

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, St. John's, and St. Thomas Aquinas.**

(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.

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.