

# Higher Education Student Assistance

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## Mission

To make college affordable, to allow students more choice in selecting a college, and to increase college preparation.

## Summary of Activities

Student financial assistance provided by the state includes both programs administered by the **State Student Assistance Commission of Indiana** (SSACI) and the portion of institutional financial aid derived from general operating appropriations to the public colleges and universities.

SSACI has three main areas of concentration: Grants and Scholarships, Early Intervention / Education Programs, and Technology, Research and Analysis. Grants and scholarships administered by SSACI include the Higher Education Award, Freedom of Choice grant, Twenty-first Century Scholarship, National Guard Supplemental grant, Part-Time Grant, Special Program grants for nurses, working students, minority students, and Fee Remission Grants for children of disabled veterans and similar students. Students who receive Core 40 and Academic Honors diplomas in high school are eligible for higher levels of assistance.



SSACI also conducts early intervention programs for Twenty-first Century Scholars and education and outreach programs for all students, parents, high school counselors, and financial aid professionals. It conducts research to better understand the needs of Hoosier students and families.

Institutional aid appropriated directly to public universities includes statutory and non-statutory tuition and fee waivers and institutional grants and scholarships. Statutory tuition and fee waivers administered by universities include senior citizen fee waivers and county scholarships. Non-statutory waivers may be granted at the discretion of institutional trustees to a variety of students including faculty and staff and their spouses and dependents, graduate and undergraduate teaching and research assistants, and students with specific talents or abilities. Other institutional aid includes need-based grants and merit scholarships.

## External Factors

The primary factors affecting student assistance are the continuously rising cost of attending college; the increasing number of high school graduates going to college; the increasing number of graduates earning Core 40 and Academic Honors diplomas; the growing number of students who attend college part-time; the increasing reliance of students on loans to finance their education; and the slow growth in federal student assistance programs.

## Evaluation and Accomplishments

In 1998-99, Indiana's need-based aid programs administered by SSACI ranked seventh nationally in estimated grant dollars per resident population, ninth in estimated grant dollars per resident college-age population, and sixth in estimated grant dollars to undergraduates per full-time undergraduate enrollment. In 1999-2000, 61% of students used their Higher Education Awards and 68% used their Freedom of Choice grants; SSACI funded \$90,185,104 in major grants alone to over 41,000 students, and over \$8 million in Twenty-First Century Scholarships and other special program grants to over 8,000 students.

Through the efforts of the Office of Twenty-First Century Scholars, Indiana was the recipient of a \$25 million five year federal grant for improving its early intervention programs: GEARUP, *Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs*.

SSACI expanded its programs to meet the needs of more students during the 1999-2001 biennium. Beginning in the academic year 2000-2001, funding was provided to expand the Higher Education Award Program to include students at proprietary institutions. The 1999 General Assembly also created the Indiana National Guard Supplemental Grant to pay the tuition of active Indiana National Guard members attending public colleges.

In 1999-2000, SSACI introduced two online systems: **eGRADS** and **CHIPS**. **eGRADS**, a real-time online **Grant Report and Delivery System**, was made available to financial aid professionals in nearly 100 colleges and universities around the state. This system enables staff in those offices to check on the eligibility and awards for any of their enrolled students. **CHIPS**, the **Core 40 and Honors Internet uPdate System**, was developed as a Web-based Internet application that allows high school counselors to list pertinent data on their Honors and Core 40 graduates. Working with high school counselors is crucial to the success of the supplemental grant program. **CHIPS** reduces the workload on counselors and staff while increasing the accuracy and timeliness of the data.

To maximize the benefits of the SSACI's college work study program for both students and employers, the Web-based internet application **WERRS-Work Experience Resume and Referral System** was put on-line in July of 2000. This system will allow SSACI to match students with particular skills, as described in their on-line resumes, to employers needing those skills.

## Plans for the Biennium

SSACI plans to maintain its national leadership position in financial aid by meeting the financial needs of Hoosier families; to increase the number of students eligible for part-time grants; to increase the range and depth of early intervention programs for Scholars and parents; to improve its outreach and education programs for students, parents, high school counselors, and financial aid professionals.

SSACI will introduce in 2001-2002 **eGRADS II**, its on-line real-time system that enables students to examine their awards and change those awards from one college to another. In any given year, over 22,000 students change their first college choice right up to and after the start of classes; **eGRADS II** will enable SSACI to respond in a rapid and timely manner to the change requests.

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“I wanted to take a moment to personally thank you for awarding me scholarship money. I'm sure that these scholarship awards may begin to only seem like names, but they are real people with real needs. Thank you very much for helping with my financial needs. Your help is truly appreciated.”

- A high school senior

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