LOUISIANA OFFICE OF STUDENT FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

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YOUR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES
TOPS TECH
TAYLOR OPPORTUNITY PROGRAM FOR STUDENTS (TOPS)

Read Carefully! These are your rights and responsibilities for receipt and retention of a TOPS Tech Award. This is accurate as of the date it was produced; however, you are responsible for complying with all governing statutes and rules applicable to this program, which may change from time to time, whether disclosed or not. Notices of statutory or regulatory changes are available through the website of the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) at https://mylosfa.la.gov/. When you have questions about TOPS, you should reference Your Rights and Responsibilities on the Student Hub, visit our website at https://mylosfa.la.gov/or email custserv@la.gov.

STAY ON TOP OF YOUR TOPS AWARD! Maintain your current email address and cell phone number on the Student Hub so that we may provide you with critical updates about your award! We no longer mail award notifications.

TOPS Tech Awards are dependent upon an annual appropriation of funds for TOPS by the state legislature. Eligibility for a TOPS Award does not guarantee that your award will be fully funded.

You have established your eligibility for a TOPS Tech Award.

- To receive the award, you must enroll for the first time as a full-time student at an eligible institution in a TOPS Tech eligible program NO LATER THAN the first regular semester or quarter that is one year after your high school graduation. (If you graduated in May 2022, you must enroll no later than the fall semester or quarter of 2023).
- Eligible institutions, including public, private and proprietary institutions that offer eligible programs and eligible cosmetology schools, are included with the notification of your TOPS eligibility on your account in the Student Hub.
- If you enlisted and began serving on active duty in the United States Armed Services within one year of the date you graduated from high school and before you enrolled in college as a full-time student, you are allowed to defer your enrollment at an eligible institution for the period of time you are continuously on active duty, including reenlistments, and until the first regular semester following the one year anniversary of your separation from active duty. You must contact this office and provide a copy of your DD Form 214 "Certificate of Release or Discharge from Active Duty" when you are ready to activate your award.

To retain your TOPS Tech eligibility, you must be enrolled in an eligible program of study **each semester or quarter during the academic year as a full-time student** as of the 15th class day at a semester institution or the 10th class day at a quarter institution. See the Section on Proprietary and Cosmetology Schools on the following page for enrollment dates.

Your TOPS Award may be combined with other financial aid (scholarships, grants or loans) but if your total financial aid package exceeds the cost of attendance established by your institution, your TOPS Award amount may be reduced. If other aid exceeds your cost of attendance and your TOPS payment is zero, that semester will not be counted toward your two years of TOPS Tech eligibility. Contact the financial aid office at the institution you are attending for an explanation of how your award may be affected by other aid.

AWARD DURATION:

- You may receive a TOPS Tech Award for a maximum of 2 years. If you complete your program of study before you use 2 years of eligibility, you may use any remaining eligibility to enroll in another qualifying program.
- Summer terms in TOPS Tech eligible programs are considered part of the academic year and are eligible for award payment if you enroll full-time, provided that funding is sufficient.

PRIVACY INFORMATION: If you are either 18 years old or are actually attending college, the federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) does not allow disclosure of your personal information to anyone, including your parents or custodian unless you grant them access to your records. You may grant access through the LOSFA Student Hub. Have your parents sign up for a parent account in the Student Hub, and they will have the option to request permission to see your records. You would then grant that permission through your account.

TO RENEW YOUR AWARD:

APPLICATION: You must annually apply for federal grant aid by completing the FAFSA or Renewal FAFSA in its entirety by July 1 each year, unless you determine yourself ineligible for federal grant aid using the software provided for that purpose at www.finaid.org/calculators.

The information in the following two sections does NOT pertain to proprietary and cosmetology schools. Refer to the PROPRIETARY AND COSMETOLOGY SCHOOLS SECTION below for continuation information regarding these schools.

ENROLLMENT AND CREDIT HOUR REQUIREMENTS:

- You must enroll fulltime each term, remain continuously enrolled and **earn** (**PASS with a "D" or better**) at least 24 credit hours during each Academic Year. (Summer sessions are optional.)
- The Academic Year begins with the fall semester or term, includes the winter term (if applicable), the spring semester or term and ends with the summer session. If you have earned at least 24 hours prior to the summer session, you are not required to attend the summer session to maintain your award. However, if you have not earned 24 hours by the end of the spring semester/quarter, you must enroll in and earn enough hours during the summer session to meet the 24 hour requirement.
- If you enrolled as a first-time, full-time student in the middle of the Academic Year (spring semester or winter/spring quarter), you will not be required to earn 24 hours that year.
- **Credits from Advanced Placement, CLEP, or Credit by Exam are not included in Academic Year Earned Hours.**
- You must earn 24 hours even if you drop courses, change majors or transfer to another school. Failure to earn 24 hours will result in the cancelation of your TOPS Tech Award at the end of the Academic Year.
- The grade for courses reported as "**Incomplete**" will be counted as "**F**" unless a subsequent report from your school shows otherwise.
- If you must leave school completely during the semester or quarter, or if you transfer to another eligible institution after the semester or quarter has begun, you should officially resign with the Registrar's Office so that you do not receive failing grades in all of the courses in which you were enrolled. If you do not, your TOPS Tech Award may be jeopardized. If you resign, your award will be canceled and you must submit a Request for Exception form to be considered for an exception.

REQUESTING AN EXCEPTION

An exception for cause to the requirement to enroll for the first time as a full-time student by the deadline, to enroll full-time each semester or term thereafter, to remain continuously enrolled and/or to earn 24 hours may be granted if, by the deadline specified in the letter notifying you of the cancelation of your award, you submit a Request for Exception form with the required supporting documentation sufficient to justify a failure to comply with these requirements. You can download the Request for Exception form with instructions and a list of the required documentation at https://mylosfa.la.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/02/Exception-Request-Form4.pdf. Email your completed form to www.tops.exceptions@la.gov. If your Request for Exception form is not received by the deadline, it will **NOT** be considered. When your form is received, the date of receipt will be posted in the Student Hub. You will be contacted if additional information is needed. You will be notified in your account on the Student Hub and by mail whether an exception is granted. **Exceptions cannot be granted for failure to make Steady Academic Progress or failure to earn the minimum TOPS Cum GPA.**

STEADY ACADEMIC PROGRESS and CUMULATIVE GRADE POINT AVERAGE REQUIREMENTS:

- You must make Steady Academic Progress (SAP) (earn a cumulative GPA of at least 2.00 on a 4.00 scale) at the end of **every** semester, quarter or session for which grades are reported. If you do not earn at least a 2.00, your award will be suspended, and if you do not achieve the required TOPS Cum GPA within one year, your award will be permanently canceled.
- Your TOPS Cum GPA is calculated on all college coursework you attempted at all schools, including dual enrollment and repeated courses. It is based on hours, grades and quality points reported by all schools you have attended, so it may be different from that grade point average calculated by the school you attend.
- You must have at least a 2.50 TOPS Cum GPA at the end of the summer semester or quarter, regardless of the number of hours you have earned, or your award will be suspended. If you do not achieve the required TOPS Cum GPA of at least 2.50 within one year, your award will be permanently canceled.

PROPRIETARY AND COSMETOLOGY SCHOOLS

- To be eligible to receive your TOPS Tech award, you must be enrolled full-time according to your school on one of the following dates: September 1, December 1 and March 1. (Note: If the 1st falls on a weekend or holiday, you must be enrolled and attending classes prior to that weekend or holiday for your award to be paid for that term).
- To maintain your award, you must meet federal grant aid requirements for steady academic progress at your school and maintain continuous enrollment.