



NOTICE REGARDING FINANCIAL AID FRAUD

Southern State Community College (SSCC) follows established guidelines for the prevention, identification of, and response to indications of identity theft and financial aid fraud. This notice provides a summary of student rights, responsibilities, and preventative measures regarding financial aid fraud.

What are Identity Theft and Financial Aid Fraud?

1) The first is when unscrupulous individuals use personally identifying information of other people (identity theft) to apply for admission to college and to receive financial aid, and then enroll in classes. Often, the victimized “student” is not aware that they have been enrolled in classes, and the financial aid refunds in their name are sent to the individual who is perpetrating the fraud. This frequently results in the victimized student being left with unpaid debt at the institution and with the U.S. Department of Education due to student loans that were obtained in their name. These students must then go through the difficult and often expensive process of establishing that those debts are not legitimately theirs.

2) The second is when individuals use their own personal information to apply for admission to a college, apply for financial aid, and enroll in college courses with no intention of completing those courses. The student’s tuition and fees are usually paid by financial aid funds, and the student receives refunds of financial aid funds in excess of those costs. Perspective and current students should be aware that enrolling in classes and accepting financial aid with no intent to complete classes may be considered financial aid fraud. When you complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), your signature certifies that financial aid funds will be used for educational purposes. This includes attending your registered classes, actively participating in those classes, and completing registered classes. Often these students continue to receive financial aid funds until they are no longer eligible due to their failure to meet Satisfactory Academic Progress Standards (SAP). Based on guidance issued by the Office of the Inspector General at the U.S Department of Education, SSCC has instituted procedures designed to identify those students who may be committing financial aid fraud, as well as those at risk of being a victim of this crime.

What Happens When Identity Theft or Financial Aid Fraud is Suspected on My Account?

When a SSCC student is identified as being a potential victim or perpetrator of financial aid fraud, their account at the college is placed on a restriction. This restriction prevents the student from accessing their college records and prevents the disbursement of any pending financial aid funds. To have that restriction lifted, the student is required to meet in person with an official of the college. Initial documentation required during this meeting:

- A state issued photo ID
- Your Social Security Card
- Proof of High School Graduation (Official High School Diploma or GED)

The student may be asked questions particular to their status to positively determine their identity and intent as a student at SSCC. As a result of the meeting, the student may be asked to submit additional documentation to confirm their status as a student. This documentation may include, but not be limited to:

- Official transcripts from any other institution of higher education the student previously attended
- Proof of residency at address listed on the student's college records
- Utility bill or other documentation to confirm your status

Please note that SSCC reserves the right to leave the restriction in place until requested documentation has been submitted or otherwise confirmed the student's status. In recent years, Financial Aid Fraud has increased dramatically. This crime has the potential to cause extensive economic loss for students, the institutions, and the taxpaying public. In cases where SSCC finds that there is significant reason to be concerned that financial aid fraud is occurring, the institution has an obligation to refer that information to the Office of The Inspector General of the United States Department of Education. In these instances, the college will leave the restriction in place until instructed by the Department of Education that it is appropriate to lift the restriction. Students who are victims of identity theft and/or financial aid fraud are urged to file a police report and seek assistance from appropriate authorities outside of the college. This may include contacting credit bureaus and your banking institution. For more information, please copy/paste this link in your browser to learn more about how to protect yourself from identity theft.