Q: What is the history and purpose of the new tuition tax credit legislation that gave rise to the Georgia GOAL Scholarship Program?

A: In 2008, the Georgia General Assembly passed House Bill 1133 and Governor Sonny Perdue signed it into law. The law provides for the creation of student scholarship organizations (“SSOs”) that use Georgia income tax credit-eligible dollars to provide public school or kindergarten-entry students with the opportunity to attend private schools. Georgia GOAL Scholarship Program, Inc. is one of the SSOs created to implement the new law.

Q: Can participation in this program count as my gift to The Woodward Fund?

A: No. GOAL scholarships are redirected tax dollars and are not counted as gifts to The Woodward Fund. Participating in Georgia GOAL does not supplant our fundraising efforts which we will continue to rely on to provide our students with the highest level of educational experience possible.

Q: How does our school benefit from this legislation?

A: As a GOAL participating school, our school is eligible to promote the GOAL program to its constituents who, in turn, can designate that their tax dollars to GOAL be used to provide financial assistance to qualified students. Our school is also eligible to receive undesignated tax dollars from GOAL. Thus, our school will be able to increase the amount of financial aid for which its students and their families are eligible.

Q: How does the tax credit work?

A: A taxpayer redirecting all or a portion of his or her Georgia income tax payments to GOAL and designating our school receives an income tax CREDIT against their Georgia income taxes for the amount of their tax dollar redirection. Thus, if a married couple filing a joint return owes $6,000 of Georgia income taxes and makes the maximum contribution to GOAL of $2,500, they will only have to pay $3,500 of income taxes to the state of Georgia.

Q: What is the maximum amount of Georgia income taxes that an individual can redirect each year to GOAL?

A: Each calendar year, as long as there is space available under the $58 million annual cap on tax credits established by HB 1133, a married couple filing a joint return can redirect up to $2,500 of their income tax payments to GOAL. The maximum for an individual is $1,000.

Q: If an individual has paid all of his or her estimated Georgia income taxes for a particular tax year and participates in GOAL in that year, will he or she still receive a Georgia income tax credit for the same amount?

A: Yes. If, after applying the tax credit against the Georgia income tax due and applying all estimated tax payments and withheld income taxes, there is an overpayment, the taxpayer can elect to have all or a portion of the overpayment paid to him or her.

Q: Can corporations contribute to the Georgia GOAL Scholarship Program?
A: Yes. Corporations can receive a tax credit for amounts contributed to the GOAL Scholarship Program of up to 75 percent of their Georgia income tax liability. S-Corporations, LLC, and Partnerships may redirect up to $10,000 for a tax credit. For each of these entities, consider consulting your tax advisor for further guidance.

As with C-corps, taxable trusts may be eligible to participate in GOAL by redirecting up to 75 percent of their state income tax liability. Please consult your tax advisor for further guidance.

Q: If he or she itemizes deductions, can an individual take a charitable income tax deduction on his or her federal income tax return for the amount of the contribution to GOAL?
A: Yes.

Q: If I redirect some of my Georgia income tax payment to GOAL, can I designate that it be used to provide financial aid for students who will be attending our school?
A: Yes.

Q: If I redirect some of my Georgia tax payments to GOAL, can I designate the student who will benefit from the financial assistance?
A: No. Although a participant in the Georgia GOAL program may designate our school and recommend a possible GOAL recipient (except a dependent of the donor), the financial aid committee at our school will have the discretion of deciding which qualified recipients will be recommended to GOAL for financial assistance. GOAL funds will be awarded to new students from public schools who qualify for need-based aid as determined by the Admissions financial aid process. Students eligible for need-based financial aid at Woodward are those in grades 7-12. Woodward will follow the same process for awarding GOAL funds as they do for need-based financial aid. There will be no application process to receive GOAL specific funds.

Q: What is the deadline for making contributions that qualify for the tax credit? How do I participate?
A: In order to redirect tax dollars to GOAL for a tax credit, an individual or corporation must first receive pre-approval from the Georgia Department of Revenue. The form needed for the pre-approval process is available on Woodward’s website and GOAL’s website. Georgia GOAL is accepting 2015 tax credit applications beginning August 1, 2014, to provide tax payers with the best chance of receiving the credit. GOAL will confirm receipt of your form and will contact you once your form has been approved in 2015 so that you can make your payment by check or credit card. Due to the popularity of this program, we expect the cap of $58 million designated for student scholarship organizations for 2015 will be met in January. You will not receive your tax benefit until you file your 2015 Georgia state taxes in 2016.

Q: What students are eligible under the law to receive financial assistance from the Georgia GOAL Scholarship Program?
A: As the legislation indicates, eligible students include those who are “Georgia residents enrolled in a Georgia secondary or primary public school or eligible to enroll in a qualified kindergarten, pre-kindergarten or first grade program.” However, Woodward Academy will follow the established financial aid process, making GOAL aid available to qualifying new students from public schools, entering grades 7-12.
Q: When will monies from GOAL be available to qualifying students at our school?
A: Monies from 2015 GOAL participation will be available in the 2015-2016 academic year.

Q: Will our school modify the school’s admission criteria to accommodate students who would qualify for Georgia GOAL monies but not qualify under the current admission criteria at our school?
A: No. All applicants will be required to have completed our regular application for admission. Acceptance for admission will be based on the current standards and criteria for admission to our school. Exceptions will not be made for applicants who are eligible for GOAL financial assistance. The program simply allows for families with qualified students who had not previously been able to attend our school to do so. Admission standards will not change.

Q: Will the GOAL financial assistance be awarded, in whole or in part, based on achievement in co-curricular areas such as arts and athletics?
A: No consideration is given to co-curricular achievement in allocating Georgia GOAL financial assistance. All admission decisions are made based on our school’s admission standards and the verified financial need of the student’s family.

Q: How does a family apply to receive financial assistance from the Georgia GOAL Scholarship Program?
A: Our school will explain the availability of the GOAL Scholarship Program in the financial aid information packet distributed to interested applicants to the school. Any applicant family interested in receiving GOAL monies needs to express such interest to the admissions office. They will then be asked to provide proof of their child’s enrollment in a public school or eligibility to enter kindergarten. The family will also be required to submit the first two pages of their signed federal income tax return for the prior year. If the applicant family is approved for a GOAL scholarship and all other admission standards have been met indicating the student will attend Woodward Academy, prior to enrollment, the family, our school, and GOAL will enter into a GOAL Scholarship Agreement.

Q: After a recipient’s first year participating in GOAL, will he or she automatically receive GOAL funding each subsequent year that he or she is enrolled at our school?
A: GOAL scholarships are awarded for the duration of a student’s enrollment at our school. However, the amount of the GOAL financial aid received in each year is determined annually based on continued financial need, the availability of GOAL funds designated for use at our school, and the student’s compliance with behavioral, academic, and covenant standards. The financial assistance evaluation must also be completed each year to validate financial need.

Q: After our school awards GOAL monies in a particular year, what happens to any remaining GOAL funds that have been designated for use at our school?
A: Under the terms of the GOAL School Participation Agreement entered into between GOAL and our school, any unused funds that have been designated for use at our school are held by GOAL in an account designated for the school. These funds (together with any net income earned on the account) are available for providing ongoing financial aid to existing GOAL scholarship recipients at our school and for awarding future GOAL scholarships at our school.
Q: Does the Georgia GOAL Scholarship Program affect the current financial aid program at our school?
A: Our school’s financial assistance program serves our currently enrolled families who have an identified financial need. Since the GOAL program serves new students to the school, the financial aid program at our school will continue to operate as it has in the past. There is no conflict between the two; one will complement the other.

Q: How will our school communicate this financial assistance opportunity to qualified families?
A: We will communicate our participation in the GOAL Scholarship Program by letter, email, and include information on our About Woodward tab on our web site. To apply for financial aid, additional information may be obtained from our Admissions Office.

Q: Does participation in the GOAL Scholarship Program open the door for government intervention in our school? Can we be forced to compromise our mission, standards, and/or practices?
A: Absolutely not! We would never agree to participate in a program that forces us to compromise our mission, standards, and/or practices.

Q: Is the Georgia GOAL Scholarship Program a government agency? What is its role?
A: No. Georgia GOAL Scholarship Program, Inc., is an independent 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization. GOAL, not the state of Georgia, provides financial assistance to students at its participating schools. In addition to saving its participating schools the trouble of creating and operating their own HB 1133 student scholarship organizations, GOAL serves as an information clearinghouse; provides information and insights regarding the marketing aspects of the tuition tax credit legislation; monitors legal and regulatory developments; shares best practices among the participating schools; solicits participation from corporations; and promotes the program in the CPA and financial community.

Q: How do I find more information about Georgia GOAL Scholarship Program?
A: If you have questions about the Georgia GOAL Scholarship Program, please review the GOAL website at www.goalscholarship.org or contact Lin Pahl at 404.765.4010 at Woodward Academy.