

## ***USC Graduate Preferred Lender Selection Process Academic Year 2026-2027***

### **Summary**

Due to recent changes in federal loan eligibility under the One Big Beautiful Bill Act of 2025, University of Southern California has established a Preferred Lender List for graduate students who may need alternative loan options.

### **Methodology & Criteria**

USC sent a request for information (RFI) to 10 lenders with a list of questions regarding their products and services. The RFI included the following neutral, borrower centered topics:

- Loan Program Offerings
- Loan Terms and Conditions
- Borrower Eligibility and Approval Criteria
- Repayment Plans and Flexibility
- Competitive Comparison
- Customer Service, Support, and Technology
- Ethics, Compliance, and Transparency

A committee of members from USC's Financial Aid Office, Office of the Provost, and Office of the Senior Vice President for Finance and Chief Financial Officer evaluated the lender responses.

### **Evaluation of Lender Responses**

Once all information had been gathered and considered, the committee selected three preferred lenders for the 2026-2027 academic year. The committee identified several leading proposals, and after further negotiations with those lenders determined that three lenders were best positioned to meet the needs of USC graduate students:

- **Sallie Mae:** Sallie Mae is a large private student lender that provides loan options for a wide range of borrowers and degree programs with competitive terms and rates. They provide adaptable repayment plans, borrower benefits, and a strong commitment to customer service.
- **SoFi:** SoFi has an established history of providing financing to USC students. The lender offers loan products that meet program needs, along with excellent rates for well-qualified borrowers. SoFi offers multiple repayment options and provides excellent customer service.
- **College Ave:** College Ave is a recognized lender that offers multiple loan products and program-specific borrower benefits, with opportunity for low rates. The lender offers satisfactory repayment options and hardship forbearance. They enhance convenience through a mobile app and deliver strong customer service.