

From: Washington College Grant (WSAC)

Sent: Friday, March 27, 2020 7:56 AM

To: WSAC DL FAAs ALL <FAAsALL@wsac.wa.gov>; WSAC DL SNG All Contacts <SNGAllContacts@wsac.wa.gov>; WSAC DL Financial Aid Directors <FinancialAidDirectors@wsac.wa.gov>; WSAC DL SWS Private SEAs <SWSPprivateSEAs@wsac.wa.gov>; WSAC DL SWS Public SEAs <SWSPublicSEAs@wsac.wa.gov>; WSAC DL SWS Private FAAs <SWSPprivateFAAs@wsac.wa.gov>

Subject: State Aid and COVID-19 Update

Importance: High

Dear Colleagues,

Your work with and on behalf of students during these very challenging circumstances is inspiring and commendable. Thank you!

We want to provide **updates (in bold)** and reiterate previous guidance in response to the COVID-19 situation.

In general, we want to provide as much flexibility as possible so that you can serve students. If you have questions, need additional details or would like us to review previous guidance, don't hesitate to contact us. Many of the responses below are due to your good questions and suggestions to our office.

- **Spring payments – You have flexibility on when you disburse state aid to students.** (No 10 day requirement, like federal aid.) We are processing payment requests as we receive them.
- Repayments
 - Students who fail to commence attendance and/or withdraw prior to the start of the term for which they have received a disbursement will owe 100% of the state funds disbursed. **Institutions may refer these repayments to WSAC following the repayment referral process.**
 - Aid administrators have 30 days to report repayments (instead of 10) through the remainder of the 2019-20 academic year.
 - WSAC is working with our billing and collection contractors **to allow payment deferments without penalties for individuals impacted by COVID-19 that owe state aid repayments.**
- Spring Interim - Reporting will open as scheduled on April 6 and is due on May 8, 2020.
- State Work Study – see below for details on allowances to convert wages to general financial aid awards.
- Passport Eligible Students – WSAC has been in contact with Passport designated support staff on campuses to provide as many resources as possible. This includes details on accessing emergency funding through College Success Foundation. See below for more details.

We have heard from many of you that you are making adjustments to your term start and end dates. You do not need to notify our office of those changes, assuming there is no change to your Title IV participation agreement with the Department of Education. **WSAC does need to be notified right away if there are changes to your federal aid participation, with your accreditor or your ability to administer state financial aid.**

Please do not hesitate to contact us. The best way to contact program staff is through email. All program mailboxes are also monitored carefully. You may also call the toll-free line at 1-888-535-0747 to leave a message.

Passport to Careers: passport@wsac.wa.gov
Washington College Grant: wcg@wsac.wa.gov
College Bound Scholarship: cbs@wsac.wa.gov
General Financial Aid: finaid@wsac.wa.gov
WASFA: wasfa@wsac.wa.gov
SWS: sws@wsac.wa.gov
Repayment: repayment@wsac.wa.gov

Finally (not COVID-19 related), note that proposed Washington College Grant and College Bound Scholarship rules (WACs) are open for public comment. **You may access the proposed rules [here for WCG](#) and [here for CBS](#).**

State Work Study Administrators:

State Work Study (SWS) Program Guidance: SWS employees who are unable to perform regularly scheduled work hours or tasks as a result of an employer's COVID-19 suspension, or significant alteration of normal business operations have two options:

Option 1 - SWS will continue to reimburse employers for the applicable program share of eligible hours through the remainder of 2019-20 as long as the SWS employer continues to pay its share of gross student wages for those hours. To receive reimbursement under these conditions, there is no change to the operational process for employers. Hours eligible for SWS reimbursement under this option include, but are not limited to, performing typical job tasks, remote work, including project-based assignments, or not working because of COVID-19 limitations.

Option 2 - Alternatively or in addition to option 1, institutions may also utilize their remaining 2019-20 SWS allocations to fulfill the financial aid commitment made to current SWS students by reclassifying their remaining 2019-20 SWS awards as general financial aid, rather than anticipated wages, up to the maximum of the student's remaining SWS award. Eligible students must have documented SWS earnings in the same academic year and continue to meet all SWS eligibility requirements. The employer would not be required to match as under option 1 above, but institutions must ensure that the emergency SWS awards are provided equitably.

Please see the SWS Attachment for answers to frequently asked questions.

Passport Administrators:

Our number one goal is to stay student-centered. Second, we want to remain flexible, and engage in smart planning and preparation. Therefore, institution staff may access Passport incentive grant funds to help students overcome barriers during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Please see the attached memo outlining some ways to support students with incentive grant funds. We also have attached a document from The Hope Center, which provides guidance about how to support students with food, emergency aid, housing and learning supplies.

Due to the flexibility of Passport Incentive funds, they can be used for each of these areas. WSAC remains committed to providing support to students and staff from our new, remote work

environment, and we plan to keep communication as open as possible with institutions. Please do not hesitate to reach out to us via phone or email.

In partnership and with gratitude,
WSAC Student Financial Assistance Division



WASHINGTON STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT COUNCIL

Student Financial Assistance Division

888-535-0747

Finaid@wsac.wa.gov | www.readysetgrad.org/wasfa