



## PROFESSIONAL JUDGMENT POLICY

### PURPOSE

To establish guidelines for administering professional judgment for Title IV eligible students in accordance with regulations set forth by the U.S. Department of Education (U.S. DOE).

### STATEMENT OF POLICY

It is the University's policy to administer the use of professional judgment in accordance with Federal regulations and law.

In accordance with U.S. DOE regulations, Financial Aid Administrators have the authority to consider unique family circumstances not reflected in the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Students with special circumstances or unusual circumstances can request a Professional Judgement (PJ) and a Financial Aid Administrator may exercise PJ on a case-by-case basis to adjust the following:

- Student's Cost of Attendance
- FAFSA Data Elements used to calculate the Student Aid Index (SAI)

The FAFSA requires tax information from two years prior; as a result, the U.S. DOE recognizes that certain individuals may experience a change in their financial situations between that time and when they are attending school. As a result, information as reported on the FAFSA may not accurately reflect a student's current ability to pay. Students who fall into this situation must contact the Center for Student Success & Coaching to inquire about a Professional Judgement (PJ).

PJ requests will not be processed after the end of an Academic Year OR after the student has ceased enrollment for a particular term. A PJ request does not guarantee approval or an increase in aid eligibility.

#### **Special Circumstances PJ – Cost of Attendance**

Special Circumstances for which a student may request a PJ to adjust their Cost of Attendance must be justifiable and in accordance with University's establish COA. The request must be based on additional or extra charges for one or more of the items listed:

- Course Fees, Books, Course Materials, Supplies, and Equipment
- Food & Housing
- Computer Purchase
- Transportation
- Dependent Care
- Miscellaneous Expenses

Students requesting a Special Circumstances PJ to adjust Cost of Attendance must provide the following documentation:

- Request for Special Circumstances Appeal Form
- Required documentation as outlined on the Form

### **Special Circumstances PJ – FAFSA Data Elements**

Special Circumstances for which a student may request a PJ to adjust FAFSA data elements include the following:

- Loss of income for a student, parent, and/or spouse due to divorce, death, change or loss of employment or disability
- Student's change in marital status after original FAFSA was signed and submitted
- One-time lump sum distribution or non-recurring income that inflates adjusted gross income
- Major medical expenses not covered by insurance, already paid out-of-pocket
- Tuition payments made for elementary/secondary school costs for a younger sibling
- Child support received that has decreased or ended

Students requesting a Special Circumstances PJ to adjust FAFSA data elements must provide the following documentation:

- Request for Special Circumstances Appeal Form
- Detailed letter of appeal explaining their special circumstances and reason for appeal
- The required documentation listed for each item the student selected on the Form

The Center for Student Success & Coaching reviews each request for Professional Judgment on a case-by-case basis and students are required to complete the request on an annual basis since the PJ cannot be automatically renewed each year.

**POLICY TYPE: STUDENT FINANCE**