Granville P. Meade Scholarship Program Disbursement Guide

The Distribution Guide for the Granville P. Meade Scholarship Program (GPM) was created to help you and your family understand how you can get the maximum benefit from your scholarship. Please read the information carefully. The guide addresses the most commonly asked questions about processing distributions and using funds. If you have any additional questions, please contact Abbie Handford by phone (804-225-4072) or email (abbiehandford@schev.edu).

How does it work?

The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia (SCHEV) works with the Virginia College Savings Plan (VCSP) to facilitate timely and accurate disbursements to Virginia colleges and universities. Once winners return the Intent to Enroll form and required documentation to SCHEV, a VCSP Virginia Education Savings Trust (VEST) account is created. Scholarship funds are deposited into the account for use by the student ($2,000 each year up to four years for a total of $8,000). Any unused funds at the end of one year will roll forward for use in the next year; scholars have six years to use the funds.

In order to access the deposited scholarship funds, recipients must submit a VEST Distribution Request form and required documentation for a qualified educational expense. All forms and documentation must be submitted to SCHEV by the required deadlines.

What are the deadlines and program contact information?

All forms are available on our web page at www.schev.edu/gpmscholar

- Intent to Enroll form is due July 15, 2019.
- VEST Distribution Request form is due September 1, 2019.
- Contact information for the program is as follows:
  Granville P. Meade Scholarship
  State Council of Higher Education for Virginia
  101 N. 14th Street, 9th Floor
  James Monroe Building
  Richmond, VA 23219
  Phone: 804-225-4072
  Fax: 804-225-2604
  Email: abbiehandford@schev.edu

What is a Virginia College Savings Plan Virginia Education Savings Trust account?
A VCSP VEST account is a Virginia College Savings Plan Virginia Education Savings Trust account. This account is created by SCHEV for the recipient. Annual scholarship funds are deposited into the VEST account once SCHEV has received a complete Intent to Enroll form and required documentation. VEST accounts can be used to pay for qualified educational expenses only.

**Are there unique restrictions for a VEST account issued under the Granville P. Meade Scholarship Program?**

Yes, notwithstanding any other statement in this document or options otherwise available under the VEST program, the following restrictions apply to the GPM Scholarship:

- Disbursements can be made for only qualified educational expenses at an eligible institution for undergraduate education, including programs leading to a certificate, associate’s degree, bachelor’s degree or other recognized post-secondary, undergraduate credential.
- Scholars receive a maximum of $2,000 placed into their VEST account each year they are enrolled in an eligible institution in an eligible program for up to four years of study.
- Excess funds from one year may be carried forward for use in the following year, but all funds remaining six years after the scholar graduates from high school revert to the master fund to be made available for future scholarship recipients.
- To be eligible to receive funds under the program, scholars must enroll in an eligible institution in an eligible program during the initial academic year following selection as a GPM scholar. Failure to enroll in an eligible institution in an eligible program for at least one term during subsequent academic years disqualifies the scholar from receiving further disbursements from the program unless the discontinued enrollment is necessary for military or national emergency purposes or other extenuating circumstances, as approved by SCHEV staff. In such cases, the six-year limitation may be extended.
- Annual renewal is automatic as long as the scholar maintains good academic standing and enrolls at least half time at an eligible institution in an eligible program. Failure to maintain good academic standing with all eligible institutions where GPM Scholarship funds were used automatically disqualifies the scholar from receiving further disbursements from the program. All unused funds revert to the master GPM account.

**What institutions (colleges and universities) are eligible to receive VEST distributions?**

Generally, an eligible institution is an accredited post-secondary educational institution in Virginia offering credit toward a bachelor’s degree, an associate’s degree, or another recognized post-secondary credential. An eligible institution must be eligible to participate in federal student financial aid programs under Title IV of the Higher
Education Act of 1965. Institutions eligible for these programs will have a “Federal School Code.” Higher education institutions that choose not to participate in federal student financial aid programs do not meet the definition of eligible institution for purposes of qualified distributions from VEST. If we determine based on your Intent to Enroll form that your college or university is not an eligible institution, we will contact you.

**What is a qualified higher education expense?**

These are expenses allowed under Section 529 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as amended, which governs state college savings programs like VEST. In order for your distributions to be tax free, they must comply with the federal definitions and regulations provided under Section 529. Generally, these expenses include the following:

1. Tuition, mandatory fees, and the costs of textbooks, supplies, and equipment required for the enrollment or attendance of a designated beneficiary at an eligible institution. Please note that:
   a. Equipment, such as computers, must be required by the eligible institution for the student’s enrollment or attendance for the cost to be covered by VEST distributions. We must have written documentation of any required equipment;
   b. Some fees, such as parking fees, may not qualify; and
   c. Costs associated with health insurance plans, whether issued by the eligible institution or by a third party, do not qualify. Under very limited circumstances, if the eligible institution charges a student health fee to each and every student, the student health fee may qualify.

2. The cost of room and board of a designated beneficiary for any academic period during which the designated beneficiary is enrolled at least half time in a degree, certificate, or other program that leads to a recognized educational credential awarded by an eligible institution. The allowable amount of room and board expenses for students living on campus is the actual amount invoiced by the eligible institution. For students who live off campus or at home, the allowable amount for room and board expenses is the applicable room and board amount for that period used by the eligible institution in determining its cost of attendance.

3. Also included are expenses for special needs services in the case of a special needs beneficiary, which are incurred in connection with enrollment or attendance at an eligible institution.

**What is the Intent to Enroll form and what documentation is required?**

The Intent to Enroll form provides SCHEV with current contact, enrollment, and academic progress information. The Intent to Enroll form must be submitted with a copy of your most
recent transcript showing at least half-time enrollment and your cumulative grade point average. This form also includes a FERPA release, which allows communication between SCHEV and your college. Intent to Enroll Forms are due no later than July 15, 2019. If enrollment begins in a spring or summer term, the Intent to Enroll form is due no later than two weeks before your first day of class.

What is the VEST Distribution Request form and what supporting documentation is required?

The VEST Distribution Request Form provides SCHEV with your qualified education expense information. Required documentation is as follows:

**Documentation required for ALL distribution requests:**
- Copy of tuition/invoice showing financial aid and actual charges.
- After freshman year, proof of verification of good academic standing and previous enrollment levels (unofficial transcript with suffice).
- Proof of payment/expense to be reimbursed.

**Documentation required for EACH type of request:**
- **Tuition and Fees** - Attach a copy of the invoice (bill) showing charges and financial aid. Granville P. Meade Scholarships cannot pay more than the difference between institutional direct charges and gift assistance (grants/scholarships/waivers) received by the student. GPM funds cannot be used to pay non-mandatory fees, such as parking fees.

- **Room and Board** - All room and board distributions are made on a semester-by-semester basis.
  - On Campus: The allowable amount of room and board expenses for students living on campus is the actual amount invoiced by the eligible institution. Attach a copy of the invoice (bill) showing the charges.
  - Off campus or at home with a parent or guardian: The allowable amount for room and board expenses is the applicable room and board amount for that period used by the eligible institution in determining its cost of attendance. You should be able to obtain this information directly from the institution you attend. If living off-campus, but not with a parent or guardian, attach a copy of your leave (with signature).

- **Textbooks** - Attach a copy of the itemized receipt, listing the names of the books and the prices paid. If an itemized receipt is not available, please include the syllabus (course outline) that lists the required books for the class along with the receipt showing the
prices paid. If used books are purchases, a written request showing the names of the books and the costs is acceptable.

- **Equipment** - Attach a copy of the itemized receipt, detailed description of the equipment and documentation from your institution that personal equipment is required for enrollment or attendance.

- **Supplies** - Attach a copy of the itemized receipt. No other documentation is needed for basic supplies such as pens, pencils, paper, etc. Further documentation is needed for items that are not basic. Attach the syllabus (course outline) showing where the items are required, along with the itemized receipt. If the receipt does not list the individual items, please write the name of the item next to the price. This will expedite your request.

* Please note that when providing documentation printed from the web and scanned into the PDF file, the web page URL address and date must appear in the header or footer of the document. Also, if a color copy of the documentation is not needed for clarity, the scanner’s color setting should be set to the black-and-white option (this helps to decrease file size).

**How are payments made?**

The VCSP makes payments either electronically or by check directly to the college for application to your account.

**How much will VEST pay?**

The VCSP will pay directly to the eligible institution the amount you request on the VEST Distribution Request form up to the balance of your account.

**Do I need to keep any records of my expenses?**

Yes. Federal tax law requires that you maintain records adequate to prove your expenses, such as an invoice, for at least three years.

**How long will it take for VEST to issue a check or electronic payment after you receive my Granville P. Meade Distribution Request form?**

This is dependent upon your providing a completed request form and an accurate invoice on a timely basis. All VEST distributions will be made subject to the pending settlement period – this is the period of time between receipt of your completed Distribution Request form and when the amount to be distributed is actually withdrawn from your VEST account. Distribution requests in good standing received by VCSP on any business day of the week prior to the close of business will generally be disbursed within two business weeks of receipt; however, VCSP, at its discretion, may modify this settlement schedule without prior notice. SCHEV and the VCSP are not responsible for payment of any higher education expenses that exceed the current balance of a VEST account at the time a distribution is made.
What if I withdraw after the add/drop period?
If you withdraw after payments have been made from your VEST account, please notify SCHEV staff immediately. Withdrawal may affect future eligibility for the GPM Scholarship.

What if I transfer to a different college for my second semester or in subsequent years?
You are responsible for notifying us of your intent to transfer by filling out a new Intent to Enroll form. You must notify us as soon as possible to ensure the prompt payment of your VEST distributions to the correct college.

Do I have to reapply for the scholarship after the first year and what requirements must be met to retain eligibility?
Your GPM award is automatically renewed each year. To continue to receive funds you need only maintain good academic standing, as defined by your institution; be enrolled at least half time; and verify that educational expenses have been incurred by completing the distribution request form. If you fall below half-time enrollment, you can retain eligibility by enrolling at least half time in at least one term during the academic year (fall to summer). Your scholarship will be available to you for a maximum of six years following the time of your projected date of graduation from high school.

Failure to maintain good academic standing forfeits your eligibility for the program and any future disbursements. Failure to enroll in an eligible institution in an eligible program for at least one term during subsequent academic years disqualifies the scholar from receiving further disbursements from the program unless the discontinued enrollment is necessary for military or national emergency purposes or other extenuating circumstances, as approved by SCHEV staff. In such cases, the six-year limitation may be extended.

How will my VEST account affect my application for financial aid?
GPM VEST accounts should not be reported on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) since the account is owned by neither the student nor the student’s parent.

What happens if I receive other gift assistance?
Other gift assistance is financial aid that is not repaid and includes scholarships, need-based grants, and tuition remission benefits for children of college or university employees. Other gift assistance does not include student loans or work-study programs. If you receive other gift assistance, please contact us and provide documentation (award letter or other written notification) of the amount of the assistance so that we may determine Granville P. Meade Scholarship eligibility. If necessary, your GPM scholarship funds may be carried forward to future years, up to the six-year period.