

# The Massachusetts Office of Student Financial Assistance



## ***ACTION LETTER***

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Action Letter #1  
September 2005

### **2005-2006 PROGRAMS GUIDELINES UPDATES**

Dear Colleague:

This Action Letter outlines the measures enacted by the Massachusetts Board of Higher Education in response to the results of Hurricane Katrina. Of particular note is the newly created **Commonwealth Hurricane Katrina Emergency Tuition Waiver**. This tuition waiver is effective for the 2005 fall semester. In addition to their inclusion in this Action Letter, the guidelines for Commonwealth Hurricane Katrina Emergency Tuition Waiver will also be published on the Massachusetts Office of Student Financial Assistance website at [www.osfa.mass.edu](http://www.osfa.mass.edu)

This Action Letter includes the following:

- I. The Board of Higher Education's Press Release in response to the results of Hurricane Katrina
- II. Approved Board Motion that established Commonwealth Hurricane Katrina Emergency Tuition Waiver
- III. Commonwealth Hurricane Katrina Emergency Tuition Waiver Guidelines
- IV. Commonwealth Hurricane Katrina Emergency Tuition Waiver Affidavit Form (attached)

**I      BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION PRESS RELEASE**

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
September 5, 2005**

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**Board of Higher Education Waives Tuition for Students Displaced by Katrina**

Boston: Undergraduate students displaced from attending colleges and universities due to Hurricane Katrina will be able to attend public colleges and universities in Massachusetts tuition-free this fall. The Board approved the waiving of tuition Tuesday afternoon. In addition, many campuses have offered to expedite admission, waive fees, help secure student housing where possible and begun fundraising activities.

Students unable to attend an institution due to the effects of Hurricane Katrina will have only to verify that they were admitted to or enrolled in an institution of higher education for fall semester, 2005, to receive the waiver.

Working with presidents of both public and independent colleges throughout the Commonwealth, the Board will provide current information about higher educational opportunities in Massachusetts as well as links to national sites offering guidance on financial aid, admission, and other services on its website <http://www.mass.edu/Katrina>.

In making this announcement, Chairman of the Board Stephen P. Tocco, said that “the higher education community is committed to doing whatever possible to provide continuity and support for students and their families to minimize the disruption and suffering caused by Katrina.” The Board passed a similar waiver in September 2001 for the children and spouses of victims of the tragedy on September 11.

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**II      BOARD MOTION ESTABLISHING KATRINA WAIVER  
**BHE 05-14    September 7, 2005****

The Board of Higher Education hereby amends the Tuition Waiver Program Guidelines, originally adopted December 17, 1991 (EA-92-2), by adding Section U, *Commonwealth Hurricane Katrina Emergency Tuition Waiver*, as attached. Further, the Board of Higher Education requests that public higher education institutions develop waiver programs for eligible students as defined in the attachment that would provide a 100 percent tuition waiver for any non-state supported course or program offered by such public college or university.

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Judith I. Gill  
Chancellor  
September 7, 2005

### **III KATRINA WAIVER GUIDELINES**

#### **DEFINITIONS:**

##### **ELIGIBLE INSTITUTION**

An institution within the system of public institutions of higher education as identified in Section 5 of Chapter 15A of the Massachusetts General Laws.

##### **ELIGIBLE PROGRAM**

Any state-supported course offered by an institution at a public college or university, excluding all graduate courses and courses in the medical degree program at the University of Massachusetts Medical Center. Eligible courses include those toward an undergraduate degree program, certificate program, short-term certificate program, and non-credit courses. Institutions are encouraged to develop waiver programs for eligible students that would provide a 100 percent tuition waiver for any non-state supported course and/or certificate program.

##### **ELIGIBLE STUDENT**

An undergraduate student who is unable to attend an institution due to the effects of Hurricane Katrina and provides as documentation one of the following:

- Verification of admission to or enrollment in an institution of higher education for fall semester, 2005; or
- A signed Commonwealth Hurricane Katrina Emergency Tuition Waiver Affidavit attesting admission or enrollment in an academic program leading to a degree, certificate or other recognized credential for the 2005-2006 academic year at an institution

##### **AWARD VALUE**

Students eligible under this program will be entitled to a tuition waiver equal to 100 percent of the resident or non-resident tuition rate for eligible state-supported courses offered at the participating public higher education institution.

The waiver may be awarded to eligible students for the fall semester 2005. The Board of Higher Education may amend these guidelines to permit the awarding of this waiver for the spring 2006 semester.

## **AWARD PROCEDURE**

Tuition waiver recipients shall be responsible for submitting documentation of eligibility to the institution where he/she will enroll. The institution shall award a waiver equal to the value of required tuition.

## **AUDIT REQUIREMENTS**

- a) It shall be the responsibility of each college and university to maintain documentation of a recipient student's eligibility.
- b) The Chancellor shall require each campus to furnish to the Board of Higher Education a report detailing specific information regarding tuition waiver recipients. The Office of Student Financial Assistance will coordinate specification and procedures for this report.
- c) All financial books, records and documents pertaining to this program shall at all times be open to inspection, review and audit by the Chancellor, the State Auditor or their authorized representatives who shall have access to the premises wherever such books, records and documents are located. The institution shall retain such financial books, records and documents for seven years. An institution may retain such records for a period of five years if approval is received from the Records Conservation Board in accordance with General Laws, Chapter 30, Section 42.

Please contact the Massachusetts Office of Student Financial Assistance at 617.727.9420 if you have any questions or need assistance.