

College Opportunity Fund

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College Opportunity Fund (COF)

The College Opportunity Fund (COF) is a state-funded stipend and receiving the COF stipend at Colorado School of Mines is a two-step process. Below are instructions on how to receive your COF stipend, as well as answers to common questions.

How to Apply for COF:

First, a student must apply for the COF through the College Assist Website: <https://cof.college-assist.org>.

How to 'Lifetime Authorize' COF at Mines:

Once the application has been submitted, the student must also authorize the COF stipend to their student account in Trailhead. To authorize the COF on Trailhead, follow these steps:

1. Log in to **Trailhead**.
2. Locate the **"College Opportunity Fund" card**. (*If you don't see the COF card, you may need to switch to "discover" mode through either the three-line "hamburger" icon on the upper left or by scrolling to the bottom and selecting the blue "Discover More" button, then type "college" in the search box.*)
3. Select **"Get Started"**.

4. In the Authorization Agreement section, choose the '**Lifetime Authorization for COF Funds**' option
5. Press "**Submit**"
6. Press "**Confirm**"

This will authorize your COF stipend to apply toward your account balance each semester at Mines for which you are eligible to receive it and it typically takes 1-2 weeks for the stipend to apply.

Students should complete all steps to receive their COF before the census date to avoid delays in receiving COF.

If you experience any issues applying for or authorizing your COF, or if you have general questions about COF, please contact [**residency@mines.edu**](mailto:residency@mines.edu).

COF FAQs:

How much is COF?

Because COF is a State-funded stipend, the cost can change each fiscal year. COF is \$116 per credit hour.

Who is Eligible for COF?

Who is eligible?

- In-state undergraduate students.
- Degree-seeking, non-degree, and teacher enhancement/continuing education students classified as undergraduates will be eligible. Your age, your income, and your financial aid eligibility are irrelevant – students of all ages, all incomes, and all aid statuses will be eligible.

Who is not eligible?

- Undergraduate non-residents students.
- Graduate students are not eligible. Graduate education (including graduate students taking undergraduate classes) is funded in a different way by the State, under a “fee for service” contract. Under this mechanism, the fee for service dollars come directly to the institution. Graduate students do not apply for COF, nor will they see any COF related information on registration information or on bills.
- Non-degree students classified at a graduate level (already having achieved a bachelor’s degree) are not eligible for COF.

COF Application Process:

What happens if I don’t apply for COF?

If you do not apply you will be responsible for paying the full tuition, including the portion that would have been covered by the COF. For example, if your total tuition is \$2000, and if you apply for the voucher and authorize its use, if COF would cover \$680 on your behalf, you would pay \$1320. However, if you don’t apply for the voucher and authorize the funds, you will be responsible for paying the full \$2000. (These amounts are for illustration only.)

What if I don’t have a social security number? May I still apply for COF?

- If you are legally able to get a social security number (ssn), you must use your social security number for COF.
- If you are legally unable to obtain a social security number (ssn), there is an option to indicate you do not have an ssn through the online application. The application can be found at cof.college-assist.org.

Do I have to qualify for financial aid in order to apply to COF and get a COF voucher?

No. COF is separate from financial aid. You do not have to complete a financial aid application to qualify for COF (FAFSA or any other state or institutional financial aid application).

What Courses are Eligible for COF?

What courses are not COF eligible?

NOTE: Courses that are not COF-eligible will not count toward the 145-lifetime credit limits. No COF funding will be reflected on tuition and fee bills for non-COF eligible courses. Some of these courses may be funded a different way by the state.

- Continuing education courses.
- Courses not needed for the bachelor's degree, but planned for future transfer into a graduate program.

What if I'm an undergraduate taking graduate courses?

As of 12-14-04, Colorado Department of Higher Education has determined that undergraduate students taking graduate courses may count those courses toward COF hours and that a COF stipend will apply toward tuition for those courses, as long as the student plans to apply those credits toward the bachelor's degree.

Undergraduate students who take Graduate-level courses (500-level) during their undergraduate enrollment at Mines and note on the 500-Level Class Registration Form that they are using the course towards the requirements for their Master's degree will not receive COF funds for the Graduate-level course. This is true whether or not the student has been admitted into a combined BS/MS program. Only graduate-level courses that are planned to be counted towards a BS degree are eligible for COF funding.

How will I know if a course I choose is not COF eligible?

If you choose a non-COF eligible course during the registration process, a warning message will be provided to let you know that no COF funding is available for the course. You may choose to continue with the course in your schedule or to drop the course. No COF funding will be reflected on tuition and fee bills for non-COF eligible courses.

Tuition and COF:

How will the amount of the stipend be calculated?

Your amount will be calculated based on the number of eligible credit hours you register for each term. This amount may differ each year and will be determined by the state legislature each spring for the upcoming academic year. The amount per credit hour will be the same at all Colorado public institutions, including community colleges.

Can I pick and choose which courses during a term I use for COF?

No. If you authorize COF during registration, all COF eligible courses that you register for in that term will be applied for the stipend. If you are attending multiple institutions in a given term, you authorize separately for each institution through their student portal.

Can I take as many hours as I want during the term, provided that I still have COF hours available, and still get the COF stipend for every eligible credit hour?

Yes. There is no limit to the number of COF eligible hours you can take (authorize) in a term, provided you have not exceeded your COF lifetime maximum hours of 145.

Will I receive a check?

No. Upon your authorization, the stipend amount will be sent by the state on your behalf directly to the institution you choose to attend. The amount will be applied directly to the total tuition charge on your university account. The stipend does not get mailed to your home or transferred to your bank account.

What will I pay? What if I have financial aid?

You will pay total tuition MINUS the part paid on your behalf by COF, MINUS any parts paid by financial aid. For example, if your total tuition is \$2000, and COF pays \$680 on your behalf, and a scholarship pays \$500, you will pay \$820 ($\$2000 - \$680 - \$500 = \820 .) (These amounts are for illustration only.)

Will the voucher cover the total amount of in-state tuition?

No. The student's share of the cost for undergraduate education is not expected to decrease from today's current rates. You can expect that both tuition rates and COF stipend values may change from year to year.

What happens if I don't authorize?

If you do not authorize the use of the stipend by the required deadline each term (Census Day), or choose specifically not to authorize COF, you will be responsible for paying the full tuition, including the portion that would have been covered by the stipend. For example, if your total tuition is \$2000, and if you apply for the voucher and authorize its use, if COF would cover \$680 on your behalf, you would pay \$1320. However, if you don't authorize the funds, you will be responsible for paying the full \$2000. (These amounts are for illustration only.)

What happens once I have used all my COF lifetime hours?

Once you have used the COF lifetime hours, which is 145 credit hours, any additional hours taken are charged at the resident tuition rate, without COF applied. For example, if you have 10 COF hours remaining, and register for 15 hours, tuition will be charged for all 15 hours, and the COF voucher will apply to only 10 of the hours.

Are 'stipend,' and 'COF' the same thing?

Yes. The College Opportunity Fund program is variously known

as COF/stipend, and Senate Bill 04-189.

COF Lifetime Hours:

Am I eligible for COF for as long as I am an undergraduate in Colorado?

COF is capped at 145 credit hours. Students classified as undergraduate, taking additional undergraduate work after receipt of a bachelor's degree may have 30 more undergraduate post baccalaureate hours added to their limit.

Where can I see my COF hours used, and COF hours available?

If you attended another institution besides Mines, it is best to view your COF hours by accessing your College Assist account: <https://cof.college-assist.org/>. From there you can view your COF hours used at each institution you attended.

If you have been continuously enrolled at Mines, and did not transfer from another Colorado institution, you can view your COF hours used by logging into Trailhead and viewing COF hours under your student record.

When will I see COF was applied?

Students must apply and authorize COF first, then register for courses. The stipend does not apply automatically after a student takes these actions. The university must submit a report to the State. Funds then get disbursed to the university where it is applied to the COF eligible student records. This report is sent weekly at the beginning of each semester and monthly after Census Day. If a student does not apply or authorize their COF correctly the stipend will not apply to their record.

What happens if I'm admitted to a degree program as a freshman, and then decide to attend a Continuing Education/Extended Studies program instead?

If you are admitted to a degree program as a freshman, you would begin your COF record as a freshman, eligible for 145

credit hours. Since COF does not distinguish between a student seeking a degree or not, any hours that are taken in either program could be eligible for COF. However, COF does distinguish where courses are taught -- hours taken in courses taught by Continuing Education/Extended Studies generally are not COF eligible and will not receive the stipend.

What happens if I take some COF eligible hours at another Colorado public institution, and those COF hours do not transfer to Mines?

If you take COF eligible courses at any Colorado institution participating in COF, those hours are reported as part of your COF hours used and count toward your 145 COF hour limit. It does not matter if the hours transfer into a Mines degree program or not.

What happens to my COF hours if I begin as a non-resident freshman at Mines, but eventually petition for change of residency, and begin paying resident tuition?

Only those eligible hours attempted once you have resident status are tracked towards the 145 COF limit.

What happens if I take a course and fail it? Are my COF hours added back in?

If you take the course and fail it, the COF hours are still deducted from your COF balance.

What if I withdraw from all courses? What happens to my COF hours for that term?

Under the Colorado Department of Higher Education policy, any hours that you were registered for when you withdrew are deducted from your COF lifetime hours available. The COF hours will be treated as if you completed the courses. So, although you may get a tuition refund based on a campus tuition appeals process, you will not get a "refund" of COF hours.

COF Waiver:

What if I need more than the lifetime 145 credit hours to get

my undergraduate degree?

Undergraduate students can apply for an institutional waiver. The institutional waiver can only be used once and remains in place for three consecutive semesters, including summer. The waiver is not guaranteed to be approved. Students must meet policy criteria to be eligible: <https://www.mines.edu/policy-library/cof-waiver-policy/>.

If a student has exhausted the waiver hours and still needs additional hours, or if a student was denied because they did not meet the policy criteria, they can complete a waiver through the State. This waiver is reviewed and processed by the Colorado Department of Higher Education.

What if I completed my bachelor's degree and am pursuing a post baccalaureate degree, will I be eligible to complete the waiver?

After completing a bachelor's degree, students pursuing a post baccalaureate degree are eligible for 30 COF hours. However, they are not eligible for an institutional waiver.

Can I apply for multiple institutional waivers?

A student can receive only one institutional waiver.

Who do I contact if I have more questions about the waiver?

All COF and COF waiver questions can be directed to residency@mines.edu.

Where do I get the COF Waiver?

Students should only complete the waiver if they anticipate they will reach their 145 limit prior to the term they need it for. The COF Waiver is an online form that can be found through this link: <https://www.mines.edu/registrar/cof-waiver/>.

Contact Us

Registrar's Office

Student Center, Suite E280

1200 16th Street

Golden, CO 80401

Registration or student record questions

registrar@mines.edu

303-273-3200

FAX: 303-384-2253

Tuition Classification & COF questions

residency@mines.edu

Transfer credit questions

transfer@mines.edu

Military and VA Benefit related questions

veterans@mines.edu

Graduation questions

graduation@mines.edu