

Lavelle Fund for the Blind, Inc.

Stipend Program for Blind Students Attending Selected Colleges and Universities in the New York City Area

SECTION 1: The program's purpose. The program aims to help make quality undergraduate and graduate education affordable for financially needy Tri-State area students who are legally blind and capable of university-level study. Toward this end, the Lavelle Fund for the Blind (the Fund) is awarding grants to selected colleges in the NYC area, in support of general educational purpose stipends.

At present, the participating colleges are: Dominican College, Fordham University, St. John's University, St. Thomas Aquinas College, and Seton Hall University. Interested students should apply directly to the colleges.

SECTION 2: At each participating college, stipends for general educational purposes will be awarded to a maximum total of five (5) students or for the equivalent of 22-student years of stipend support – whichever is higher. Both entering freshman and transfer students and incumbent (presently enrolled) students at any undergraduate grade level are eligible to participate. Stipends will vary depending on college costs and student need – but will not normally exceed a maximum of \$15,000 per year, for up to four (4) years.

Colleges must annually certify participating graduate students as “students achieving satisfactory full-time-equivalent progress toward a graduate degree.” In the case of undergraduates, students needing more than four years to complete their undergraduate program must seek approval from their college to receive continued Fund support.

SECTION 3: Fund stipends will be awarded on a “last dollar of need” basis. Before being considered for any Fund stipend support, students must first complete their own college's standard financial aid application process. Other resources available to needy students may include: (a) federal Pell Grants, (b) the college's own student aid funds, and (c) in the case of NYS residents, NYS Tuition Assistance Program awards (up to \$5,000/year) and NYS Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped sponsorships for legally blind students who meet the requirements of the Commission's college policy (up to about \$6,000 per year for tuition -- plus additional support for room and board).

Participating colleges will determine the appropriate annual Fund stipend amount for each participating student based on the following calculation:

TOTAL COLLEGE COST (tuition, fees, room and board, and books)

MINUS two things:

(1) NON-LAVELLE FINANCIAL AID from all government, college, and other sources; **AND** (2) the FAMILY'S APPROPRIATE CONTRIBUTION – that is, the share of college costs that the college determines the student's family can pay.

However, the family will not normally be expected to borrow any money to cover college costs, and the college need not be rigidly bound by federal student aid guidelines in determining the family's ability to pay.

SECTION 4: Student recruitment. Each college will be responsible for recruiting new students and identifying incumbent (currently enrolled) students. Students may be admitted to the program until June 30, 2010.

Please see the appendix to this program summary for contacts helpful in identifying and recruiting eligible students. In addition to speaking with these contacts, colleges are asked to place notices regarding the Fund stipend program in appropriate college publications, including college catalogues.

SECTION 5: CRITERIA FOR SELECTING stipend winners. Students must normally meet three such criteria: (1) being a resident of New York, New Jersey, or Connecticut, with preference being given to New York City residents; (2) being certified as legally blind by their home state commission for the blind; and (3) meeting each college's own general criteria for need-based financial aid. Naturally, all students must have also met each college's general standards for admission.

Under certain circumstances, participating colleges may waive the requirement that visually impaired students be certified as "legally blind." To obtain such a waiver and be eligible for a Lavelle Fund stipend, students must:

- Present to their college a letter from a board-certified ophthalmologist stating that their visual impairment would seriously limit their ability to keep up with college-level academic work unless the students had access to special supports. Examples of such supports include: adaptive technology, books in alternate formats, and/or help from volunteer readers.
- Fulfill all the other eligibility requirements named above – that is, the ones unrelated to degree of vision loss.

SECTION 6: The actual SELECTION PROCESS. Each participating college will be responsible for: (1) working with the appropriate state commission for the blind to identify all incumbent and newly accepted undergraduates who are legally blind; (2) determining which of these legally blind students qualify as needing some amount of Fund financial support; and (3) determining how much Fund support each student needs annually, for up to four years. Should the potential cumulative total of qualified students ever exceed five, the University will rank-order the students, based mainly on degree of financial need, to determine which students will actually receive Fund stipend support.

SECTION 7: Paying and monitoring the use of stipend dollars. Each semester, the Fund will pay the agreed-on stipend dollars directly to each participating college. The college will then be responsible for ensuring that these funds are used exclusively for the agreed student support purposes.

The Fund will continue to provide the agreed-upon level of annual stipend support for as long as the students remain full-time undergraduates in good standing. Stipend amounts will be adjusted for students who switch to part-time status and for students who are no longer enrolled in good standing (e.g., students who have been suspended).

SECTION 8: Providing ongoing, personalized support to participating students. Participating colleges will ask appropriate college staff (perhaps from the colleges' offices for students with disabilities) to: (1) maintain regular contact with the participating students, (2) identify promptly any special problems they are encountering, and (3) offer the students troubleshooting support as needed. In this connection, the colleges may also want to refer students to the students' home-state commissions for the blind to access an array of free vision rehabilitation services.

SECTION 9: Reporting to the Fund. Participating colleges will be required to report annually to the Fund on: (1) the expenditure of Fund stipend dollars; (2) participating students' college progress (grades, retention, and graduation); (3) the ongoing personal attention and support that the colleges are providing the students; and (4) any problems in the Fund stipend program that the college(s) and/or the Fund need to address.

SECTION 10: Recognizing participating students. Both to recognize participating students and to encourage social interaction, the Fund may hold an annual recognition event for all participating students.

Appendix:

Notes on Recruiting and other Program Contacts

A. RECRUITING RESOURCES

Student recruiting in collaboration with the three Tri-State state commissions for the blind. To help identify both incumbent and newly accepted students who live in New York State and are legally blind, participating colleges should touch base with Ms. Robin Gilman-Capon, the downstate regional coordinator for the New York State Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped (CBVH). CBVH maintains a list of New York State residents of all ages who have been certified as legally blind by appropriate medical experts. Ms. Gilman-Capon has agreed to use these records in: (1) reviewing each participating college's own list of potential Lavelle stipend recipients and (2) identifying any other legally blind persons that CBVH believes to be attending a given college. She may also be able to provide information about what vision rehabilitation services a student has received through CBVH and indicate whether the student has fulfilled CBVH requirements for CBVH's own college sponsorship program (e.g., by demonstrating good travel skills). CBVH must receive students' permission before releasing such data.

NOTE: Please see below for contact information for: (a) Ms. Gilman-Capon and (b) officials at the New Jersey and Connecticut state commissions who have agreed to work with target colleges in similar ways.

Student recruiting in collaboration with the New York Institute for Special Education's Schermerhorn Program. In New York City, another potential recruiting resource is Ms. Donna Karlson, a vocational teacher and guidance counselor at the Schermerhorn Program. A unit of the venerable New York Institute for Special Education, Schermerhorn is a Bronx-based K-12 school for academically able students with vision impairments. Approximately 4-12 students graduate annually from its high school program, with many going on to study at NYC area colleges. Ms. Karlson says she'd be happy to encourage graduating seniors to consider attending the colleges participating in the Lavelle Fund stipend program. Her contact information, too, appears below.

B. CONTACT DATA

The principal contacts for the program are as follows

For the Lavelle Fund for the Blind:

Mr. Andrew Fisher
Executive Director
Lavelle Fund for the Blind, Inc.
307 West 38th Street, Suite 2010
New York, NY 10018
Phone: (212) 668-9801
Email: afisher@lavellefund.org

For the participating colleges:

For Dominican College:

Mr. Brian Fernandes
Vice President for Enrollment Management
Dominican College
470 Western Highway
Orangeburg, NY 10962
Phone: (845) 848-7807
Email: brian.fernandes@dc.edu

Ms. Margaret Giuliano
Coordinator of Special Services
Dominican College
470 Western Highway
Orangeburg, NY 10962
Phone: (845) 848-4035
Email: margaret.giulliano@dc.edu

For Fordham University:

Mr. John W. Buckley
Assistant Vice President for Undergraduate Enrollment
Office of Undergraduate Admission -- Duane Library
Fordham University
441 East Fordham Road
Bronx, NY 10458-5191
Phone: (718) 817-3707
Email: jbuckley@fordham.edu

Ms. Caitlin Murphy
Director of Disability Services
Fordham University
441 East Fordham Road
Bronx, NY 10458-5191
Phone: (718) 817-4362
Email: acamurphy@fordham.edu

For St. John's University:

Ms. Jackie Lockrie
Associate Dean for Student Services
St. John's University
8000 Utopia Parkway
Jamaica, NY 11439
Phone: (718) 990-6568
Email: lockriej@stjohns.edu

Ms. Mary Verrone
Student Financial Services
St. John's University
Newman B-28
8000 Utopia Parkway
Jamaica, NY 11439
Phone: (718) 990-5322
Email: verronem@stjohns.edu

For St. Thomas Aquinas College:

Mr. Vin Crapanzano
Dean, Marketing and Enrollment Management
St. Thomas Aquinas College
125 Route 340
Sparkhill, NY 10976-1050
Phone: (845) 398-4019
Email: vcrapanz@stac.edu

Dr. Walter J. Schneider
VP and Dean of Student Affairs
St. Thomas Aquinas College
125 Route 340
Sparkhill, NY 10976-1050
Phone: (845) 398-4066
Email: wschneid@stac.edu

For Seton Hall University:

Matthew F. Tominey, PhD
Director, Disability Support Services
Duffy Hall Room 67
Seton Hall University
400 South Orange Ave.
South Orange, NJ 07079
Phone: (973).313.6003
Email: tominema@shu.edu

Ms. Stephanie J. Hauge
Director, Corporation and Foundation Relations
University Advancement
Seton Hall University
457 Centre Street
South Orange, NJ 07079
Phone: (973) 378-9852
Email: haugeste@shu.edu

For the three state commissions for the blind in the Tri-State area:

Ms. Robin Gilman-Capon
Downstate Regional Coordinator
New York State Commission for the Blind and Visually Handicapped
20 Exchange Place, 2nd Floor
New York, NY 10005
Phone: (212) 825-5718
Email: robin.gilman-capon@ocfs.state.ny.us

Ms. Debbie Sainz
Transition-to-College Unit
New Jersey Commission for the Blind and Visually Impaired
153 Halsey Street – 5th Floor
Newark, NJ 07101
Phone: (973) 693-6489
Email: debbie.kassoss-sainz@dhs.nj.us

Mr. Michael Cordero
Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor
Board of Education and Services for the Blind
State of Connecticut
184 Windsor Avenue
Windsor, CT 06095

Phone: (860) 602-4016

Email: Michael.Cordero@ct.gov

Note: Mr. Cordero has special responsibility for school-to-college transition for Connecticut residents who are legally blind.

Other sources of expertise and resources about college support services for students who are blind

Mr. Daniel Callahan
Director, Children's Vision Health Initiative
Jewish Guild for the Blind
One North Lexington Avenue, 8th Floor
White Plains, NY 10601

Phone: (212) 769-7581 or (800) 915-0306

Email: callahand@jgb.org

Ellen Trief, EdD
Professor
Hunter College
Programs in Blind and Visually Impaired and
Severe/Multiple Disabilities
695 Park Avenue
New York, NY 10021
Phone: 212 772-4110
Email: etnj421@aol.com

For a New York Area K-12 school specializing in serving academically able students with vision impairments:

Ms. Donna Karlson
Vocational Teacher and Guidance Counselor
The Schermerhorn Program
The New York Institute for Special Education
999 Pelham Parkway
Bronx, NY 10469-4998
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