Drug Convictions and Financial Aid Eligibility

HCU follows the HEOA policy for students to regain eligibility to receive federal financial aid after a drug conviction. Any student who loses federal student aid eligibility due to drug violations will be advised of standing procedure to re-gain Title IV eligibility. Notification will be sent through email by the Office of Financial.

According to federal regulations, students convicted for a drug offense that occurred during a period of enrollment while they were receiving Title IV Federal Financial Aid, may lose eligibility for Federal Aid. If a student answers ‘Yes’ to question 31 on the FAFSA, they will be sent a worksheet by the federal processing center in order to determine if the conviction affects eligibility for aid. Should the financial aid office be notified that a student has been convicted of sale or possession of illegal drugs, the financial assistance will be suspended immediately.

If a conviction was reversed, set aside, or removed from the student’s record it does not count. Convictions occurring during periods of non-enrollment do not count. In addition, any conviction received as a juvenile does not count, unless they were tried as an adult. The period of ineligibility is dependent upon the type of conviction (sale or possession) and if there were previous offenses. The chart below demonstrates the periods of ineligibility:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Possession of Illegal Drugs</th>
<th>Sale of Illegal Drugs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1st Offense</td>
<td>2 years from date of conviction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Offense</td>
<td>Indefinite period</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3+ Offenses</td>
<td>Indefinite period</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If the student was convicted of both selling and possessing illegal drugs, they will be ineligible for the longer period.

Regaining Eligibility

It is the student’s responsibility to certify to the school that they have successfully completed the rehabilitation program. The student may regain eligibility:

- The day after the period of ineligibility ends,
- When they successfully complete a qualified drug rehabilitation program, or
- If the student passes two unannounced drug tests given by a qualified rehabilitation program they may regain eligibility.

Students must provide documentation of this completion to the Office of Financial Aid.
Students denied eligibility for an indefinite period can regain it after:

- Successfully completing a rehabilitation program as described below,
- Passing two unannounced drug tests from such a program, or
- If a conviction is reversed, set aside, or removed from the student’s record so that fewer than two convictions for sale or three convictions for possession remain on the record.
  - In such cases, the nature and dates of the remaining convictions will determine when the student regains eligibility.

**Qualified Drug Rehabilitation Program**

A qualified drug rehabilitation program must include at least two unannounced drug tests and must satisfy at least one of the following requirements:

- Be qualified to receive funds directly or indirectly from a federal, state, or local government
- Be qualified to receive payment directly or indirectly from a federally or state-licensed insurance company
- Be administered or recognized by a federal, state, or local government agency or court
- Be administered or recognized by a federal or state-licensed hospital, health clinic, or medical doctor.
- Additional drug convictions will make the student ineligible for federal aid again.

**Health Risks for Drug and Alcohol Abuse**

All drugs are toxic or poisonous when abused. Health risks of drug abuse include but are not limited to sleep disorders, confusion, hallucinations, paranoia, deep depression, malnutrition, liver and kidney damage, cardiac irregularities, hepatitis, and neurological damage.

Alcohol is a depressant. It depresses the central nervous system and can cause serious physical damage. Excessive drinking damages the liver, resulting in cirrhosis; chronic alcohol abuse also causes hypertension, cardiac irregularities, ulcers, pancreatitis, kidney disease, cancer of the esophagus, liver, bladder or lungs; memory loss, tremors, malnutrition, vitamin deficiencies and possibly sexual dysfunction. Abuse of alcohol or drugs during pregnancy increases the risk of birth defects, spontaneous abortion and still births.

**Assistance for Alcohol Abuse and/or Drug Abuse Problems**

Heritage Christian University will provide confidential, professional assistance for any students who request substance abuse information. Students are urged to seek information and help regarding substance abuse for themselves or their friends. A variety of services including counseling, and/or referral information are available at the Alpha
Center and in the Dean of Students office. There are also a number of Alcohol and Drug Education Programs/Rehabilitation Centers available to students in the Florence/Shoals area.

HCU believes that these resources can provide ongoing, student-centered education and prevention information including a peer education, training programs, and health promotional materials for our students. For more information, students should contact the Dean of Student’s office at extension 305, or The Alpha Center at 256-765-7111. To protect students’ privacy, information regarding a student during participation in any related program will be treated confidentially.