

The college may owe you money

LATE AND DEFERRED PAYMENT FEES CANNOT BE PAID WITH FINANCIAL AID

BY ZACH WHITLEY
MANAGING EDITOR

The college is refunding nearly \$50,000 in institutional fees to hundreds of students.

In December of 2019, the college learned from the Department of Education that certain types of fees should not be covered by financial aid funds. As a result, Clackamas Community College is refunding these fees from the 2017-2018 and 2018-2019 academic years.

Jennifer Anderson, associate dean of Enrollment and Student Services, said college employees learned they should not be using financial aid to cover students' late fees at a December financial aid conference in Reno, Nev.

"The way I frame it for myself is like a change in the tax code, right?" said Anderson. "Like this year, something's allowable to write off and next year, something has changed."

Students have been receiving letters from the college that they will receive refunds. According to Anderson, the college will refund approximately \$48,000 to 651 students, with the range of refunds being from \$30 to \$420 per student.

For the 2017-2018 academic year, the college refunded an average of \$70 to 231 students (\$16,170), and in the 2018-2019 year, \$71 to 453 students (\$32,163).

For students who have graduated, the school will use students' last known addresses to refund this money.

The National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators states on its website, "late fees, penalty fees, finance charges, and overtime

charges are not allowable charges and therefore cannot be paid with Title IV funds."

Specifically at CCC, the ones that affect students are the late payment fees and deferred payment fees. These fees are mostly from failing to pay balances by a specific date, but can also be from choosing a deferred payment plan.

The college is also undergoing a routine audit - the first in roughly 20 years - to look at how it handles student financial aid, Anderson said.

"It's just our time," said Anderson. "We're in the middle of it. It's not public."

"The way I frame it for myself is like a change in the tax code"
— Anderson

Right: This letter is an example of what students received from the college this winter.



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Dear Student,

In reviewing of our process for charging fees (deferred payment fee and/or non-payment fee) for the 2017-18 and/or 2018-19 academic years, we have determined that you should receive a refund. These fees were charged to you and deducted from your financial aid during the time period listed above. Enclosed is a check in the amount we determined should be refunded to you.

Sincerely,
The Office of Financial Aid and Scholarships

FAQ's

Q: Why am I receiving a refund?

A: We reviewed our process for allocating fees and determined that you should receive a refund of the fees.

Q: Why didn't I received a refund for all of the deferred payment fees and/or non-payment fees I was charged?

A: CCC is only refunding charges for those students whose financial aid file was complete (all documents received) before the fees were assessed.

Q: Why did this happen?

A: As part of our continual improvement process, we are always evaluating what is in the best interest of the students.

Q: Why did we only review 2017-18 and 2018-19?

A: Only the last two years were identified as the review time frame.

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ON THE COVER: CCC sophomore Jason Shaner wins the 133lb bracket at the NJCAA championship in Council Bluffs Iowa on March 7. Photos by Travis Whittaker; cover design by Jonathan Villagomez.

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