Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP)
Federal student financial assistance regulations require Sterling College, as an institution offering federal student financial assistance, to measure Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) of each attending student on a regular basis. SAP, as assessed by Sterling College’s Financial Aid Office, is separate and distinct from a student’s academic standing as determined by his/her college or academic unit at Sterling College. SAP is a method of measuring a student’s progress toward program completion. To be eligible for federal aid, a student must maintain satisfactory academic progress. SAP is measured through the use of qualitative and quantitative tests. Qualitative tests reference a student’s grades (e.g. cumulative GPA) and quantitative tests reference how much time has elapsed since the student began his/her program of study (i.e. length/duration). Students who are placed on SAP exclusion, as detailed below, are ineligible to receive federal student financial assistance. Examples of assistance include: Federal Pell Grant, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant (FSEOG), Federal Perkins Loan, Federal Work Study, Federal Direct Loan (subsidized and/or unsubsidized), Federal Direct Parent PLUS Loan, Teacher Education Assistance for College and Higher Education (TEACH) Grant, and the Iraq and Afghanistan Service Grant.
Sterling College’s Financial Aid Office is responsible for measuring SAP for the purposes of monitoring federal student aid eligibility. The Satisfactory Academic Progress standards outlined in this policy are as strict as or stricter than Sterling College’s institutional academic progress policies for students pursuing an educational credential.

SAP Evaluation Increments
In accordance with the final program integrity regulations, published October 29, 2010, on the topic of SAP by the U.S. Department of Education, Sterling College’s Financial Aid Office has elected to measure SAP at the conclusion of each regularly scheduled semester. At Sterling College the semester represents a student’s payment period for federal financial assistance. Consequently, SAP will be measured in increments of single terms, i.e. at the conclusion of each fall, spring, and summer term. Interterm in included in fall semester.

Quantitative Measure (Length/Duration)Sterling College’s Financial Aid Office utilizes a quantitative test to measure a student’s maximum time frame toward his/her degree completion. The quantitative test is:

• Ratio of Attempted to Completed Units Cumulative Test
The maximum attempted units may not exceed 150% of the published length of the educational program. Where a student has successfully transferred course credits from other post-secondary institutions to Sterling College, those credits are included in the Maximum Attempted Units Test noted above. More specifically, each credit successfully transferred to Sterling College is considered to represent one attempted unit which was successfully completed.

Qualitative Measure (GPA)
Sterling College's Financial Aid Office utilizes a qualitative test to measure a student's academic standing necessary to complete his/her degree program. The Cumulative GPA Test is utilized by Sterling College's Financial Aid Office to measure the qualitative component of SAP for its undergraduate student population. To pass this test, undergraduate students with less than 32 credit hours must maintain a cumulative GPA of 1.85 or higher; undergraduate students with 32 or more hours must maintain a cumulative GPA of 2.00 or higher.

SAP Statuses and Implications
As a student's SAP is evaluated at the regularly scheduled increments, Sterling College's Financial Aid Office will typically place one of four differing SAP statuses upon a student. They are:

- **Good Standing** – This status is indicative that a student has successfully passed all of the applicable quantitative and qualitative tests that were deployed in evaluating his/her SAP status. The student has passed the SAP eligibility criteria to receive federal student financial assistance.

- **Warning** – Since Sterling College's Financial Aid Office endeavors to evaluate student SAP at the conclusion of each regularly scheduled term (fall, spring, summer), a student may be placed on SAP Warning. A student who has been placed on Warning from a previous status of Good Standing retains his/her federal student aid eligibility for one subsequent term of enrollment. A student on Warning status is not required to successfully appeal his/her SAP status to receive federal student financial assistance. Typically, a status of Warning will be conferred on a student when his/her SAP status of Good Standing is downgraded at a subsequent evaluation where the student fails to pass one or more of the applicable SAP tests outlined above.

- **Exclusion** – This status indicates that the student is no longer eligible to receive federal student financial aid. Typically, a status of Exclusion will
be conferred on a student where he/she failed to pass all of the deployed SAP tests following a term in which his/her status had been determined to be Warning. A student may also be placed on exclusion from a previous SAP status of Probation-Academic Plan where the student failed to meet the academic expectations for the term in review.

- **Probation – Academic Plan** - This status allows a student to receive federal financial assistance for a potential period of time greater than one term following the successful appeal by the student of his/her SAP Exclusion status. This status may be conferred on a student by the Financial Aid Office utilizing professional judgment after reviewing the student’s SAP appeal filed in response to an Exclusion status. This status requires the creation of an academic plan that outlines academic recovery objectives over consecutive terms. A student with a status of Probation – Academic Plan is evaluated at the conclusion of each term in an effort to determine if the student has successfully met the objectives for that particular term. Provided the student meets the objectives for a given term, he/she will remain on the Probation – Academic Plan status and will not be required to file an additional SAP appeal. Conversely, if a student with a SAP status of Probation – Academic Plan fails to meet the objectives for a given term, as set out as a condition of this status, the student’s SAP will be downgraded to Exclusion with the resulting loss of federal student eligibility at the time of evaluation.

**Appeals**

If a student is found to be in violation of the Satisfactory Academic Progress guidelines and has been placed on financial aid exclusion, an appeal process is available for extenuating circumstances. Appeals are reviewed based on a documentable extenuating circumstance impacting academic performance. Extenuating circumstances are considered to be past events that are no longer barriers to academic progress. The appeal application should support how the student is now in a position to be academically successful. Examples of extenuating circumstances considered for appeal are:

- Serious illness or injury to student or immediate family member (parent, spouse, sibling, child) that required extended recovery time
- Death of an immediate family member
- Significant trauma in the student’s life that impaired the student’s emotional and/or physical health
- Withdrawal due to military service
• Other unexpected circumstances beyond the control of the student.

Note: Circumstances related to the typical adjustment to college life are not considered as extenuating for purposes of appealing suspension of financial aid.

Appeals must include the following documentation:
• A completed Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) Appeal form which will include an explanation describing how extenuating circumstances resulted in the student’s inability to maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress, and an explanation of what has changed that will allow the student to maintain Satisfactory Academic Progress at the next evaluation
• Documentation required to support the extenuating circumstances (i.e. medical documentation, notice of death, accident reports, court documentation, or other relevant documentation)
• Statement of the student’s educational goals
• Academic advisor statement and approval of Academic Plan

All students who are not meeting SAP will be notified in writing by the Financial Aid Office. The letter will include a copy of the appeal form and instructions on how to file an appeal.

The above noted appeal form may also be obtained under the ‘forms’ link on the Financial Aid webpage (http://www.sterling.edu/admissions/financial-aid/forms). The completed form and required documents must be submitted to the Financial Aid Office for processing by the deadline stated on the form.

Upon receipt of the completed appeal, a financial aid staff member will review the information provided to determine if the student has encountered mitigating circumstances that warrant the continuation of federal student eligibility even though the student is not currently meeting the established SAP standards. An appeal may be approved or denied. SAP appeal determinations are final and may not be contested.

**Probationary Period**
In the event that the SAP appeal is approved, a SAP status of Probation – Single Term or Probation – Academic Plan will be conferred on the student. As a condition of the Probation statuses, the Financial Aid Office may set specific academic requirements. The requirements may include any combination of the following:
- successful completion of a set number of units for one or more academic terms,
- attainment of a set percentage of attempted vs. completed for one or more terms,
- attainment of a specific term GPA for one or more terms, and/or
- setting a limit on the number of units attempted for one or more terms
  interruption of one or more terms.

**Regaining Eligibility**

Typically, to regain the SAP status of Good Standing a student must pass all of the
quantitative and qualitative measurements applicable to his/her academic career as
described in both the Quantitative Measurement and Qualitative Measurement
sections above. However, on a case-by-case basis the Financial Aid Office may
place a student on SAP Good Standing status where it has been determined that
unique circumstances to the student render an incomplete assessment of the
student’s true SAP status via the systematic tests deployed.

**Communication of SAP Statuses**

Generally, the Financial Aid Office makes no special provision to inform a student
that he/she has a SAP status of Good Standing.

The communications outlined below typically take the form of either a paper or
electronic (e-mail) notification. Electronic communications are sent to the student’s
official campus e-mail address.

- If it has been determined that a student has either a SAP status of
  Warning or Exclusion, the Financial Aid Office will communicate this
  status to the student along with the implications of the status in regard to
  federal eligibility.

- Probationary SAP status such as Probation-Academic Plan are
  communicated to the student upon the successful completion of the
  student’s appeal process.

- In the event that a SAP appeal is denied, a communication is sent to the
  student when the determination is made.