

	<b>FGCU Policy 4.012</b>	<b>Responsible Office:</b> First Year Experience and Retention Programs
	<b>Soar in 4 Program</b>	

**\*\*The SOAR in 4 Program is suspended for students entering FGCU beginning in Fall 2022 in order to re-evaluate the program and its funding sources. The suspension will not impact eligible FGCU students who started at the University on or prior to Fall 2021 and who meet all the requirements of the Soar in 4 Program.\*\***

**A. POLICY STATEMENT**

Florida Gulf Coast University developed the Soar in 4 Program in response to Governor Rick Scott’s “Ready, Set, Work” University Challenge. The implementation and administration of Florida Gulf Coast University’s Soar in 4 Program will be addressed under this Policy.

**B. REASON FOR POLICY**

This Policy provides guidance for determining a student’s eligibility for the Soar in 4 Program, the processes used for verifying eligibility, calculating and paying the rebate, and processing a student’s appeal of the rebate decision.

**C. APPLICABILITY AND/OR ACCOUNTABILITY**

This Policy is applicable to all faculty, staff, and students of the University.

**D. DEFINITION OF TERMS**

1. *Academic Advising Appointment(s)*: Student appointments with an Academic Advisor in University Advising Services.
2. *Annualized Earnings*: Student must earn at least \$25,000 annually through at least one (1) position that satisfies the definition of full-time employment plus any additional part-time work which enables the student to earn at least \$25,000 annually. Annualized Earnings may include variable income such as overtime wages or tip income. The Annualized Earnings requirement does not apply to students who are participating in United States government-sponsored volunteer or service programs, including the Peace Corps, Teach for America, City Year, or AmeriCorps, regardless of location of service, or to service members of any branch of the United States military or the Coast Guard.
3. *Career Counseling Appointment(s)*: Student appointments with staff in the Office of Career Development Services to assist students in developing and implementing career, education, and employment plans and decisions. Sessions are held to discuss topics such as choice of a major, the process of career decision-making, and career prospects related

to chosen major.

4. *College-Level Examination Program (CLEP)*: CLEP is a group of standardized tests which assess college-level knowledge and provide a mechanism for earning college credits without taking college courses.
5. *Co-operative Program*: A Co-operative Program consists of a full-time position for a period of several months, during which the student works in a specific discipline for pay, a stipend, or similar benefits. A Co-operative Program is for a longer duration than an internship.
6. *Designated Professional Staff*: Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) personnel designated to electronically verify a student's completion of qualifying activities, such as Academic Advisors in University Advising Services, designee in the Office of Career Development Services, designee in the Office of Internships and Cooperative Programs, and the Director of Retention and Engagement Programs.
7. *Denial of Rebate Re-Evaluation Form*: Form that a student will be given the opportunity to complete upon denial of their Soar in 4 Program application based on not completing the qualifying activities.
8. *Earned FGCU Credit Hours*: Credit hours awarded upon successful completion of an academic course at FGCU.
9. *Eligible Student*: A degree-seeking FTIC student admitted to FGCU during or after the summer 2015 term. This includes international and out-of-state students.
10. *Employer Recruiting Events*: Events sponsored by the Office of Internships and Cooperative Programs, Career Development Services, or the academic college in which the major is housed, at which a student has an opportunity to interact with prospective employers in a professional setting.
11. *Experiential Learning*: Yearlong student internships through the Office of Internships and Cooperative Programs designed to provide both real world experience and the expansion of knowledge, skills, and abilities learned in previous courses and laboratory experiences.
12. *First Time in College (FTIC) Student*: A student who has earned a high school diploma or its equivalent and who has earned no more than eleven (11) semester hours of transferable credit after high school graduation.
13. *First Year*: The first term during which the student is admitted to FGCU as an FTIC Student and the following two (2) terms, including summer. The First Year for FTIC Students who are readmitted as FTIC Students during a term after their original admission term will still consist of the original first term during which the student is admitted to FGCU as an FTIC Student and the following two (2) terms, including

summer.

14. *Full-Time Employment*: Working a minimum of thirty-five (35) hours per week.
15. *Gift Aid*: Amounts received by a student from grants, waivers, scholarships, or other third party payments such as Veteran Affairs (VA) benefits, vocational rehabilitation, etc., which cover tuition.
16. *Graduates*: An FTIC Student who started at Florida Gulf Coast University in the fall (or summer continuing to fall) term and was enrolled full-time in their first semester and had graduated from Florida Gulf Coast University by the summer term of their fourth (4<sup>th</sup>) year or an FTIC student who started in the spring term and was enrolled full-time in their first semester and had graduated from Florida Gulf Coast University by the fall term of their fourth (4<sup>th</sup>) year. FTIC includes “early admit” students who were admitted as degree-seeking students prior to high school graduation. This definition is adapted from the State University System Database (SUDS).
17. *Initial Eligibility and Tracking Form*: The Initial Eligibility and Tracking Form is given to a student during their Eagle View Orientation to review the Soar in 4 Program requirements and sign the statement of compliance.
18. *Internship*: An Internship is a short-term, mutually beneficial relationship between a student and an employer in which a student may gain experience in their fields of study, earning a salary, academic credits, or both. A student typically works ten (10) to twenty-four (24) hours a week during a semester to complement specific classwork in a carefully monitored environment.
19. *Qualifying Activity*: An activity that meets Soar in 4 Program requirements.
20. *Rebate Amount*: An amount that will equal the tuition paid either out-of-pocket, through student loans, or Florida Prepaid (excludes Gift Aid) for credits earned in the First Year as a student at FGCU, up to a maximum of thirty (30) undergraduate credit hours.
21. *Student Type*: Type of student at the time of most recent registration for credit courses at FGCU based upon previous educational experiences and educational goals at the time of admission.
22. *Transient Enrollment*: Enrollment as a non-degree-seeking student attending another institution before returning to the student’s home institution.
23. *Tuition*: The portion of a credit hour assessment designated for Tuition or Tuition differential.

## **E. PROCEDURES**

## 1. Sign-Up

- a. As part of a student's Eagle View Orientation, he or she will meet with their respective Academic Advisor. During that initial meeting, the Academic Advisor will explain the Soar in 4 Program to the student along with the rebate criteria.
- b. The student will sign the statement of compliance on the Soar in 4 Program Initial Eligibility and Tracking Form confirming they have read and clearly understand the rebate criteria. Additionally, to be awarded the rebate, all Qualifying Activities must be electronically verified by Designated Professional Staff prior to graduation.
- c. After signing the statement of compliance, the Initial Eligibility and Tracking Form will be sent to the Director of Retention and Engagement Programs, who will scan, electronically verify the front page, and attach the form to the student's Banner record.

## 2. Qualifying Activities

Throughout the student's attendance at FGCU, Qualifying Activities described below must be completed by an Eligible Student in order to qualify for the rebate:

- a. Make and attend an Academic Advising Appointment to receive academic advising on major selection and the sequencing of degree requirements to stay on track for timely graduation within four (4) years, once per year throughout their four (4) years;
- b. Select a major during the First Year;
- c. Participate in Internships, Co-operative Programs, or other similar opportunities, including academic research, with potential employers, through enrollment in an Internship or fieldwork designated course either for zero credit hours or for an amount of credit hours designated by the academic program with a grade of S (satisfactory) or C or better;
- d. Utilize FGCU Career Development Services, including:
  - 1) Make and attend a Career Counseling Appointment to receive in-person advising on career decision making, career prospects, resume preparation, interview techniques, career choices, etc.; and
  - 2) Participate in at least one (1) Employer Recruiting Event hosted by Career Development Services or the Office of Internships and Cooperative Programs;
- e. Graduate from FGCU in four (4) years or less; and
- f. Attain Full-Time Employment of at least thirty-five (35) hours per week in Florida

within six (6) months of graduation with Annualized Earnings of \$25,000 or higher.

3. As each Qualifying Activity is completed, the student must obtain electronic verification from the Designated Professional Staff.
  - a. *Designated Academic Advisors*: The student must obtain electronic verification at least once per academic year verifying that the student made and attended the Academic Advising Appointment and that the student received academic advising about his or her choice of a major and the sequencing of degree requirements to stay on track for four-year graduation.
  - b. *Office of Internships and Cooperative Programs Designee*: The student must obtain electronic verification confirming the student participated in Internships, Co-operative Programs, Experiential Learning, or other similar opportunities with registered and approved employers prior to graduation.
  - c. *Career Development Services Designee*: The student must obtain electronic verification confirming that the student made and attended the Career Counseling Appointment and that the student received in-person advising from Career Development Services, prior to graduation, about the process of career decision-making and career prospects related to their major.
  - d. *Career Development Services or Office of Internships and Cooperative Programs Designee*: The student must obtain electronic verification confirming the student attended an Employer Recruiting Event prior to graduation.
4. Rebate Amount
  - a. After completion of the student's First Year, the student may log onto Gulfline to view the rebate to be awarded upon completion of all Soar in 4 Program rebate criteria.
  - b. The rebate to be awarded upon completion of all rebate criteria is the amount of Tuition the student paid either out of pocket or through student loans and/or Florida Prepaid, excluding all Gift Aid received, for Earned FGCU Credit Hours earned in the student's First Year, up to a maximum of thirty (30) credits.
  - c. Credits for courses taken outside of FGCU during the First Year, for example, through Transient Enrollment or through testing mechanisms including, but not limited to, CLEP, are not eligible for the Soar in 4 program.
  - d. Based upon out of pocket Tuition expenses, it is possible that a student may meet the eligibility criteria and complete all Qualifying Activities as a part of the Soar in 4 Program rebate criteria, but have a zero dollar (\$0) amount as their Rebate Amount.

## 5. Application for Payment of Rebate

- a. The student may submit a Soar in 4 Program application up to one (1) year after the student's graduation date. The application may be obtained through the Soar in 4 Program section of the Office of the Bursar's website.
- b. The student must complete the checklist in the application attesting to the completion of the Soar in 4 Program rebate criteria completed prior to graduation.
- c. The student must also attest to and provide confirmation of completion of the final rebate criteria, which is to have attained Full-Time Employment in Florida within six (6) months of graduation with Annualized Earnings of \$25,000. An acceptable confirmation of the final employment criterion is to attach two consecutive pay stubs from the student's employer. Other acceptable forms of confirmation will be determined on a case-by-case basis. If the student is self-employed, the student must submit the business' organizing documents in the State of Florida and the business' most recent tax return. If the student operates as an unincorporated sole proprietorship, then the student must show documentation created in the normal course of business that shows evidence of business activity and the most recent available tax return of the student.
- d. Since the awarded rebate is taxable to the student, the student must also complete and submit to the Office of the Bursar with the application the appropriate tax form to comply with IRS requirements. For U.S. citizens and resident aliens, a Form W-9, Request for Taxpayer Identification Number and Certification, must be completed. For nonresident aliens, a Form W-8BEN, Certificate of Foreign Status of Beneficial Owner for United States Tax Withholding and Reporting, must be completed.
- e. The student, upon completion and execution of the application within one (1) year of the student's graduation date, submits the application to the Office of the Bursar.
- f. The Office of the Bursar will review the application to certify that all rebate criteria have been met. If all criteria have not been certified as complete, the Office of the Bursar will notify the student of his or her ineligibility for payment. If all criteria have been certified as complete, the Office of the Bursar will issue a check for the awarded rebate within four (4) to six (6) weeks after receipt of application.
- g. If a U. S. Citizen or Resident Alien student receives a total rebate in excess of \$600, the Rebate Amount will be reported to the IRS on Form 1099-MISC, Miscellaneous Income. For Non-Resident Aliens, the entire rebate will be reported to the IRS on Form 1042-S, Foreign Person's U. S. Source Income Subject to Withholding.

## 6. Denial of Rebate Re-Evaluation

- a. Upon receiving notice that the student has not met the Soar in 4 Program rebate

criteria to receive a Tuition rebate, the student will be allowed to request a re-evaluation of the Soar in 4 Program application by submitting a Denial of Rebate Re-Evaluation Form. This re-evaluation can be based upon extenuating circumstances as described in a letter or documented University error.

- b. A committee consisting of a representative from each of the following offices, First Year Experience and Retention Programs, the academic advising community, Career Development Services, Internships and Co-operative Programs, and the Office of the Bursar, will re-evaluate the application.
- c. An outcome notification will be sent to the student, once this re-evaluation is completed, that will explain how the committee arrived at its decision to approve or deny the appeal.
- d. Non-compliance with any and all of the Qualifying Activities may affect a student's ability to receive a rebate under the Soar in 4 Program. The University decision is not appealable outside of the University.

## **F. DISQUALIFYING EVENTS OR CHANGE IN ELIGIBILITY**

### **1. Change of Major**

Although a student is able to change his or her major after declaring a major during their First Year, the student's decision to change his or her major to another area of study may result in an extension in their time to degree completion that may affect their ability to receive a rebate under the Soar in 4 Program.

### **2. Change in Admission Term or Student Type**

- a. An FTIC Student who is readmitted as a Student Type other than FTIC is disqualified from receiving a rebate under the Soar in 4 Program.
- b. Per FGCU Regulation 2.001, Undergraduate Admissions, Section Q:

A student who does not enroll into the term to which he or she has been admitted may defer or change admission to a future term by submitting a Change of Term form to the Office of Undergraduate Admissions. Admission in the new term is not automatic, and a student requesting a new term must meet the admission requirements in effect for the new term. Entry dates for some programs are limited to specified terms. If a student attends another post-secondary institution in the interim, an official transcript of all work attempted is required. A new application and application fee are required when deferring admission to a term beginning more than two (2) terms after the original admission term or if the student requests a change of term for the second time.

Provided that all of the abovementioned readmission criteria are met, and the student is classified as an FTIC in their new admission term, the student's First Year will begin during the semester of the new admission term.

## G. EXCEPTIONS

### Retroactive Eligibility

1. Students, who entered in the summer and fall terms of 2015, and in the spring term of 2016, will be granted exceptions to Qualifying Activities that had to be completed during their First Year. Such exceptions must be on the basis of their lack of awareness about the Soar in 4 Program requirements that had yet to be put in place at the time that Qualifying Activities had to be completed.
2. Exceptions to completing Qualifying Activities will be handled on a case-by-case basis by a committee consisting of a representative from each of the following offices, First Year Experience and Retention Programs, the academic advising community, Career Development Services, Internships and Co-operative Programs, and the Office of the Bursar, through the denial of rebate re-evaluation process.

### *Authority*

*BOG Regulation 1.001, University Board of Trustees Powers and Duties  
FGCU Regulation 7.010, Governor's Challenge Rebate Program*

### *History of Policy*

*New 09/04/18; Amended 10/04/19; Suspended 09/14/21*

**APPROVED**

\*s/Michael V. Martin  
Michael V. Martin, President

September 14, 2021  
Date