

GEAR UP EDUCATIONAL TRUST AWARDS FACT SHEET

Points of Contact:

How do I communicate with the California Student Aid Commission (Commission)?

▶When you need to contact the Commission, please include your name, social security number, address, and phone number and refer to the GEAR UP Educational Trust Account program. *(It would be a good idea for you to make and keep a copy for of any letters and documents that you mail to the Commission.)*

If I need to mail something what is the mailing address I need to use?

▶California Student Aid Commission
Specialized Programs Unit - GEAR UP
P. O. Box 419029
Rancho Cordova, CA 95741-9029

What if I change my address? How do I correct it?
(VERY IMPORTANT, Missed communications could result in the loss of your award!!)

▶The Commission will contact you once a year to give you a statement of the status of your account. If you change your permanent mailing address, you must **immediately** inform the Commission's Specialized Programs Unit. You may use our change of address form or FAX the information to us. The Commission is not responsible for mail **not** received from or by you. Please have your mail forwarded if you are away from your permanent address.

How can I contact the Commission?

▶If you need to FAX us a document the fax number is (916) 526-7977.
▶You can also communicate with us through **Email at Gear-Up@csac.ca.gov**

Questions and Answers:

What is a GEAR UP Educational Trust Account award? ▶A GEAR UP Educational Trust Account award is a ScholarShare account held in trust for you by the Commission. The account will earn interest until you withdraw the funds. To withdraw funds, you must graduate from high school (or the equivalent) and enroll in college within one year (12 months) of your high school graduation.

Do I have to remain in a Gear Up or Talent Search project to retain the award? ▶ No.

What is an eligible institution? ▶ Postsecondary institutions participating in Federal Title IV student financial aid programs are eligible institutions.

Do I have to enroll in a four year school? ▶ No. Can I attend a Community College or vocational or proprietary college? ▶Yes.

Do I have to attend a college in California? ▶ No.

How does the Commission determine that I have graduated? ▶ The Commission will accept a copy of your diploma, an official transcript with the graduation date noted, a letter from your school, or an official copy of your GED or CHSP scores. (GED or CHSP, if used, must be completed on or before your cohort class would graduate.)

How do I withdraw funds from the account? ▶ The awardee must contact the Commission to begin the withdrawal process. The Commission will need proof of high school graduation and college enrollment. Scholarshare requires a withdrawal form to be completed by the beneficiary and the account owner. Authorized Commission staff can sign as the account owner.

Can I withdraw the entire balance at once or small amounts over time or both? ▶ Yes, both, depending on the qualified higher education expenses incurred.

What if I do not draw all monies out at once and then do not continue in college? Is remainder forfeited? ▶ You must withdraw all funds within six years.

What kind of expenses does ScholarShare funds cover? ▶ ScholarShare funds cover qualified higher education expenses, which include tuition, fees, books, supplies, and equipment required for the student's enrollment or attendance at an eligible educational institution. This also includes expenses for special needs services in the case of special needs students.

Do I have to be enrolled at a certain level? Half-time, full-time? ▶ Yes, Half-time