

EDUCATION

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## EFP Takeaways

Gaining, Losing, and Regaining Merit-based Scholarships

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### *The Study*

Georgia's HOPE and Zell Miller Scholarships are merit-based scholarship programs covering full or partial tuition for students attending the state's public higher education institutions. Students must meet various criteria to gain and keep their awards. Students who enter a post-secondary institution without a scholarship can gain a HOPE Scholarship if their GPAs rise above a certain level, and students who lose both HOPE and Zell Miller Scholarships can regain them later. Because of these features, students' scholarship status can change during their college careers.

The authors use administrative data from the University System of Georgia (USG) to examine rates at which USG students gain, lose, and regain HOPE and Zell Miller Scholarships, as well as differences in these dynamics across student populations.

### *Findings*

Many students change their scholarship status: Hazard analyses predict that 25% of entering Zell Miller Scholarship students lose their scholarships by their 90th credit hour, 42% of entering HOPE Scholarship students lose their scholarship by their 90th credit hour, and 27% of students who enter without a scholarship gain one.

White students are more likely than Black and Hispanic students to enter a USG institution with a HOPE or Zell Miller Scholarships. The differences are larger for the Zell Miller Scholarship, with White students being six times more likely than Black students to enter USG institutions with them. Asian students also have higher rates of Zell Miller scholarship receipt. The disparities widen during students'

careers as Black and Hispanic students are less likely than other students to keep or gain the scholarships.

Men, students from families with low incomes, students who are not financially supported by their parents, Pell grant recipients, and student loan recipients are less likely to enter institutions with HOPE or Zell Miller Scholarships, less likely to gain scholarships during college, and less likely to keep scholarships.

### *Implications and Recommendations*

Students with moderately high GPAs might have a good chance of keeping or gaining a scholarship. Scholarship students, especially those at high risk of losing scholarships, may benefit if institutions broaden their existing academic support and student success initiatives to include these students. Georgia could also consider tiered scholarship reductions and other incremental or phased incentives rather than an all-or-nothing approach to motivate academic achievement. Eliminating standardized test requirements for initial Zell Miller Scholarship receipt could help to reduce initial disparities in full scholarship receipt.

#### **For more details:**

- View the [full issue](#).
- See the [full article in Education Finance and Policy](#).
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- Summary of: Ribar, D. C. & Rubenstein, R. (2023). Gaining, Losing, and Regaining Merit-based Scholarships. *Education Finance and Policy*, 18(4): 597-622.