FINANCIAL AID GUIDANCE MEMO

REFERENCE: FA 22-002
TOPIC: OHIO SAFETY OFFICERS COLLEGE MEMORIAL FUND
AUTHOR: RAMAH CHURCH, PROGRAM MANAGER
DATE: 06 JULY 2021
RELEVANT STATUTE: OHIO REVISED CODE, SECTION 3333.26

*Update* Ohio Revised Code
The Ohio Revised Code for the Ohio Safety Officers College Memorial Fund (OSO) can be found at: https://codes.ohio.gov/ohio-revised-code/section-3333.26.

This program provides undergraduate tuition assistance to a child, spouse, and qualified former spouse of peace officers, fire fighters and certain other safety officers who are killed in the line-of-duty, anywhere in the United States. It also provides undergraduate or certificate tuition assistance to the children and spouses of a member of the armed services of the U.S., who has been killed in the line of duty during Operation Enduring Freedom, Operation Iraqi Freedom, or a combat zone designated by the President of the United States. The student is eligible for this program if he/she is an Ohio resident and/or does not qualify for the Ohio War Orphan & Severely Disabled Veterans’ Children Scholarship Program.

*New* Residency
Recipients are required to be current Ohio residents as described in the Ohio Student Residency Administrative Rule, found at: http://codes.ohio.gov/oac/3333-1-10/. Recipients, however, are not required to have been Ohio residents at the time the service member was killed in the line of duty.

*New* Financial Aid Audits
The Ohio Revised Code authorizes the Chancellor to conduct financial aid audits of state-supported colleges and universities, proprietary, and non-profit private colleges and universities. All Ohio and Pennsylvania institutions with financial aid errors based on their prior year audit results will automatically be audited in an upcoming calendar year. Additional institutions may be audited by random selection in order to maintain our goal of auditing a set number of institutions yearly. Every institution will be audited at least once every three years. Further guidance from the Financial Aid Auditor will be forthcoming.

Award Amount - Undergraduate Level
For the 2021-2022 academic year, for students in an associate’s or bachelor’s degree program, the Fund will provide benefits which cover 100% instructional and student fee charges at public colleges and universities and $8,545 per year at private (non-profit and for-profit) post-secondary institutions. As required in statute, the private award amount is derived from the prior year’s average public award amount.
Recent changes to statute include benefits available to students in a certificate program at an approved post-secondary institution. For the 2021-2022 academic year, the Fund will provide benefits not to exceed $8,000 per academic year for instructional and student fee charges at public and private (non-profit and for-profit) post-secondary institutions.

Influence of other Tuition Specific/Student Fees Aid
OSO funds are available to be used toward tuition and student fees. Student fees are defined as general fees, course fees, and special fees.

For students receiving any tuition/student fees-specific aid, a simple calculation should be performed to determine final OSO eligibility. This other tuition/fees-specific aid must be applied prior to the OSO award. Tuition/student fees minus tuition/student fee-specific aid equals OSO eligibility.

Study Abroad
The home school needs to maintain documentation showing course(s) being taken, tuition charges at the study abroad institution (if not recorded on transcript and account statement), and that funds were used for tuition and student fees only. The total expense of tuition and fee charges must not be more than the cost of attending the home institution during that term. In keeping with federal guidelines, the home school must keep this documentation in the event of an audit.

*Update* Utilization
Students in an undergraduate program are required to be Ohio residents and may receive tuition waivers for a maximum of the equivalent of four academic years of full-time or part-time undergraduate study. Part-time status is considered anything less than 12 credit hours but would be considered as a full term of eligibility.

Students in a certificate program are required to be Ohio residents and may receive tuition waivers for up to two certificate programs, not to exceed the equivalent of four academic years of full-time or part-time undergraduate study. Part-time status is considered anything less than 12 credit hours but would be considered as a full term of eligibility.

Certification
The child or spouse of a peace officer, fire fighter, and certain other safety officers must have a letter from the Policemen and Firemen's Pension Board or a letter from the police chief or fire chief indicating that the parent or spouse was killed in the line of duty. The child or spouse of a member of the armed services of the US must have a copy of the marriage certificate and a copy of the Report of Casualty.

The institution will need to notify the Ohio Department of Higher Education (ODHE) of any new eligible students. Please do not forward this documentation to ODHE. In keeping with federal guidelines, the institution must keep this documentation in the event of an audit.

Once ODHE is notified, institutions are sent a certification roster and certification of eligibility form for each term in the academic year which must be reviewed, completed, and returned to the ODHE Program Manager. Please keep in mind that schools must wait a minimum of 15 days after the start of the term before funds can be requested.
**New** Posting of Funds
In alignment with federal policy, the institution should apply the funds requested as soon as administratively feasible but no later than three business days following the date the institution received those funds.

**New** Refunds
If a student becomes ineligible anytime in the academic year due to a reduction of credit hours, withdrawal, or receiving other tuition/fee-specific aid, and all or a portion of tuition is refunded, that same percentage will need to be returned to ODHE. A refund check must be submitted to our office within **30 days**. If after 45 days the refund check is not submitted, the amount owed plus interest and any additional fees may be turned over to the Ohio Attorney General’s Office for collection. Refunds should be sent by check to the attention of the OSO Program Manager and payable to:

Ohio Department of Higher Education
Office of Financial Aid
25 South Front Street - 2nd Floor
Columbus, Ohio 43215-4183

**TO SUMMARIZE; FOR THE 2021-2022 ACADEMIC YEAR, THE AMOUNT OF THE SAFETY OFFICERS COLLEGE MEMORIAL FUND IS:**

**BACHELOR/ASSOCIATE PROGRAMS**

PUBLIC COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES: 100% OF TUITION/STUDENT FEES

PRIVATE (NON-PROFIT OR FOR-PROFIT): *$8,545 (ANNUAL AWARD)*

* *$4,272.50 per semester OR *$2,848.33 per quarter

**CERTIFICATE PROGRAMS**

PRIVATE/PUBLIC/TECHNICAL COLLEGE: UP TO $8,000 (ANNUAL AWARD)

Financial aid personnel should direct questions to Ramah Church, Program Manager, at 614.752-9528 or rchurch@highered.ohio.gov