



**Higher Education
Services Corporation**

Understanding Financial Aid Letters

Spring 2019

Award Letter Timeline

- Award letters are usually released during March and April
 - May be earlier for early filers, early acceptances
 - May be later for CUNY, late filers, applications under extensive review
- If not received by mid-April, contact the financial aid office as soon as possible!
 - May 1st is national signing day.



Award Letter Examples



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Example: Digital Format

Financial Aid				
Award Summary				
Federal Aid Year 2015-2016				
Select the term hyperlinks below to see more detailed information.				
Aid Year				
Award Description	Category	Offered	Accepted	
Federal PELL Grant Fall	Grant	2,887.50	2,887.50	
Federal PELL Grant Spring	Grant	2,887.50	2,887.50	
Initial Tap Spring	Grant	2,582.50	2,582.50	
Initial TAP Waiver Spring	Grant	665.00	665.00	
TAP Waiver Fall	Grant	665.00	665.00	
TAP Fall	Grant	2,582.50	2,582.50	
Aid Year Totals		12,270.00	12,270.00	
Currency used is US Dollar.				
Full-Yr Financial Aid Summary				
Terms				
2016 Spring Term		View Scheduled Disbursement Dates		
Award Description	Category	Offered	Accepted	
Federal PELL Grant Spring	Grant	2,887.50	2,887.50	
Initial Tap Spring	Grant	2,582.50	2,582.50	
Initial TAP Waiver Spring	Grant	665.00	665.00	
Term Totals		6,135.00	6,135.00	
2015 Fall Term		View Scheduled Disbursement Dates		
Award Description	Category	Offered	Accepted	
Federal PELL Grant Fall	Grant	2,887.50	2,887.50	
TAP Waiver Fall	Grant	665.00	665.00	
TAP Fall	Grant	2,582.50	2,582.50	
Term Totals		6,135.00	6,135.00	
Currency used is US Dollar.				
Your financial aid award is determined from the information provided in your application. If there is no financial aid displayed your application may be in progress. Please check back.				
Full-Yr Financial Aid Summary				
Return to Aid Year Selection				



Example: SUNY Smart Track Letter

SUNY The State University of New York		SUNY Smart Track [™] Empowered Financial Aid Planning Award Letter
Cost of Attendance	ESTIMATED COST OF ATTENDANCE IN THE ACADEMIC YEAR <i>(Subject to legislative changes)</i> Costs* Tuition and fees Housing and meals Estimated books and supplies Estimated transportation Estimated other educational costs *Costs will vary based on enrollment status Estimated Cost of Attendance _____ \$	COLLEGE OVERVIEW GRADUATION RATE Percentage of full-time students who graduate within 5 years LOW MEDIUM HIGH
	GRANTS AND SCHOLARSHIPS OFFERED – ESTIMATED GIFT AID <i>(Aid is subject to change based upon verification, enrollment confirmation, and legislative changes)</i> Total Grants and Scholarships (No repayment required) _____ \$	
Grants & Scholarships	ESTIMATED REMAINING COST AFTER GRANTS AND SCHOLARSHIPS <i>(Cost of attendance minus total grants and scholarships)</i> Net Cost _____ \$	MEDIAN BORROWING
Net Cost	OPTIONS TO PAY NET COST - LOANS OFFERED Total Loans (Repayment Required) _____ \$	
Loans Offered	OPTIONS TO PAY NET COST - FEDERAL WORK-STUDY (FWS) FEDERAL WORK-STUDY _____ \$	FOR MORE INFORMATION
Work Study	OPTIONS TO PAY NET COST - STUDENT AND FAMILY OPTIONS FAFSA Calculated Expected Family Contribution (EFC) _____ \$ Options to Replace Expected Family Contribution or Net Cost • Private payment plan offered by the college • Military and/or National Service Benefits • Private education loans • Federal Direct PLUS/Parent loan	
Family Contribution		



Sample: SUNY Customized Letter



FINANCIAL AID ESTIMATE

Dear A _

The College at Brockport is pleased to provide you with the following estimated financial aid for the academic year indicated above. Please be advised that this is not an actual offer of aid and is subject to change pending the final approval of the cost of attendance (i.e., tuition, fees, room, board, etc.), the verification process, meeting Financial Aid Office application deadlines, final funding levels, or other information received in our office. Failure to meet all aid requirements may result in the loss of some estimated awards.

The expenses and awards listed below are based upon full-time enrollment for the academic year.

Fall and Spring Enrollment

Full Time

FINANCIAL AID FORMULA

Estimated Cost of Attendance	\$14,306.00
-Parent Contribution (PC):	834.00
-Student Contribution (SC):	0.00
Total Estimated Need:	\$13,472.00

ESTIMATED FINANCIAL AID

PROGRAM	FALL	SPRING
Federal Pell Grant	2,440.00	2,440.00
Tuition Assistance Program	1,580.50	1,580.50
Fed. Direct Sub Stafford Loan	1,750.00	1,750.00
Fed. Direct Unsub Staff. Loan	1,000.00	1,000.00
SUNY Tuition Credit	377.50	377.50
Total Estimated Aid	\$7,148.00	\$7,148.00

Please Note:

The above TAP award is a SUNY estimate only to assist you with your financial planning and is not deferrable on your student bill. Interest on Federal Unsubsidized Stafford Loan accrues during In-School Periods.

A letter may be enclosed or sent separately requesting any currently outstanding documentation required to complete the federal verification process. This request for documentation may also be reviewed on the World Wide Web by accessing www.brockport.edu and clicking on "ONLINE SERVICES". This documentation will be verified against the data you provided on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Our office will then mail you an official award letter, which could differ from the information above. Please note that any subsequent information or documents received by our office may also affect your award.

Please contact the Financial Aid Office if you should have any questions regarding this financial aid estimate. Thank you.



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Sample: Private College (in-state)



Office of Student Financial Aid
Phone 716-888-2300 | toll free 800-541-6348 | fax 716-888-2377

On behalf of the Student Financial Aid Committee, it is a pleasure to inform you that you have been awarded the financial assistance indicated below for the **Academic Year 2014 - 2015**. **In order to fully understand your rights and responsibilities regarding this student aid award and to determine your approximate cost, please read the accompanying literature carefully.**

STUDENT FINANCIAL AID AWARD

Your award was based on full time attendance at Canisius College as a **New Undergraduate Resident**.

TYPE OF AWARD	Summer 2014	Fall 2014	Spring 2015	TOTAL
Benefactor's Scholarship		5,000	5,000	10,000
Resident Student Grant		1,000	1,000	2,000
Can. FAFSA Completion Grant		250	250	500
Canisius College Grant		6,750	6,750	13,500
Federal Pell Grant		2,840	2,840	5,680
Federal Work Study Program		1,200	1,200	2,400
New York State TAP		1,734	1,734	3,468
Fed. Direct Subsidized Loan		1,750	1,750	3,500
Fed Direct Unsubsidized Loan		1,000	1,000	2,000
TOTAL		21,524	21,524	43,048

ALL CANISIUS COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIPS/GRANTS ARE APPLIED TO TUITION & FEES FIRST. **PLEASE READ THE REVERSE SIDE FOR IMPORTANT INFORMATION.**

Sincerely yours,

Curtis C. Gaume
Curtis C. Gaume
Director of Student Financial Aid

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OF
RTUNITY.

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Award Letter Components

- Most award letters should contain:
 - Federal, state aid (if eligible)
 - Institutional aid
 - Student loan estimates
 - Private scholarships (if school was notified)
 - Cost of Attendance
 - The Expected Family Contribution (EFC)



NYS Student Aid Programs

- Is this college or university located in New York State?
- Common NYS Programs on Award Letter
 - Tuition Assistance Program (TAP)
- Other NYS Programs to be determined later
 - Excelsior, Enhanced Tuition Award
 - STEM Incentive Scholarship



Institutional Aid

- Will vary at each college, especially SUNY & CUNY
- May be need-based, non-need-based (merit-based), or both
- Was it awarded for academic reasons, athletic participation, or something else?
 - Residence grants
- Are there any requirements to fulfill the award?
- Is the award renewable?



Things to Know: Institutional Aid

- If Need-based
 - Amount offered may change year to year based on renewal of the FAFSA or CSS Profile
- If Non-need or merit-based
 - There will be minimum GPA requirements for renewal
 - Funding may change if student changes major
 - Filing the FAFSA may be required to receive the funds
- If nothing offered, ask the college why



Private Scholarships

- Is the student receiving any private scholarship?
- Was an award notice received?
 - Should be forwarded to colleges to include as part of award letter
- What is the college's policy for adjusting aid when a student receives outside scholarships?



Award Letter Evaluation

- How to determine the “best offer”:
 - Find the net price based on the aid offer
 - Determine the remaining out-of-pocket cost
 - Project the annual and long-term student loan indebtedness



How Aid is Allocated

- Scholarships, grants and student loan principle will cover any direct costs first
 - Remaining amounts can be “refunded” toward indirect costs
- Federal work-study earnings help only with indirect costs



Student Loan Options



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Student Loan Options

- Federal Direct Subsidized Stafford Loan
- Federal Direct Unsubsidized Stafford Loan
- Federal Direct PLUS Loan
- Private Student Loans



Direct Subsidized Stafford Loan

- Interest paid by the government while borrower is in school
- Student must have unmet need to qualify
- Up to \$3,500 for first year students
 - Increases up to max of \$4,500 for sophomores, then \$5,500 for juniors and seniors
- 5.05% fixed interest rate for 2018-19
 - Will reset every year on July 1st



Direct Unsubsidized Stafford Loan

- Interest accrues immediately while borrower is in school
 - Can be paid quarterly or capitalized
- Not need-based
- Up to \$2,000 a year
 - May be \$5,500 if ineligible for subsidized loan
 - May be increased to \$4,000 for independent students or students with parent that cannot borrow a PLUS loan
- 5.05% fixed interest rate for 2018-19
 - Will reset every year on July 1st



Options After Student's Loans

- After student loans are deducted, remaining out-of-pocket cost can be covered by a federal PLUS loan
 - College's total net cost is \$10,000
 - Student's loan estimate is \$5,500 for first year
 - Parent PLUS loan estimate for remaining cost is \$4,500 for first year



Federal PLUS Loans

- Borrower is parent of dependent undergraduate student
- Credit check required
 - Borrower must not have adverse credit history
- Annual loan amount is determined by the college
 - Usually cost of attendance minus student's aid
- 7.6% fixed interest rate for 2018-19
- Immediate repayment or in-school deferment option



Private Student Loans

- Borrower can be student and/or parent
- Credit check required
 - Most undergrad students will need a co-signer
- Loan amount certified by school
 - Cost of attendance minus other aid
- Fixed or Variable interest rates determined by private market
- Immediate repayment or deferment



Award Letter Resources



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Online Award Letter Comparison Tools

- Easy to use, free resources
- Makes determining Net Price much easier
- Can compare multiple award letters
- Helps determine long term student loan debt



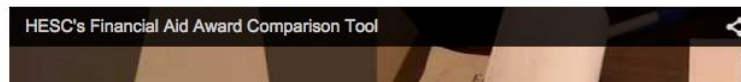
HESC.ny.gov: Comparison Tool

The screenshot shows the HESC website header. On the left is the HESC logo with the tagline 'We Help People Pay For College'. To its right is the text: 'New York State Higher Education Services Corporation', 'Andrew M Cuomo, Governor', and 'Elsa Magee, Acting President'. Further right are two buttons: 'Partner Access' (green) and 'My HESC Account Access' (yellow). Below these are social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, and a search bar with the text 'Google™ Custom Search'. A navigation bar below the header contains four tabs: 'Prepare', 'Pay', 'Repay', and 'Contact'. Below the navigation bar is a breadcrumb trail: 'Home / Pay for College / Apply For Financial Aid / Comparing College Award Letters'. The main heading of the page is 'Comparing College Award Letters' in white text on a green background.

HESC's interactive [Financial Aid Award Packages Comparison tool](#) can help you determine the "bottom line" for each college to which you've applied and received a financial aid award offer.

The college financial aid award letter contains important information about the financial aid package being offered. Students often apply to multiple colleges, so it is essential to review and compare financial aid awards carefully before making a final decision.

Award letters typically include the cost of attendance (COA) and the types of financial aid being offered – usually a combination of scholarships, grants, work-study and loans. Each college may use its own format and terminology, so it can be challenging to compare "apples to apples."



Related Resources

[Estimate Your Monthly Loan Payments](#)

[Compare The Different Types of Loans](#)

[What You Need to Know Before You Take a Loan](#)

In The Spotlight



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Consumerfinance.gov/paying-for-college/

cfpb Consumer Financial Protection Bureau

Contact us (855) 411-2372

Search

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Compare financial aid
 Compare college costs and financial aid offers to see how they might impact you down the road. Just researching schools? Check out [College Scorecard](#).

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 Add some information about the schools you're considering to see the financial impact down the road. If you don't have a financial aid offer, we'll show you where to find cost info for each school. [Get started](#)

You can compare up to 3 schools.
Hint: you can save your progress at the bottom of this page and come back later.

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School 1 School 2 School 3



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Bigfuture.collegeboard.org



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Compare Your Aid Awards

It's Easy to Compare Your Aid Awards

- Before you get started, check out our tips for using the comparison tool. [?](#)
- Enter the student's cost and aid information in the blank fields. Then click on the Calculate button.
- Click on the links in the left column for advice about what to enter in each field.

Do not use commas when entering dollar amounts (e.g., enter 2000 — not 2,000).

State You Live In	School 1 School 4	School 2	School 3
<input type="text" value="No selection"/>			
College or University Name	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Cost of Attendance ?	School 1 School 4	School 2	School 3
Tuition and Fees ?	\$ <input type="text"/>	\$ <input type="text"/>	\$ <input type="text"/>
	\$ <input type="text"/>		



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Accepting Awards, Appeals, & Special Circumstances



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Accepting the Awards

- Students will be asked to accept or decline their awards
 - Either online or by returning the award letter
- Student loans are estimated and student or parent must accept the loans
 - Fulfill other document requirements;
Promissory Notes, Entrance Counseling



Appeals and Reconsideration Requests

- Follow college's institutional policy
 - Some colleges do not consider appeals for first year students
 - Does the college have a designated appeal form?
- When appealing:
 - Use careful crafting of appeal letters
 - Make wise comparisons between colleges and their aid offers
 - Be realistic!



Special Circumstances

- Colleges do address changes to income that can affect financial aid outcome
 - Unemployment, divorce/separation, unusual medical expenses, other loss of income
- Follow college's institutional policy
 - Many have a designated form, process
- When addressing special circumstances:
 - Provide personalized letter explaining situation
 - Provide supporting documentation



The What ifs...

- Keep in mind, there are no guarantees of:
 - Big gift aid increases to cover large amount of unmet need through an appeal
 - Automatic aid increases in the future
 - Resident Advisor (RA) job to reduce residential costs
 - Parents being able to renew PLUS loans
 - Receiving debt forgiveness



Questions?

