	College Opportunity Fund Credit-Hour Limit Waiver Policy	Responsible Administrative Unit: Finance & Administration
	Issued: August 2007 Revised: June 11, 2012	Policy Contact: Controller, RCuswort@mines.edu

1.0 BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

The College Opportunity Fund (COF) provides state financial support directly to eligible students for higher education in Colorado. The COF was created by an Act of the Colorado State Legislature and signed into law by Governor Owens in May 2004. Since the COF was implemented in 2005, undergraduate students who are eligible for in-state tuition, and who are admitted and enrolled at a public institution receive a per credit-hour stipend from the COF.


The law creating the College Opportunity Fund caps an undergraduate student's stipend eligibility at 145 credit-hours. However, waivers to the credit-hour limit may be granted in special circumstances by Mines or by the Colorado Commission on Higher Education (CCHE) to allow a limited number of COF credits to be granted beyond the 145 hour limit. **A student is eligible to apply for a CCHE waiver only after their initial waiver request to the School has been denied.** The following policy outlines the eligibility criteria and the process for obtaining a COF credit-hour limit waiver from the School.

2.0 POLICY

A limited number of waivers to the 145 credit-hour COF limitation may be granted by the Controller of the Colorado School of Mines. The number of waivers that can be approved by any institution in a fiscal year is limited by the State of Colorado. Per state statute, priority for waivers is to be given to students 1) who used COF credit for courses taken after July 1, 2006, as part of *Post Secondary Enrollment Options* (PSEO) or *Fast Track* programs, and 2) whose coursework is for purposes of job retraining. Beyond that, waivers will be granted according to the following eligibility criteria:

- CCHE approved and the School implemented **an alteration of degree requirements or standards** for the specific degree while the student was enrolled in that degree program;
- **The degree program** as approved by CCHE **requires more than 120 hours** to complete;
- **Extenuating circumstances** existing outside the student's control (health, physical ability, change of work hours/location) that would keep the student from finishing the degree program within the 145 lifetime credit-hour limit;
- Paying the full amount of total in-state tuition for credit-hours that exceed the 145 COF credit-hour lifetime limit would cause a **substantial economic hardship** on the student and the student's family;
- The student is strategically pursuing a **dual degree, double major, or combination** of majors and/or minors in pursuit of a particular career goal.

Written justification for the waiver request must be provided by the student (see Attachment A: COF Waiver Request Form). In addition, the following information will be reviewed as part of the waiver request process:

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- **The student's academic transcript**, to note academic progress including changes in major, course withdrawals, transfer status, etc.;
- **Research by the Bursar's Office to determine if a previous tuition refund has already been granted.** Note that a previous tuition refund would have resulted in a reduction of COF hours used proportional to the tuition refunded for a given term.

3.0 PROCEDURES

Requesting a Waiver

To request a waiver, undergraduate students must have used 120 or more COF hours toward the lifetime limit of 145. Students will be alerted via email when they have reached the 120-hour mark. Students may review their COF lifetime hours and hours-used balances as follows:

- Colorado School of Mines registration COF summary; or
- Colorado Student Loan Program account created when the student applied for COF: <https://cofweb.cslp.org/cofapp/COFLogon.jsp>

When a student reaches 120 COF hours, she or he must complete the COF Waiver Request Form (see Attachment A, which delineates waiver criteria along with suggestions of appropriate documentation to be included with the waiver request). The waiver request will be considered based on the materials provided by the student, and the information submitted by appropriate CSM offices as mentioned above.


Timing of Waiver Request

The request for a waiver of the lifetime credit-hour limit should be submitted to the Registrar's Office no later than **the last date to drop a full-term course with tuition adjustment (the census date)** as noted on the academic calendar for each term. If circumstances warrant filing later than the dates listed above, consideration will be given if the limited number of institutional waivers has not been exhausted.

COF waivers should be sought *before* exceeding the 145 credit-hour lifetime limit. For consideration of a waiver, **students should have less than 25 COF-eligible credit-hours remaining** (i.e., cumulative COF hours used greater than or equal to 120). Students should file as early as they know there may be an issue. This process cannot apply retroactively to hours already taken in prior terms that exceeded the COF lifetime limit.

Approval of Waiver Request

Once submitted, the COF Waiver Request Forms will be processed by the Registrar's and Bursar's offices. Once processed, the Controller will review all waiver requests. If the Controller is unavailable, the Vice President for Finance and Administration will review waiver requests. If there is a question regarding a student's academic progress, the Office of Academic Affairs will participate in the waiver approval process. Decisions

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will be finalized 30 days after the census date as noted on the academic calendar for each term. Students will be notified of a final decision in writing or via e-mail. **Students who are denied a waiver from Mines may apply for a waiver from CCHE.** The CCHE waiver form is available at:

<http://www.state.co.us/cche/reforms/stipends/cofwaiver.pdf>.

If the waiver request is approved and additional COF credit-hours are allowed, a tuition and fee bill will be recalculated, and COF lifetime hours will be adjusted. If approved, the student's COF institutional waiver status will be reported to Colorado Student Loan Program.

Waivers will not be approved in the following cases:

- A student has not made satisfactory academic progress;
- A student has completed an undergraduate degree and has used the 30 post-baccalaureate degree COF credit-hours available.

4.0 RESPONSIBILITIES:

Student:

- Completes the COF Waiver Request Form when 120 COF hours has been reached, being sure to attach necessary documentation.
- Turns in the COF Waiver Request Form to the Registrar's Office no later than the census date for a given semester.
- If COF Waiver Request is denied by Mines, applies for a CCHE Waiver.

Registrar:

- Researches academic records for students requesting COF Waivers.
- Flags Waiver Requests for students whose record of academic progress may not be satisfactory.
- Attaches transcripts to COF Waiver Forms and forwards to Bursar's Office.

Bursar:


- Researches financial records for students requesting COF Waivers and determines number of credit-hours that remain eligible for COF credit.
- Forwards research and COF Waiver Forms to Controller's Office.

Office of Academic Affairs:

- Participates in COF Waiver approval process for those students whose academic progress has been noted by the Registrar's office as potentially unsatisfactory.

Controller:

- Approves or denies COF Waiver Requests.

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- Notifies students of approval or denial of request and informs students in writing of their option to pursue a CCHE waiver (<http://www.state.co.us/cche/reforms/stipends/cofwaiver.pdf>).


5.0 ATTACHMENTS

COF Waiver Request Form (See Pg 5)

6.0 DISCLAIMER:

Hours taken in excess of COF lifetime hours are calculated at full tuition, without credit for a COF stipend. Submitting a COF waiver request does not exempt students from tuition, fees, late and service charges or financial stops. Students must pay bills in full by the published deadlines.

The waiver request process does not address tuition refunds for course drop or withdrawal, class fees, late enrollment, grades or grade changes, tuition classification, academic advising or other academic policy or regulations. There are separate appellate procedures for those circumstances.

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COF Waiver Request Form


Instructions-

If you have been notified by CSM that you have used at least 120 hours of COF credit-hours toward your baccalaureate degree, then you should apply for an institutional waiver of the 145 credit-hour limit on COF eligibility if you meet one of the waiver criteria listed below. Only one institutional waiver for COF lifetime hours is allowed per student. Please plan accordingly.

Step 1: Waiver Criteria-

Review the waiver criteria listed below and suggested documentation. Indicate which of the waiver criteria applies to you.

Check box below	Do these criteria apply to you?	Documentation needed: <i>All information submitted is confidential.</i>
	You have used COF credits for courses taken after July 1, 2006, as part of <i>Post Secondary Enrollment Options</i> (PSEO) or <i>Fast Track</i> programs.	Evidence of enrollment in PSEO or Fast Track programs can be obtained from the Admissions Office or the Registrar's Office.
	You need additional courses for job retraining.	Dated, signed letter from the employer, on company letterhead, demonstrating that in order to keep a professional position at that company, job retraining was required which necessitated a change in academic coursework.
	While you were enrolled, CCHE approved and CSM implemented an alteration of your specific degree requirements or standards.	If Step 3 of COF Waiver form is completed, Registrar will provide documentation of CCHE degree program changes.
	Your degree program, as approved by CCHE, requires more than 120 hours to complete.	If Step 3 of COF Waiver form is completed, Registrar will provide documentation of degree program requirements.
	You have had a recent medical condition.	Dated, signed letter from the attending physician on letterhead, containing the general nature of your illness/injury, dates, severity, and why you could not attend school.
	You have had a family emergency (death, illness).	Death certificate, or obituary notice; or dated, signed letter from the attending physician on letterhead, containing the general nature of your family member's illness/injury, dates, and severity.

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	You have had a change in work location or work hours which affected your academic schedule.	Dated, signed letter from the employer, on company letterhead, demonstrating that in order to keep a job, changes in work hours or location were required, which necessitated a change in academic coursework or course schedule.
	You, or the party responsible for paying your tuition, have financial hardship.	The circumstances that require more than 145 credits to complete a degree must have an academic basis. Beyond the academic considerations, provide documentation why paying total tuition, rather than tuition less the COF voucher, would create substantial economic hardship for you or for the payer of your tuition bill.
	You are pursuing a dual degree, double major, or combination of majors/minors that has increased credit-hours needed.	If Step 3 of COF Waiver form is completed, Registrar will provide documentation.

Step 2: Justification- (attach a separate page):

Please elaborate on the reasons that you are requesting an exception to the COF lifetime limit of 145 credit-hours. This explanation should clearly show how you meet the circumstances described above in Part I. Attach necessary documentation.

Step 3: Academic Information-

Name: _____ Anticipated graduation date: _____ Have you applied to graduate? _____ yes _____ no Total anticipated number of hours left to graduate: _____ I plan to complete these hours over the following term(s): Term 1 _____ Credit-hours anticipated: _____ Term 2 _____ Credit-hours anticipated: _____ Term 3 _____ Credit-hours anticipated: _____	<p>Note: If a waiver is approved, you must complete the additional hours within three <i>consecutive</i> terms, not to exceed a period of 365 days.</p>
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Step 4: Certification Statement-

I certify that to the best of my knowledge the information included in this waiver request is accurate, true and unaltered. If false information or falsified supporting documentation is found to have been included in this waiver request, the request becomes void, and the resultant action becomes retroactively nullified.

I understand that if this COF institutional waiver is approved, it is a once-in-a-lifetime waiver from the 145 COF lifetime hours limitation, and all hours approved must be completed within the parameters specified by the Controller of the Colorado School of Mines and the State of Colorado.

I understand that if I have not completed the requirements for a baccalaureate degree by the end of the waiver period and choose to continue my coursework, I must a) pay full tuition without COF stipend credit for all hours in excess of the hours added to my COF lifetime limit, or b) seek a CCHE waiver (CCHE waiver form is available at: <http://www.state.co.us/cche/reforms/stipends/cofwaiver.pdf>).

Signed _____

Date _____

<p>For Office Use Only:</p> <p>As of _____ date:</p> <p>Transcript review _____ COF hours approved _____</p> <p>Bursar review _____ COF hours approved _____</p> <p>_____ Waiver denied because criteria not met</p> <p>_____ Waiver denied because institutional waiver limit met - CCHE waiver is possible</p> <p>_____ Waiver approved Start term _____ End Term _____</p>
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Turn in your COF Waiver Request Form to the Registrar's Office located in the Student Center no later than the last day of add/drop in a given term (census date).