

## WHAT IS TOPS?

Louisiana's Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS) is a comprehensive program of state scholarships and one of the most innovative and progressive student assistance programs in the nation. TOPS has four award components. See the table on the reverse for eligibility and renewal requirements of each award, except the Tech Award, which is presented in a separate brochure.

## TOPS CORE CURRICULUM

Students must take the courses required for TOPS within their TOPS University curriculum requirements. Beginning with graduates of the 2017-2018 academic year, there will be significant changes to both the list of approved TOPS Core Curriculum courses and the Core Curriculum grade point average (GPA) calculation. Go to <http://www.osfa.la.gov/MainSitePDFs/TOPSCoreCurriculum2018.pdf>.

UNITS	COURSES <sup>1</sup>
English = 4 units	
4 units	English I, II, III and IV
Math = 4 units	
1 unit	Algebra I, or Integrated Mathematics I, or Applied Algebra I or Algebra I - Parts 1 & 2 (two units) or Applied Mathematics I & II (two units) or Applied Algebra 1A and 1B (two units)
1 unit	Algebra II or Integrated Mathematics II
2 units	Geometry, Pre-Calculus, Advanced Math-PreCalculus, Calculus, Advanced Math - Functions and Statistics, Probability and Statistics, Discrete Mathematics, Applied Mathematics III, Integrated Mathematics III, or Algebra III, AP Computer Science A
Science = 4 units	
1 unit	Biology I or II
1 unit	Chemistry I or II, or Chemistry Com
2 units	Earth Science, Physical Science, Environmental Science, Integrated Science, Biology II, Chemistry II, Physics, Physics II, Physics for Technology I or II, or Anatomy and Physiology or both Agriscience I & II (both for 1 unit)
Social Studies = 4 units	
1 unit	United States History
1 unit	Civics (1 year), or ½ Unit Civics and ½ Unit Free Enterprise <sup>2</sup> , or AP Government and Politics; United States
2 units	World History, Western Civilization, World Geography, European History, History of Religion or AP Human Geography
Foreign Language = 2 units	
2 units	Foreign Language (two units in the same language)
Fine Arts = 1 unit	
1 unit	Fine Arts Survey or 1 unit of a performance course in music, or dance, or theater or 1 unit of studio art or 1 unit of visual art or 1 unit drafting or both Speech III & IV (both for 1 unit)
Total = 19 Units	

<sup>1</sup> Advanced Placement (AP) courses and International Baccalaureate (IB) courses with the same name as a course listed in the TOPS Core Curriculum may be substituted.  
<sup>2</sup> The unit comprised of ½ Unit Civics and ½ Unit Free Enterprise may NOT be used by students in public schools to meet high school graduation requirements if they entered the ninth grade after June 30, 2011, but can be used by students in public and non-public schools to meet the TOPS Core Curriculum requirements.

## HOW AND WHEN TO APPLY FOR TOPS?

To apply for TOPS, the student must complete the Free Application For Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) at [www.fafsa.gov](http://www.fafsa.gov) or the TOPS On-line Application at <https://www.osfa.la.gov/AwardSystem/>. The FAFSA must be completed by students who qualify for federal grant aid and by students who are seeking other forms of financial aid. The TOPS On-line Application may be completed by students who can certify that they do not qualify for federal grant aid.

**Graduates of 2017** - The TOPS application deadline is July 1 following the one year anniversary of high school graduation. You **MUST** file your FAFSA or TOPS On-line Application so that it is received by the federal processor by July 1, 2018 to receive full TOPS funding. However, to ensure timely processing and award notification, students are strongly encouraged to file at least six weeks prior to entry into college. Be sure to **PRINT** and **RETAIN** your dated FAFSA or TOPS On-line Application confirmation page that includes the confirmation number in case verification of timely filing is required. *No payment of a TOPS award will be made until the initial FAFSA or on-line application has been received and you have been determined eligible for a TOPS award.*

INITIAL APPLICATION RECEIPT DATE	RECEIVES TOPS FUNDING FOR:
Oct. 1, 2016 - July 1, 2018	8 semesters (12 quarters) beginning with Academic Year 2017-2018*
July 2 - Aug. 30, 2018	7 semesters (10 quarters) beginning with Academic Year 2017-2018 **
Aug. 31 - Oct. 29, 2018	6 semesters (9 quarters) beginning with Academic Year 2017-2018 ***
Initial applications received after Oct. 29, 2018	Ineligible for TOPS Award

\*If your initial FAFSA or on-line application is received after July 1 immediately following your graduation from high school, the payment of your TOPS award will not be made until your application is received and you are determined eligible for a TOPS award. If you enroll for the first time as a full time student before your FAFSA or on-line application is received, you must meet the TOPS Continuing Eligibility Requirements to receive payments of your TOPS award after the first semester, quarter or term of your full time enrollment at an eligible college or university.

\*\* If you are a 2017 high school graduate and your application is received from July 2, 2018, through August 30, 2018, you will be eligible to receive seven semesters of TOPS funding beginning with the 2017-2018 academic year. You must also meet TOPS Continuing Eligibility Requirements if you attend college during the 2017-2018 academic year.

\*\*\* If you are a 2017 high school graduate and your application is received from August 31, 2018 through October 29, 2018, you will be eligible to receive six semesters of TOPS funding beginning with the 2017-2018 academic year. You must also meet TOPS Continuing Eligibility Requirements if you attend college during the 2017-2018 academic year.

## NON HIGH SCHOOL GRADUATES

Students with superior intellect who enter college full-time prior to their nineteenth birthday without completing high school or an approved home study program may qualify for a TOPS award. Contact LOSFA for more information.

## CONTACT LOSFA:



E-mail LOSFA at:  
[custserv@la.gov](mailto:custserv@la.gov)



Access LOSFA on the Internet at:  
[www.osfa.la.gov](http://www.osfa.la.gov)



Write LOSFA at:  
P.O. Box 91202  
Baton Rouge, LA 70821-9202



To speak to a representative,  
call LOSFA at (800) 259-5626 or  
(225) 219-1012



<http://www.facebook.com/LOSFA>



<http://www.twitter.com/LOSFA>



<http://instagram.com/LOSFA001>

### Consent to Receive Academic Data

LOSFA can only evaluate TOPS eligibility for those students whose parents granted consent for LOSFA to receive their academic data. Consent forms may be accessed here: <http://www.osfa.la.gov/MainSitePDFs/ConsentForm.pdf>. Consent may be withdrawn by written notice at any time. Once a student reaches 18 years of age, he or she may grant consent by using this form: <http://www.osfa.la.gov/MainSitePDFs/ConsentFormOver18.pdf>

**Disclaimer:** This brochure is current as of the edition date and is provided for informational purposes only. The eligibility requirements and rules governing the TOPS program are subject to legislative and regulatory amendments subsequent to the edition date of this brochure. TOPS applicants are responsible for determining the program requirements at the time of application and should not rely on this brochure as a full disclosure of all qualifications required for a TOPS award.



Taylor Opportunity Program for Students  
Opportunity, Performance and  
Honors Awards  
September 2016 Edition

Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance  
This brochure incorporates changes as of the edition date and applies to high school graduates of the class of 2017.

# LOUISIANA'S TAYLOR OPPORTUNITY PROGRAM FOR STUDENTS, "TOPS"

September 2016

For more information, call the Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance (LOSFA) at (800) 259-5626 or visit our Web site at [www.osfa.la.gov](http://www.osfa.la.gov).

STANDARD ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS <sup>1</sup>	AWARD COMPONENTS OF TOPS (EXCEPT TECH AWARD)		
	OPPORTUNITY AWARD	PERFORMANCE AWARD	HONORS AWARD
<b>High School Grade Point Average (GPA)</b>	2.50 (GPA computed on core courses only)	3.00 <sup>2</sup> (GPA computed on core courses only)	3.00 <sup>2</sup> (GPA computed on core courses only)
<b>Core Units</b>	19 <sup>3</sup>	19 <sup>3</sup>	19 <sup>3</sup>
<b>ACT Composite Score (or SAT Equivalent)</b>	Prior year state average, Currently 20 <sup>4</sup>	23 <sup>4</sup>	27 <sup>4</sup>
<b>BESE-Approved Home-Study Student Eligibility <sup>5</sup></b>	Currently an ACT of 22 (2 points above standard, in lieu of core units and GPA)	Currently an ACT of 24 (1 point above standard, in lieu of core units and GPA)	Currently an ACT of 28 (1 point above standard, in lieu of core units and GPA)
<b>Out-of-State Student Eligibility <sup>6</sup></b>	Currently an ACT of 23 (3 points above standard, in lieu of core units and GPA)	Currently an ACT of 26 (3 points above standard, in lieu of core units and GPA)	Currently an ACT of 30 (3 points above standard, in lieu of core units and GPA)
<b>Must Enroll Full Time <sup>7, 8, 9</sup></b>	As a first-time freshman, by the fall semester following the first anniversary of high school graduation	As a first-time freshman, by the fall semester following the first anniversary of high school graduation	As a first-time freshman, by the fall semester following the first anniversary of high school graduation
<b>Eligible Institutions <sup>10</sup></b>	Louisiana public & LAICU postsecondary institutions and certain cosmetology and proprietary schools	Louisiana public & LAICU postsecondary institutions and certain cosmetology and proprietary schools	Louisiana public & LAICU postsecondary institutions and certain cosmetology and proprietary schools
<b>Maximum Award at Public Schools</b>	Payment of TOPS is contingent upon appropriations by the Louisiana Legislature. If funding is not available to pay all awards at an amount approved by the Louisiana Legislature, a pro-rata share of all available funding will be distributed among all eligible, enrolled students.	Payment of TOPS is contingent upon appropriations by the Louisiana Legislature. If funding is not available to pay all awards at an amount approved by the Louisiana Legislature, a pro-rata share of all available funding will be distributed among all eligible, enrolled students. A maximum stipend of \$400 per academic year may be paid, provided sufficient funding is available. The stipend will be reduced by the same percentage as the award amount in the event of a budget shortfall.	Payment of TOPS is contingent upon appropriations by the Louisiana Legislature. If funding is not available to pay all awards at an amount approved by the Louisiana Legislature, a pro-rata share of all available funding will be distributed among all eligible, enrolled students. A maximum stipend of \$800 per academic year may be paid, provided sufficient funding is available. The stipend will be reduced by the same percentage as the award amount in the event of a budget shortfall.
<b>Maximum Award at LAICU Institutions <sup>10</sup></b>	Weighted average of prior year TOPS payments to students at public-degree granting schools	Weighted average of prior year TOPS payments to students at public-degree granting schools	Weighted average of prior year TOPS payments to students at public-degree granting schools
RENEWAL REQUIREMENTS <sup>11</sup>	OPPORTUNITY AWARD	PERFORMANCE AWARD	HONORS AWARD
<b>Maintain Steady Academic Progress (Based on TOPS cumulative GPA which is calculated on all course work attempted and may not be the same as that calculated by the school.)</b>	2.30 end of first academic year 2.50 end of all other academic years Maintain steady academic progress at the end of all other terms (2.00 TOPS cumulative GPA)	3.00 end of each academic year <sup>12</sup> Maintain steady academic progress at the end of all other terms (2.00 TOPS cumulative GPA)	3.00 end of each academic year <sup>12</sup> Maintain steady academic progress at the end of all other terms (2.00 TOPS Cumulative GPA)
<b>Hours Earned Per Academic Year <sup>13</sup></b>	Enroll full time and maintain continuous enrollment each semester, earn 24 hours or more each academic year	Enroll full time and maintain continuous enrollment each semester, earn 24 hours or more each academic year	Enroll full time and maintain continuous enrollment each semester, earn 24 hours or more each academic year
<b>Award Reinstated Upon Recovery of Required GPA <sup>14</sup></b>	Yes	Yes, but reinstated as an Opportunity Award	Yes, but reinstated as an Opportunity Award
<b>Award Limit <sup>15, 16</sup></b>	4 years or 8 semesters	4 years or 8 semesters	4 years or 8 semesters

<sup>1</sup> - Applicable to students who are U.S. citizens or permanent residents who are eligible to apply for U.S. citizenship and who graduate from Louisiana public or approved non-public high schools, and who are the dependent of a parent(s) or a court ordered custodian who is a resident of Louisiana for at least two years prior to the month of the dependent's high school graduation; or a dependent of a member of the Armed Forces who claims Louisiana as his legal residence and has filed Louisiana tax returns or who is stationed in Louisiana and completes a DD Form 2058 to become a legal resident within 180 days of reporting to Louisiana; or is a student who actually resides in Louisiana while attending a Louisiana public or approved non-public high school for the period of his or her last two full years of high school culminating in graduation as certified by the high school.

<sup>2</sup> - Beginning with 2021 graduates, the GPA required to qualify for the Performance Award will be a 3.25 and the GPA required to qualify for the Honors Award will be a 3.50.

<sup>3</sup> - Core units may NOT be waived if not required at the high school attended. It is the student's responsibility to acquire any such course(s) through approved correspondence or distance learning venues. Individual courses may be waived for students with exceptionalities or disabilities that prevent enrollment or successful completion. See reverse side for TOPS Core Curriculum. Beginning with graduates of the 2017-2018 Academic Year, there will be significant changes to both the list of approved TOPS Core Curriculum courses and the Core Curriculum grade point average (GPA) calculation. Go to <http://www.osfa.la.gov/MainSitePDFs/TOPSCoreCurriculum2018.pdf> for details.

<sup>4</sup> - A qualifying score achieved on a National, International, Military, or Special ACT or equivalent SAT taken no later than April 30 and a first time qualifying score on a test taken after April 30 but before July 1 of the year of high school graduation will be accepted. Scores on tests taken after June of the year of high school graduation will not be accepted unless the student is granted an exception for a score earned on a test taken before September 30 of the year of high school graduation based on proof that the student was prevented from taking the test prior to July 1 due to circumstances beyond the control of the student and attributable to the administration of the test. For an ACT or SAT score to be considered, the student must enter code 1595 on the ACT registration form or code 9019 on the SAT registration form. The score for the writing section is NOT included.

<sup>5</sup> - Applicable to students who complete a La. Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) approved home-study program at the twelfth grade level and who meet the residency requirements (See Note 1). If the student previously attended a Louisiana high school, he must complete at least the 11th and 12th grade of an approved home study program.

<sup>6</sup> - Applicable to students who graduate from an approved out-of-state high school and who meet the residency requirements (See Note 1). Students who graduate from an approved high school located outside of the U.S. may also qualify for a TOPS Opportunity Award with an ACT score of 23 or higher, provided a parent(s) of the dependent student was actively engaged in work or other activity on behalf of a Louisiana employer or sponsor and actually lived in Louisiana for at least the 24-months preceding the date the work or activity outside the U.S. began, and must have remained a Louisiana resident through the date of the student's graduation from high school.

<sup>7</sup> - A qualified student who enlists and enters on active duty in the Armed Forces within one year of graduation from high school must enroll in an eligible college or university no later than the semester, quarter or term following the one year anniversary of separation from active duty. The veteran must not have been discharged with an undesirable,

bad conduct or dishonorable discharge. A student who meets these requirements and did not previously apply, must file a FAFSA within one year of separation from active duty.

<sup>8</sup> - Exceptions for "first-time freshman", "full-time and continuous enrollment and/or 24 hour" requirements may be granted for demonstrated cause. Contact LOSFA or go to [www.osfa.la.gov/exceptionform](http://www.osfa.la.gov/exceptionform) for an application.

<sup>9</sup> - Students who met the academic requirements for a TOPS award and enrolled as a first-time freshman at an out-of-state college or at an eligible in-state college but subsequently enrolled at an eligible out-of-state college may apply for TOPS by submitting the Application to Return from an Out-of-State College no later than July 1st immediately following the semester, quarter or term during which the student returns and enrolls as a full-time student in an eligible Louisiana college. All supporting documents must be received no later than January 15th following the deadline. The student must have met the renewal requirements for TOPS while enrolled out-of-state. Students who first enrolled full-time in a Louisiana college must meet the deadline listed on the reverse side of this brochure. The deadline for students who first enrolled full-time in an out-of-state college is July 1 following the first semester, quarter or term of enrollment at an eligible Louisiana college.

<sup>10</sup> - LAICU schools are those institutions that are members of the Louisiana Association of Independent Colleges and Universities. "Certain cosmetology and proprietary schools" include any school with a valid and current certificate of registration issued by the Louisiana State Board of Cosmetology that is accredited by an accrediting organization recognized by the U.S. Department of Education, and any proprietary school with a valid and current license issued by the Board of Regents that is accredited by an accrediting organization recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.

<sup>11</sup> - Unless the recipient of an award is ineligible for federal grant aid, a FAFSA must be filed annually to be received by the state deadline of July 1.

<sup>12</sup> - Students who fail to maintain a 3.00 GPA will have their award converted to the Opportunity Award.

<sup>13</sup> - The academic year begins with the fall semester, quarter or term and ends at the beginning of the following fall semester, quarter or term. All summer sessions and intersessions within this time frame are included. Only courses for which credit is earned during an academic year will be counted towards the 24-hour requirement. In order to earn credit for a course, you must receive a grade of "D" or better.

<sup>14</sup> - Provided that the period of ineligibility did not last for more than two years.

<sup>15</sup> - Any student who successfully completes an academic undergraduate degree in less than the eight semesters of eligibility may receive any remaining award benefits if the student enrolls in a professional/postgraduate academic program at an eligible institution and continues to meet all academic and other requirements for continuation of the award. TOPS may not be used to pursue a second baccalaureate degree.

<sup>16</sup> - Recipients may pursue an academic degree or technical diplomas or both, but may not exceed the award limit.