



## Valpo Student-Athlete Graduation Grant Program Policy

### Introduction

Following the 2021 U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Alston vs. NCAA* and approval by the Missouri Valley Conference's Board of Directors, the Valpo Athletics Department unveiled the **Valpo Student-Athlete Graduation Grant (SAGG)** program for the 2022-23 academic year.

The *Alston* verdict, coupled with a change in NCAA legislation, allows student-athletes of revenue-generating sports on athletic aid the opportunity to receive up to \$2,990 per academic semester (or \$5,980 per academic year) as financial awards related to classroom success. The Missouri Valley Board of Directors approved its members to provide these incentives to student-athletes in all sports who are receiving athletically related aid. The Missouri Valley encouraged member institutions to provide this funding for men's and women's basketball student-athletes. Valparaiso University will offer the funding to scholarship men's and women's basketball and volleyball student-athletes as these sports are the only sports with athletic aid at Valpo to generate revenue through ticket revenue.

The core mission of Valparaiso University and its athletics department is education, and earning a degree is paramount. Retention of students in the general body on campus is key to the success of the University. For student-athletes, retention includes the exhaustion of their athletic eligibility while they are a student-athlete at Valparaiso University. Therefore, Valpo scholarship student-athletes on the men's and women's basketball and volleyball teams will be eligible for a SAGG upon completion of their undergraduate degree at Valparaiso University and the exhaustion of their athletic eligibility at Valparaiso University (except as otherwise provided herein), and the funds will be dispersed upon graduation or when eligibility is exhausted, whichever occurs last.

The NCAA's eligibility extensions due to the COVID-19 pandemic ensures that special circumstances will arise over the next few years, so Valpo retains flexibility and discretion in awarding future SAGG.

### Valpo Student-Athlete Graduation Grants

- The purpose of this Policy is to reward student-athletes on athletic aid for their commitment to their Valpo sport while they are a student-athlete at Valpo and reward their academic success as evidenced by their earning an undergraduate degree, encourage potential student-athletes to enroll at Valpo and participate in Valpo athletics, and retain student-athletes at Valpo for their entire athletic eligibility. Any ambiguity in this Policy shall be interpreted in a manner that best accomplishes the purpose stated herein.
- Scholarship student-athletes in the sports of men's and women's basketball and volleyball, who earn an undergraduate degree from Valparaiso University and exhaust their athletic eligibility at Valparaiso University are eligible for a SAGG, subject to the other terms and conditions of this policy. The amount of the grant will be based upon the number of semesters an athletically eligible student-athlete is a Valparaiso University undergraduate or graduate student (capped at eight semesters of payments) and the commitment made by the athletics department in the financial aid agreement. An undergraduate student-athlete has 10 semesters to earn a full SAGG (\$23,920), which aligns with current APR calculations.
- A full scholarship student-athlete earning a Valparaiso University undergraduate degree will be eligible for a SAGG valued at \$23,920 ( $\$2,990 \times 8$  semesters = \$23,920) that will be paid upon undergraduate graduation and the exhaustion of their athletic eligibility at Valparaiso University (subject to tax and withholding, if applicable), whichever occurs last.
- A student-athlete who has an athletic aid agreement as well as other institutional aid (i.e., academic aid or tuition remission aid), in addition to athletic aid, will be eligible to receive a SAGG in the

amount of the combined aid equivalency, not to exceed 100%. A student-athlete who does not have athletic aid will not qualify for a SAGG for the semesters in which they did not have athletic aid.

- A student-athlete who transfers into and subsequently graduates from Valparaiso University with an undergraduate degree and exhausts their athletic eligibility will be eligible for a SAGG based upon the number of semesters spent as a Valpo an eligible student-athlete with the combined aid equivalency multiplied by \$2,990.
- Student-athletes who graduate with an undergraduate degree from Valpo mid-year with athletic eligibility remaining will receive a full year's SAGG provided that they complete their athletic eligibility at Valparaiso University (i.e., a women's basketball player who graduates in December 2025 at the end of her seventh semester but plays for the Beacons in spring 2026 will be paid for the eighth semester and not be penalized for graduating early).
- A student-athlete who leaves Valparaiso University **without** earning an undergraduate degree at Valpo, or already having an undergraduate degree, and exhausting their athletic eligibility (unless classified as "permanent medical" as defined by the NCAA) **WILL NOT** be eligible for a SAGG. However, special consideration may be given to a student-athlete who separates from the team prior to earning an undergraduate degree at Valpo, exhausts their eligibility as the result of going pro, and later graduates with an undergraduate degree from Valpo. See the FAQ below.
- An electronic or in-person (as requested) exit interview with the sports administrator of the designee is also required to receive a SAGG.
- The department of athletics will incrementally implement the SAGG program. During Phase 1 eligible men's and women's basketball student-athletes that compete in the 2022-2023 basketball season are eligible for a SAGG in the total amount of \$5,980 (one year/two units of funding) and payments will be dispersed no later than the census date of fall 2023. During Phase 2, men's and women's basketball student-athletes are eligible for two years (four units) of SAGG. Volleyball student-athletes who meet the SAGG requirements will be eligible to receive one year (one year/two units of funding) of the SAGG beginning in the 2023-24 season with payments dispersed no later than the census date of fall 2024. The athletic department will plan to incrementally increase the funding for eligible student-athletes as units accrue in continuous semesters after the initial academic year of implementation (2022-23 for men's and women's basketball; 2023-24 for volleyball) to a maximum total of \$23,920 (four years/eight units of funding) is offered (2025-26 for men's and women's basketball; 2026-27 for volleyball).

## **FAQ & Other Policy Terms**

### **How is a semester defined for this policy?**

For the purpose of this policy, a semester is defined as a complete fall or spring semester. One (1) unit equals one (1) semester.

### **Are Valpo walk-ons or preferred walk-ons eligible for SAGG?**

Only scholarship student-athletes are eligible for these awards. However, a walk-on placed on an athletic scholarship for any length of time would be eligible for a SAGG, based upon the number of semesters the individual was on an athletic scholarship.

### **Is a medically disqualified (permanent medical as defined by the NCAA) student-athlete eligible for a SAGG?**

A Valpo student-athlete who has been classified as permanent medical from a Valpo team and remains in good standing at Valparaiso University and with their team will be eligible for a Student-Athlete Graduation Grant once they graduate with an undergraduate degree and would have otherwise exhausted their athletic eligibility at Valparaiso University, but were unable to because of the classification.

**What if it takes a student-athlete five or more years to earn an undergraduate degree from Valparaiso University?**

A student-athlete on 100% financial aid (athletic and other aid combined, not to exceed 100% equivalency, as stated in the original agreement) at Valparaiso University for a total of at least 8 semesters and graduates in 5 years/10 semesters or less would receive a full SAGG of \$23,920, as they have 5 years/10 semesters from the start of initial eligibility to earn the full SAGG. A student-athlete may not earn additional semester payments following the 10<sup>th</sup> semester of initial college enrollment. If a student-athlete takes more than 5 years (10 semesters) to earn an undergraduate degree but otherwise qualifies for SAGG, they must submit a written request to receive the award upon graduation from Valparaiso University, which will be reviewed for approval by the Director of Athletics. Generally, the athlete must graduate within close proximity to their season of athletic eligibility at Valparaiso University but the Director of Athletics will consider the facts and circumstances of each request and reserves the right to deny the request if he/she determines approval would not be consistent with the objective of this policy.

**What if an athletically related financial aid package changes during an individual's career?**

The SAGG is guaranteed to be no less than the proportional amount of the student-athlete's financial aid agreement.

If a financial aid package increases during a student-athlete's career, the SAGG will be adjusted accordingly. If the value of the financial aid package is reduced or canceled during the period of the award for reasons outlined in the original agreement, the SAGG will also be adjusted accordingly.

**What if a student-athlete turns professional without graduating from Valparaiso University?**

A student-athlete who turns professional in their respective sport may be eligible for a SAGG when they earn their undergraduate degree from Valparaiso University because turning professional exhausts athletic eligibility. Such a student-athlete may be considered for a SAGG by submitting a written request to receive the reward that will be reviewed for approval by the Director of Athletics. If granted, the SAGG will be commensurate to the number of semesters spent on athletic scholarship at Valpo.

For example, a basketball student-athlete who initially enrolls at Valpo in the fall of 2024 and declares for the 2027 NBA Draft without graduating would be eligible for a five-semester SAGG upon completion of their Valparaiso University degree and approval by the Director of Athletics of their submitted written request.

**Does a student-athlete receive the SAGG for earning a graduate degree at Valparaiso University?**

No. Valpo Student-Athlete Graduation Grants are only awarded to student-athletes earning undergraduate degrees.

**When will the SAGG program begin?**

The SAGG program was implemented at the start of the 2022-23 academic year. However, the written policy was approved and is available publicly during the 2024 spring semester, and is applicable to the start of the 2022-23 academic year.

**How does the SAGG program impact current Valpo student-athletes?**

Valpo men's and women's basketball scholarship student-athletes who were freshmen, sophomores or juniors during the 2022-23 academic year are eligible for SAGG beginning in 2022-23. For example:

- A Valpo senior student-athlete on the men's basketball team in 2022-23 will be eligible for two units (\$5,980) of a SAGG upon graduation during the 2022-23 academic year
- A 2022-23 junior may earn up to four units (\$11,960)
- A 2022-23 sophomore may earn up to six units (\$17,940)
- A 2022-23 freshman would be eligible to earn eight units (\$23,920).

Freshmen men's and women's basketball student-athletes who enter Valpo in 2023-24 would be eligible for a maximum of eight units. The SAGG program will be implemented for women's volleyball starting in 2023-24 and the same principles will apply.

**What if a student-athlete graduates from Valparaiso University in less than eight semesters?**

A student-athlete who starts at Valparaiso University and graduates in less than eight semesters is eligible for a SAGG of up to \$23,920 (or less if an equivalency sport) provided they are a member in good standing

of their respective Valpo team in the eighth semester and exhaust their athletic eligibility at Valpo.

**When will student-athletes receive their SAGG?**

Payments will be made following the census date of the subsequent semester following undergraduate graduation or exhaustion of their athletic eligibility, whichever is later.

**Is the SAGG subject to federal or state income tax?**

Student-athletes should consult their family's tax advisor/preparer. International student-athletes will have taxes taken out of their SAGG, just as they do for their scholarships.

Approved by President's Cabinet; April 2, 2024.