



NATIONAL FRATERNAL ORDER OF POLICE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Update on Free College Benefit

NASHVILLE, TN – This is a letter received last night from Eastern Gateway Community College regarding the FOP Free College matter:

Good evening,

As you are aware, today, we were scheduled to meet with Dr. Early and his team at the U.S. Department of Education (DOE). Earlier this morning, in an effort to proactively communicate with Dr. Early, we provided him with a list of discussion items for the session; each was related to the cease-and-desist letter sent by Dr. Early on July 18, 2022. That letter contained several substantive references to a need for restructuring of the Free College Benefit Program, and accordingly, our discussion items and questions focused heavily on that subject.

Shortly before our scheduled meeting, Dr. Early replied, stating, "In light of the list of questions you presented, the Department would like to postpone the meeting scheduled for today so that we can internally discuss all of the questions and provide answers. The Department will provide you the answers in writing as soon as possible."

We are disappointed by this decision, particularly because our questions sought clarity related to DOE's July 18 letter; items we expected them to have been prepared to discuss. In addition, Dr. Early's reply stated, "The Department can confirm that the students who were accepted for enrollment prior to the date of the cease-and-desist letter (July 18th, 2022) can be awarded Title IV aid for the Fall semester. Students enrolled outside of the Free College Benefits Program are also eligible for Title IV funding." Obviously, this directly conflicts with the guidance offered by Dr. Early on July 25th, in which we were given the impression that newly enrolled students in the Free College Benefit Program could also continue in full for the Fall 2022 semester.

Considering the conflicting information, and after thorough discussion with our legal counsel and the Ohio Attorney General's Office, we have concluded that it is in the best interest of EGCC to move forward only by exercising an abundance of caution. As such, and until we receive the responses from DOE, we are again temporarily suspending new enrollments in the Free College Benefit for Fall 2022. We understand that this is a frustrating change of direction for our students, our staff, and the EGCC community. However, we know with certainty that this path will align with the most

conservative elements of guidance received to date from DOE, and therefore it will avoid further scrutiny or potential misinterpretation while DOE works to provide us with answers. This serves to preserve the integrity of the College and leave zero doubt as to whether we are being compliant with DOE's current directives.

To summarize what this means, effective immediately:

- ALL students who were registered for Fall 2022 courses on or before July 18, 2022, WILL be able to attend in the Fall and use Title IV aid and/or the Free College Benefit.
- Students who enrolled for Fall 2022 courses on or after July 19, 2022:
 - Students who enrolled under the Under Free College Benefit, at this time are NOT eligible for the Free College Benefit and may not utilize Title IV aid. We are diligently working on an alternative funding plan for these students before the Fall start. Our teams will be reaching out to these students prior to the Fall start.
 - Students not affiliated with a union OR who choose to remove their union affiliation from their account may attend and utilize Title IV aid if eligible. If Title IV aid does not cover their balance, they will need to provide supplemental funding (i.e., self-pay, loan, etc.)
- We will continue to work with DOE regarding all changes they seek for the Free College Benefit Program and will vigorously pursue prompt guidance to move forward quickly and compliantly.

We are hopeful to get responses and guidance from the Department of Education quickly on how to continue to offer a free education to our students. We want to thank our students, alumni, and Union Partners for the support of this tremendous program that has transformed so many lives.

This message has been sent on behalf of President Geoghegan.



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