

Guided Pathways Recruitment Architecture Subgroup

Recommendation 003-RA-05

Background

Our Community College open door admissions policy offers admission to every high school graduate or student with a high school diploma equivalency. Students enrolling in a major for an associate degree are required to take a college placement test or request a waiver based on SAT/ACT scores. Transfer students may present transcripts showing the completion of college level English and Math. Some programs, such as Nursing, require specific preparation for admission, and therefore have special requirements.

A standard two-page admissions paper application was created in conjunction with the Community College Admissions Council and the CSCU Webmaster over a one-year period. An online application also exists for students, available via www.ct.edu/admission.

Section 6.5.2 of the former Board of Trustees Policy Manual designates that “a mandatory application fee shall be charged to all first-time applicants for admission to the Community College system.” The Board of Regents, via Board Resolution 16-069, had affirmed the application fee be designated as non-refundable to student applicants. The application fee for Community College students is currently \$20. Students who had previously paid an application fee are not assessed the \$20 upon being readmitted to any community college within Connecticut. Application fees for Credit students are assessed to any and all new applicants, and are not eligible to be covered through financial aid. The Application Fee does not apply to non-credit students.

Application Fee waivers are designated at the discretion of college presidents, and additionally through partner agencies such as CONNTAC. Employees (and their spouses and dependent children), Connecticut residents over the age of sixty-two, and High School Partnership students are also eligible to receive a waiver for a community college Application Fee.

Fiscal Background

Over the past five fiscal years, application fees in aggregate across our community colleges has averaged \$612,776 (\$566,860 in FY17) and \$108,088 in application fee waivers (\$95,400 in FY17). For FY17, 16.83% of students (4,770 out of 28,343) received an application fee waiver. The Application Fee, net of Application Fee Waivers, yielded \$471,460 in FY17.

Fiscal Year	Application Fees	Application Fee Waivers	Net Revenue	% Receiving Application Waiver
FY17	\$ 566,860	\$ 95,400	\$ 471,460	16.8%
FY16	\$ 592,680	\$ 111,160	\$ 481,520	18.8%
FY15	\$ 612,120	\$ 106,560	\$ 505,560	17.4%
FY14	\$ 630,360	\$ 117,160	\$ 513,200	18.6%
FY13	\$ 661,860	\$ 110,160	\$ 551,700	16.6%

Application Fee Analysis

Application Fee Waivers are broken down into two categories: Fringe Benefit Waivers for Employees and Statutory & Other Waivers. Fringe Benefit Waivers for Employees consist of waivers to the following bargaining units and member areas: 4C, AFSCME, AFT, Classified, and Unclassified. Statutory Waivers consist of Senior Citizen and High School Partnership students. Other waivers are those at the discretion of the President of each college, as well as at the discretion of partner agencies.

Fiscal Year	Employee Waivers	# Fringe Benefit Waivers	Statutory & Other Waivers	# Statutory & Other Waivers
FY17	\$ 620	31	\$ 94,780	4,739
FY16	\$ 920	46	\$ 110,240	5,512
FY15	\$ 900	45	\$ 105,660	5,283
FY14	\$ 940	47	\$ 116,220	5,811
FY13	\$ 900	45	\$ 109,260	5,463

Financial Aid Eligibility

Charges which are eligible to be applied against eligible financial aid disbursement are known as institutional charges. Institutional charges are those which are typically synonymous with educationally related cost, such as tuition and activity fees. Institutional charges are also used to determine the portion of unearned Title IV aid that the school is responsible for returning in the event of a withdrawal. Since application fees are excluded from institutional charges because they are not educational costs, they are not eligible to be considered in a student's financial aid cost of attendance, and an institution may not apply financial aid toward the application fee charge.

Credit seeking students, in both associate degree and certain certificate programs (minimum 16 credit hours), are eligible to apply for financial assistance toward their program of study. Non-matriculated and non-Credit students are ineligible to apply for federal or state financial assistance.

Comparable Institution Practice

Within the top 25 community colleges across the country, the following institutions are ranked by Fall 2015 headcount and presented with their corresponding Application Fee.

Institution	Fall 2015 Headcount	Application Fee
Ivy Tech Community College	81,668	\$ 0
Lone Star College System	70,724	\$ 0
Miami Dade College	62,332	\$ 30 Domestic; \$ 50 Int'l
Houston Community College	56,522	\$ 0
Connecticut Community Colleges	52,761	\$ 20
Tarrant County College District	51,688	\$ 0
Northern Virginia Community College	50,078	\$ 0

Challenges

The Application Fee has been identified as a barrier to entry by internal constituent units, including but not limited to Presidents, Deans, and Directors of Admission. This is inclusive of students who may not have an available \$20 to apply, students who may not know a waiver might exist, and students who become discouraged when they are able to complete an application online but do not have a means to electronically pay.

Impact

In addition to a fiscal analysis that will be provided by the CSCU Chief Finance Officer to supplement these recommendations, this change has the ability to relieve any financial barriers to entry that exist for our low-income students. In Fall 2017, 47.8% of community college students were Pell Grant recipients. By extension, these low-income students would still be able to have the additional fee covered by financial aid dollars, and new recipients would not be burdened with a \$20 Application Fee. Time spent by staff to process application fee waivers is eliminated. More importantly, the potential embarrassment for a student to have to apply for a \$20 waiver is eliminated, thus creating social justice for our students.

Recommendation

1. Eliminate the \$20 Application Fee for all students.
2. Increase the semester College Service Fee by \$5 to supplement administrative processing activities related to a student's Credit enrollment.
3. Assess a \$5 College Service Fee to Non-Credit Students for each registration (with an annual \$10 maximum) to supplement administrative processing activities related to a student's Non-Credit enrollment.
4. Explore options for a single admission application for Credit and Non-Credit Students.

Review

Chief Financial Officer:	04/23/2018
Deans of Continuing Ed:	05/04/2018
Directors of Admission:	05/11/2018

Endorsement

Guided Pathways Taskforce:	05/04/2018
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