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February 1, 2016

Senator Eric L. Brakey, Chair  
Representative Drew Gattine, Chair  
Members, Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services  
#100 State House Station  
Augusta, ME 04333-0100

**Re: Chapter 577 Public Law-An Act to Improve Degree and  
Career Attainment for Former Foster Children**

Dear Senator Brakey, Representative Gattine, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services:

Attached please find the report from the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) mandated by the of the passage of L.D. 1683 An Act to Improve Degree and Career Attainment for Former Foster Children, to report on the implementation of the transition grant program.

Over the past year, DHHS has completed the rulemaking process and worked to establish the Alumni Transition Grant Program Advisory Council. The attached report summarizes matters regarding the program as of December, 2015.

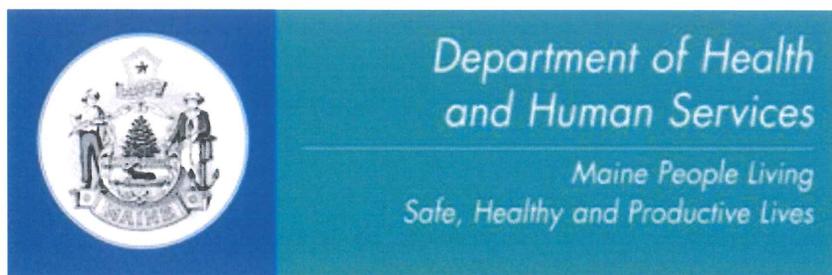
If you have questions please contact Nick Adolphsen, Director, Government Relations and Policy at [nick.adolphsen@maine.gov](mailto:nick.adolphsen@maine.gov) or (207) 287-5270.

Sincerely,

Mary C. Mayhew  
Commissioner

MCM/klv

Attachment



# **The Alumni Transition Grant Program (ATGP)**

## **2015 Annual Report**

**Prepared by:  
Alumni Transition Grant Program Advisory Committee  
and Respectfully Submitted by:  
Maine Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Child and Family Services**

**Contents**

Executive Summary.....3

Summary of ATGP Implementation Activities.....4

Appendix A: An Act to Improve Degree and Career Attainment for  
Former Foster Children .....6

Appendix B: ATGP Advisory Committee Members.....8

Appendix C: ATGP Advisory Committee Bylaws.....9

Appendix D: ATGP Advisory Committee Minutes.....11

Appendix E: ATGP Budget Form.....16

## Executive Summary

The Alumni Transition Grant Program (ATGP) is governed by Maine law as set forth in 22 M.R.S. § 4010-C, and in Rules through 10-144 C.M.R. Ch. 577.

The ATGP is administered by DHHS, Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS) and provides financial assistance and Navigator support to eligible students for the purpose of helping young people, who aged out of Maine's foster care system, complete their postsecondary degree.

ATGP grants are awarded on a first come, first served basis within allocated resources and will provide support to no more than 40 eligible individuals at any one time. Eligible individuals may apply to the ATGP after their 20<sup>th</sup> birthday and up until their 27<sup>th</sup> birthday using the ATGP application available through DHHS, OCFS.

An eligible individual must have aged out of Maine's foster care system at age 18; *and* exited Maine's Voluntary Extended Care and Support (V9) Agreement at age 21; *and* was enrolled in a postsecondary education program making satisfactory progress when his or her V9 ended at age 21; *and* not yet attained his or her 27<sup>th</sup> birthday.

The level of financial support provided to each ATGP recipient will be equivalent to the current Voluntary Extended Care and Support (V9) Agreement pursuant to section 4037-A and in accordance with DHHS Office of Child and Family Services policy (V.T. Youth Transition Policy).

The ATGP will provide financial support to eligible students for postsecondary support up to the completion of an undergraduate degree not to exceed: six (6) years for the completion of a four-year undergraduate bachelor's degree; four (4) years for the completion of a two-year undergraduate associate's degree; and four (4) years for the completion of a postsecondary training program designed to prepare students for gainful employment in a recognized occupation.

OCFS designated OCFS Youth Transition Specialists located in district offices across the state to serve as ATGP Navigators. Through this Navigator support, ATGP recipients receive postsecondary education support during the grant period.

ATGP awards were made to eligible students beginning January 1, 2015 (for the spring 2015 academic semester).

ATGP Rules became effective August 12, 2015.

## **Summary of ATGP Implementation Activities**

### ATGP Activities:

The ATGP Program continued to be promoted to young people through the Youth Leadership Advisory Team (YLAT) website, through OCFS Youth Transition Specialists, and through presentations in the community.

### ATGP Navigators:

Utilizing existing staffing resources, OCFS is fulfilling the role of ATGP Navigators, through Youth Transition Specialists located in district offices across the state. ATGP Navigators have assisted ATGP recipients to access various campus-based and community based resources as directed by the ATGP recipient.

In addition to contacting ATGP recipients at least three times during each semester, the ATGP Navigator will coordinate support to students by collaborating with other campus-based TRIO student support services and newly established College Transition Specialists through Jobs for Maine's Graduates.

### ATGP Advisory Committee:

Members of the ATGP Advisory Committee have been appointed by the Director, Office of Child and Family Services. Many of these members were part of the ATGP Implementation Committee. The ATGP Advisory Committee is comprised of various stakeholders and is co-led by an ATGP recipient.

The ATGP Advisory Committee met in October and December 2015. The Committee intends to meet at least 4 times per year in 2016. The ATGP Committee established its Bylaws and set priorities topics for 2016.

### ATGP Data:

To date, fifteen (15) unduplicated students (representing new and renewing ATGP recipients) have been supported through the Alumni Transition Grant Program. Since the ATGP program began in January 2015, all nine (9) initial ATGP recipients have remained eligible and enrolled in the ATGP Program on Jan. 1, 2015. To remain eligible, students must be in good academic standing, or if on probation, have a formal plan to remediate academic probation and still be eligible for FAFSA funding.

ATGP funds totaling approximately \$57,000 have been provided to eligible students since inception of the program in January 2015. ATGP awards have been made on average of \$3,797 per student (unduplicated).

The OCFS Youth Transition Team Leader reviews with each eligible ATGP Recipient, their student incomes and expenses within the allowable ATGP categories as established by the ATGP Development Committee. (See ATGP Budget Form, Appendix E)

Students are eligible to receive ATGP funds only during semesters in which they are enrolled in classes. ATGP Funds are provided to eligible students after all other free financial aid and wages are taken into account. ATGP funds are provided to students to cover:

- **Direct College Costs** (Tuition, fees, books, supplies, tools, equipment, tutoring campus housing, and transportation).
- **Living Expenses** (Off-campus room and board, utilities, phone, laundry, and childcare, extraordinary factors such as an emergency car repairs and medical expenses not covered by MaineCare, and a 5% allowance for unanticipated student costs).

Of the funding provided to ATGP recipients, approximately 56% has been provided to students to cover direct college costs, as outlined above. The remaining 44% has been provided to students to cover expenses associated with daily living, as outlined above.

This chart provides a breakdown of the funding provided:

<b>Semester</b>	<b>Direct College Costs</b>	<b>Living Expenses</b>	<b>Total Funding</b>
Spring 2016	\$14,743	\$11,584	\$26,327
Summer 2016	\$4,564	\$3,586	\$8,150
Fall 2016	\$12,589	\$9,891	\$22,480

Of the ATGP recipients, just over half (eight students) also worked part-time while attending their postsecondary college and training programs.

ATGP recipients have been meeting with their ATGP Navigators (who are the OCFS Youth Transition Specialists) during each semester. ATGP Navigators provide support to students based on needs that the student identifies. This support includes assisting ATGP recipients to access both campus-based resources, such as Student Assistance Programs, TRIO programs, and tutoring, and community-based resources, such as counseling services, when needed.

Of the total number of ATGP recipients to date, three (3) have graduated with a Bachelor's Degree.

**Appendix A:**

<http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/bills/getPDF.asp?paper=HP1206&item=5&snum=126>.

APPROVED  
APRIL 28, 2014  
BY GOVERNOR

CHAPTER 577  
PUBLIC LAW

**STATE OF MAINE**

**IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD  
TWO THOUSAND AND FOURTEEN**

**H.P. 1206 - L.D. 1683**

**An Act To Improve Degree and Career Attainment for Former Foster Children**

**Be it enacted by the People of the State of Maine as follows:**

**Sec. 1. 22 MRSA §4010-C is enacted to read:**

**§4010-C. Transition grant program**

The Department of Health and Human Services shall establish a transition grant program to provide financial support to eligible individuals to pay for postsecondary education.

- 1. Age; enrollment in postsecondary education institution.** In order to be eligible to participate in the program, an individual must be at least 21 years of age but less than 27 years of age, must have exited the voluntary extended care and support agreement with the State under section 4037-A at 21 years of age and must be enrolled in a postsecondary education institution.
- 2. Level of financial support.** The transition grant is for postsecondary support up to the completion of an undergraduate degree. The level of financial support must be equivalent to the current voluntary extended foster care supports pursuant to section 4037-A. The department shall set duration limits, including a 6-year maximum for a 4-year degree, a 4-year maximum for a 2-year degree and other duration limits for other types of postsecondary education.
- 3. Postsecondary education navigator services.** The program must include postsecondary education navigator services that provide transitional services and college support. The department shall determine the specifics of those services.
- 4. Advisory committee.** The department shall establish an advisory committee to provide oversight of the implementation of the transition grant program. The advisory committee must include stakeholders in the postsecondary education field, the department's postsecondary education navigator under subsection 6, professionals who work with transitional foster youth, employers, representatives of the department and other interested parties. The department shall adopt rules to determine the membership, terms of office and voting procedures of the advisory committee and other specifics of the advisory committee's governance structure. The advisory committee shall provide an annual report to the department and the joint standing committee of the Legislature having jurisdiction over health and human services matters.

**5. Limit on number of individuals receiving transition grants.** No more than 40 individuals at any one time may receive transition grants under this section.

**6. Postsecondary education navigator.** The department shall develop the roles and responsibilities for the postsecondary education navigator to provide transitional services and college student support for individuals pursuant to this section. The postsecondary education navigator shall provide data to the advisory committee. The department shall adopt rules to implement this section. Rules adopted pursuant to this section are routine technical rules as defined in Title 5, chapter 375, subchapter 2-A.

**Sec. 2. Appropriations and Allocations.** The following appropriations and allocations are made.

**HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, DEPARTMENT OF (FORMERLY DHS)**

**State-funded Foster Care/Adoption Assistance 0139**

Initiative: Appropriates funds for a transitional grant program for individuals exiting the state foster care system at 21 years of age and actively pursuing postsecondary education. This appropriation is to provide the initial 20 grants beginning January 1, 2015.

**State-funded Foster Care/Adoption Assistance 0139**

Initiative: Deappropriates funds on a one-time basis resulting from program savings.

**GENERAL FUND 2013-14 2014-15**

All Other \$0 \$50,000

GENERAL FUND TOTAL \$0 \$50,000

**GENERAL FUND 2013-14 2014-15**

All Other \$0 (\$50,000)

GENERAL FUND TOTAL \$0 (\$50,000)

**HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES,**

**DEPARTMENT OF (FORMERLY DHS)**

**DEPARTMENT TOTALS 2013-14 2014-15**

**GENERAL FUND \$0 \$0**

**DEPARTMENT TOTAL - ALL FUNDS \$0 \$0**

## Appendix B:

### Alumni Transition Grant Program (ATGP) Advisory Committee Members:

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**Dulcey Laberge**, DHHS OCFS Youth Transition Team Leader, Program Administrator,  
*Co-Chair*

**Jessica Henderson**, Representative: Alumni Transition Grant Program Participants,  
*Co-Chair*

**Carleigh Boston**, Representative: Alumni Transition Grant Program Participants

**Amie Howard**, Representative: DHHS OCFS District Staff

**Christina Hunninghaus**, Representative: ATGP Navigators

**Laurie Davis**, University of Southern Maine, Representative: Postsecondary Educational  
Institutions

**Michael Hinckley-Gordon**, Good Will-Hinckley, Representative: Community-based  
Organizations Focused on Postsecondary Education for Youth in Transition

**Ben Gilman**, Maine State Chamber of Commerce, Representative: Community-based  
Employers

**Denise Smith**, Eastern Maine Development Corporation, Representative, Public  
Organization Focused on Employment for Youth in Transition

**Ahmen Cabral**, University of Southern Maine, Muskie School, Representative: Maine  
Youth Leadership Advisory Team

**Jessica Whittier**, Finance Authority of Maine, Representative: Community-based  
Organizations Focused on Youth in Transition

**Debbie Bechard**, Jobs for Maine's Graduates, Representative: Community-based  
Organizations Focused on Postsecondary Education for Youth in Transition

## **Appendix C:**

### **Alumni Transition Grant Program (ATGP) Advisory Committee Bylaws**

#### **1. Purpose:**

The Department of Health and Human Services established a transition grant program to provide financial support to eligible individuals to support their postsecondary education. 22 M.R.S. § 4010-C

The Purpose of the ATGP Advisory Committee, as authorized by 10-148, Chapter 577, is to ensure the ATGP program is meeting the needs of ATGP recipients as intended by Rule.

#### **2. Membership and Structure:**

The ATGP Advisory Committee will be comprised of a maximum of fifteen (15) members, as appointed by the DHHS, OCFS Director, who are representative of:

1. DHHS OCFS Youth Transition Specialist
2. DHHS OCFS district staff
3. The ATGP Navigator
4. Postsecondary educational institutions
5. Community-based organizations focused on postsecondary education for youth in transition
6. Community-based employers
7. Community-based or public organizations focused on employment for youth in transition
8. Alumni Transition Grant Program participants (at least two [2])
9. Youth Leadership Advisory Team contracted provider
10. Community-based organizations focused on youth in transition

#### **3. Governance Structure**

##### **A. Responsibilities and Duties:**

- a. Develops and follows Committee bylaws;
- b. Approves forms and procedures;
- c. Develops promotional materials;
- d. Identifies and reviews relevant aggregated data and to ensure that the program is working—as intended;
- e. Reviews ATGP rules and relevant policies at least annually or sooner if determined necessary;
- f. Advises OCFS Director regarding identified barriers, unmet needs, and suggested improvements to the ATGP within the context of these rules;

- g. Reviews bylaws on an annual basis; and
  - h. Provides an annual report each January to Maine's Legislative Joint Standing committee on Health and Human Services and the OCFS Director regarding utilization of this program, overall outcomes, and other needs of youth in transition that cannot be met by this program.
- B. Committee Meetings/Co-Chairs: The OCFS Youth Transition Specialist will call the first meeting of the Advisory Committee. At the first meeting, the committee shall select, by majority vote, co-chairs (including one ATGP participant) from among its members to serve a term of one year. Co-chairs may be re-elected to subsequent one-year terms. Co-chairs shall call subsequent meetings and will identify a note-taker from the attendees who is responsible for recording the minutes of the meeting. The Advisory Committee must meet at least four (4) times per year.
- C. Notice of Meetings/Agendas: The chair shall send a notice of meeting to each advisory committee member at least three (3) weeks in advance. A notice of meetings must contain the date, time, place, and agenda of the meeting and the minutes of the previous meeting. Special meetings must have at least ten (10) days' notification prior to meetings:
- a. Attendance at Meetings: Each advisory committee member is expected to attend all meetings, either in person or remotely.
  - b. Within three (3) months of resignation or removal of a committee member, the committee will make a recommendation to the OCFS Director regarding a new membership appointment.
- D. Committee Decision Making: The Advisory Committee will make all decisions based on consensus. When consensus cannot be reached, the Committee will make decisions based on majority rule. A quorum is required. A quorum is defined as 50 percent plus one, of the current membership. The Advisory Committee will also follow *Robert's Rules of Order*, 11<sup>th</sup> Edition, or any subsequent edition.

Bylaws adopted by the ATGP Committee on December 18, 2015

## **Appendix D:**

### **ATGP Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes (Oct. and Dec. 2015)**

#### **Alumni Transition Grant Program ATGP Advisory Committee *Meeting Minutes--October 26, 2015***

##### **Members Present:**

Jessica Whittier, FAME  
Chris Hunninghaus, OCFS  
Amie Howard, OCFS  
Carleigh Boston, ATGP Participant  
Jessica Henderson, ATGP Participant  
Michael Hinckley-Gordon, Good Will-Hinckley  
Laurie Davis, USM  
Ahmen Cabral, USM, Muskie  
Dulcey Laberge, OCFS  
Debbie Bechard, JMG

##### **Absent:**

Ben Gilman, Maine State Chamber of Commerce

##### **Election of Co-Chairs:**

Unanimously elected as the two ATGP Advisory Committee Co-Chairs:

- ✓ Jessica Henderson, ATGP Participant
- ✓ Dulcey Laberge, OCFS, Youth Transition Team Leader

##### **Review of ATGP Rules and Committee Role:**

Thanks given to several of the committee members who helped draft the Rules.

There was discussion about the fact that this program is different than the V9 Agreement (Voluntary Extended Care).

- The Navigator role was intentionally designed to be different than the OCFS Caseworker or a case manager, and the level of contact and support should be based on the youth's needs.
- As part of the Committee's Role, we should ensure youth are fully aware of the program and requirements. It was suggested that new promotional materials be developed.

##### **Development of ATGP Advisory Committee Bylaws:**

We reviewed examples of Bylaws from other similar types of committees and discussed the important features/considerations needed.

It was felt that the Bylaws are a natural extension of the Rules and could be developed directly from the ATGP Rules.

Dulcey will write and send out a draft of the ATGP Bylaws that the Advisory Committee can review and edit as needed at our next meeting.

### **Development of Agenda for Next Meeting(s):**

1. Adopt ATGP Committee Bylaws
2. ATGP Legislative Report
3. Develop Promotional Materials
  - Build in information from the Participant Agreement
  - Be clear about student accountability to meet with the Navigator
4. Establish ATGP Processes
  - Review ATGP Forms
  - Process for Dulcey (ATGP Manager) to introduce students to their ATGP Navigator
  - Develop standard practices for ATGP Navigators
    - Important for Navigators to know about Trio and all other support programs that would be made available to students
  - Should we consider an annual “Meet and Greet” and “orientation/training” for all ATGP Recipients (August?). For example, letting students know what they can request for financial help during the semester.
5. Develop ATGP Participant Exit Survey
6. Define Data to be Collected and Reviewed
  - We began discussing what data would be relevant and useful to this group, and also what would allow us to compare outcomes to other available support programs, such as the Maine Youth Transition Network, JMG Navigators, etc
  - There was discussion and agreement that any data provided to the ATGP Advisory Committee and Reports would be aggregated data only—no individual participant-level data—and that due to the small numbers of participants, we would be sensitive to confidentiality of students
  - We also want to look at what needs are not being met through this program. An example is Food Stamps regulations that college students are now ineligible

**Alumni Transition Grant Program  
ATGP Advisory Committee Meeting  
35 Anthony Ave., Augusta, Room A  
December 18, 2015  
*Meeting Minutes***

**Present:**

Jessica Whittier, Finance Authority of Maine (FAME)  
Amie Howard, Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS)  
Jessica Henderson, ATGP Participant  
Laurie Davis, University of Southern Maine (USM, TRIO)  
Ahmen Cabral, University of Southern Maine (USM, Muskie School)  
Dulcey Laberge, Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS)  
Debbie Bechard, Jobs for Maine's Graduates (JMG)  
Ben Gilman, Maine State Chamber of Commerce  
Denise Smith, Eastern Maine Development Corporation (EMDC)

**Regrets:**

Carleigh Boston, ATGP Participant  
Michael Hinckley-Gordon, Good Will-Hinckley, College Step UP Program  
Chris Hunninghaus, Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS)

**Summary:**

We discussed the fact that several members joined by phone today, and since we had technical difficulties, it would be helpful for members to join in person if at all possible, especially since we likely will meet only 4 times per year. We agreed that for decision-making, votes made during the meeting from a remote location would count.

Dulcey will send out an email to schedule next year's meetings in advance. We will plan to meet in March, June, September, and December.

**Review of Previous Minutes**

A change was made to the previous minutes to reflect that Debbie Bechard, JMG was present. The October 2015 Minutes was accepted.

**ATGP Advisory Committee Bylaws**

These were reviewed and accepted by the Committee.

**Review Draft ATGP Report**

The draft 2015 report due to be submitted to the Legislative Health and Human Services Committee in January 2016 was reviewed.

A correction will be made to the report to include Debbie Bechard. It was suggested to add to the report the total ATGP spending to date.

We discussed the process for submitting the ATGP Committee report to the Legislative Committee:

- Dulcey will make the suggested changes to the report.
- The report will then be forwarded to OCFS Management for review
- The report will then be forwarded to the DHHS Commissioner's Office for review
- The report will be submitted to the Legislature by DHHS.

**Develop agenda for next meeting:**

The Committee believes it is important to review all the materials that were developed by the ATGP Rules Committee and look to provide additional protocols and information to ATGP recipients. The Committee also wants to determine what data will support the work of the Committee.

**Agenda—March 2016 Meeting:**

1. Develop Promotional Materials
  - Dulcey and Ahmen will draft a flyer and sent out before the March meeting.
2. Develop ATGP Participant Exit Survey
3. Establish ATGP Processes
  - Develop list of Resources
    - Plan “Meet and Greet” and “orientation/training” for all ATGP Recipients (July-August?). For example, letting students know what they can request for financial help during the semester.
    - Develop standard practices for ATGP Navigators
      - Important for Navigators to know about Trio and all other support programs that would be made available to students (Laurie Davis will work on this list with other Trio staff)
      - Process for Dulcey (ATGP Manager) to introduce students to their ATGP Navigator

**Proposed Agenda—June 2016 Meeting:**

1. Review ATGP Forms
  - Budget Forms
2. Define Data to be Collected and Reviewed

- Aggregated data that would be relevant and useful to this group:
  - Allow us to compare outcomes to other available support programs, such as the Maine Youth Transition Network, JMG Navigators, etc.
  - Other supports that are being accessed.
  - Needs that are not being met through this program.

**Appendix E:**

**Alumni Transition Grant Program (ATGP)  
ATGP Budget Form**

*To be completed each semester to determine level of ATGP financial support  
DHHS will provide to eligible ATGP recipients. Awards are determined based on  
current semester (fall, spring, summer).*

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Semester: \_\_\_\_\_ # of months in Semester: \_\_\_\_\_

Date Completed: \_\_\_\_\_

**A. Income for the Semester:**

Total Financial Aid (not including loans):

FAFSA Award \$

Scholarships \$

ETV \$

Other (explain): \$

**Total Financial Aid \$** \_\_\_\_\_

Funds provided by a 3<sup>rd</sup> party (i.e. relatives):

Monthly \$

One Time \$

**Total Private Aid for Education \$** \_\_\_\_\_

Monthly Individual Income:

Employment Wages \$

Food Stamps \$

Social Security Payment \$

TANF \$

Other Monthly Income (explain): \$

Total Monthly Income \$

**Total Semester Income \$** \_\_\_\_\_

**B. School Expenses for the Semester:**

Tuition \$

Fees \$

Health Insurance \$

Food Plan \$

Campus Housing \$

Parking \$

Books \$

School Supplies \$  
Required Tools/Equipment \$  
Transportation (to and from school) \$  
Laptop/maintenance \$  
Tutoring \$  
Other school related expenses (explain): \$  
**Total School Related Expenses \$ \_\_\_\_\_**

**C. Monthly Living Expenses:**

Rent/Mortgage (Individual cost only) \$  
Utilities (Individual cost only):  
Electricity \$  
Heat \$  
Cell Phone or Home Phone \$  
Internet \$  
Food Cost \$  
Laundry \$  
Childcare \$  
Other monthly expenses (explain below): \$  
**Total Monthly Living Expenses \$ \_\_\_\_\_**  
**Total Living Expenses per Semester \$ \_\_\_\_\_**

**D. Additional Expenses for the Semester:**

Extraordinary Factors (explain): \$  
Modifications or Repairs (explain): \$  
Special Equipment needs (explain): \$  
Medical expenses not covered by MaineCare \$  
Driver Education Costs \$  
Other (explain): \$  
**Total Additional Expenses \$ \_\_\_\_\_**  
**Total Expenses \$ \_\_\_\_\_**

**Level of ATGP Financial Need for Semester: \$ \_\_\_\_\_**

Financial Aid-Expenses: A-(B+C+D)

**Additional 5% added for unanticipated costs: \$ \_\_\_\_\_**

**Total ATGP Award: \$ \_\_\_\_\_**