



## The Excelsior Scholarship

Tuition-Free SUNY and CUNY

### Overview

The New York State Excelsior Scholarship guarantees free tuition to middle-class families attending a SUNY or CUNY school and is designed to promote on-time graduation. The scholarship will pay any remaining tuition charges after the student's other grants and scholarships have been applied (tuition is frozen at \$3,235/semester for Excelsior-eligible students until 2021-22). The New York State Higher Education Services Corporation (HESC) is responsible for administering the program; you may sign up for email updates or learn more about the program at [www.hesc.ny.gov](http://www.hesc.ny.gov).

### Application Process

Students must complete a separate application for the Excelsior Scholarship at [www.hesc.ny.gov](http://www.hesc.ny.gov). The application period for the fall semester runs approximately April through July. The application period for the spring semester is in December. Once a student has been awarded an Excelsior Scholarship, they do not need to reapply in future terms.

### Timing and Income Requirements

The Excelsior Scholarship program will be phased in over three years, beginning in fall 2017 (see chart). The "combined" federal adjusted gross income (AGI) is determined by a student's NYS dependency status. For dependent students, the combined AGI is the sum of the student's federal AGI and his or her parents' federal AGI. For independent students, the combined AGI is the student's federal AGI plus his/her spouse's AGI (if married).

Academic Year	Combined Federal AGI	Federal Tax Year
2017-2018 Academic Year	\$100,000 or less	2015
2018-2019 Academic Year	\$110,000 or less	2016
2019-2020 Academic Year	\$125,000 or less	2017

### General Eligibility Requirements at SUNY

- Must enroll at a 2 or 4-year SUNY or CUNY school and be a New York State Resident.
- Must be a U.S. Citizen or eligible non-citizen (students in the USA under DACA are not eligible).
- Based on a tuition rate of \$3,235/semester, the student must have remaining tuition charges after all other grants and scholarships are applied (including but not limited to: Federal Pell, NYS TAP, SUNY Tuition Credit, merit scholarships, private scholarships).
- Only the fall and spring semesters are eligible terms for which the Excelsior Scholarship may be awarded.

### Residency Requirements

- Must reside in New York State for the same number of years as the student received the Excelsior Scholarship.
- Cannot work in any other state.
- Consequences:** If a student fails to meet the residency requirements, the student's Excelsior Scholarship will be converted to an interest-free student loan, repayable over 10 years.

### Academic Eligibility Requirements

- Must earn at least 30 credits per academic year and enroll in at least 12 credit hours per semester.
  - ✓ Students may enroll in J-Term or summer to meet the 30-credit hour minimum.
  - ✓ Students admitted under EOP are required to earn at least 24 credits per year.
- Students with a qualified disability under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) may attend full-time or part-time, but must achieve 100% passing on all courses attempted. Students are not required to earn 30 credits per year. Students must be linked with Buffalo State's Student Accessibility Services Office.
- Must be able to graduate in 4 years and remain continuously enrolled each fall and spring semester.
- Students' eligibility will be certified at the end of each semester.
- Consequences:** If a student fails to meet all the academic requirements, he or she loses eligibility for the scholarship permanently. Students that can demonstrate good cause for not meeting the academic requirements may appeal directly to HESC. Scholarship monies received prior to losing eligibility are not converted into a loan.

### Example: Calculating an Excelsior Scholarship Award

Jon is from Brooklyn, New York and is considering attending Buffalo State. His parents' 2016 federal adjusted gross income was \$90,000. Jon filed taxes for the first time in 2016 and his adjusted gross income was \$3,500. Jon determines his "combined adjusted gross income" is  $\$90,000 + \$3,500 = \$93,500$ . Since this combined AGI is below the \$110,000 limit for the 2018-2019 school year, Jon meets the income requirements for the Excelsior Scholarship.

Next, Jon reviews his SUNY Award Letter and other scholarship notices and sums all the grants and scholarships he was awarded. In total, he will receive \$2,122.00 per semester in grants and scholarships. The tuition rate for Excelsior-eligible students is \$3,235. He calculates his Excelsior Scholarship to be  $\$3,235 - \$2,122 = \$1,113.00$  (see Table 1).

Table 1: Calculate Excelsior Scholarship Amount

Grants and Scholarships for Fall 2018	Amount per Semester
NYS TAP Grant	\$250.00
SUNY Tuition Credit	\$73.00
Federal Pell Grant	\$299.00
Lion's Club Scholarship from High school	\$500.00
<u>Buffalo State Provost Scholarship</u>	<u>+ \$1,000.00</u>
<b>Total Grants and Scholarships</b>	<b>\$2,122.00</b>
<b>Fall 2018 Expected Tuition Charge</b>	<b>\$3,235.00</b>
<b>Excelsior Scholarship Amount</b> [Tuition - Grants and Scholarships: $\$3,235 - \$2,122$ ]	<b>\$1,113.00</b>

While all of Jon's tuition will be covered by grants and scholarships, he understands there are additional costs he must consider. Jon will live on-campus and determines after all other charges and borrowing federal student loans, he will need to pay Buffalo State \$4,848.00 per semester (see Table 2). Jon is not eligible for a textbook deferment since his financial aid does not exceed his charges. Therefore, Jon should be prepared to purchase his textbooks out-of-pocket and budget approximately \$500 per semester.

Table 2: Determine other costs and balance due

Charges Not Covered by the Excelsior Scholarship	Amount per Semester
College Fees	\$653.00
Housing (standard double room)	\$4,088.00
<u>Meal Plan</u>	<u>+ \$2,857.00</u>
<b>Total Charges Not Covered by Excelsior</b> Assumes Jon has his own health insurance	<b>\$7,598.00</b>
<b>Federal Student Loans</b> Must accept loans and complete MPN and entrance counseling	<b>\$2,750.00</b>
<b>Expected Fall Semester Balance</b> [Charges - Loans: $\$7,598.00 - \$2,750.00$ ]	<b>\$4,848.00</b>

#### Options to Pay Remaining Amount Due:

- **Payment Plan** through Student Accounts: [studentaccounts.buffalostate.edu/automatic-payment-plan](http://studentaccounts.buffalostate.edu/automatic-payment-plan)
- **Federal Parent PLUS Loans** (parents of dependent students only): [financialaid.buffalostate.edu/federal-loans](http://financialaid.buffalostate.edu/federal-loans)
- **Private Student Loans** (co-signer typically required with student): [financialaid.buffalostate.edu/private-loans](http://financialaid.buffalostate.edu/private-loans)