Standards of Academic Progress

Purpose

Federal and state regulations require that students receiving financial aid maintain satisfactory academic progress. VGCC applies these Standards of Academic Progress (SAP) to all federal and state financial aid funds in order to maintain a consistent procedure for all students receiving assistance.

Procedure

To receive financial aid, students must meet VGCC's SAP requirements. Each student is expected to maintain SAP toward completing the requirements of a degree, diploma or certificate. These standards are applied to a student's entire academic history at VGCC, including transfer hours from other schools and periods when financial aid was not received. Keeping your financial aid involves making continued successful progress toward obtaining a degree.

VGCC Financial Aid Standards of Academic Progress include:

- Qualitative Standard – Maintain a 2.0 cumulative grade point average (GPA) on a 4-point scale.
- Quantitative Standard – Successfully complete at least 67% of credit hours attempted with a passing grade (Completion Rate). The Completion Rate equals the credit hours completed divided by the credit hours attempted (and then multiplied by 100). Basic rounding is applied, meaning a student with a 66.5% completion rate is considered meeting this standard.
- Maximum Timeframe – Complete academic program within a time frame not exceeding 150% of the published length of the program. If an academic program requires 60 hours to complete, a student must complete the program within a maximum of 90 credit hours before exceeding financial aid eligibility (60 required credit hours multiplied by 150% = 90 maximum hours).

Treatment of Selected Grades and Special Notes:

- **Withdrawals** – Credit hours in which a student receives a grade of "W", "WF", or "WP" are included in the number of attempted hours, but do not count toward successfully completed hours. Students who withdraw (either official or unofficial) may have difficulty meeting the SAP Quantitative Standard (Completion Rate). Withdrawals are not factored in the GPA calculation.
- **Incomplete and Failing Grades** – Credit hours in which a student receives a grade of "I" or "F" are included in the number of attempted hours, but do not count toward successfully completed hours. Grades of "F" and "I" negatively affect GPA and Completion Rate. "Incompletes" are treated as failing grades until the class is

completed. Students with "incompletes" may have difficulty meeting the SAP requirements at the time of evaluation, but may request reevaluation upon completion.

- **Transfer Credit** – Transfer credit hours are included in the calculation of SAP as attempted and completed credits for the Quantitative Standard (Completion Rate), but are not calculated in a student's GPA for the Qualitative Standard (GPA). In addition to being factored into the completion rate requirement, a student's maximum time to receive financial aid will also be reduced by the equivalent transfer of credit hours towards his/her degree. Students transferring from another college will be considered making satisfactory progress at the time of enrollment at VGCC.
- **Developmental Courses** – Grades for courses numbered less than 100 (i.e. DMA 010, DMA 050, DRE 097, ENG 085, MAT 060, RED 090, etc.) are included in the GPA calculation as well as the Completion Rate. These grades include "PA", "PB", "PC", or "RF". "RF" grades are considered failing grades. One academic year of credit (30 credit hours) may be added for required developmental coursework when calculating the 150% Maximum Timeframe. Developmental courses attempted in excess of 30 total semester credit hours cannot be counted towards the enrollment hours for purposes of awarding financial aid.
- **Audit and No Show** – Grades for audit "AU" or no show "NS" or classes flagged for Never Attending are not considered attempted coursework. These are not included in the GPA or completion rate determinations. A student cannot receive financial aid for courses that he or she audits or is considered a "no show."
- **Proficiency (Credit by Exam)** – While a credit by exam "CE" is not included in the enrollment hours for purposes of awarding financial aid, the credits will be counted in each component of the student's academic progress.
- **Repeat Courses** – In accordance with VGCC procedure, students are permitted to retake courses. If you have already earned a passing grade ("D" or better) for a course, you may only repeat the course once for financial aid purposes. In addition, all hours attempted (and grades earned) will continue to be counted in each component of the student's SAP calculation.
- **Forgiveness of Grades** – There is no provision in the federal regulations for the concept of forgiveness of grades. VGCC must always include all courses, even if forgiven, in the SAP calculation.
- **Degree Earned** – Students who have successfully completed a Title IV eligible degree, diploma or certificate which has been posted to their official transcript will have the required program hours removed from their attempted hours for the Maximum Timeframe calculation. Any remaining credits will be counted towards the maximum timeframe calculation for the new academic program. If any of the earned course hours are required for the student's new program, prior credit will count in the new maximum timeframe calculation.
- **Summer Session** – Credit hours attempted and earned during the summer session will be included in the SAP calculation.
- **Clock Hour Programs** – Students enrolled in clock hour programs (e.g. Cosmetology) will have SAP evaluated at the end of each payment period. At the time of review, students must have successfully completed both the clock hours and weeks of instructional time

required for the payment period. Maximum Timeframe is measured in cumulative clock hours required to complete the program and expressed in calendar time. (Note that a student in a clock hour program cannot receive aid for hours beyond those in the program; the maximum timeframe applies to the amount of calendar time the student takes to complete those hours.) For example, if the program is 1500 clock hours and meets 30 clock hours per week, that means the program is 50 weeks in length. 150% of 50 weeks is 75 weeks. A student may receive aid while enrolled in this program for up to 75 weeks to complete the 1500 clock hours required for graduation.

- **COVID-19 Amended Policies** - Due to the National Emergency associated with Covid-19 and guidance from the Department of Education, the following grades were added for Spring 2020 courses related to campus closures:
  - **WE** – The grade of WE was given to any student who withdrew with a last date of attendance on or after March 13, 2020. WE grades are not counted for attempted course work and do not have weight.
  - **IE –** The grade of IE was given to any student requesting an Incomplete with a last date of attendance on or after March 13, 2020. IE grades are not counted for attempted course work and do not have weight.

SAP Evaluation Process

The Financial Aid Office will check students' grades and progress at the end of each semester. After grades and progress are checked, students will be sent a SAP notification to their VGCC e-mail account from the Financial Aid Office. All students are expected to monitor their e-mail account and review notices sent.

SAP Statuses:

- **Satisfactory** – Students who are meeting all SAP requirements are given a Financial Aid "Satisfactory" status and remain academically eligible for financial aid.
- **Academic Warning** – Students (who are not currently on Warning status) who are not meeting SAP requirements are placed on Financial Aid Academic Warning and are considered to be making unsatisfactory academic progress. Students with a "Financial Aid Academic Warning" status are eligible to receive financial aid for one payment period (term), provided they are otherwise eligible, to regain satisfactory academic progress. At the end of the academic warning period, a student's grades are checked for academic progress. If SAP requirements are met, the Warning status is lifted and the student is set to a Satisfactory status. If SAP requirements are not meet, the student is placed on Financial Aid Suspension.
- **Financial Aid Suspension** – Students who fail to meet all SAP requirements at the end of the academic warning period will be placed on "Financial Aid Suspension" and are not academically eligible for financial aid. Students may remain enrolled if they are satisfying the VGCC academic requirements; however, no federal or state financial aid will be provided until SAP requirements are met.
- **Warning - Near Maximum Timeframe** – Students who have attempted approximately 100% of the maximum allowable credit hours for their academic program will receive a

courtesy notification status of "Warning - Near Maximum Timeframe." Students receiving this status are reviewed to ensure the academic program may be completed within the timeframe permitted. Under this status, students will continue to receive financial aid until they reach 150% of their academic program, at which time they will have their financial aid suspended and be assigned a status of Maximum Timeframe.

- **Maximum Timeframe** – Students who exceed their academic program timeframe will be placed on Financial Aid Suspension for Maximum Timeframe and are not academically eligible for financial aid.
- **Continued Probation** – Students who receive an approved Financial Aid Academic Appeal to improve SAP over time or graduate from their academic program with specified conditions are placed on "Continued Probation" status.
- **Terminated** – Students who were previously granted (approved) a Financial Aid Academic Appeal and fails to meet the required conditions for continued eligibility. Students with a Terminated SAP status are not academically eligible for federal or state financial aid.

Regaining Eligibility

It is important to know a student may only regain satisfactory academic progress by successfully completing classes to improve the cumulative GPA and completion rate standards. A student may also transfer in enough credit hours to bring up his cumulative completion rate. Students who exceed the maximum timeframe to complete their academic program may only regain satisfactory academic progress by graduating from their program. ***Paying for a semester or sitting out a semester does NOT permit a student to regain satisfactory academic progress.***

Students may appeal the financial aid suspension and maximum timeframe. If approved, the student may receive financial aid on Continued Probation for one or more semesters with an established Financial Aid Academic Plan.

Appeal Process

Students suspended from financial aid may submit a Financial Aid Academic Appeal Form to the Financial Aid Office for reinstatement of aid. An appeal should only be submitted if a student's failure to maintain the standards of academic progress is based upon extenuating circumstances or if the student's maximum timeframe is exceeded. Circumstances may include, but are not limited to, medical issues, death, injury or illness. Students should attach documentation of extenuating circumstances with their appeal. The Financial Aid Academic Appeals Committee is permitted to request such documentation before an appeal decision is made.

Submission of an appeal form does not guarantee reinstatement of financial aid. Appeal forms are available to print on the VGCC Financial Aid webpage or obtained in the Financial Aid Office. Students are expected to explain their poor performance and plan for future success. Appeal

forms are reviewed by the Financial Aid Academic Appeal Committee each month. Their decision is final. The approval or denial notice will be sent to the student's VGCC email address.

Appeal Denial

If the appeal is denied, the student may not submit another Financial Aid Academic Appeal in the current or following years until he/she has successfully completed a minimum of nine (9) credit hours with a 2.5 GPA and 100% completion rate (no F/RF, failing grades, or withdrawals). Students who are not meeting SAP, but have completed a minimum of 9 hours with a 2.5 GPA and 100% completion rate, are expected to submit an appeal form so progress can be reevaluated by the Financial Aid Academic Appeal Committee. If SAP requirements are met prior to completing the minimum of 9 hours, a student may request a reevaluation of academic progress to the Financial Aid Office.

Appeal Approved

If the appeal is approved, the student will be placed on Continued Probation. Before aid is awarded for an approved appeal, the student must establish a Financial Aid Academic Plan for one or more semesters with the Financial Aid Office. The Academic Plan outlines the requirements a student must meet in order to remain eligible for financial aid and achieve Satisfactory SAP status. In addition to the academic plan, students with an approved appeal for maximum timeframe are required to provide a degree completion plan signed by their academic advisor.

Students with a Continued Probation status will be evaluated at the end of each payment period (term) to determine his/her SAP status. Until the student achieves a Satisfactory SAP status or graduates, the student is expected to meet the Academic Plan requirements to remain eligible for financial aid. Failure to meet the Academic Plan requirements will result in the termination of financial aid eligibility.