

## FINANCIAL AID SATISFACTORY PROGRESS (RCTC Policy 2.9.2)

### DEPARTMENT OF FINANCIAL AID SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS POLICY

Federal and state law requires that a recipient of state or federal financial aid make Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) towards a degree or certificate to remain eligible for aid. These laws also require that the standards used must be based on cumulative measures and must include all periods of a student's enrollment, regardless of whether or not the student received financial aid. Therefore, in compliance with federal and state laws, Rochester Community and Technical College (RCTC) has established the following standards of academic progress which will apply when determining a student's eligibility for Financial Aid. RCTC has designated the Financial Aid Office as the department responsible for ensuring implementation and monitoring of this policy.

**Students bear primary responsibility for their own academic progress and for seeking assistance when experiencing academic difficulty. Students are encouraged to keep a file of their grades and transcripts.**

Requirements:

#### I. Qualitative Measure.

Students are required to carry a cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) of 2.0 to be considered for and/or maintain eligibility for Financial Aid funding. Refer to Section VIII for more information regarding the treatment of specific courses and grades when determining the student's GPA for purposes of Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress.

#### II. Quantitative Measures.

- A. Required completion percentage. Students must successfully earn 67% of cumulative registered credits. Refer to Section VIII for more information regarding what courses will be included when determining the student's completion rate percentage.
- B. Maximum Timeframe. Students may continue to receive financial aid through the number of credits required for completion of their degree/diploma/certificate multiplied by 150%, provided they meet required cumulative GPA and completion rate standards. Refer to Section VIII for more information regarding which courses will be included when determining if the student has exceeded the Maximum Timeframe requirement.

#### III. Evaluation Period.

All students will be evaluated at the end of each term of his/her attendance. Summer Sessions I, XL & II will be combined and progress evaluated as one term. Students enrolled in a program which can be completed within one term shall be reviewed at mid-term. Faculty are responsible to submit grades according to published deadlines. Deadlines will be set in such a way so as to allow the Financial Aid Office sufficient time to evaluate and notify students on or before the 10<sup>th</sup> day of the subsequent term.

#### IV. Failure to Meet Standards.

- A. Financial Aid Warning.
  - 1. Warning Status. If, at the end of the evaluation period, a student has not met either the cumulative GPA standard or the required cumulative completion percentage standard, then RCTC shall allow the student to retain his/her financial aid eligibility under a warning status for one evaluation period.
  - 2. Reinstatement of students on Warning status. If, at the end of the warning period, a student has met both the cumulative GPA and cumulative completion percentage standards, then RCTC shall end the student's warning status.
- B. Financial Aid Suspension of students on warning status.

At the end of the warning period, RCTC will suspend any student who has not met BOTH the cumulative GPA and cumulative completion percentage requirements. This suspension will be effective immediately upon completion of the evaluation.

C. Financial Aid Suspension for other reasons.

1. Suspension for maximum timeframe failure. At the end of the evaluation period, if a student has failed to meet RCTC's standard for measurement of maximum timeframe, the student shall be suspended from financial aid eligibility immediately upon completion of the evaluation. There shall be no warning period for students who exceed maximum timeframe requirements.
2. Suspension for extraordinary circumstances. RCTC may immediately suspend students from financial aid eligibility in the event of extraordinary circumstances including, but not limited to, previously suspended (and reinstated) students whose academic performance falls below acceptable standards during a subsequent term of enrollment; students who register for courses, receive financial aid and do not attend any classes; and students whose attendance patterns appear to abuse the receipt of financial aid.
3. Suspension for inability to meet program requirements within the maximum timeframe. At the end of any evaluation period, a student may be immediately suspended from financial aid eligibility if RCTC determines that it is not possible for the student to raise his/her GPA or course completion percentage to meet the minimum standards before the student reaches the end of his/her program.

V. Appeals and Probation.

A. Appeals.

Students who have been placed on Financial Aid Suspension have the right to appeal, based on unusual or extenuating circumstances. Such circumstances include, but are not limited to, death of relative, illness, hospitalization or injury of the student.

Students shall submit, as part of their appeal, information as requested regarding why the student failed to make satisfactory progress and what has changed in the student's situation that would allow the student to demonstrate satisfactory academic progress at the end of the next evaluation period.

An appeal may be approved only under the following circumstances:

1. RCTC determines the student should be able to meet SAP standards at the end of the next evaluation period.  
OR
2. RCTC develops an academic plan with the student that, if followed, shall ensure that the student will be able to meet SAP standards by a specific point in time. If the academic plan includes term standards of GPA and percent of completion, they shall be higher than RCTC's normal standards so as to allow the student to improve his/her GPA and/or percent of completion.

The initial consideration of appeals shall be undertaken by the Director of Financial Aid, or a designee, who will review the information submitted and make a determination. If the student is dissatisfied with this decision, the student may appeal to the RCTC Financial Aid Appeals Board. Students wishing to appeal to the Appeals Board should submit their request to the attention of the Financial Aid Appeals Board. Results of all appeals shall be communicated to students in writing. Notification of approved appeals shall include the standards the student is expected to meet or the academic plan that the student is expected to complete in order to retain financial aid eligibility at the end of the next evaluation period.

B. Probationary Status.

A student who has successfully appealed shall be placed on Financial Aid probation for one evaluation period. At the end of this evaluation period, if a student on financial aid probation status

1. Has met RCTC's cumulative GPA and cumulative completion percentage standards, then student shall be returned to good standing.
2. Has not met RCTC's cumulative GPA and completion percentage standards, but has met the conditions specified in his/her academic plan, then student shall retain his/her financial aid eligibility under a probationary status for a subsequent evaluation period.
3. Has not met RCTC's cumulative GPA and completion percentage standards, AND has also not met the conditions specified in his/her academic plan, then student shall be re-suspended immediately upon completion of the evaluation.

VI. Notification of Status and Appeal Results.

A. Status.

RCTC will notify a student in writing any time the student is placed in a warning, suspension or probation status. For each action, the following information will also be provided to the student:

1. Warning Notification: The student will be informed of the conditions of their warning status.
2. Suspension Notification: The student will be notified of their right to appeal.
3. Probation Notification: The student will be informed of the expected standards that must be met or the academic plan that he/she is expected to complete in order to retain financial aid eligibility at the end of the next evaluation period.

## B. Appeals.

RCTC will notify a student in writing of the result of all appeals. If approved, the appeal notification shall include a list of standards the student is expected to meet or the academic plan the student is expected to complete in order to retain financial aid eligibility at the end of the next evaluation period. If an appeal is denied, the notification shall describe the reason(s) for the denial and the process for appealing the denial to the Financial Aid Appeals Board.

## VII. Reinstatement.

Students may be reinstated when they are meeting RCTC's financial aid satisfactory academic progress qualitative and quantitative standards. In the case of unusual or extenuating circumstances, a student may also be reinstated after having successfully appealed. Neither paying for their own classes nor sitting out for a period of time is sufficient in and of itself to re-establish a student's financial aid eligibility.

Students whose financial aid eligibility has been suspended may regain their eligibility only through RCTC's appeal process or when they are again meeting RCTC's Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress cumulative GPA and cumulative completion percentage standards.

## VIII. Treatment of Grades and Credits.

### A. Treatment of Grades.

Credit: The unit by which academic work is measured.

Registered Credits: The total number of credits for which a student is officially enrolled at the end of the drop/add period each term. Registered credits include repeat coursework, developmental coursework and consortium credits. Registered credits do not include transfer credits or audits.

Completed vs. Non-completed Credits: (*Used to calculate percent of completion*) Completed credits include those with only the grades of A, B, C, D, S and P. Non-completed credits include those with grades of F, FN, FW, I, IP, N, NC, W or Z. Non-completed credits will be treated in the calculation as attempted, but not completed.

Grade Points: Calculated using courses for which a student receives a letter grade of A, B, C, D or F, FN, FW. Grade points are not calculated for grades of I, IP, NC, P, S, W or Z. (A=4, B=3, C=2, D=1, F, FN or FW=0.) Grade point total is the sum of grade points earned as determined by multiplying the grade point value of the grade by the number of course credits. See academic transcript for explanation of historical grading annotations not addressed in this policy.

Grade Point Average (GPA): The quotient of the student's grade point total divided by the grade point credits. Each grade report shows the student's GPA for the term and cumulative GPA since admission. "P" does not carry a grade point value, and as such, is not calculated in the GPA. A "P" will not improve the student's GPA. However, "P" credits count toward total registered credits.

Incompletes: An "I" is assigned only in exceptional circumstances, and is a temporary grade. An "I" grade will automatically become an "F" (if course is offered Pass/No Credit, the "I" will automatically become an N/C) at the end of the next term if requirements to complete coursework have not been satisfactorily met.

Non-Reported Grades: If an instructor does not report a letter grade, a "Z" is assigned to the course. "Z" does not carry a grade point value, and as such, is not calculated in the GPA. However, "Z" credits count toward total registered credits.

### B. Academic Amnesty (Fresh Start).

When reviewing a student's Financial Aid standing under this policy, all credits for which the student has been granted academic amnesty ("fresh start") shall be included in the qualitative (GPA) and quantitative (Completion Rate/Maximum Timeframe) measurements.

### C. Audited Courses.

Audited courses are not funded with Financial Aid and are not included in any Financial Aid Satisfactory Academic Progress measurement(s).

### D. Consortium Credits.

Credits for which Financial Aid is received under a consortium agreement will be recorded on the student's record. These consortium credits will be included when determining the student's cumulative GPA, completion percentage and maximum time frame calculations.

E. Remedial Credits.

Remedial/Developmental coursework (courses numbered below 1000) will be included when determining the student's cumulative GPA and completion percentage. Up to 30 remedial/developmental credits shall be excluded when calculating the student's maximum timeframe.

F. Repeated Courses.

Students are allowed to repeat courses for the purpose of passing or improving their grade. A student shall not be permitted to receive financial aid for more than one repetition of a previously passed course. All repeated courses are initially included in the GPA and completion rate calculations. All credits are included when determining if the student has exceeded the maximum timeframe criteria.

If they so choose, it is the student's responsibility to petition to the Admissions and Records Office to have their GPA adjusted after repeating a course. If a petition is approved, only the course with the highest grade is included in the student's cumulative GPA. See RCTC policy regarding course repetition, number of times a course may be repeated and the total number of course repetitions allowed.

G. Transfer Credits.

Transfer credits accepted by RCTC and applied toward the student's program requirements shall be counted as credits attempted and completed for calculation of cumulative completion percentage. Grades associated with these credits (if any) shall not be used in calculating cumulative GPA.

Transfer credits accepted by RCTC and applied toward the student's general education, program or degree requirements shall apply toward the maximum timeframe calculation.

H. Withdrawals.

Credits for which a grade of "W" is received are considered attempted, but not successfully completed credits. The "W" grade does not impact GPA but DOES negatively impact the student's cumulative completion percentage.

Definitions:

<b>Academic Plan Academic Action Plan</b>	A student who successfully appeals for reinstatement of financial aid eligibility may be required to complete, during a probationary period, specific requirements contained in an academic plan developed for the student by his/her RCTC Advisor or Counselor.
<b>Evaluation Period</b>	RCTC shall measure Satisfactory Academic Progress at the end of each academic term or at the mid-point of programs less than one year in length.
<b>Financial Aid Suspension of students on warning status</b>	A student on financial aid suspension status is not eligible to receive financial aid (including grants, loans and work study). Students whose financial aid eligibility has been suspended may regain eligibility only through RCTC's appeal process or when they are again meeting the financial aid satisfactory academic progress cumulative grade point average and cumulative completion percentage standards.
<b>Maximum timeframe</b>	The maximum number of cumulative attempted credits within which a student must complete his/her academic program.
<b>Probation Status</b>	A status under which a student who has successfully appealed a suspension shall regain his/her financial aid eligibility for one evaluation period, after which he/she must either have met the cumulative GPA and cumulative completion percentage standards, or have successfully completed the requirements of an academic plan developed for that student by a member of RCTC's Advising/Counseling staff.
<b>Qualitative measure</b>	The Grade Point Average (GPA) a student must maintain in order to retain financial aid eligibility.
<b>Quantitative measure</b>	The "pace" at which a student must progress through his/her program in order to retain financial aid eligibility.
<b>Required completion percentage</b>	The percentage of cumulative attempted credits that a student must successfully complete in order to retain financial aid eligibility.
<b>Warning status</b>	A status under which a student shall continue to retain his/her financial aid eligibility for one evaluation period despite a determination that he/she has not met either the cumulative GPA standard, the cumulative completion percentage standard, or both.

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