



## FINANCIAL AID GUIDANCE MEMO

REFERENCE: FA 17-009  
TOPIC: CHOOSE OHIO FIRST SCHOLARSHIP (COF)  
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DATE: 14 DECEMBER 2016 *updated 13 June 2017*  
RELEVANT STATUTE: OHIO REVISED CODE, SECTIONS 3333.60 – 3333.69

### The Choose Ohio First Program

Ohio Revised Code 3333.61 establishes the Choose Ohio First Scholarship Program as a component of the Ohio Innovation Partnership. Through a competitive process described in Ohio Revised Code 3333.62, the Choose Ohio First Scholarship Program assigns a number of scholarships to universities and colleges to recruit Ohio residents as undergraduate students in the fields of science, technology, engineering, mathematics, medicine (STEMM) or STEMM Education fields.

Choose Ohio First scholarships are student-centered grants from the state for participating eligible students to attend a university or college. As such, Choose Ohio First Scholarships are awarded to each participating eligible student as a grant to the state university or college the student is attending and is reflected on the student's tuition bill.

### Ohio Administrative and Revised Codes

Throughout the Ohio Administrative and Revised Code, there are several references to the Chancellor establishing rules for various aspects of the program. The COF Revised Code can be found at: <http://codes.ohio.gov/orc/Search/3333.60> and the COF Administrative Code can be found at: <http://codes.ohio.gov/oac/Search/3333-1-61>.

### Award Amounts

Through the competitive process, each college or university establishes the scholarship amount for its designated Choose Ohio First STEMM or STEMM education majors. **For the 2016-2017 academic year:**

- A minimum per student award of \$1,500.00 per academic year;
- A maximum per student award of \$7,061.00 per academic year. Per Ohio Revised Code 3333.66, this is calculated annually as one-half of the highest in-state undergraduate instructional and general fees charged by all state universities.
- Primary Care Medical and Nursing student awards undergo a separate process for scholarship selection and award.

### Scholarship Use

Beyond instructional and general fees, laboratory fees and book vouchers have been approved as an eligible use of COF funds. However, there must be a notification on the student's tuition bill indicating this use. In accordance with ORC, the entire grant must be used for scholarships, fellowships, grants, or other monetary or nonmonetary incentives to students, and not for administration.

For study abroad students, the institution needs to have paperwork showing courses being taken and tuition charges at the study abroad institution. The institution must keep this documentation in case of an audit.

### **\*Updated\* Eligibility Requirements**

- Scholar must be an Ohio resident and maintain a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 or higher. If a student falls below this cumulative GPA, the institution must submit a plan of action to the ODHE Program Manager each term. Beginning with the 2017-2018 academic year, scholarships may be revoked if a student doesn't make adequate progress to meet this eligibility requirement after two terms.
- Scholar must maintain enrollment in a STEMM major and Classification of Instructional Program (CIP) Code for which the college or university sought and gained approval through the competitive process for program awards (**as outlined in the institution's MOU**).
  - A Choose Ohio First Scholar may change majors and remain eligible if the program is an approved STEMM major and the approved CIP Code is outlined in the institution's MOU.
  - **If a scholar drops out of their program mid-year, the institution will not be able to re-allocate those funds to another student.**
- Scholar must be an undergraduate student, majoring in a specific STEMM or STEMM education program for which the college or university has received a Choose Ohio First designation.
- Graduate students are allowed on a limited basis as follows:
  - Ohio residents returning to Ohio for graduate school after completing undergraduate studies in other states or countries;
  - Primary care medical students who commit to a post-residency primary care practice in Ohio for not less than three years, accepting Medicaid recipients as patients without restriction. A primary care medical student may not receive a Choose Ohio First scholarship for more than four years; or
  - Primary care nursing students enrolled in a patient centered medical home training opportunity who commit to an advanced practice nursing primary care practice in Ohio for not less than three years after completing nursing school, accepting Medicaid recipients as patients without restriction. A primary care nursing student may not receive a Choose Ohio First Scholarship for more than three years.

### **\*Updated\* STEMM Majors & Approved CIP Codes**

Institutions will only be reimbursed for students who are enrolled in CIP codes approved under the institution's current MOU. Any student submitted for payment under a CIP code not in the institution's MOU will not be provided payment.

- Institutions with students who have been previously funded under an ineligible CIP code must submit a listing of these students via secure transmission to the ODHE Program Manager within 30 days of this guidance and a determination will be made regarding their eligibility. This listing must include:
  - Institution
  - Scholar name(s);
  - Scholar Social Security Number(s);
  - Degree Level
  - Name of Program
  - CIP Code
  - Scholar(s) anticipated year of program completion; and
  - Notes as to why you are using these CIP codes and if there is an accompanying minor

If a student changes major in the middle of a term to either a non-STEMM major or to a STEMM major outside the institution's MOU, that student will lose their scholarship for that and subsequent terms. It is the institution's responsibility to communicate this policy to students before they make such decisions. **Please note that remaining funds cannot be allocated to another student.**

### **Payment Submissions and Reimbursement**

- The institution must submit the required data in the Choose Ohio First Scholarship Data and Reporting System no later than 67 days following the end of the term referenced in the data form. Any requests received after such time will not be reimbursed.
- Windows for payment submission open the day after the end of each term and remain open for approximately 67 days. The COF system generates reminder emails before the opening and closing of windows. Once your window is closed, it will not be reopened and you will not be able to submit students for reimbursement.
- **Any outstanding COF payment issues from FY16 and before must be brought to the attention of the ODHE Program Manager within 30 days of this guidance. No outstanding issues will be considered beyond that date.**

### **\*Updated\* Repayments of Over Awards**

If the institution has previously submitted a payment request that is greater than the amount the student was eligible to receive for that term, the institution must submit a listing of these overpayments via secure file transfer to the program manager. The institution's payment amount for the current term will be reduced by this overpayment. The listing of overpayments must include:

- Institution
- Scholar name(s);
- Scholar Social Security Number(s);
- Term overpayment occurred; and
- Reason for overpayment

### **Program Accountability**

- The Chancellor's reporting requirements for the Choose Ohio First Scholarship Program require each awarded college or university to:
  - Submit appropriate data to HEI and COF Reporting System according to timelines established for those reporting periods;
  - Submit an Annual Report inclusive of fiscal and performance measures using the required template that will be sent out at the end of the academic year; and
  - Fulfill pledges of other institutional, public, or nonpublic resources and report on the Annual Report.

### **\*Updated\* HEI Secure File Transfer Site**

A student's full social security number should never be sent in an e-mail. Secure files can be uploaded to the following site:  
<https://heifx.ohiohighered.org/>

Log in to the site and select 'Choose Ohio First' where it says 'Associate with Program.'

*Financial aid personnel should direct questions to the Choose Ohio First Scholarship Program Manager, Megan Johnson, 614.752.9532, [mjohnson@highered.ohio.gov](mailto:mjohnson@highered.ohio.gov).*