

## GENERAL PROVISIONS

If a student or the student's family has experienced a significant change in financial circumstances, the Financial Aid Office, in accordance with federal Professional Judgment guidelines, may be able to re-evaluate eligibility for financial aid for the school year. This re-evaluation process will be initiated by the student and/or parent by submitting a Special Consideration (SPC) request form.

In many instances, a student or family can demonstrate a financial loss from one year to the next. However, the financial loss may not be significant enough to gain more financial aid eligibility. Not all changes in circumstances will result in an adjustment and/or increase a student's financial aid eligibility.

### **Circumstances that will be considered**

- If a student/parent reduced wages due to job loss or layoff, decreased work hours for at least 90 days.
- Receipt of unemployment benefits in lieu of wages or expiration of unemployment benefits.
- Inflated adjusted gross income on tax return due to a retirement account or pension withdrawal that was used to pay off debt.
- High (PAID) out of pocket medical, dental, vision or prescription expenses that exceed allowance per federal methodology.
- Loss or reduction in child support or spousal support payments.
- Marital divorce or separation.
- Death of a parent or spouse.
- Other similar financial changes as appropriate.

## REQUIREMENTS

### **Verification**

- Any student requesting Special Consideration will be required to complete Verification prior to SPC review. Students will be advised via the Special Consideration webpage and on the SPC Request Form that they must submit appropriate verification documents before their Request for Special Consideration will be reviewed.
- If a student has already completed Verification they are not required to re-submit the documentation.
- If a student who was not selected for Verification by CPS or by the Institution prior to submitting a Special Consideration Request, later decides to retract the SPC process, the student may be re-grouped to a non-verification tracking group.
- If any verification documentation is received for a student, a review of the submitted documents will be performed in accordance with the Unsolicited Documentation section of the Verification Policy.
- If requested documentation for verification is not received within 30 days the SPC may be denied.

## **Documentation**

- Documentation that supports the re-evaluation request must be submitted for review at the discretion of the reviewing advisor. The type and nature of the documentation will depend on the nature of the SPC circumstances. Examples of documentation are provided on the Special Consideration request form.
- Supplementary documentation may be requested as necessary.

## **PROFESSIONAL JUDGMENT**

Evaluation is subject to Professional Judgment of the advisor completing the review per this policy. Supporting documentation will be requested and retained and will include notes regarding the conclusion of the review. A record of the documentation will be scanned into Xtender and noted on RHACOMM in Banner as necessary.

The SPC worksheet will include verified information such as wages, adjusted gross income, tax paid, un-taxed income, tax-deferred pension contributions, etc. New calculations will also be recorded and notes made on the SPC worksheet to document the reasons for re-evaluation, the financial items being updated and rationale for change.

## **NOTIFICATION**

Once a determination has been made on a Special Consideration request, a student will be notified of the decision via the student's Ferris email account. The email will include the decision, rationale for the decision, any EFC change based on the decision, and if applicable, the impact on the student's financial aid award.

## **ACADEMIC YEAR AND 12 MONTH PERIOD DETERMINATIONS**

Changes made to the FAFSA apply to the entire academic year, regardless of when the SPC Request is submitted. It is the discretion of the FAO to determine which academic aid year a request should be applied to, taking into consideration the student's enrollment period and the time when the financial change occurred.

Per federal Professional Judgment Guidelines, the SPC advisor may determine which 12 month period will be considered in the re-evaluation, depending on the circumstances of the SPC. The designated 12 month period does not have to be a base tax year. For example, if an SPC were based on unemployment that was effective just prior to the beginning of a new school year, the advisor may determine that the appropriate 12 month period would be from September to August. For consistency, the prior year's income will be the basis for the income except where the income change would warrant a more appropriate 12 month period.

## **SPECIAL CONSIDERATION POLICY EXCEPTIONS**

The Director of Financial aid has final authority regarding the above policy to remain compliant with Federal regulations and has discretion to rule on matters not covered in this policy.