

Other Financial Assistance (OFA)

FAQs for Faculty & Staff

The **Other Financial Assistance (OFA) Policy**, as well as the **Financial Aid Handbook** can be found at <https://www.wabash.edu/admissions/finances/policies>

To ensure compliance with federal financial aid regulations, funding provided to a student must be accounted for in his overall financial aid package, even if the funds are intended to cover optional activities. Such funding is federally-defined as Other Financial Assistance (OFA) and must be reported to the Financial Aid Office via the [OFA Notification Form](#).

This FAQ is intended to supplement the [Other Financial Assistance \(OFA\) Policy](#). This FAQ provides faculty & staff who sponsor programs and opportunities that provide students money or other financial support with clarification, guidance, and examples to assist in the reporting of OFA. Please [contact the Financial Aid Office](#) if you are unsure about what needs to be reported via the OFA Notification Form.

Review the lists below prior to offering a student anything with monetary value, such as a stipend, grant, award, housing, travel or conference support, or a gift card.

You do not need to notify Financial Aid for anything on the “What Does NOT Count as OFA” list. For everything else, submit the [OFA Notification Form](#) to Financial Aid before money is offered or paid to the student. Financial Aid determines whether the funding is OFA and informs the appropriate parties of the results.

What Does NOT Count as OFA?

- Wages a student earns as a Wabash employee, such as WISE or a summer research job in a Wabash department. The exception to this is Federal Work-Study (FWS), which must be counted as OFA.
- Emergency financial assistance provided unexpected expenses that fall under a component of the Cost of Attendance (COA).
- Short-term emergency loans (Dean’s Loans) that must be repaid by the end of the current enrollment or payment period.
- Dollar-for-dollar reimbursement, with receipts, of a student’s expenses for an optional activity
- Costs of an optional activity that Wabash pays directly to a vendor or that a department pays on the student’s behalf (airfare, conference registration fees, lodging, summer housing, etc.).
- Payments to a student for taking part in a research study (for example, a gift card for participating in a faculty member’s study)
- Money a student organization spends from its own funds
- Gift cards and non-cash prizes when no one keeps a record of who received them

What DOES Count as OFA?

- Scholarships, grants, and awards, including summer enrichment grants such as the Dill, Rudolph, and Givens awards, as well as the WLAIP summer stipend
- Stipends paid to a student who is not a Wabash employee, including stipends for internships or research at another organization

- Money paid to a student for travel, housing, conferences, research, internships, or similar opportunities (other than receipted reimbursements for an optional activity)
- Per diem payments
- Cash awards and prizes, such as Moot Court prizes
- Contest or drawing prizes (including gift cards and items such as electronics) when winners are tracked by name and if *any* of these is true:
 - only college students can enter;
 - the prize can be used for educational expenses;
 - the student is required or allowed to use it for school; or
 - the contest is part of a course or program
- Gift cards that are not contest or drawing prizes when the department keeps a record of who received them (except payments for taking part in a research study)
- Equipment, materials, or books the student keeps (for example, a laptop, software, a textbook, or a musical instrument), or money to buy them
- Charges on the student's account that a department pays for him

Submit the [OFA Notification Form](#) before offering or paying any of these.

Need-based campus employment (Federal Work Study, or FWS) and Chapel Awards *also* count as OFA. However, the OFA Notification Form does not need to be completed for either. The process for naming/awarding Chapel Award recipients has not changed.

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Is this a new law?

No. This is a long-standing federal regulation. Our policy ensures that all financial assistance a student receives is accounted for correctly and that the College remains in compliance with federal regulations.

Who submits the OFA Notification Form?

The sponsoring department, office, program, or faculty member submits the OFA Notification Form to the Financial Aid Office. Financial Aid reviews the request and determines whether the assistance is OFA.

When should the form be submitted?

Submit the form **before** the assistance is offered to the student. Timely submission allows Financial Aid to communicate with the student regarding any effect the OFA has on his aid. Depending on the circumstances, the student may decide it's not in his best interest to accept the funding.

What happens after the form is submitted?

Financial Aid reviews the request, determines whether the assistance is OFA, and emails their determination to the individual who submitted the form, as well as the Business Office. If the student's aid package needs to change, Financial Aid makes the adjustment and communicates with the student directly.

How will OFA affect a student's financial aid?

The amount of assistance will be incorporated into the student's financial aid package. Inclusion of the assistance does not always result in adjustments to other aid. The two most common effects are:

- the amount a student or parent can borrow is reduced (see Example 1 in the [OFA Policy](#))
- other forms of financial aid are reduced so that the student's overall assistance does not exceed their Cost of Attendance (COA) (see Example 2 in the [OFA policy](#))

Is there a minimum dollar amount for reporting?

No. Any amount provided, no matter how small, must be reported.

If a faculty member gives a student a textbook, does it count as OFA?

Yes, if the student keeps the book. No, if the book is loaned and returned.

Can the funding be set up so it doesn't affect the student's aid?

Possibly. For an optional activity, pay vendors directly instead of giving the funds to the student, or reimburse the student's expenses when he provides receipts.

Otherwise, the Financial Aid Office will work to mitigate the effect any additional financial assistance may have on the student's financial aid package whenever possible. Financial Aid will communicate with the student regarding any impacts the addition of the OFA has on their invoice.

Do summer payments need to be reported?

Yes. A student's period of enrollment includes the summers between academic years. Summer assistance counts in his aid package for the following academic year, split evenly between fall and spring.

Example Scenarios**Scenario 1: Summer Enrichment Program**

A department wants to support a student's participation in an optional summer enrichment experience. The experience is not required as part of the student's course or degree program.

- Funds provided for this trip are OFA if:
 - paid directly to the student
- Funds provided are not OFA if:
 - Wabash pays a vendor directly (airfare, housing, program fees)
 - reimbursed to the student by Wabash for actual expenses incurred; receipts must be provided

Scenario 1 - Submit the form only if the student will receive money (other than a receipted reimbursements).

Scenario 2: On-Campus Employment

A department hires a student to perform work.

- Wages earned as a Wabash employee are OFA if:
 - it is Federal Work Study
- Wages earned as a Wabash employee are not OFA if:
 - it is WISE or summer employment and financial need is not taken into consideration

Scenario 2 - No form is submitted in either instance; Financial Aid already knows about FWS students.

Scenario 3: On-Campus Summer Employment with housing

A department hires a student to perform summer work for which the student will need summer housing.

- Funds for housing are OFA if:
 - the department gives money directly to the student to pay for housing
- Funds for housing are not OFA if:
 - the department pays for the housing (no funds are given to the student)

Scenario 3 - Submit the form only if the student will receive money directly.

Scenario 4: Faculty-Sponsored Conference Travel

A faculty member wants to send a student to a conference. The conference is not required as part of the student's course or degree program.

- Funds paid for conference expenses are OFA if:
 - paid directly to the student, such as cash advances and per diems
- Funds paid for conference expenses are not OFA if:
 - Wabash pays a vendor directly (airfare, lodging, registration fees, etc.)
 - reimbursed to the student by Wabash for actual expenses incurred; receipts must be provided

Scenario 4 - Submit the form only for per diems, cash advances, or other money paid to the student (other than receipted reimbursements).

Scenario 5: Internship Housing Stipend

A student receives a housing stipend for an internship or summer experience. The experience is not required as part of the student's course or degree program.

- Funds for housing are OFA if:
 - the department gives money to the student to pay for housing
- Funds for housing are not OFA if:
 - the department pays the landlord or housing provider directly (no funds are given to the student)

Scenario 5 - Submit the form only if the student will receive money directly.

Scenario 6: Student Organization Travel

Members of a student organization travel to an event using organizational funds.

Scenario 6 - Student organizations are outside the scope of this policy.

Scenario 7: Gift Cards & Incentives

An academic department gives \$10 gift cards to students who attend an event.

- Gift cards are OFA if:
 - recipients are tracked by student name (e.g., recipients are publicly announced)
- Gift cards are not OFA if:
 - there is no record of who received them (i.e., given indiscriminately)
 - gift cards are given to students for taking part in a research study, even when recipients are tracked.

Scenario 7 - Submit the form only if you keep a list of recipients. No form is needed if the cards are payments for taking part in a research study, or if recipients are not tracked.

Scenario 8: Wabash Programs

The same rules apply to Wabash-specific programs. This is not necessarily an exhaustive list.

- **Stephenson Institute:** A stipend for a student to work at the American Enterprise Institute, plus an additional amount awarded for housing, is all OFA. The student is not a Wabash employee, so the stipend is not a wage, and the housing money goes directly to him.
- **Global Health Initiative (GHI):** A stipend for an internship at a county health department is OFA because the student is not a Wabash employee.
- **Grant-funded internships:** Monetary support from a Wabash grant for a summer internship at a private business is OFA for the same reason.
- **Department-funded research abroad:** Monetary support to the student plus an additional amount awarded for housing and travel, both paid to the student, is all OFA. If Wabash buys the plane ticket and pays for the housing directly, only the amount paid to support the student is OFA, because the trip isn't required by the student's program.
- **Summer research job in a Wabash department:** A student is hired as a Wabash employee and paid wages over the summer, with on-campus housing paid by the department. None of the funding counts as OFA because the campus employment is not except Federal Work Study and the department pays for the housing directly.
- **WLAIP:** Flights and ground transportation to campus are not OFA because Wabash pays the vendors directly and the program isn't required for his degree. The summer stipend is OFA. Instead of paying it to the student, Financial Aid applies it as a credit on his fall invoice. If that creates a credit balance, the Business Office refunds it on the first day of fall classes.
- **First Plus Scholars Book Voucher:** First Plus Scholars receive a bookstore voucher after their first semester. The voucher can only be used for textbooks and supplies. The value of the voucher is OFA because it offsets part of the books and supplies portion of the student's Cost of Attendance.

Scenario 8 - Submit the form if the student will receive funding directly. Programs that fund multiple students every year may submit one form per year with a roster of recipients.