

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. One component, the TOPS Tech Award, is detailed herein. (See separate brochure for the TOPS Opportunity, Performance and Honors Awards.)

WHAT IS THE TOPS TECH AWARD?

Unique among the TOPS scholarships, the TOPS Tech Award was created by the Louisiana Legislature with the sole intention of promoting a skilled workforce in Louisiana. Currently, the TOPS Tech Award is offered to qualified high school graduates and provides up to two years of skill or occupational training to be pursued at an accredited Louisiana postsecondary institution that offers a vocational or technical education certificate/diploma.

Students graduating through the 2015-2016 academic year (high school) who are awarded TOPS-Tech may enroll in a Louisiana public community or technical college that offers a Vocational or Technical Education Certificate or Diploma Program or a non-academic undergraduate degree to pursue a skill, occupational training, or technical training (including approved cosmetology and proprietary schools) subsequent to high school graduation.

Beginning with students graduating in the 2016-17 academic year, TOPS Tech awards may be used only for certain degrees/certifications and programs that are aligned with state workforce priorities as determined by the Board of Regents and the Louisiana Workforce Investment Council.

WHERE MAY I USE THE TOPS TECH AWARD?

For Students Graduating High School in the 2015-2016 Academic Year:

The TOPS Tech Award may be used for up to two years of skill or occupational training at any campus of the Louisiana Community and Technical College System, accredited two-or-four-year public colleges or universities, or private colleges or universities (members of the Louisiana Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, LAICU) to pursue a vocational or technical education certificate, diploma or non-academic degree program. Students who are eligible for the TOPS Tech Award may also use their awards at any school with a valid and current certificate of registration issued by the Louisiana State Board of Cosmetology and that is accredited by an accrediting organization recognized by the United States Department of Education, and any proprietary school, with a valid and current license issued by the Board of Regents and accredited by an accrediting organization recognized by the United States Department of Education. 2016 High School graduates MAY NOT use the TOPS Tech Award at any institution to pursue an academic program or degree.

For Students Graduating High School in the 2016-2017 Academic Year and Thereafter:

Beginning with students graduating from high school in the 2016-17 academic year, the TOPS Tech Award is a workforce scholarship program for Louisiana residents who enroll in an eligible college or university on a full-time basis in an associate's degree or other shorter-term training and education program

that is aligned to state workforce priorities as determined by the Board of Regents and the Louisiana Workforce Investment Council.

If the Board of Regents and the Louisiana Workforce Commission determine that a program is no longer aligned with those priorities, an otherwise eligible student who had previously received an award and enrolled in that program may continue to use the award.

HOW AND WHEN TO APPLY FOR TOPS?

To apply for TOPS, the student should complete the Free Application For Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) at 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 only be completed by students who can certify that they do not qualify for federal grant aid. In the event of a budget shortfall, students completing the TOPS On-line Application instead of the FAFSA will be the first to lose their TOPS award.

Graduates of 2016 - The TOPS application deadline is July 1 following the one year anniversary of high school graduation. You **MUST** file your FAFSA so that it is received by the federal processor by July 1, 2017 to receive full TOPS funding or the TOPS On-line Application so that it is received by LOSFA no later than July 1, 2017. 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:
Jan. 1, 2016 - July 1, 2017	2 years beginning with Academic Year 2016-2017*
July 2 - Aug. 30, 2017	2 years, less 1 semester, beginning with Academic Year 2016-2017 **
Aug. 31 - Oct. 29, 2017	2 years, less 2 semesters, beginning with Academic Year 2016-2017 ***
Initial applications received after Oct. 29, 2017	Ineligible for TOPS Tech 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 2016 high school graduate and your application is received from July 2, 2017, through August 30, 2017, you will be eligible to receive two years, less 1 semester, of TOPS Tech funding beginning with the 2016-2017 academic year. You must also meet TOPS Continuing Eligibility Requirements if you attend college during the 2016-2017 academic year.

*** If you are a 2016 high school graduate and your application is received from August 31, 2017 through October 29, 2017, you will be eligible to receive 2 years, less 2 semesters, of TOPS Tech funding beginning with the 2016-2017 academic year. You must also meet TOPS Continuing Eligibility Requirements if you attend college during the 2016-2017 academic year.

CONTACT LOSFA



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Access LOSFA on the Internet at:
www.osfa.la.gov



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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 Tech Award.



Taylor Opportunity Program for Students
Tech Award
September 2015 Edition
For students graduating from high school
in the 2015-16 academic year and thereafter

Louisiana Office of Student Financial Assistance
This brochure incorporates changes in effect as of
the edition date and applies to high school graduates
of the class of 2016 applying for the TOPS Tech Award.

LOUISIANA'S TAYLOR OPPORTUNITY PROGRAM FOR STUDENTS "TOPS" TECH AWARD

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

September 2015

STANDARD ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS ¹	TECH AWARD
High School Grade Point Average (GPA)	2.50 (GPA computed on core courses only)
Tech Core Units	Option 1 - 17 Core Units ² Option 2 - 19 Core Units ² 21 Jumpstart Career Path Core Units ²
ACT Composite Score (or SAT Equivalent)	17 ³ or higher or a silver level score on the assessments of the ACT WorkKeys system
Must Enroll Full Time	As a first-time freshman, by the first semester following the first anniversary of high school graduation ^{4, 5}
Eligible Institutions	Louisiana Technical College campuses and other public postsecondary or LAICU ⁶ schools that provide skill or occupational training and certain cosmetology and proprietary schools ⁷
Maximum Award at Public Schools That Do Not Offer a Baccalaureate Degree	An amount that equals tuition ⁸
Maximum Award at Public Schools That Offer Baccalaureate Degrees and at LAICU ⁶ Institutions and certain cosmetology and proprietary schools ⁷	The average of TOPS Tech payments paid to students attending public schools that do not offer a baccalaureate degree
BESE-APPROVED HOME-STUDY STUDENT ELIGIBILITY ⁹	ACT of 19 (2 points above standard in lieu of core units and GPA)
OUT-OF-STATE STUDENT ELIGIBILITY ¹⁰	ACT of 20 (3 points above standard in lieu of core units and GPA)
RENEWAL REQUIREMENTS ¹¹	TECH AWARD
Maintain Steady Academic Progress (Based on the TOPS cumulative GPA which is calculated on all course work attempted and may not be the same as that calculated by the school)	2.50 end of the academic year Maintain steady academic progress at the end of all other terms or semesters (2.00 cumulative GPA)
Hours Earned Per Academic Year	Enroll full time and maintain continuous enrollment each semester, earn 24 hours or more each academic year ⁵
Award Reinstated Upon Recovery of Required GPA	Yes ¹²
Award Limit	2 years

TOPS TECH CORE CURRICULA	
STUDENTS GRADUATING THROUGH THE 2016-2017 ACADEMIC YEAR	
UNITS	COURSE
3	English I, II and III
1	English IV, or substitute 1 unit of Business English
1	Algebra I, or both Algebra I, Parts 1 and 2 (two units); or both Applied Mathematics I and II (two units)
2	Geometry, Applied Mathematics III, Algebra II, Math Essentials, Financial Mathematics, Advanced Math – Pre-Calculus, Advanced Math – Functions and Statistics, Discrete Mathematics, or Probability and Statistics (2 units). Integrated Mathematics I, II and III may be substituted for Algebra I, Geometry and Algebra II, and shall be considered the equivalent of the 3 required math units.
1	Biology
2	Chemistry or Applied Chemistry, Earth Science, Environmental Science, Physical Science, Integrated Science, Biology II, Chemistry II, Physics, Physics II or Physics for Technology, or Agriscience I and Agriscience II (both for one unit)
1	American History
1	Civics and Free Enterprise (one unit combined) or Civics (1 unit, non-public)
1	World History, Western Civilization, or World Geography
Remaining courses must be selected from one of the two following options:	
Option I	
1	Fine Arts Survey or drafting (one unit) or substitute 2 units of performance courses in music, dance or theatre; or substitute 2 units of visual art courses; or substitute 2 units of studio art courses; or a course from the Career and Technical Education Course Offerings in Bulletin 741 or the updates to Bulletin 741; or substitute 1 unit as an elective from among the other subjects listed in this core curriculum)
2	Foreign Language, Technical Writing, Speech II or Speech III
1	One unit from the secondary computer education program of studies approved by BESE
17 Total Core Curriculum Units	
Option II	
4	In a career major comprised of a sequence of related specialty courses. In order for a student to use this option, the courses for the career major must be approved by BESE. For a complete list of majors and courses, please go to: http://www.louisianabelieves.com/docs/coursechoice/2013-2014-career-and-technical-education-area-of-concentration-guide.pdf?sfvrsn=2
1	In related or technical fields. A related course includes any course which is listed under the student's major. A technical course is one that is listed in the approved career option plan for the high school at which the course is taken.
1	Basic computer course
19 Total Core Curriculum Units	
STUDENTS GRADUATING IN THE 2015-2016 ACADEMIC YEAR AND THEREAFTER	
UNITS	COURSE
2	English I and English II
2	English III, English IV, AP or IB English courses, Business English, Technical Writing, or comparable Louisiana Technical College courses offered by Jump Start regional teams as approved by the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.
1	Algebra I; or both Algebra I, Part 1 and Algebra I, Part 2; or an applied or hybrid algebra course
3	Geometry, Algebra II, Math Essentials, Financial Literacy, Business Math, Algebra III, Advanced Math -Functions and Statistics, Advanced Math - Pre-Calculus, Pre-calculus, or comparable Louisiana Technical College courses offered by Jump Start regional teams as approved by the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education. Integrated Mathematics I, II, and III may be substituted for Algebra I, Geometry, and Algebra II, and shall equal three mathematics credits
1	Biology
1	Chemistry I, Earth Science, Environmental Science, Agriscience I and Agriscience II (both for one unit), Physical Science, or AP or IB science courses
1	U.S. History, AP U.S. History, or IB U.S. History
1	Civics, Government, AP U.S. Government and Politics: Comparative, or AP U.S. Government and Politics: United States
9	In Jump Start course sequences, workplace experiences, and credentials. A student shall complete a regionally designed series of Career and Technical Education Jump Start coursework and workplace-based learning experiences leading to a statewide or regional Jump Start credential. This shall include courses and workplace experiences specific to the credential, courses related to foundational career skills requirements in Jump Start, and other courses, including career electives, that the Jump Start regional team determines are appropriate for the career major.
Students may also qualify for a TOPS Tech Award by completing the high school course work constituting the TOPS core curriculum for the Opportunity, Performance and Honors Awards.	

1 - Applicable to students who are U.S. citizens or permanent residents who are eligible to apply for U.S. citizenship; graduate from Louisiana public or approved non-public high schools; and 1) are the dependent of a parent(s) who is a resident of Louisiana for at least two years prior to the month of the dependent's high school graduation; or 2) a dependent of a member of the Armed Forces who claims Louisiana as his legal residence and has filed Louisiana tax returns; or 3) who is stationed in Louisiana and completes a DD Form 2058 to become a legal resident within 180 days of reporting to Louisiana; or 4) 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.

2 - Core units may NOT be waived if not offered 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.

3 - 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.

4 - 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 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 so that it is received within one year of separation from active duty.

5 - 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 for an application. The academic year includes the summer session.

6 - Non-public institutions that are members of the Louisiana Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (LAICU).

7 - Any school with a valid and current certificate of registration issued by the Louisiana State Board of Cosmetology and that is accredited by an accrediting organization recognized by the United States Department of Education, and any proprietary school with a valid and current license issued by the Board of Regents and accredited by an accrediting organization recognized by the United States Department of Education.

8 - Tuition varies from institution to institution. Your institution may include fees on your fee bill that are not covered by TOPS.

9 - 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).

10 - 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 United States may also qualify for a TOPS Tech Award with an ACT score of 20 or higher, if a parent(s) of the dependent student: (1) was actively engaged in work or other activity on behalf of a Louisiana employer or sponsor; (2) actually lived in Louisiana for at least the 24-months preceding the date the work or activity outside the United States began, and (3) remained a Louisiana resident through the date of the student's graduation from high school.

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

12 - Provided that the period of ineligibility did not extend for more than one year.