

MONTANA BOARD OF REGENTS OF HIGHER EDUCATION
Policy and Procedures Manual

SUBJECT: STUDENT AFFAIRS
Policy 501.3 - Governor's Post-Secondary Scholarship Program
Revised: March 6, 2008; **Issued:** April 16, 2008

A. Board Policy

1. The Governor's Postsecondary Scholarship Program (the Program) was created by §§ 20-26-601 through 20-26-613, MCA. The purpose of the Program is to provide scholarships on the basis of need and merit to Montana residents toward the cost of attendance at qualifying two-year and four-year postsecondary institutions and to allocate some of the scholarships to specific areas of study that promote economic development or address critical workforce shortage areas in Montana.

2. A Governor's Scholarship Advisory Council appointed by the Governor will assist the Board of Regents of Higher Education in administering the scholarship program. The Commissioner of Higher Education, under the authority of the Board and in consultation with the Council, shall administer the Program under the terms of this policy. The Montana Guaranteed Student Loan Program (MGSLP) will facilitate this program on behalf of the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education.

B. Eligibility. A student is eligible to receive a Governor's Scholarship providing the student:

1. Is a resident of the State of Montana;
2. Has been accepted by or is enrolled at an eligible Montana postsecondary institution;
3. For scholarships based upon financial need, has completed the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form and does not have an expected family contribution (EFC) exceeding the cost of attendance at the postsecondary institution the student will or is attending;
4. For scholarships based upon merit, has obtained a high school GPA of at least 3.0 or a score of at least 20 on the ACT or 1440 on the SAT college admission test; and be enrolled full-time at an eligible postsecondary institution;
5. Is not also receiving a Montana University System Honor Scholarship for the same period of enrollment;
6. If applicable, has met the Title IV selective services registration requirements;
7. Is not in default on a Title IV or state of Montana education loan;
8. Does not owe a refund to a federal Title IV or state of Montana student financial aid program;
9. Is not incarcerated;
10. Is seeking a first certificate, associate, or baccalaureate degree at a qualifying Montana postsecondary institution.

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C. Categories of Scholarships

The Program will award three categories of scholarship: merit-based awards to graduating high school seniors, merit-based awards to at-large applicants, and need-based awards.

1. Merit-based awards to graduating high school seniors: Each accredited Montana high school, including accredited nonpublic high schools, is eligible to award at least one Governor's Scholarship for merit annually in the amount of \$2,000, to a graduating student in accordance with Title 20, Chapter 26, Part 6, MCA.

2. Merit-based awards available to at-large applicants: MGSLP will award Governor's Scholarships annually in the amount of \$2,000 each, based on merit in accordance with Title 20, Chapter 26, Part 6, MCA.

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3. Need-based awards: MGSLP will allocate Governor's Scholarships annually to eligible postsecondary institutions in the amount of \$1,000 each, to be awarded based on financial need in accordance with Title 20, Chapter 26, Part 6, MCA.

D. Eligible Institutions

Recipients of a Governor's Scholarship may utilize the award at any of the following eligible postsecondary institutions: (1) a campus of the Montana University System, as defined in § 20-25-201; (2) a Montana community college, defined and organized as provided in § 20-15-101; (3) a two-year, accredited tribal community college located in the state of Montana or a four-year accredited tribal college located in the state of Montana; or (4) a private, not-for-profit college, under the following conditions: if donations to the Program from private sources are designated for a Montana private nonprofit private educational institution, as defined in § 15-30-163(3)(b), the scholarship may be used at the designated institution, subject to the same award, eligibility and renewal requirements as for recipients attending eligible postsecondary institutions.

E. Procedures

1. Merit-based awards to graduating high school seniors.

a. A high school principal, or the principal's designee, will select recipients from his or her high school based upon the eligibility criteria described in § B-4 of this policy utilizing the methodology set forth in Regents Policy 501.1(A)(2). The computation of actual grade point averages shall be as of the end of the 7th semester of high school or, in the case of a student graduating in three years, at the end of the 5th semester of high school. To remain eligible the student must maintain a 3.00 or higher GPA through the completion of high school.

b. If a recipient decides not to attend an eligible campus, the student should relinquish the scholarship at once. If the scholarship is relinquished prior to May 15th of the award year, the principal or designee may award the scholarship to the next ranking eligible member of the same graduating class. Such recipient will be subject to the same restrictions as all other scholarship recipients.

2. Merit At-Large Scholarships

a. Eligible students must apply for the scholarship. To be eligible to receive an at-large scholarship, a student must apply to and be accepted by an eligible postsecondary institution and may be required to complete a FAFSA. The student must also submit a completed scholarship application to the MGSLP not later than March 31 of the award year. Failure to meet these requirements will disqualify the student for an at-large scholarship.

b. MGSLP will award scholarships based upon any or all of the following criteria:

- (1) The applicant's high school grade point average;
- (2) The applicant's coursework;
- (3) The applicant's ACT or SAT results;
- (4) The applicant's extra-curricular activity;
- (5) The applicant's community service or volunteer work;
- (6) The applicant's financial need;
- (7) The impact a scholarship would make for the applicant's college attendance;
- (8) The compelling nature of the applicant's circumstances;
- (9) Enrollment in a two-year associate or certificate program;

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(10) References or other requirements, as required by MGSLP.

3. Need-based awards

a. The MGSLP will allocate need-based awards each year to eligible postsecondary institutions based upon the most recent full time equivalent enrollment information available to the MGSLP. Each eligible postsecondary institution will receive a minimum of five need-based scholarships, regardless of the actual FTE calculation.

b. The Commissioner of Higher Education will determine the specific areas of study that promote economic development or address current or projected critical workforce shortage areas. MGSLP will advise each postsecondary institution of the specific number of general, health science, technology, or trades scholarships it may award. An eligible campus will obtain approval from MGSLP to re-award the scholarships if the campus is unable to award the specified health science, technology, or trades scholarships prescribed.

c. The financial aid office at each postsecondary institution shall be solely responsible for identifying and awarding need-based scholarships. No standard criteria will be used for selecting candidates other than the primary consideration of financial need. Because many students have an EFC of zero, institutions may use any or all of the following guidelines for identifying need-based students:

- (1) The ability of the student to benefit from the scholarship;
- (2) The status of the student as a first generation or non-traditional college student;
- (3) The impact a scholarship would have on a student's debt-load, need to work, while attending college, or ability to remain in the state of Montana after graduation;
- (4) The past academic performance of the student;
- (5) Other compelling circumstances.

F. Renewal of Scholarships

Contingent upon the availability of funds, the Governor's Scholarship is renewable annually provided that: (1) students awarded scholarships based upon financial need meet, at a minimum, satisfactory academic progress; (2) students awarded scholarships based upon merit meet, at a minimum, satisfactory academic progress and complete 24 credits or more per academic year. Awards to students attending four year institutions may be renewed for no more than eight consecutive semesters. The total value of a merit-based scholarship over eight semesters shall not exceed \$8,000. Awards to students attending two year institutions may be renewed for no more than four continuous semesters. The total value of a need-based award over four semesters shall not exceed \$2,000. The total value of a merit award at a two-year institution over four semesters shall not exceed \$4,000, provided, however, that the recipient of a two-year merit scholarship may petition in writing to MGSLP, for an extension of that award up to a maximum of four additional semesters on the following conditions: (1) the student has transferred to an eligible four-year institution; (2) is enrolled full-time; and (3) all other terms and requirements of this policy have been met.

G. Transferability

The Governor's Scholarship is transferable between eligible campuses upon proper transfer, notification of MGSLP, and continued adherence to all eligibility requirements.

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H. Funds: Authorization to Distribute Funds

1. Except for funds donated from private sources, the obligation for funding the Program is an obligation of the State. The Board of Regents is not required to provide a scholarship to an eligible student without a line item appropriation to the Board for this purpose.
2. If the line item appropriation is insufficient to fully fund the Program, qualified recipients seeking renewal of their scholarships will have priority for available funds.
3. If the line item appropriation is insufficient to fully fund the Program, the number of scholarships will be reduced, but individual award amounts will remain unchanged (i.e. the award amount will remain \$1,000 or \$2,000 depending upon the category of scholarship).
4. Funds from a scholarship must be used toward the cost of attendance at a qualifying postsecondary institution and may not be used to pay for remedial or college-preparatory course work. Each Governor's Scholarship will be distributed directly to the postsecondary institution in installments at the beginning of each term (semester or quarter) that corresponds with the terms of the institution's academic year, for payment toward the recipient's cost of attendance.

I. Provisions Applicable to All Awards

1. Recipients of a Governor's Scholarship are not precluded from receiving other financial aid, awards, or scholarships, except as required by federal or state law or board policy.
2. A recipient must use his or her Governor's Scholarship during the next chronological semester or term (excluding summer) after being awarded the scholarship.
3. A recipient who is assigned to active military duty does not lose his or her eligibility or right to renew the scholarship by that reason during such tour of active duty, provided he or she returns to school within nine months of discharge from active military duty; all other eligibility requirements apply.
4. Recipients are limited to one category of award (i.e. one merit, need-based, or at-large scholarship).
5. A Governor's Scholarship may be used as payment toward classes taken on-line if those on-line classes are considered part of the home campus cost of attendance.

J. Reversion of Scholarships To MGSLP

1. If a Montana high school has no graduates who qualify for a scholarship, the scholarships revert to MGSLP and may be reallocated to any category of scholarship at the discretion of the MGSLP.
2. If a recipient loses eligibility, postsecondary institutions may revert the money to MGSLP for reallocation or may re-award scholarships as follows:

Financial aid offices may fill vacated scholarship slots with a new, need-based recipient. When practical, the new recipient should be of the same category of need (i.e. health science, technology, etc.). The value of the scholarship will be the remaining value of the relinquished scholarship, not to exceed \$2,000 (meaning the value of the scholarship could be something other than \$1,000 or \$2,000). These scholarship awards are one-time-only awards and schools are not expected to report these awards as Governor's Scholarships.

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K. Reports

1. High schools will report to MGSLP not later than May 15 of each year the names of scholarship recipients, including which institution the recipients will attend.

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2. Postsecondary institutions will report to MGSLP not later than October 31 of each year the recipients and their courses of study for all Governor's Scholarships.

3. MGSLP will present to the Advisory Council a list of all recipients awarded Governor's Scholarships, by categories of scholarship, by postsecondary institution attended and by course of study, where applicable, for the Council's review. The report will be provided to the Board of Regents each year.

L. Appeals.

Scholarship awards are not subject to appeal however recipients may appeal termination or non-renewal of their awards to the Commissioner of Higher Education, based on the showing of extenuating circumstances. The Commissioner's decision will be final.

History:

Item 129-102-R1105, Governor's Postsecondary Scholarship Program Policies, approved by the Board of Regents November 18, 2005 (Memo). Item 136-101-R0907, approved by the Board of Regents September 20, 2007. ITEM 138-111-R0308 (Supporting Material), approved March 6, 2008, clarifying renewal of scholarships.