Title: #VI-10A. Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) Standards for Financial Aid Applicants

Date: May 9, 2019 (Replaces version dated October 5, 2018)

A. Statutory Guidance

Federal regulations, HEA Sec. 484(c), 34 CFR 668.16 and 34 CFR 668.34 require schools offering Federal Student Aid to monitor the academic progress of students who apply for and/or receive financial aid. The State of West Virginia uses the same requirements as federal Title IV aid for purposes of determining whether Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) standards are met for State of West Virginia financial aid programs. Satisfactory Academic Progress standards for financial aid applicants differ from institutional standards related to "Academic Standing," as explained in WVUP Answer Book #VI-10, *Academic Standing*.

B. Satisfactory Progress Definitions

1. **Academic Plan** – An Academic Plan is a tool used to ensure that the student is able to meet WVUP's SAP standards by a specific point in time. An Academic Plan is developed by the student and their advisor as part of the SAP or maximum timeframe appeal and may be for one to three payment periods. These Plans must be tailored to address the specific student's progress toward compliance with SAP. Students who fail to comply with the agreed upon Academic Plan will immediately be placed on *Financial Aid Suspension* status.

2. **Appeal** – A process by which a student who is not meeting SAP standards petitions the school for reconsideration of their eligibility for FSA funds

3. **Financial Aid Probation** – A status the school assigns to a student who is failing to make satisfactory academic progress and who successfully appeals. Eligibility for aid may be reinstated for one payment period by appeal or under the terms of an approved Academic Plan.

4. **Financial Aid Suspension** – Students on Suspension status have not met SAP standards and cannot receive Financial Aid until they have fulfilled the necessary steps to regain eligibility for financial aid as outlined in this policy.

5. **Financial Aid Warning** – A status the school assigns to a student who is failing to make satisfactory academic progress. WVUP reinstates eligibility for aid for one payment period and may do so without a student appeal.

6. Maximum Timeframe – For an undergraduate program, this is a period no longer than 150 percent of the published length of the program.

C. Satisfactory Academic Progress

Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) standards describe the academic standards that students must maintain while completing their certificate, associate, or baccalaureate degree to maintain eligibility for financial aid. These standards consist of completing a quantitative (time-based) and qualitative (grade-based) measure, and a maximum timeframe measure (150%), which is reviewed at the end of each academic semester. Students will be notified by e-mail at their WVUP email address if not meeting SAP and further requirements/actions that are necessary.

D. Federal Student Aid Programs Monitored by these Regulations

- Federal Direct Subsidized Student Loan
- Federal Direct Unsubsidized Student Loan
- Federal Direct Parent Plus Loan (PLUS)
- Federal Pell Grant
- Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (SEOG)
- Federal Work-Study (CWS)

E. West Virginia Student Aid Programs Monitored by these Regulations

- WV Higher Education Grants
- Promise Scholarship
- WV Higher Education Adult Part-Time Student Grant (WVHEAPS)
- WV Nursing Scholarship Program
- WV Invests (Title 135, Series 8)

F. Minimum SAP Standards

The Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) standard for WVUP students consists of three parts and is defined as follows:

1. Quantitative Standard - Pace

Pace is the rate at which a student is progressing toward program completion. Satisfactory academic progress requires all students receiving financial aid to maintain a 67% completion rate. This means a student must complete 67% of all credit hours attempted, as scheduled after the close of registration, with passing grades of A, B, C, D or P. Grades that will be counted toward hours attempted also include failed coursework (F), withdrawals (W), FIW, and Repeat coursework. A grade of I for incomplete will be evaluated once it has been updated to reflect a permanent grade. Audited courses that result in a grade of X are excluded from completion rate calculations. All attempted credit hours and transfer hours are calculated in the rate even if no financial aid was received for the hours.

2. Qualitative Standard – GPA

All students receiving financial aid must maintain a minimum of a 2.0 grade point average on a 4.0 scale. Earned transfer credit will also be calculated into the GPA unless a Grade Forgiveness Request has been petitioned with the Records Office. Some academic programs may have individual standards for program participation that are higher than the general requirement of maintaining a GPA of at least 2.0. If the student is enrolled in an academic program requiring a GPA greater than 2.0, then the student must maintain the higher program required GPA in order to meet the SAP standards. WVUP programs requiring higher than a 2.0 GPA are as follows:

- Associate of Applied Science – Nursing – Required 2.50 GPA for entry into the program
- Bachelor of Arts - Elementary Education Program – Required GPA 3.0
- Bachelor of Applied Science & Associate of Applied Science – Business Administration
    o General Education Classes GPA 2.0
    o Common Professional Core Component GPA 2.25 (See academic map)
    o Courses in Major Field of Study GPA 2.50 (See academic maps)

3. Quantitative Standard - Maximum Time Frame

Students are also limited to the number of credit hours for which they can receive financial aid. A student must complete their studies within the maximum period for completion that would be limited to no more than 150% of the published length of their program. All attempted and transfer coursework is included in the calculation. A student is ineligible to receive further federal financial aid when it becomes mathematically impossible to complete the program within 150% of the length of the program. Federal student aid may be reinstated for *Maximum Timeframe* issues **only** with an approved appeal.

The 150% timeframe standards are listed below:

a. One-Year Certificates

Students are expected to complete their program within 45 credit hours.

b. Two-Year Degrees (AAS, AA, or AS)

Students are expected to complete their program within 90 credit hours.

c. Four-Year Degrees (bachelor's level)

Students are expected to complete their program within 180 credit hours.

G. 150% Timeframe Students Who Elect to Change Majors

If a student enrolled in a degree program at WVUP determines the major they selected at the time of their initial enrollment no longer fits their academic goals or interests they may change their major. For purposes of the SAP 150% maximum timeframe, a student may change their major one time during the pursuit of their academic degree. Progressing into a bachelors program from

a related associate level program is not a change of major; rather it is the pursuit of a new degree. For students who elect this one-time option, courses that do not count toward the new major will not be included in the maximum timeframe calculation SAP requirement. Therefore, the maximum timeframe for completion of courses in the new major would be 150% of the hours required for the new program major minus any hours attempted for courses previously taken that count toward the new major degree. The student will be required to declare one primary major as that is the degree for which financial aid eligibility will be determined and monitored.

H. 150% Timeframe for Second Degree-Seeking Students

Students enrolled at WVUP who already possess an undergraduate degree, may qualify for additional federal and/or state financial aid. Students seeking second degrees are monitored like any other student and are expected to complete their programs within the maximum allowable timeframes listed above. A student pursuing a second undergraduate degree at WVUP is eligible to receive federal and state aid for a maximum of 150% of the hours required for the second degree minus any hours attempted for courses previously taken that count toward the new degree. Transfer hours not needed for the new degree do not count toward the 150% time-frame requirement.

~~Let us consider the following~~ Example: Assume a student previously received an associate of applied science degree in business and has now enrolled to complete an associate of applied science in nursing. Both degrees have a maximum 150% timeframe for completion of 90 hours. While completing the associate of applied science in business, the student transferred in 40 hours of general education and elective credits that applies toward the associate of applied science in nursing. The maximum timeframe would be calculated as follows:

150% maximum timeframe for nursing degree	90
Credits transferred from prior degree program	(40)
Maximum timeframe to complete nursing degree	50

I. Dual Degrees

For students simultaneously pursuing two or more degrees, the measurement of their minimum 67% pace of completion and 2.0 GPA requirement are still based on their total attempted hours. Their maximum timeframe requirement for total attempted hours will be calculated using the degree with the greater number of required hours.

J. Review of Progress

All students will be subject to review of their compliance with SAP standards at the end of each semester, shortly after grades for the semester are posted. The quantitative and qualitative standards used to judge academic progress will be cumulative and will include all periods of the student's enrollment, even periods in which the student did not receive financial aid funds or enrollment periods at other institutions.

Following are the detailed steps of the SAP standards review process:

1. A review will be done at the end of each semester/payment period. The evaluation period will be based on attendance in all prior semester(s) and will include all classes attempted (and transfer work) whether federal aid was received or not.

2. After the first time the student does not meet the minimum SAP standards for GPA and completion percentage, the student is placed on Financial Aid Warning Status. Financial Aid Warning means that the student CAN receive federal financial aid for the next semester of enrollment.

3. If, after the Warning period, the student is still unable to meet the minimum SAP standards the student is then placed on Financial Aid Suspension status, and is eligible to appeal to go on either Probation or Probation with Academic Plan. When the student is on Probation status, they are NOT eligible for federal financial aid for the next semester unless they appeal and the appeal is approved or they can meet SAP by entering into an approved Academic Plan. Students may appeal only if they have extenuating circumstances.

4. A student who does not appeal, submits an unsuccessful appeal, fails to meet the SAP standards after a successful appeal, or fails to fulfill the terms of an approved academic plan will remain on or return to the financial aid status of Suspension. Students on Suspension status cannot receive federal or state financial aid unless they re-establish eligibility as outlined below.

5. A student not meeting the 150% maximum timeframe is automatically required to submit an appeal and an Academic Plan. The Academic Plan may be applicable for up to 3 semesters.

K. Repeated Courses

Students are permitted to repeat a course for which they received a grade of D or F if they originally took the class within their first 60 credit hours of study.   Repeating courses must be in accordance with Answer Book #VI-5B, *Repeating Courses and Grade Forgiveness*. The grade achieved in the repeated course is recorded on the academic record; however, the original grade also remains on the academic record. The course with the highest grade is used in determining cumulative credit earned and in computing the GPA. All repeated courses are included in hours attempted.

L. Financial Aid Warning

Students who fail to meet the SAP standards are placed on financial aid warning during the following semester. In the first semester that a student does not meet SAP, they will be notified via their WVUP email account of their failure to meet SAP, and placed on Financial Aid Warning status for the next semester.

Students on Financial Aid Warning status are eligible to receive any aid that they meet the eligibility requirements to receive without limitations due to the warning status. Financial Aid Warning status does not initiate any differences in disbursement from the rest of the student population.

Students on Financial Aid Warning status are expected to attend and complete all courses in which they are enrolled with an overall GPA for the financial aid warning term of 2.50 or higher. Academic performance and completion percentage while on financial aid warning status will be considered during the evaluation of a student appeal.

M. Financial Aid Suspension

A student loses federal and state student eligibility by failing to adhere to one or more of the SAP components for two consecutive semesters or by exceeding the enrolled program's maximum timeframe limit. A student who does not appeal, submits an unsuccessful appeal, fails to meet the SAP standards after a successful appeal, or fails to fulfill the terms of an approved academic plan are placed on the financial aid status of Suspension. Students in the Suspension status cannot receive federal or state financial aid unless they re-establish eligibility as outlined below.

Federal and state student aid for students on Suspension status may be reinstated for GPA/Completion pace issues by following the Re-establishing Eligibility process described in Section Q.

Students will be sent an email via the WVUP email system notifying them that they have been placed on Suspension status because of their failure to meet SAP standards and of their right to appeal in accordance with the process described in WVUP Answer Book #VI-10B, *Financial Aid Appeal for Students not in Compliance with Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) Standards*.

N. Probation Status Requiring an Academic Plan

As permitted by 34 CFR 668.34, 8 ii, a student on financial aid probation with an academic plan may receive Title IV, federal program funds upon the successful completion of an SAP appeal and execution of an approved Academic Plan. While the student is on financial aid probation with an Academic Plan, the student must develop an Academic Plan that ensures they will comply with SAP within a period of 1 but not more than 3 semesters. The required Academic Plan worksheet must be developed and agreed to by the student and their academic advisor. All courses listed in the Academic Plan must be required for completion of the degree for which the student is enrolled. A current MyDegree evaluation is required as part of the appeal process.

During the time the student is on probation status requiring an Academic Plan, the student must do the following:

1. File an appeal and prove that progress towards compliance with SAP occurred during the Financial Aid Warning period; **or** that there were extenuating circumstances that prevented the student from complying with SAP. Progress towards compliance with SAP is implied if the student completed all of the classes in which they enrolled; maintained an overall 2.5 GPA for those classes taken during the Financial Aid Warning period; and it is mathematically possible for them to comply with SAP at the end of the final Academic Plan period.
2. Strictly adhere to the course schedule agreed to in the Academic Plan without modification. Students must file a written appeal if they wish to change or deviate from

their Academic Plan. The appeal must explain what has happened to make the change necessary and how they will be able to make satisfactory academic progress.

3. Maintain the minimum GPA for currently enrolled classes required to ensure the student will finish their program with an overall GPA of 2.0 (or the required GPA for those programs with a higher standard).
4. Complete each of the courses for which they are enrolled with passing grades.
5. At the end of each payment period of the Academic Plan, the student must remain mathematically eligible to comply with SAP by the end of the Academic Plan

At the end of one payment period on financial aid probation, the student must meet WVUP's SAP standards **or** meet the requirements of the Academic Plan created and agreed to by WVUP and the student. If the Academic Plan extends beyond one payment period, an evaluation of the progress towards the plan will be made at the end of each payment period.

If a student fails to meet SAP or comply with the terms of the Academic Plan, they will immediately be placed on Financial Aid Suspension and will NOT be eligible to receive further federal or state financial assistance unless and until they have complied with the standard for reestablishing eligibility.

O. Re-establishing Eligibility Due to Insufficient GPA or Completing Pace Deficiencies

If a student is on Financial Aid Suspension status because of failure to comply with the minimum SAP standards for GPA and pace of completion as described above, they must do the following to re-establish eligibility for financial aid:

1. Regain satisfactory academic progress standing by meeting the required minimum GPA and pace percentage. The student has to self-pay for courses necessary to bring academic progress up to the published standards. Once the student believes they meet the minimum SAP standards for GPA and pace of completion, the student must request that the financial aid office conduct an eligibility review. Once the financial aid office has confirmed the student has met the eligibility standards, financial aid eligibility will be reinstated.
2. File an eligibility reinstatement financial aid appeal. If the SAP appeal is approved, the student is place on Probation or Probation with an Academic Plan. If an appeal is denied, the student may still attend WVUP but at their own expense. The student may not attend if they have also been determined academically ineligible by the Office of Academic Affairs. The financial aid appeal process is outlined in WVUP Answer Book VI-10B *Financial Aid Appeal for Students not in Compliance with Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) Standards*.

P. Re-establish Eligibility if Maximum Timeframe is Exceeded

On an individual basis, students may have their federal student aid eligibility reinstated for a prescribed period as the result of an approved written appeal. During the first semester where eligibility has been reinstated, the student is not placed on probation but is instead expected to satisfy components of a financial aid Academic Plan. Financial aid Academic Plans for students who have exceeded the maximum timeframe consisting of six requirements:

1. Successfully complete (Earn Grade of A, B, C, D, P, or S) a specified list of courses during the first semester where eligibility has been reinstated; and

2. Successfully complete at least 67% of the credits attempted for the initial eligibility reinstatement semester; and

3. Successfully complete the minimum credits for the enrollment status upon which their financial aid package was calculated (or for students who have not used financial aid, the amount of credits in which they were enrolled after the add/drop period concludes) and;

4. Earn a semester GPA of a minimum of 2.0; and

5. Earn a cumulative GPA of a minimum of 2.0 (or the minimum GPA required for the student's academic program); and

6. Graduate from the program(s) by the date specified on the approved Academic Plan.

Students who fail to achieve any requirement specified in their Academic Plan will become ineligible for federal and state student aid programs for the remainder of their enrollment. Students who successfully complete the course requirements noted in their Academic Plan will have their federal student aid eligibility reinstated for the remainder of the prescribed period of time (specified in their appeal decision letter), and must continually meet both the GPA and completion pace requirements each semester. The student is expected to graduate from their program within this specified period of time. See WVUP Answer Book #VI-10B for definitions and conditions.

Q. Additional SAP Policies

1. *Repeat Courses:* A student may receive financial aid for repeating a previously failed (required) course once. A student may not receive financial aid a second time for a course that was passed. For this purpose, passed means any grade higher than an "F", regardless of any school or program policy requiring a higher grade or measure to have passed the course. Any courses repeated will be used in the student's pace and 150% calculations.

2. *Incomplete Grades:* Classes in which students are issued Incompletes are considered attempted hours, but not passing hours; therefore, they are used in all SAP calculations as such.

R. SAP Appeal Notifications

All notifications will be sent to the student's WVUP email address. Students must follow all instructions as indicated in the appeal, approval or denial notice. Some appeals may be approved with modifications, such as approval for a reduced number of credit hours for the term in which the student is on Financial Aid Probation. The student may need to contact their academic advisor or the WVUP Center for Student Services to adjust their schedule.

Note: *Financial aid is only available for courses required for degree completion. Students cannot take "filler" classes to be a full-time student for federal financial aid purposes, or take courses for future degree programs not required for completion of their current degree at WVUP.*

S. Changes in Standards

The standards for Satisfactory Academic Progress for financial aid recipients that are in effect at the beginning of the fall semester for each academic year will remain in effect for the remainder of that academic year unless superseded by state or federal authority.

Responsible Administrator: Director, Financial Aid, 304-424-8310