

Don't just HOPE you're ready for the future... plan now!

The passage of House Bill 326 (Preserving HOPE and Georgia Pre-K for Future Generations) brings a number of significant changes to the HOPE Scholarship Program that will affect Georgia students pursuing a postsecondary education in the state. Learn more about the changes and HOPE eligibility below. Talk to your counselor if you have other questions.

With House Bill 326, how has the HOPE Scholarship Program changed?

- The amount of the HOPE Scholarship award will be adjusted annually based on lottery revenue. The same holds true for the HOPE award for private college students and for the HOPE Grant for students pursuing a technical certification or diploma. If lottery revenue drops, the amount of the awards would decrease as well. For the 2011–12 school year, officials say the scholarship and grant awards will be about 90% of the previous year's awards. The private school award for 2011–12 will be \$3,600. The awards will no longer adjust upward to cover tuition increases, nor do they cover books and fees. That said, the HOPE Scholarship Program remains a significant source of college funding for many Georgia families.
- Under HB 326, the state's top students may qualify for the new full-tuition Zell Miller Scholarship, reserved for high school valedictorians, salutatorians, and graduates with strong GPAs and test scores who plan to attend an eligible public college or university. (See below.) Zell Miller Scholars attending a private Georgia college would receive an award of \$4,000 per year.
- Georgia college students may no longer use HOPE Scholarship funds to pay for remedial or developmental courses.
- Students in the Class of 2015 and after must earn high school credit in advanced courses to qualify for HOPE. (See below.)
- Students now have a seven-year window in which to use HOPE after high school graduation.
- Students qualifying for needs-based aid could qualify for the new, low-interest (1%) Student Access Loan Program administered by the Georgia Student Finance Commission. The application is available at www.GAcollge411.org. These loans could be forgiven altogether for recipients who become certified and teach in a public K–12 school in Georgia in the content areas of science, technology, engineering, or mathematics. Each year of classroom service would forgive one year of the student loan.
- Other requirements for HOPE eligibility have not changed. In addition to maintaining an adequate college GPA (a 3.0 GPA or higher during semesters in which 30, 60, and 90 hours of earned credit is reached), HOPE-eligible students must be enrolled in an eligible postsecondary institution; meet Georgia residency requirements; be a U.S. citizen or an eligible non-citizen; be registered for selective service, if applicable; not have a drug conviction; and not be in default on a school loan. Only undergraduates are eligible for HOPE funds, up to 127 semester hours.

What grade point average is required to earn a HOPE Scholarship or the new Zell Miller Scholarship?

To qualify for the HOPE Scholarship, a student must earn a minimum 3.0 cumulative grade point average in all academic classes in high school. Zell Miller Scholars must be their high school's valedictorian or salutatorian, or earn a 3.7 high school GPA or higher and post, in one sitting, an SAT combined score of 1200 or higher in math and reading or an ACT score of 26 or higher.

What high school courses will count in determining HOPE eligibility?

All academic courses attempted in language arts, mathematics, science, social studies, and modern and classical languages, including both required and elective courses in these subjects, would count toward HOPE eligibility. If a student fails a class in a core subject, then retakes the class, both grades would be included in the student's HOPE grade point average. Students entering high school in 2011–12 and after will be required to earn credit in rigorous high school coursework in order to qualify for the HOPE Scholarship in the future. Students earning credit for courses in GCPS' regular sequence for advanced math and science (as well as advanced foreign language or college-level Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate classes) would meet the HOPE rigor requirements. The Class of 2015 must earn at least two high-rigor credits, with three credits required for 2016 graduates, and four credits for those graduating in 2017. This requirement does not apply to students entering college before 2015.



Will an “80” average in academic classes qualify a high school student for the HOPE Scholarship?

No. Each individual course grade (expressed as a percentage) must be converted to a 4.0 scale, based on Gwinnett County Public Schools’ grading scale. For instance, a 77% has a value of 2.0, an 88% converts to 3.0, and a 94% is a 4.0. See *The Choice Book* or your transcript for Gwinnett’s grading scale.

Are any high school classes given extra weighting?

For HOPE purposes only, grades in Advanced Placement (AP) and International Baccalaureate (IB) classes will be weighted in the following manner:

- Gwinnett students get a weight of 10 points added to their earned numerical grades in AP and IB courses for determining class rank and GPA for college applications.
- In determining HOPE Scholarship eligibility, the 10 points added by GCPS will be subtracted from the AP or IB numerical grade (for HOPE purposes only).
- For the HOPE average only, the “unweighted” numerical grade will be converted to a 4.0 scale, then .5 points will be added to the converted score. No grades higher than a 4.0 will be awarded.

Example: A student earns an 88 in AP Biology, and has a weighted numerical average of 98 with the 10 points. For determining class rank and GPA for college applications, the grade would be considered an “A” with a 98 numerical average and a 4.0 on the GCPS grading scale. For HOPE Scholarship eligibility only, the *unweighted* numerical average of 88, considered a “B,” would be converted to a 3.0, then .5 would be added back for a 3.5. If the student had a 92 unweighted average (102 with the 10 points), the converted score would be a 4.0 both for class rank purposes and for HOPE purposes.

Who calculates the HOPE average and determines eligibility for the HOPE Scholarship?

The Georgia Student Finance Commission, a state agency, calculates HOPE averages based on transcript information provided by Gwinnett County Public Schools. The school system does **not** calculate HOPE averages and does **not** have access to the state’s calculations.

Will the HOPE average be included on the Gwinnett County transcripts or report cards?

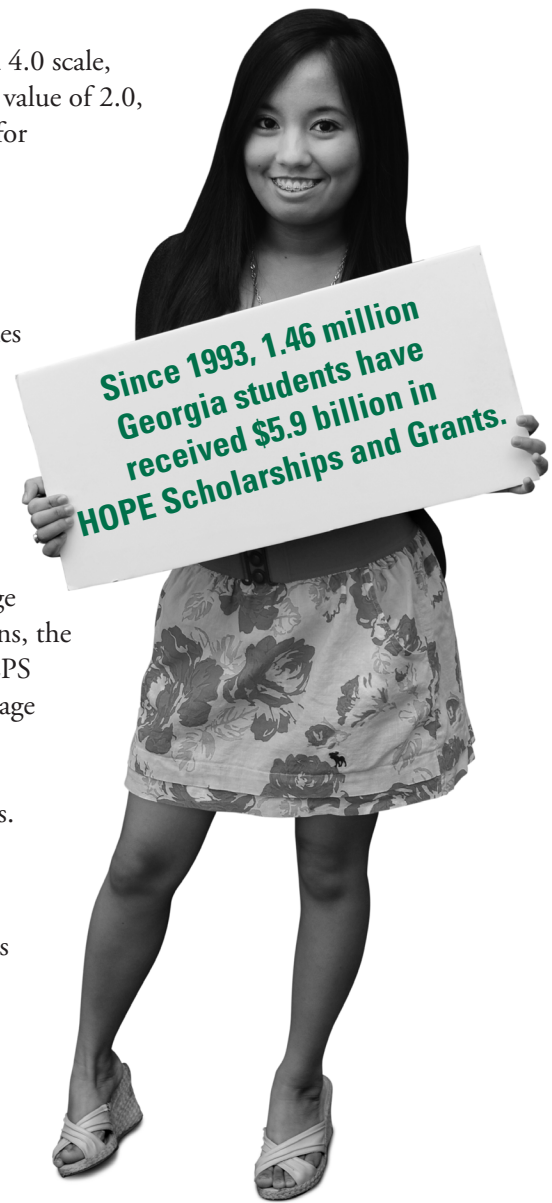
No. Because the HOPE average is not computed by GCPS, it will **not** appear on a student’s transcript or report card.

How and when do parents and students learn a student’s HOPE eligibility status?

Students will **not** receive automatic or direct notification of their HOPE eligibility status. Students and/or their parents may sign on to www.GAcollge411.org and create a “My411 Student Account.” The state generally makes HOPE eligibility available for graduating seniors through these personal accounts in mid-June. After the state posts HOPE eligibility information on GAcollege 411, families may contact the financial aid office of the college or postsecondary school the student is registered to attend in the summer or fall. Financial aid staff will have access to this information directly from the Georgia Student Finance Commission.

What do students have to do to keep the HOPE Scholarship?

To keep the scholarship, college students must maintain a 3.0 GPA or higher during the semesters in which they reach 30-, 60-, and 90-hours of credit earned. A student who loses the scholarship by dropping below a 3.0 average has one year to regain the scholarship by bringing his or her GPA back to a 3.0. Students may regain the scholarship only one time. Zell Miller Scholars must maintain a 3.3 average in college. If the student falls below the required 3.3 GPA, but maintains a 3.0 or higher, the student remains eligible for the regular HOPE award.



Questions? Call 1-800-505-GSFC (4732) or 770-724-9000 or check online at www.GAcollge411.org.

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