

Chapter HEA 15

WISCONSIN COVENANT SCHOLARS PROGRAM

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Note: Chapter Adm 80 was renumbered chapter HEA 15 under s. 13.92 (4) (b) 1., Stats., Register November 2011 No. 671.

HEA 15.01 Purpose. The purpose of this chapter is to define the various aspects of the Wisconsin Covenant Scholars program authorized by s. 39.437, Stats., as to the awarding of grants to Wisconsin Covenant Scholars, and to implement s. 16.257, Stats.

Note: Section 16.257, Stats., was repealed by 2011 Wis. Act 32.

History: CR 10-027; cr. Register September 2010 No. 657, eff. 10-1-10.

HEA 15.02 Definitions. In this chapter:

(1) “Board” means the higher educational aids board.

(2) “Eligible institution” means a public or private, non-profit, accredited institution of higher education or a tribally controlled college in Wisconsin which is eligible to participate in the grant program authorized under s. 39.30, Stats.

(3) “Grant” means a grant awarded under the Wisconsin Covenant Scholars Program, unless otherwise specified.

(4) “Half-time enrollment” means enrollment in at least six academic credits per semester or the quarterly or special term equivalent as determined by the educational institution.

(5) “Full-time enrollment” means enrollment in at least twelve academic credits per semester or the quarterly or special term equivalent as determined by the educational institution.

(6) “Office” means the office of the Wisconsin Covenant Scholars Program.

Note: The Office of the Wisconsin Covenant Scholars Program was eliminated by 2011 Wis. Act 32. Future rulemaking will address the affect on this chapter of the elimination of the “office.”

(7) “Scholar” means a student determined to be eligible to receive a monetary award under the Wisconsin Covenant scholar program.

(8) “High school” refers to grades nine through twelve.

(9) “Serious misdemeanor” means a misdemeanor involving bodily harm or a dangerous weapon.

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HEA 15.03 Designation of scholar. (1) To be designated as a Wisconsin Covenant scholar by the office for the purpose of grant eligibility, a student must do all of the following:

(a) Enroll in the Wisconsin Covenant Scholars Program by submitting the appropriate paperwork to the office by September 30th of the student’s freshman year in high school.

(b) Meet all of the following eligibility requirements:

1. Receive a diploma from a Wisconsin high school.

2. Maintain approximately a B average while in high school.

The approximate B average shall be calculated in one of the following ways:

a. The student has a career cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 2.85 or higher on a 4.0 scale; or

b. The student earned a GPA of 3.0 or higher on a 4.0 scale

for at least 5 semesters and never earned less than a 2.0 in any semester; or

c. The student earned a GPA of 3.25 or higher on a 4.0 scale during the first semester of senior year and has shown consistent improvement since the beginning of high school.

3. Complete course credit that shall prepare the student for the college or university the student intends to attend, which shall be shown in one of the following ways:

a. The student shows admission to at least one eligible institution; or

b. The student lists 3 eligible institutions at which the student intends to apply and confirms that the student’s coursework meets or exceeds the course requirements for the colleges or universities listed.

4. Demonstrate good citizenship and engage in activities that support the community. To show that the student has demonstrated good citizenship and engaged in activities that support the community, the student shall meet both of the following requirements:

a. The student must not have been convicted of a felony or serious misdemeanor and, if the student was suspended during high school, the student must provide two letters of recommendation which show substantial personal growth following the suspension from school faculty or other community members; and

b. The student was involved in one of the following activities extra curricular activities that contain an element of community service and can document at least 30 hours of service; or a school sponsored service learning experience that meets a high school graduation requirement; or a service learning experience that was designed by the student, and the results of which were shared with the student’s teachers.

5. Show that the student submitted a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) on or before April 1 of the student’s senior year of high school. Extensions for extenuating circumstances may be made solely at the discretion of the office.

6. Apply and do all that is necessary to gain admission to an eligible institution, which shall be shown in one of the following ways:

a. Has been admitted to at least one eligible institution; or

b. Plans to apply to at least 3 eligible institutions and meets those institutions’ admission guidelines.

(c) Complete the Wisconsin Covenant scholar verification form, consistent with the Wisconsin Covenant scholar verification instructions, and submit the form to the office by April 1 of the student’s senior year of high school. The form must be signed by the school principal or the principal’s designee to be considered valid.

(2) By April 30th of each year, the office shall submit to the board a list of scholars eligible for grant consideration.

(a) The current Wisconsin Covenant scholar verification in-

structions and form shall be available on the office's website (www.wisconsincoventant.wi.gov) by November 1 of each year and must be completed and sent to the office by April 1 of the following year. In addition, the current Wisconsin Covenant scholar verification instructions and form shall be mailed to students who have enrolled in the Wisconsin Covenant Scholars program under sub. (1) (a) by December 31 of their senior year of high school.

History: CR 10-027: cr. Register September 2010 No. 657, eff. 10-1-10.

HEA 15.04 Scholar qualifications for award. A scholar who meets the requirements of s. HEA 15.03 shall receive an award only if all of the following apply:

(1) The scholar is eligible for in-state tuition pursuant to s. 36.27 (2), Stats.; and

(2) The scholar is admitted to an eligible institution and enrolled, within one academic year of high school graduation, in an undergraduate degree or certificate program eligible for federal student aid under Title IV of the federal Higher Education Act leading to an undergraduate degree, diploma, or certificate from an eligible institution. Board staff may make exceptions to the one year enrollment requirement on a case-by-case basis due to health, military service or other personal reasons.

(3) The scholar's name does not appear on the statewide support lien docket under s. 49.854 (2) (b), Stats., unless the person provides the board a payment agreement that has been approved by the county child support agency under s. 59.53 (5), Stats., and that is consistent with rules promulgated under s. 49.858 (2) (a), Stats.

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HEA 15.05 Continuing scholar eligibility. (1) A scholar may receive the grant award for no more than the equivalent of eight semesters. The equivalent may include a combination of traditional semesters, summer terms or other measurements of academic year. The eight semesters need not be continuous, but the student is eligible for the grant only within five academic years of his or her high school graduation.

(2) The scholar may not receive a grant in any semester in which the student is not enrolled at least half-time.

(3) Eligibility for the grant awards ceases if:

(a) The scholar does not maintain acceptable academic standards as prescribed by the student's institution of higher education; or

(b) The scholar does not file an updated Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) annually; or

(c) The student does not enroll in accordance with s. HEA 15.04 (2); or

(d) The scholar is convicted of a felony or serious misdemeanor.

History: CR 10-027: cr. Register September 2010 No. 657, eff. 10-1-10; correction in (3) (c) made under s. 13.92 (4) (b) 7., Stats., Register November 2011 No. 671.

HEA 15.06 Terms of grants. (1) Eligible institutions shall enter into a five-year contract with the board using the established financial aid distribution process. Annual program funds for the Wisconsin Covenant Scholars grant program shall be allocated through these contracts for a period of five academic years following the high school graduation of each class of Wisconsin Covenant Scholars.

(2) Grant amounts shall be determined by the Estimated Family Contribution (EFC) calculated by the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) based on the following designations. Scholars shall receive the full grant amounts listed below

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regardless of the scholars' unmet need except in case where awarding the full amount conflicts with federal laws related to over-awarding in the financial aid process. In that instance, the grant may be reduced in order to comply with federal law.

(a) For students attending an eligible institution full time:

1. Scholars with an EFC of \$0 shall receive \$1,000 annual grant for the first two years of postsecondary education. For the second two years of postsecondary education, the office shall develop and submit to the board a formula for awarding grants for the upcoming academic years to scholars enrolled in an eligible institution. The formula shall account for expected parental and student contributions and shall be consistent with generally accepted definitions and nationally approved needs analysis methodology.

a. This award amount assumes that the Wisconsin Covenant Foundation shall continue to grant \$1,500 annually for the first two years of postsecondary education for students with an EFC of \$0.

b. If the Wisconsin Covenant Foundation does not award at least \$1,500 annually for the first two years of postsecondary education, then students with a \$0 EFC shall receive \$1,500 annually rather than \$1,000 for the first two years of postsecondary education.

2. Scholars with an EFC of \$1 to \$3,499 shall receive \$1,500 annual grant for the first two years of postsecondary education. For the second two years of postsecondary education, the office shall develop and submit to the board a formula for awarding grants for the upcoming academic years to scholars enrolled in an eligible institution.

3. Scholars with an EFC of \$3,500 to \$11,999 shall receive \$1,000 annual grant for the first two years of postsecondary education. For the second two years of postsecondary education, the office shall develop and submit to the board a formula for awarding grants for the upcoming academic years to scholars enrolled in an eligible institution.

4. Scholars with an EFC of \$12,000 or greater shall receive \$250 annual grant for the first two years of postsecondary education. For the second two years of postsecondary education, the office shall develop and submit to the board a formula for awarding grants for the upcoming academic years to scholars enrolled in an eligible institution.

(b) For students attending an eligible institution half time:

1. Scholars with an EFC of \$0 to \$3,499 shall receive \$750 annual grant for the first two years of postsecondary education. For the second two years of postsecondary education, the office shall develop and submit to the board a formula for awarding grants for the upcoming academic years to scholars enrolled in an eligible institution.

2. Scholars with an EFC of \$3,500 to \$11,999 shall receive \$500 annual grant for the first two years of postsecondary education. For the second two years of postsecondary education, the office shall develop and submit to the board a formula for awarding grants for the upcoming academic years to scholars enrolled in an institution.

3. Scholars with an EFC of \$12,000 or greater shall receive \$125 annual grant for the first two years of postsecondary education. For the second two years of postsecondary education, the office shall develop and submit to the board a formula for awarding grants for the upcoming academic years to scholars enrolled in an eligible institution.

History: CR 10-027: cr. Register September 2010 No. 657, eff. 10-1-10.

HEA 15.07 High school responsibilities. On or before January 31 of each year, the office shall provide to each high

school principal or principal's designee a list of students who are eligible for verification in that year. By April 5 of each year, each high school principal or principal's designee is required to provide a list of students who completed the pledge and have been certified by the Office of the Wisconsin Covenant verification form, as well as those students who did not present a form for verification.

Note: The Office of the Wisconsin Covenant verification form shall be available at the office website www.wisconsin covenant.wi.gov or by writing to HEAB, Office of the Wisconsin Covenant, PO Box 7885, Madison, WI 53707-7885. An updated form shall be available no later than November 1 of each year.

History: CR 10-027: cr. Register September 2010 No. 657, eff. 10-1-10.

HEA 15.08 Institutional and partner responsibilities. (1) Each eligible institution shall ensure that the Wisconsin Covenant Scholars grant does not replace other need-based federal, state, or institutional grant assistance in the package of financial aid offered to the scholar by the institution.

(2) Funds shall be returned to the board, using the board's established Return of Funds policy s. HEA 1.07 for scholars who withdraw, drop out or fail to enroll.

(3) To help make the Wisconsin Covenant a reality for Wisconsin students and their families, the University of Wisconsin System, the Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, the Wisconsin Technical College System, and the Department of Public Instruction shall work together to ensure:

(a) There is a place for each scholar in higher education. The respective systems shall work to prioritize the entrance of the Covenant Scholars into their systems and identify a place for each scholar in the higher education system of their choice.

(b) Scholars can access available financial resources including but not limited to scholarships, grants, loans, and work that will put higher education within reach for each scholar.

(c) Support for the scholars in middle and high school to help them achieve their goals through the continuation, expansion, or establishment of pre-college programming, mentoring, tutoring, and other local supports.

(4) The University of Wisconsin System, the Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities, the Wisconsin Technical College System, and the Department of Public Instruction shall report annually to the office detailing the nature of

support the system is providing for the scholars as well the outcomes of this support. The office shall work in conjunction with the reporting agencies regarding the annual goals of the report and substance of the report.

History: CR 10-027: cr. Register September 2010 No. 657, eff. 10-1-10.

HEA 15.09 Wisconsin Covenant College Access Network Council. (1) Pursuant to s. 16.257, Stats., the office shall establish a Wisconsin Covenant College Access Network Council charged with coordinating statewide college access programs and organizations in an effort to minimize duplication of effort and maximize student pursuit of postsecondary education.

Note: Section 16.257, Stats., was repealed by 2011 Wis. Act 32.

(2) The members of this council shall include:

(a) Director, Office of the Wisconsin Covenant;

Note: The Office of the Wisconsin Covenant was eliminated by 2011 Wis. Act 32.

(b) President, University of Wisconsin System;

(c) President, Wisconsin Technical College System;

(d) President, Wisconsin Association of Independent Colleges and Universities;

(e) Superintendent, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction;

(f) Executive Secretary, Higher Education Aids Board.

(3) In addition, the council shall appoint associate members representing each of the following:

(a) A non-profit organization with significant college access programming; and

(b) A non-profit organization that provides significant funding for college access programming; and

(c) A representative from the business community.

History: CR 10-027: cr. Register September 2010 No. 657, eff. 10-1-10; renumbering of (2) and (3) made under s. 13.92 (4) (b) 1., Stats., Register September 2010 No. 657.

HEA 15.10 Reporting system. The reporting system contemplated by s. 39.437 (5) (a), Stats., is established under s. HEA 1.02 and administered by the board. The board shall share this information on an annual basis with the office.

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