

# Fee Collection: Updated Practices

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Changing a deep-rooted practice is always a challenge and typically comes with growing pains, but ultimately there are positive results. This fall, we undertook a concerted and stepped-up effort to reinforce the need for students to pay their full tuition on time. Although not without precedent, restricting Blackboard access was a difficult decision for us and did have the effect we had hoped; students paid their tuition or made arrangements to do so.

Over time, our historically lenient approach to tuition deadlines has allowed students to put off paying their tuition until the end of the term when accessing their grades was their only motivation. In some cases, many students just simply did not pay. This steadily increasing practice has led to reduced revenues and an increased debt load the college can no longer sustain. Typically, those who do not pay are subject to service restrictions such as not being able to register for subsequent terms, not obtaining their marks or transcripts, and ultimately having their credentials withheld and their overdue accounts being sent to a third party collection agency.

Unfortunately, these measures were not achieving the required outcome so this fall, the added deterrent of restricted Blackboard access was introduced to encourage earlier payments. Just over 5 percent of the total full-time student body failed to pay their tuition by the end of September, despite numerous reminders, and as a result, had their Blackboard access restricted in October. Since then, two-thirds of the original group of students who lost access to Blackboard were able to pay their tuition and have had their access reinstated. Another 20 percent arranged for payment plans and also regained access. Unfortunately, there are still roughly 17 percent (less than 330 students) we have not heard from or who have missed their payment plan deadline; they remain restricted from Blackboard.

In an attempt to help those students struggling to meet their financial obligations, we have been working closely with the Seneca Student Federation and front-line service staff to provide more information and resources on financial planning, OSAP, scholarships and bursaries, and how to budget and improve financial literacy. We understand the financial

strains students face, but we need to be consistent and fair, including to those many, many students who pay their fees on time.

Students who have concerns with financing their education can visit the Financial Aid office on their campus and should be encouraged to take advantage of upcoming webinars and info sessions on budgeting and financial support.

Change does not always happen quickly; if we reinforce consistent messages about timelines and adhere to clear policies and practices, we should achieve the required results fairly quickly with far less disruption.

Full tuition for the Winter term will be due **on or before January 7, 2019** for all students. A **late penalty of \$150.00** will be applied after **Day 10 (January 18, 2019)** of the new term. If tuition remains outstanding beyond **Day 15 (January 25, 2019)**, access to Blackboard will be restricted. We appreciate your support in helping our students understand and meet the required deadlines to avoid any disruption to their academic studies.

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