

**UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF GEORGIA**

**Keeping the HOPE Scholarship  
Throughout College:**

**The Status of Fall First-Time  
Freshmen Six Years Later**

**Board of Regents  
Office of Research and Policy Analysis  
February 2009**

**University System of Georgia**  
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Georgia's HOPE Scholarship is a merit-based student aid program for students who graduated from Georgia high schools since 1993.<sup>1</sup> HOPE pays for first-year college tuition, mandatory fees (limited to the 2004 fee amount), and a book allowance to those students who have a "B" high school grade point average (HSGPA) and who attend a University System of Georgia college or university. The HOPE HSGPA was based on all courses taken in high school from HOPE's inception in 1993 until 2000, but it is currently based on all attempts of the 16 units of the college preparatory curriculum.<sup>2</sup> The "B" average is defined as a 3.0 on a 4.0 scale or as an 80 numeric average, regardless of the scale (for students with Technical/Career diplomas, a 3.2 or an 85 is required).<sup>3</sup> HOPE is administered by the Georgia Student Finance Commission.

HOPE continues to pay tuition and mandatory fees as long as the student maintains a 3.0 college GPA while attending college.<sup>4</sup> The HOPE college GPA is based on all post-secondary hours attempted. In college, eligibility to continue receiving HOPE is evaluated by the institutions at checkpoints of 30, 60, and 90 hours attempted. Because students enroll for a varying number of hours each term, they may reach 30 hours at the end of the first year or in the second (or later) year. To control for this, there will be an additional GPA checkpoint in Spring term for freshmen students who enrolled for at least 12 hours during fall beginning in Spring 2006.<sup>5</sup> Students who lose HOPE at one checkpoint may regain it at a later checkpoint.

There are two possible methods of tracking student retention of HOPE over time:

1. The first method tracks the same students, those who have a HOPE award versus those who do not, over discrete time periods. Thus, one might calculate the number of HOPE recipients in Fall 2000 and check for HOPE status on these students again in Fall 2001, Fall 2002, and forward.

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<sup>1</sup> HOPE eligibility rules are more complex than presented here. The eligibility rules are available on the Georgia Student Finance Commission website.

<sup>2</sup> The HSGPA includes all grades for courses earned and attempted in English, mathematics, science, social science, and foreign language that could be used to satisfy a core curriculum graduation requirement for the DOE college preparatory diploma. Numeric grades are translated to letter grades on a 4.00 scale, using the scale in place at the high school, with a grade of "A" equal to 4.00, "B" equal to 3.00, "C" equal to 2.00, "D" equal to 1.00, and "F" equal to 0.

<sup>3</sup> Students earning a Technical/Career Diploma count the grades for earned and attempted courses grades, within specified subject areas of the technical diploma, and must earn at least a 3.2 HSGPA.

<sup>4</sup> Students in four-year baccalaureate programs may receive HOPE until they attempt a total of 127 semester hours, and students in five-year baccalaureate programs can receive HOPE until they attempt 150 semester hours. HOPE stops at graduation if that occurs earlier.

<sup>5</sup> In order to continue to receive HOPE, freshmen students must have at least a 3.0 at the end of Spring term. The spring checkpoint is not included in this analysis.

The Fall 2000 cohort of students may or may not have attempted 30 hours or been evaluated for retaining HOPE eligibility by Fall 2001.

2. The second method tracks students through the HOPE eligibility checkpoints at 30, 60, and 90 credit hours attempted, regardless of when those checkpoints occur. Thus, some of the Fall 2000 students may attempt 30 hours by the end Spring 2001; others perhaps reach that point in Fall 2002.

The reports in this series use this second method above in creating HOPE survival charts for USG institutions, following a fall cohort of first-time freshmen through six years to graduation to determine if they kept or lost HOPE at each of the 30, 60, or 90 hour checkpoints. Freshmen were included in the fall cohort if they were Georgia residents and graduated from high school after 1992. The reports can be used to explore the likelihood of students retaining HOPE throughout their undergraduate studies.

The data used for the survival charts are from HOPE Scholarship files (from the Georgia Student Finance Commission) merged with data from the University System Student Information Reporting System (SIRS) and Academic Data Mart (ADM). This report uses cumulative attempted hours and cumulative GPA as reported in SIRS or ADM data. These calculations of cumulative hours and GPA should be considered estimates of those used for the real determination of HOPE eligibility. Data on cumulative attempted hours differ in three ways from what is used by institutions to determine eligibility for HOPE by GSFC rules. First, learning support courses and other institutional credit courses count as attempted credit hours by HOPE, but they are excluded from attempted credit hours in System data. Second, for students who have transferred from another institution (before matriculation as a first-time freshman at the reporting institution), the System database does not record data on those attempted hours for which the student does not receive credit by the receiving institution (such as a withdrawal). Finally, if an institution does not count post-secondary credit from technical institutes, SIRS/ADM does not record those hours, but the hours are considered for HOPE eligibility. As a result of these differences in measurement, the number of HOPE attempted credit hours reported in SIRS/ADM will always be equal to or lower than those used by institutions to determine HOPE eligibility.

Freshmen were followed throughout their enrollment only at their matriculating institution—students who transferred out to another System institution are not included in this analysis, and those who transferred in after the initial matriculation of the freshman cohort are not included. It should be emphasized that data on students reaching the 90 hours attempted eligibility checkpoint do not include all students still enrolled from the beginning fall cohort. Specifically, those students who have not attempted 90 credit hours by the end of the six-year period are not included. Thus, there is likely a slight under-representation of the cohort at the 90-hour mark; some of these students will retain HOPE when they attempt 90 hours. Similarly, at each checkpoint those students who are not enrolled at the six-year endpoint for the report are also not included. Institutional 30-60-90 survival charts are presented as an appendix to this report.