

ITEM 136-101-R0907

Revision of Board of Regent Policy 501.3, The Governor's Postsecondary Scholarship Program.

THAT:

The Montana Board of Regents of Higher Education hereby revises Policy 501.3, the Governor's Postsecondary Scholarship Program, to reflect statutory changes enacted by the Montana Legislature in the 2007 Special Session.

EXPLANATION:

The Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education and the Montana Guaranteed Student Loan Program, working jointly with the Governor's office, requested changes to this scholarship program to allow for more effective and efficient administration of the program. The Legislature revised the program and the new Board of Regents policy incorporates those statutory changes. The Governor's Postsecondary Scholarship Advisory Committee and the Commissioner of Higher Education recommend these changes. The significant changes to the policy are as follows:

1. A showing of financial need will generally no longer be required for merit scholarship recipients.
2. Need-based recipients can receive a scholarship without being enrolled full time. Only merit recipients must be enrolled full time.
3. Students are eligible providing they have not already received a first certificate, associates, or baccalaureate degree. The prior policy had this requirement, but also required the student to be an entering freshman. Many non-traditional students have some college, but not a degree.
4. All merit scholarships are now worth \$2,000 a year. In the previous policy, only a few merit scholarships were worth \$2,000. Merit scholarships may be renewed and may be transferred between eligible campuses.
5. Need-based scholarships have a maximum value of \$2,000 over 2 years; all merit scholarships have a maximum value of \$8,000 over 4 years. This policy allows scholarships to be renewed and transferred between eligible campuses.
6. High school principals, or their designees, now select the high school recipients. The statute provides for at least one merit scholarship for each high school each year. Now the high schools can make the selections based on criteria in the policy.

7. Students are required to enroll during the next chronological semester or term. Recipients no longer have nine months to enter a postsecondary institution. The delay caused a variety of funding and tracking issues.
8. The Commissioner of Higher Education will determine the specific areas of targeted study. A purpose of the statutory Governor's Scholarship Program is to promote economic development. The Commissioner, working in conjunction with the Governor's office, the Department of Labor, and the Office of Public Instruction, will advise MGSLP of the specific areas of study which qualify for need-based scholarships.
9. Scholarship funds may be used toward the cost of attendance. Scholarships had only been for tuition. This change allows all qualifying expenses to be covered, such as books, room and board, etc.
10. Postsecondary institutions may reallocate some scholarships without first returning those funds to MGSLP. Some scholarships always revert due to ineligibility or non-renewal. Instead of delaying and complicating the process, schools may directly re-award some scholarships if qualified students are available.

The scholarship program should be more streamlined and efficient under these new rules. The Governor's Advisory Council was involved in the proposed changes and recommends their adoption.

ATTACHMENT:

Policy 501.3 – Governor's Post-Secondary Scholarship Program