

Summer 2015

## **Spertus Institute for Jewish learning and Leadership Policies Related to R2T4**

### **Return to Title IV (R2T4)**

Withdrawing from individual courses or your program may have serious implications for your academic work and for your financial aid awards and future financial aid eligibility. If you withdraw, officially or unofficially, on or before completing 60% of the term (or award period for non-term based cohorts), and you have received Title IV federal funds in the form of a Federal Direct Loan, the federal government requires that Spertus review your eligibility for those funds.

An official withdrawal occurs when you requested and were granted the status of Withdrawal or you were withdrawn by the Institute for cause, such as lack of Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) or disciplinary actions. An unofficial withdrawal is when you stopped attending classes, even if you did not withdraw from those classes or notify Spertus (eventually resulting in a grade of F, NC, or W). If you completed less than 60% of the term/award period Spertus will determine, using a federally mandated formula, how much federal aid you have earned and based on that calculation how much of those funds must be returned to the federal government by Spertus and/or you. If you completed more than 60% of the term/award period you have earned the full amount of the scheduled disbursement.

We are required to apply a federally mandated formula to determine how much of the federal funding you “earned” up to the time of your withdrawal. This review and recalculation is called a “Return of Title IV Aid” (R2T4). The Title IV funds that were disbursed in excess of the amount determined as earned must be returned to Spertus and/or the federal government. If you received a refund from financial aid, which was to be used for education-related personal expenses such as housing expenses or a computer, you may be required to return a portion of those funds to Spertus. This portion represents funds that were intended to pay your education-related expenses through the end of the term or award period.

The amount to be returned to Spertus will be determined by your tuition and other education-related expenses, refunds you might have received for non-educational expenses such as housing, and the funds that must be returned to the federal government.

The amount to be returned to the federal government will be calculated from the date you officially withdrew from classes or, in the case of an unofficial withdrawal, the last date you

were involved in an academically related activity. To determine the amount of aid you earned up to the time of withdrawal, the Financial Aid Administrator will determine the percentage of the term/award period that you attended. The resulting percentage is then used, along with your institutional costs and total federal funds that you received (funds that were disbursed directly to your Spertus student account and/or refunded to you) or that you were eligible to receive, to determine the amount of aid that you are allowed to keep.

Any unearned Title IV aid must be returned to the federal government within 45 days of the date of the determination of your withdrawal. The Financial Aid Administrator will notify you with instructions on how to proceed if you are required to return funds to the government.

If you received scholarship assistance from Spertus and subsequently withdrew from the course or program for which the scholarship assistance was provided you may be responsible for returning a pro-rata amount of that scholarship amount as calculated by your date of withdrawal.

#### *Returned Title IV Aid Allocation*

Funds that are returned to the federal government are used to reduce the outstanding balances in individual federal programs. Financial aid returned by you or Spertus must be allocated in the following order:

1. Federal Unsubsidized Direct Loan
2. Federal Subsidized Direct Loan
3. Federal Direct Grad Plus

#### *Post-Withdrawal Disbursement*

The law specifies how your school must determine the amount of Title IV program assistance that you earn if you withdraw from school. The Title IV programs that are covered by this law are: Federal Pell Grants, Academic Competitiveness Grants, National SMART grants, TEACH Grants, Stafford Loans, PLUS Loans, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants (FSEOGs), and Federal Perkins Loans.

When you withdraw during your payment period or period of enrollment the amount of Title IV program assistance that you have earned up to that point is determined by a specific formula. If you received (or if Spertus received on your behalf) less assistance than the amount that you earned, you may be able to receive those additional funds. If you received more assistance than you earned, the excess funds must be returned by Spertus and/or you.

The amount of assistance that you have earned is determined on a pro-rated basis. For example, if you completed 30% of your payment period or period of enrollment, you earn 30%

of the assistance you were originally scheduled to receive. Once you have completed more than 60% of the payment period or period of enrollment, you earn all the assistance that you were scheduled to receive for that period.

If you did not receive all of the funds that you earned, you may be due a post-withdrawal disbursement. If your post-withdrawal disbursement includes loan funds, Spertus must get your permission before it can disburse them. You may choose to decline some or all of the loan funds so that you don't incur additional debt. Spertus may automatically use all or a portion of your post withdrawal disbursement of grant funds for tuition and fees. There may be some Title IV funds that you were scheduled to receive that cannot be disbursed to you once you withdraw because of other eligibility requirements.

If you receive (or Spertus receives on your behalf) excess Title IV program funds that must be returned, Spertus must return a portion of the excess equal to the lesser of: your institutional charges multiplied by the unearned percentage of your funds, or the entire amount of excess funds.

If Spertus is not required to return all of the excess funds, you must return the remaining amount. Any loan funds that you must return, you repay in accordance with the terms of the promissory note. That is, you make scheduled payments to the holder of the loan over a period of time.

The requirements for Title IV program funds when you withdraw are separate from any refund policy that Spertus may have. Therefore, you may still owe funds to Spertus to cover unpaid institutional charges. Spertus may also charge you for any Title IV program funds that it was required to return. If you need information about Spertus' refund or withdrawal policies or if you need more information about post-withdrawal disbursements and obligations, contact the Financial Aid Administrator, Pam Felton, at 312-322-1734 or [pfelton@spertus.edu](mailto:pfelton@spertus.edu)

### **Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP)**

Spertus has a comprehensive Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) policy [see below] that is clearly outlined in the Student Handbook. In addition, when you receive federal financial aid, federal guidelines require that you make real and measurable progress toward your degree in order to continue to receive federal aid. While the same SAP guidelines that dictate your academic work at Spertus are in force in matters of financial aid, there are particular federal government requirements related to the disbursement, return, and eligibility for federal aid that must be met and that, in some cases, expand the policies of Spertus' general SAP or individual program SAP policies. Similarly, any institutional aid, for example a scholarship or a partial tuition remission, is also impacted by your academic progress.

As the Spertus SAP policy is translated into financial aid eligibility, the following policies and procedures should be noted.

#### *Grade Point Average (GPA)*

The SAP policy requires that you maintain a minimum cumulative grade point average (GPA) in order to remain eligible for financial aid. This minimum cumulative GPA is 2.7 (on a 4.0 scale).

If you drop below a cumulative GPA of 2.7, you will receive a financial aid warning. Once you receive a financial aid warning, you may continue to receive financial aid, but you will be expected to meet the minimum standards (2.7 cumulative GPA and a minimum 66.67% overall completion rate) by the end of your warning term in order to continue to receive financial aid. Failure to meet the minimum standards after your warning term will result in financial aid suspension.

#### *Quantitative Standards - Cumulative (Overall) Progress*

The time to completion varies by individual program. Typically, students have five years to complete a Masters-level program and seven years to complete a Doctoral-level program. The latter may be extended depending upon research for the dissertation and the completion of extensive comprehensive written examinations. For the purposes of federal student aid, however, students must meet the SAP policies below and they must progress sufficiently to complete their courses of study such that they are enrolled at least half time (the equivalent of at least 6 qh per quarter) for the term/period for which they receive federal aid. Students who fail to maintain at least half time status, regardless if they maintain satisfactory academic progress, will not be eligible for student loans and may be required to begin paying back outstanding student loans.

In terms or periods when a student does not receive Title IV aid their progress is counted towards the maximum time to completion noted above (e.g., five years for Masters-level

students). In some programs, for example, those with cohort models, transfer credits are not generally accepted. For other programs (MAJS, DSJS, DJS), a limited number of transfer credits may be accepted (generally not to exceed 12 qh credits). Acceptance of these credits is contingent on the review and recommendation of the individual Program Director. In cases when transfer credits are accepted, the total number accepted will proportionally reduce the maximum period of time allowed for completion of the program. If, for example, 12 qh credits are accepted through transfer in a 48 qh cumulative credit program, the program must be completed within 3.75 years. However, please note that for federal student aid purposes, the minimum qh credit enrollment of 6 qh credits must be maintained to be considered enrolled at least half time and so eligible for federal student aid or loan deferment.

As a result, in addition to the general policies of SAP as outlined in the Student Handbook, SAP policy is further defined for federal student aid applicants and recipients with several other conditions, including a quantitative component, meaning that you are required to make steady progress toward your degree program by completing at least two-thirds (66.67%) of all your attempted credit hours. The total number of required credits may vary by program. In the case of a program such as MAJS, requiring 48 qh credits for completion, for example, if you attempt 6 quarter hours per quarter during the academic year you are considered attending at least half time and as such may be eligible for federal aid. For satisfactory academic progress related to federal aid, you would be required to complete at least 16 qh of credits in an academic year (out of a 48 cumulative attempted qh hour credits for the program), in order to comply with the minimum quantitative standards. For financial aid purposes, the MSNM program is divided into two academic terms of between 24 and 26 quarter hours (the actual length may be just under or over a calendar year, depending upon start date and individual cohort schedule). In this program, the number of course credits that must be completed prior to each disbursement within a single academic term/period is indicated in the student's award letter. For the entire academic term/period, a student must complete at least 16 qh credits (out of a minimum of 24 qh credits) to comply with minimum satisfactory academic progress requirements.

If you do not successfully complete at least 66.67% of all attempted credit hours, you will receive a financial aid warning. Once you receive a financial aid warning, you may continue to receive federal aid, but you will be expected to meet the minimum standards (2.7 cumulative GPA and a minimum 66.67% overall completion rate) by the end of your warning term in order to continue to receive federal aid. Failure to meet the minimum standards after your warning term will result in financial aid suspension.

#### *Academic Program Completion: Timely Completion of Degree*

The SAP policy includes an expectation that you complete your degree program in the timeframe stipulated by your particular program of study. Students whose enrollment appears

to exceed the stipulated timeframe may be required to submit a degree completion plan to the Program Director and the Financial Aid Administrator in order to continue to qualify for federal financial aid. The degree completion plan must outline the specific requirements remaining for degree completion. The plan must be signed by an academic advisor and be submitted to the Chief Academic Officer for review.

Federal aid is limited to the pursuit of your declared graduate degree program. Once it has been determined that you have completed the requirements for your graduate program and/or have no further enrollment requirements, you are no longer eligible for federal aid. This is true even if you have not applied for graduation and/or your degree has not been officially conferred.

#### *Financial Aid Warning*

You will receive a financial aid warning if you fail to meet the minimum Satisfactory Academic Progress requirements for one or more of the following reasons:

1. You are below the 2.7 cumulative GPA requirement (GPA requirement); and/or
2. You are below the 66.67% minimum course completion rate (quantitative requirement).

Once you receive a financial aid warning, you may continue to receive financial aid, but you will be expected to meet the minimum standards (2.7 cumulative GPA and a minimum 66.67% overall completion rate) by the end of your warning term in order to continue to receive federal aid. Failure to meet the minimum standards after your warning term will result in financial aid suspension.

#### *Financial Aid Suspension*

Your financial aid is suspended when you fail to meet the minimum SAP requirements for one or more the following reasons:

1. You have been assigned a warning status, a probation status, or you are in a monitoring term after your probation, and you fail to meet the requirements of your warning status or academic plan.
2. You are a readmitted student or a first-time applicant whose prior coursework is below the minimum SAP threshold, and because of this you are considered suspended and ineligible unless you successfully appeal.
3. You have exceeded the maximum time frame limits for your degree.

#### *Appealing Financial Aid Suspension*

If you have been suspended from financial aid because of failure to meet the minimum SAP requirements, and you feel that severe or unusual circumstances have kept you from making progress toward your degree, you may appeal.

To appeal, you must submit a written appeal to your Program Director. Your appeal should include all of the items below. Additional documentation may be requested during the review process. Appeals must be submitted at least one month prior to the term/academic period for which you are seeking reinstatement. Exceptions are made only on an appeal basis and not retroactive once the term has ended.

1. Explain the circumstances that kept you from meeting the SAP standards in the past.
2. Explain what has changed that will allow you to be successful in the future. Include as many specifics as possible, including your anticipated academic program completion date and the estimated number of hours remaining for your degree program.
3. You must meet with your academic advisor to discuss your plan of action—a written plan of action approved by the advisor and/or Program Director must be drafted and signed by you.

#### *The Satisfactory Academic Progress Appeal Process*

SAP appeals are reviewed within fourteen days, provided that all necessary documentation is received. You should receive an email with the outcome of your appeal within fourteen days of your submission of a complete appeal.

#### *Financial Aid Eligibility Appeal*

If you are appealing suspension of financial aid eligibility due to not meeting the Spertus Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) policy, you must submit a written appeal that discusses any circumstances that kept you from meeting SAP requirements in the past and indicates what you have changed in order to foster academic success moving forward. You must also specify the corrective action that you have taken so that you will meet the SAP policy in the future. Finally, you must indicate your anticipated academic program completion date and the estimated number of hours remaining for your academic program completion.

Your written appeal must be submitted no later than one month prior to the academic term or course for which you are requesting reinstatement. Appeals submitted after that date will be considered for the following enrollment period. Incomplete appeals will not be reviewed.

Once you have submitted your written appeal the Provost will review your appeal within 14 business days, and notify you of Spertus' decision via email. This decision will outline any

specific academic requirements that you must meet (generally at least two subsequent courses completed with a grade B or higher and a period by which your GPA must have been raised to the level of 2.7 prescribed by the SAP policy). If your appeal is approved, then your financial aid will be reinstated for the appropriate terms in accordance with federal, state, and Institute regulations and processing requirements/deadlines, and the availability of funds. If your appeal is denied, you may continue without the benefit of financial aid, and appeal for reinstatement after you have demonstrated progress towards earning your degree by improving your GPA and/or credit hour completion rate so that you again meet the minimum requirements.

#### *Financial Aid Probation/Academic Plan: Terms Following Suspension*

A successful appeal for reinstatement after a financial aid suspension will result in the following:

1. A probationary term in which specified term requirements must be met;
2. An additional two monitoring terms or up to 4 courses, at the end of which you will be expected to be fully meeting the SAP requirements, both in terms of GPA and completion rate.

#### *Financial Aid Probation/Reinstatement*

A suspended student who has successfully appealed for reconsideration is reinstated for aid in a probation status. During probation, which lasts one term, a student is expected to complete 100% of all courses with a minimum term GPA of 2.7. In some situations, more rigorous GPA requirements will be stipulated in the probation terms. A student who successfully meets the terms of probation will be continued on aid but will be expected to continue to meet the terms of his/her academic plan to assure that the student is fully meeting the minimum SAP requirements.

#### Special Situations

### *Mitigating Circumstances*

You may have mitigating circumstances that explain your inability to meet SAP at a certain time during your studies. Such circumstances may include your own illness, illness of immediate family members, or the death of a family member. Under such circumstances, you may be allowed to continue to participate in the financial aid program, provided that you make arrangements with Spertus faculty and administration to make up any outstanding work in a timely manner according to any proscribed deadlines.

### *Readmitted Students*

Readmitted students are required to meet the SAP policy requirements. If you are returning after an absence, and your former coursework would indicate that you are below the minimum progress requirements, you will need to appeal for reinstatement for your student aid eligibility by submitting a petition to your Program Director explaining:

1. The circumstances that kept you from meeting the SAP standards in the past.
2. Your plan for corrective action—what changes you have made that will allow you to be successful in the future.
3. Your current educational objectives and your plan for successfully completing your course of study at Spertus.

### *First-Time Financial Aid Applicants*

Current students who apply for federal aid are required to meet the SAP policy requirements. If you are a currently enrolled student and you are applying for financial aid for the first time, and your coursework does not meet the minimum academic progress requirements, you will need to complete a Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) Appeal, as explained in the appeal process above.

### Course Status and the Impact on the Calculation of your Credits and GPA

#### *Withdrawals*

Spertus reserves the right to suspend students who completely withdraw or who fail to demonstrate any measurable progress within a given term. If you withdraw completely or fail to complete all of your courses in a term, you may be suspended and asked to appeal.

Courses that you withdraw from are calculated in the total hours attempted but not in your GPA. Withdrawn courses count towards the total maximum time to degree completion. For example, if you have five years to complete your program, withdrawing from a course does not stop the clock on this period of time; i.e., you must still complete your program within five years from the date that you began the program.

### *Repeated Courses*

Repeated courses are counted in the “hours attempted” calculation for financial aid purposes and the repeat grade is treated in the cumulative GPA and total hours attempted calculations in your transcripts. All repeat courses are counted in total attempted hours, regardless of their treatment in the financial aid process.

If you have not yet completed the requirements for your degree, you may be eligible to receive federal financial aid for a repeated course if the repeated course meets current Spertus policy requirements. However, if it has been determined that you have completed your graduate degree requirements and you wish to repeat a course, you will not be eligible for federal student loans for that course.

### *Attempted Credit Hours*

All credit-bearing courses are calculated into your “hours attempted” for financial aid purposes. This includes:

- Courses enrolled at Spertus;
- Accepted transfer credit (regardless of whether you received aid for the courses, and regardless of their treatment in your current degree program requirements);
- Repeated courses.

### *Successfully Completed Credit Hours*

Any course with a passing grade higher than a C or a grade of P (PASS) is considered to be successfully completed.

Any course with a non-passing grade (C- or lower) is considered to be **not** successfully completed.

Grades of I (Incomplete) and IP (in-progress) are considered to be not successfully completed until the final grade is submitted and processed. Students wishing to appeal a grade change of an Incomplete must do so through the regular grade appeal process outlined in the Student Handbook.

All withdrawals are considered to be courses that have not been successfully completed, and negatively impact satisfactory academic progress, as they are not calculated in the grade point average.

*Courses Taken for Audit*

Audited courses do not earn academic credit and are not eligible for financial aid payment. As such, they are not evaluated in the review of the student's satisfactory academic progress.