must certify they are not default in any federal or state educational loans and they do not owe an overpayment on any federal or state grants.

Certain majors may qualify up to $7500. Go to the financial aid page of the USC Upstate Web site for more information.

For complete information, you may access the Commission on Higher Education at www.che.sc.gov.

South Carolina Income Tax Credit for College Tuition allows South Carolina residents to claim a refundable tax credit of up to $850 per student. Students must complete 15 credit hours each semester and may not receive the LIFE, Palmetto Fellow or any other state scholarship. The credit is available to offset out-of-pocket tuition payments only. Instructions are included in the S.C. income tax return.

Future Scholar 529 College Savings Plans allows families to save for college through a state-sponsored plan created under Section 529 of the Internal Revenue Code. These plans offer special tax benefits and have no income or age restrictions. Accounts can be used at almost any accredited school to pay for tuition, room, board, books and computers. For more information, call 1-888-244-5674 or visit www.futurescholar.com.

South Carolina Tuition Prepayment Program allows families to purchase an advance payment contract for tuition at a guaranteed level that can be used at public and accredited private colleges and universities. The program allows for federal tax deferral on contributions in accordance with IRS rulings. For more information, call 1-888-7SC-GRAD or visit www.scgrad.org.
S.C. State Need Based Grant* is designed for South Carolina residents who are enrolled full time seeking their first baccalaureate degree and have demonstrated financial need. Students must complete the FAFSA annually to apply. Priority is given to those students whose files are complete by the March 1 priority deadline. Students must certify that they have not been adjudicated delinquent, convicted or pled guilty or nolo contendere to any felonies or to any alcohol or drug-related offenses. Continuing students must complete a minimum of 24 credit hours per academic year, and earn a minimum cumulative 2.0 GPA. Students may not receive the grant for more than eight semesters. For complete information, you may access the Commission on Higher Education at www.che.sc.gov.

S. C. Teacher Loan Program was established to provide loan assistance to qualified students in education. This may be cancelled at a rate of 20 percent or $3,000 whichever is greater for each full year of teaching in either an eligible critical subject area or a critical geographic area in South Carolina. Teaching in both types of critical areas increases the cancellation benefit to 33 percent or $5,000. Available to only South Carolina residents, this program is based on minimum academic expectations. Freshmen and sophomores may borrow $5,000 per year. Students who qualify as "career changers" may borrow up to $10,000 per year. Applicants should submit the S.C. Teachers Loan Application by April 1. Funds are limited with renewal applicants given priority. Additional information, including academic criteria and critical areas/critical subjects, is available from the S.C. Student Loan Corporation Website at www.scsstudentloan.org.

Teaching Fellows Program—In 1999, the S.C. General Assembly, recognizing the shortage of teachers in our state, funded the Teaching Fellows Program for South Carolina. The mission of the South Carolina Teaching Fellows Program is to recruit talented high school seniors into the teaching profession and to help them develop leadership qualities. Each year, the program provides Fellowships for up to 200 high school seniors who have exhibited high academic achievement, a history of service to the school and community, and a desire to teach South Carolina’s children.

The scholarship provides up to $5,700 for tuition and board and $300 for summer enrichment programs (contingent on funding from the S.C. General Assembly) administered by the Center for Educator Recruitment, Retention, and Advancement (CERRA). A Fellow agrees to teach in South Carolina one year for every year he/she received the Fellowship.

Applications are available from high school guidance counselors, teachers, counselors, teacher cadet teachers, and the CERRA, and may be downloaded from the CERRA Website at www.cerra.org.

*Changes may occur for these programs. Access the Commission on Higher Education Website at www.che.sc.gov for the latest information available. Awards are contingent upon fund availability to be appropriated by the South Carolina legislature.

Work Opportunities

Job opportunities are available to USC Upstate students through a variety of programs: Federal Work-Study, Community Services Program, Job Location and Development Program, and the Student Assistant Program. The primary purpose of these programs is to provide a financial resource to students for educational expenses; however, these jobs may also provide valuable work experience. USC Upstate students work in a variety of jobs on and off campus. The pay scale is determined by the specific job description and the skills or experience of the student being hired. Students employed on campus are generally limited to working no more than 20 hours each week during periods of regular enrollment. To view job opportunities, go to www.myspartanjob.com.

ATTENTION: All award notifications are sent electronically and may be viewed through VIP.

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