

Oklahoma's Promise

Information for Financial Aid Officers

General Description of Program: Oklahoma's Promise (Oklahoma Higher Learning Access Program) provides awards equivalent to all or part of tuition expenses for students who complete the program's requirements while in high school. The award may be used at Oklahoma accredited public and private colleges and for certain courses offered at public career technology centers. Students enrolled in the eighth, ninth and tenth grade, whose family income does not exceed \$50,000, may enroll in the program. Once enrolled, the student must complete a specified 17-unit high school core curriculum, achieve a minimum 2.5 cumulative GPA in both the required core curriculum and for all high school coursework, attend school regularly, and refrain from substance abuse and criminal/delinquent acts.

Who is eligible for an Oklahoma's Promise award?

- Only students certified by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (OSRHE) as having completed the high school requirements for Oklahoma's Promise are eligible for the Oklahoma's Promise award. High school officials are responsible for documenting to the OSRHE that students have completed the high school requirements. Eligibility is ultimately determined by the OSRHE.
- Students enrolling in the program during the 8th-10th grade after July 2, 2007 must be United States citizens or lawfully present in the United States at the time they begin college to receive the award (students not lawfully present in the United States may still enroll in the program in the 8th-10th grade).
- For students receiving the award in college for the first time in 2012-13, the federal adjusted gross income of a student's parents may not exceed \$100,000 at the time the student goes to college (if the student is independent for federal financial aid purposes, the limit applies to the student's income).

College Requirements for Oklahoma's Promise students

- Students must begin postsecondary education within three years of graduating from high school. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education may award the Oklahoma's Promise benefits for a student's first semester or other academic unit of postsecondary enrollment taken more than three (3) years after the student graduates from high school or completes an educational program equivalent to high school graduation if the student is a member of the Armed Forces of the United States, the Reserve Corps of the Armed Forces of the United States, or the Oklahoma National Guard, and is ordered to active duty or active duty for special work or training and due to the duty commitment the student is unable to enroll prior to the end of the three-year period. Such three-year period shall be extended by the length of the term of duty.
- Once a student begins postsecondary education, he/she is eligible for benefits for a maximum of five consecutive years or the completion of a bachelor degree, **whichever comes first**. The student's five-year expiration date is noted on the eligibility list. If the student receives his/her bachelor degree prior to the expiration date, their eligibility ends upon completion of the degree requirements. Missing expiration dates generally indicate that the student's initial start date has not been determined. Once a student has received his/her first

disbursement, an expiration date will appear on the eligibility record. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education may award the Oklahoma's Promise benefits for courses of postsecondary units taken more than five (5) years after the student's first semester of postsecondary enrollment only in hardship circumstances; provided, however, no Oklahoma's Promise participant may receive benefits beyond a cumulative time period of five (5) years.

- Oklahoma's Promise students must meet the regular admission requirements for the institution they plan to attend. Oklahoma's Promise students admitted to an institution by special admission standards are not eligible for the Oklahoma's Promise award their first semester of enrollment. Completion of the Oklahoma's Promise requirements does not guarantee admission to an institution of higher education.
- For students receiving the Oklahoma's Promise award for the first time in 2012-13 and thereafter, at the time the student begins postsecondary education and prior to receiving any program benefit award, the federal adjusted gross income of the student's parent(s) shall not exceed \$100,000 per year if the student is determined to have dependent status for federal financial aid.

A student who was adopted while in the permanent custody of the Department of Human Services, in the court-ordered custody of a licensed private nonprofit child-placing agency, or federally recognized Indian tribe, as defined by the federal Indian Child Welfare Act, shall be subject to the following income limit at the time the student begins postsecondary education and prior to receiving any program benefit award:

- For a student adopted between birth and twelve (12) years of age, the federal adjusted gross income of the student's parent(s) may not exceed \$150,000 per year.
- For a student adopted between thirteen (13) and seventeen (17) years of age, the federal adjusted gross income of the student's parent(s) may not exceed \$200,000 per year.

If the student is determined to be independent of the student's parents for federal financial aid purposes, the determination of income limit shall be based on the income of the student, not the income of the parent(s).

- All students eligible to receive the program benefit award for the first time in 2012-2013 and thereafter must complete an application for federal student financial aid (Free Application for Federal Student Aid or FAFSA) or its equivalent. Students not eligible to complete the FAFSA will be provided an alternate method by the OSRHE. Income information submitted through the FAFSA, or an alternate method if necessary, shall be used to determine compliance with the requirement that the parent(s) federal adjusted gross income shall not exceed \$100,000 per year at the time the student begins postsecondary education and prior to receiving any program benefit. If the student is determined to be independent for federal financial aid purposes, the income limit shall be based on the income of the student, not the income of the parent(s).
- The Oklahoma's Promise award will NOT be available for the first summer college semester immediately following high school graduation. Since official Oklahoma's Promise eligibility is not determined until high school graduation, we are unable to process the awards for the first summer semester immediately following high school graduation. The first awards will be available for the fall semester. However, once the student is officially verified in our system, he/she may use the Oklahoma's Promise award in summer semesters of later years.

- (Current Policy) Oklahoma's Promise students must maintain good academic standing in college to remain eligible for benefits. "Good academic standing" at public colleges and universities is defined by the OSRHE retention standards policy (OSRHE Admission Policy). In short, the policy requires students to achieve at least a 1.7 GPA during his/her first 30 semester credit hours and maintain a minimum 2.0 cumulative GPA after 30 semester credit hours are completed. Students attending a private institution or public career technology center shall maintain good academic standing according to the standards of the institution or school in which they are enrolled.
- Beginning with the 2012-2013 academic year, **all** Oklahoma's Promise recipients will be subject to the institution's Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) policy. All students receiving the award in the 2012-2013 year will be subject to this requirement including students having received the award in previous years AND students that have not applied for and/or received federal financial aid. Beginning with the fall of 2012, if any Oklahoma's Promise student recipient is not eligible to receive federal financial aid as defined by the institution's SAP policy, the student is not eligible to receive Oklahoma's Promise.
- Additionally, beginning with students that start receiving Oklahoma's Promise awards for the 2012-2013 academic year and thereafter, recipients must comply with a new statutory requirement to achieve a minimum cumulative grade point average of 2.0 on a 4.0 scale or its equivalent for courses taken through the student's sophomore year and achieve a minimum grade point average of 2.5 on a 4.0 scale or its equivalent for courses taken during the student's junior year and thereafter.
- Oklahoma's Promise can be used for distance learning courses (correspondence, online, interactive video, etc) offered for college credit by an eligible Oklahoma institution and for college-credit courses taken through an institution's continuing education/extension divisions. However, all students must go through the financial aid and/or bursar's office for payment processing. Award payments for these courses will be limited to the tuition rate of the institution's regular on-campus undergraduate courses.
- Legislation passed during the 1997 legislative session authorizes the State Regents to set a maximum limit on the number of courses/credit hours to which the Oklahoma's Promise award will apply. [At this time, a limit has not been set.]
- Undocumented students may enroll in Oklahoma's Promise in the 8th, 9th or 10th grade. However, all students enrolling after July 2, 2007 must be a United States citizen or lawfully present in the United States at the time they enter college to receive the program award. **Beginning with students that start receiving Oklahoma's Promise awards in the 2010-2011 academic year and thereafter, the Regent's office will identify students whose enrollment date makes them subject to this requirement. Schools will be responsible for removing ineligible students from claims for payment and will be required to monitor these students for possible future compliance with this requirement.**

How will the college/university know that a student is eligible to receive Oklahoma's Promise?

- The Oklahoma's Promise office makes available a list of eligible students on the Oklahoma's Promise eligibility verification website. A list of potentially eligible high school seniors will be available prior to high school graduation. Graduating seniors that are confirmed as meeting the program's high school requirements are removed from the potentially eligible list and placed on the eligibility list. Expiration dates are added after the Oklahoma's Promise office receives the first claim for payment indicating that the student has begun attendance.

- It is the responsibility of the student to notify the institution's financial aid office that he/she is eligible for the Oklahoma's Promise award. Students will receive an award letter from the State Regents' office after their final paperwork has been evaluated and approved. Note: In the eligibility letter we will send to each Oklahoma's Promise graduating senior certifying their completion of the high school requirements, we will also remind the student of the requirement to be a United States citizen or lawfully present and that the income of the student's parents may not exceed \$100,000 at the time the student begins postsecondary education. The eligibility letter will no longer be sufficient evidence in itself that the student is entitled to receive the Oklahoma's Promise award.

How is the award amount determined?

- The Oklahoma's Promise award is not a pre-set amount; the amount depends upon the type of institution attended and the number of hours in which the student enrolls. The Oklahoma's Promise award is calculated on the resident tuition cost only; it does not include the cost of other required fees, room and board expenses, books, or other costs related to college attendance.
- Oklahoma Public Colleges and Universities: The Oklahoma's Promise award will equal the resident tuition at Oklahoma public colleges and universities. It does not include the cost of other required fees such as student activity fees, facility fees, library fees, special or remedial course fees, parking fees, etc. The final amount awarded to each student will vary depending on the tuition rates in effect at the time, the type of institution attended, and the number of credit hours in which the student is enrolled.

Examples of a semester award at public institutions:

<u>Type of Public Institution</u>	<u>2011-2012 Average Tuition Rate⁽¹⁾</u>		<u>Hours Enrolled⁽²⁾</u>		<u>Oklahoma's Promise Semester Award</u>
Research University	\$136.00 per credit hr.	X	15	=	\$2,040.00
Regional University	\$123.00 per credit hr.	X	15	=	\$1,845.00
Community College	\$70.00 per credit hr.	X	15	=	\$1,050.00
Technical Branch (2 yr.)	\$101.00 per credit hr.	X	15	=	\$1,515.00

⁽¹⁾Some comprehensive, regional universities and other public programs have both lower and upper division tuition rates. Tuition rates are subject to change and may be higher or lower at different institutions.

⁽²⁾Enrollment in 12-15 semester credit hours per fall or spring semester is considered full-time enrollment. While students are not required to take a certain number of credit hours each semester, students will need to take 12-15 credit hours per semester to complete a bachelor's degree within the five-year time period allowed.

- Oklahoma Independent/Private Colleges and Universities: The Oklahoma's Promise award will cover a portion of the tuition at accredited independent/private colleges or universities in Oklahoma. The amount awarded to a student attending an independent/private institution will be equivalent to the amount the student would have received if the student had attended

a comparable public institution. Comparability is determined by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education.

Examples of a semester award at independent/private institutions:

Type of Independent Institution	Independent Tuition Rate ¹	Oklahoma's Promise Award Rate ²		Hours Enrolled ³	=	Oklahoma's Promise Semester Award
Research Univ.	\$400 / hr.	\$136.00 / hr.	X	15	=	\$2,040.00
Regional Univ.	\$400 / hr.	\$123.00/ hr.	X	15	=	\$1,845.00

¹The tuition rates shown here are for example only. Actual tuition rates may be higher or lower, and will vary by institution.

²At independent/private research and regional universities, the Oklahoma's Promise award is the average of the rates at public institutions.

³Enrollment in 12-15 semester credit hours per fall or spring semester is considered full-time enrollment. While students are not required to take a certain number of credit hours each semester, students will need to take 12-15 credit hours per semester to complete a bachelor's degree within the five-year time period allowed.

- **Public Career Technology Programs:** The Oklahoma's Promise award will pay a portion of the tuition cost for certain public technology programs or courses offered through "cooperative agreements" between public technology centers and Oklahoma public colleges or universities. [The award is limited to an amount equivalent to tuition at a public two-year college.] A "cooperative agreement" means certain courses or programs may be taken at the public technology centers that are approved for credit toward an Associate in Applied Science degree from a public college. However, not all programs or courses at public technology centers qualify for college credit. The student should check with the public technology center he/she plans to attend.
- **Other Oklahoma degree granting institutions that are accredited by a national accrediting body:** The Oklahoma's Promise award will be paid at a rate comparable to the rate paid to public institutions.
- Fall 2008 Freshmen who opted for the guaranteed tuition in 2008-2009 and are still eligible for that rate can be processed on separate claim forms and will receive the appropriate rate per the 2008-2009 rate schedule for guaranteed tuition until the expiration of the provisions of the rate, receipt of the bachelors degree, or the normal Oklahoma's Promise expiration whichever comes first. Oklahoma's Promise students opting for the guaranteed tuition in 2009-2010 and thereafter will be paid at the regular tuition rate for that institution.

How is the Oklahoma's Promise award applied?

- Oklahoma's Promise is a cash award. While the award level is calculated based on the amount of tuition, the award does not have to be applied only to tuition costs if the student has another tuition-only award or waiver. Oklahoma's Promise can be used with other forms of financial aid.

- **Over-award Policy.** An Oklahoma’s Promise student may not receive more financial aid than his/her cost of attending an Oklahoma postsecondary education program, as determined by the institution in which the student is enrolled. The cost of attendance should be consistent with regulations for federal Title IV student financial aid programs. If necessary, a student’s Oklahoma’s Promise award will be reduced or cancelled for that academic period so that the student’s total financial aid does not exceed the cost of attendance.

Availability of Funds

The 2007 Oklahoma Legislature approved a new law which “automatically” funds Oklahoma’s Promise awards. The 2007 law provides a permanent, dedicated source of funding for the program by allocating monies “off the top” from the state’s General Revenue Fund. This law ensures that the program is fully funded each year from a stable source of revenue.

How will Oklahoma’s Promise funds be paid to institutions?

At the completion of the drop/add period each semester, institutions must submit a claim to the OSRHE which contains the name, social security number, number of hours enrolled for the term, the tuition rate and the total amount claimed for the student (hours X tuition rate unless there is an over-award situation).

Upon receipt of the claim from the institution, the OSRHE will verify the claim and make payment to the institution.

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