

New law changes financial aid guidelines at UNCA

By Libby Ramsey
Staff Writer

Although financial aid will still be available to UNCA students, the paperwork for applying will soon increase.

A new law that President Reagan signed into effect recently authorizes Congress to appropriate more money for financial aid programs. The government will decide each year how much to allocate for aid.

The law is a result of The Higher Education Reauthorization Bill of 1986 and has also redefined "independent student."

Elaine Fox, assistant director of financial aid, said that applying for financial aid is "a lengthy process" that will now require more documentation and more justification of the

information on student applications.

Fox said that because of the review procedures established by Financial Aid Director Carolyn McElrath, "Misrepresentation of information" in student files has not been a problem at UNCA.

The financial aid office won't know if they will get more personnel until the HEA goes into effect. The guaranteed student loan program goes into effect in January, 1987, and the Pell and campus-based aid becomes effective in July, 1987.

A change the HEA made was in redefining "independent student." Guidelines now require that an independent student be 24 years old by December 31 of the award year, or meet one of nine other requirements.

New guidelines include that a stu-

dent be an orphan or ward of the court, or be a veteran of the U.S. Army. (Previously, if a veteran lived with parents he was classified as a dependent student).

Income documentation for low income students who claim self-sufficiency will be strict, Fox said. Guidelines will require an annual total income of \$4,000 for the two calendar years preceding the award year, Fox said. Students with verification of unusual circumstances will be considered for aid.

The law also says that the maximum award for Pell grants will increase to \$2,300 in academic year 1987-88 and will increase annually at the rate of \$200 until 1991-92.

The maximum increase for Supplemental Educational Opportunity

Grants (SEOG) will be from \$2,000 to \$4,000.

U.S. Secretary of Education William Bennett has said "he wanted to use the process of passing a new HEA as an opportunity for a philosophical debate about what role the federal government should play in colleges, what responsibilities parents have for paying for their children's education, what efforts colleges should make to insure that aid recipients are making academic progress and are of good character, and other issues."

Fox said the new HEA "has expanded and better defined financial aid requirements."

"Both the university and the student will have to carry more of the burden of proof," she said.

New forms slow processing of financial aid forms

From College Press Service reports

Students will get financial aid forms late this year, but won't have to wait longer to get their aid money, the College Board said last week.

The Board, whose College Scholarship Service processes many student aid applications for the government, said it's been slowed down because it had to change application forms to comply with the new Higher Education Act of 1986.

"We are concerned that students and their parents may interpret the delay in delivery of financial aid forms as a sign that there is no assistance available," Board President George Hanford said at a news conference last week.

"To the contrary," he added,

"there will be an estimated \$20 billion available in various types of federal, state and institutional financial aid for students enrolling in college in the fall of 1987."

"Independent" students can qualify for more aid than students whose parents pay part of their college costs.

Under the new act, students who turn 24-years-old by Jan. 1, 1988, will be considered "independent" for the 1987-88 academic year.

Undergraduate students under age 24 will be considered independent if they were not claimed as dependents by their parents in 1985 and 1986, and if they made more than \$4,000 in salaries and benefits each of those two years.

Hanford now thinks schools should

have the forms by late December or early in January instead of mid-November as in past years. The College Scholarship Service, however, suggests that students complete their applications as soon as possible after Jan. 1.

Earlier this year, another federal snarl made thousands of students across the country late in getting aid checks.

Complex new verification requirements for aid applicants buried many

college aid officers under piles of paperwork, delaying the processing of thousands of loans.

In 1983, application forms for the fall school term arrived two months late when Department of Education officials disagreed on the questions and format of the form.

"At some schools it will be a problem if students don't have the forms before Christmas break," said Julie Hoyle, financial aid director at National University in San Diego.

Weekend Weather

Thursday:	Cloudy and cool with rain possible. High in the mid-40s.
Friday:	Continued cloudy with possible rain. Low near 40 and a high near 45.
Saturday:	Clearing and cool. Low near 30 and a high in the mid-40s.
Sunday:	Fair and continued cool. Lows in the mid-20s and a high in the upper 40s.

The UNCA Atmospheric Science department provides this information to the campus community weekly in the Blue Banner.

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