

**BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION**  
**REQUEST FOR COMMITTEE AND BOARD ACTION**

**COMMITTEE:** Fiscal Affairs and Administrative Policy      **NO.:** FAAP 13-18

**COMMITTEE DATE:** October 9, 2012

**BOARD DATE:** October 16, 2012

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**APPROVAL OF MASSACHUSETTS HIGH DEMAND PROFESSIONS SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM GUIDELINES**

**MOVED:**            The Board of Higher Education approves the attached guidelines for the Massachusetts High Demand Professions Scholarship Program.

**Authority:**            Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 15A, Section 9B; Section 2 of Chapter 139 of the Acts of 2012

**Contact:**            Dr. Clantha McCurdy, Senior Deputy Commissioner, Access and Student Financial Assistance

## Background

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts has set a goal to lead the nation in economic development, including having the best skilled and educated workforce. Although Massachusetts is well positioned to compete in the knowledge-based economy, a major obstacle to sustained economic growth continues to be a shortage of highly skilled workers to meet our business and industry demands, especially for some professions. In the Fiscal Year 2013 budget, the Massachusetts Legislature appropriated \$3.2 million that is identified as financial aid to support the training and education of students who are enrolled in and pursuing programs of study in high demand professions. The Legislature has charged the Department of Higher Education with designing such a program, based on annual labor market conditions data, provided by the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development. Through this effort, the Massachusetts High Demand Scholarship program is created to increase the number of highly trained and educated workers to meet the Commonwealth's labor force needs in critical areas. This scholarship program will support students who are committed to completing college majors and certificates training programs for high demand professions.

Based on the most current data from the Executive Office of Workforce Development, the Massachusetts High Demand Professions Scholarship program (MHDSP) will support students pursuing programs of study in specific professions, and who plan to work in those areas upon graduation. For the first cycle of awards, high demand disciplines designated for scholarship eligibility at the associate or bachelor's degree will include those in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM); Nursing and other health professions disciplines such as radiology, Occupational Therapy, medical and clinical laboratory technology; Elementary and Secondary Education (except Special Education); and Business, specifically finance and accounting. Certificate programs will include License Practical Nursing, Dental Assistants, and computer technology. The high demand fields are current estimates of the Department of Labor and Workforce Development that are tied to long term projections on jobs and occupations, based on the Occupational Employment and Wage Statistics (OES) program, from 2010 to 2020. These disciplines reflect a certain expected growth in occupations and further project the number of likely replacements, as the Massachusetts workforce continues to age.

The attached guidelines outline the parameters of the program, define campus responsibilities, and establish the administrative process for student eligibility, certification and funds disbursement. The Department of Higher Education will conduct an annual review of this program and make revisions to the eligibility criteria, including updating high demand professions designated by the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, as necessary.

## **BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION**

### **MASSACHUSETTS HIGH-DEMAND PROFESSIONS SCHOLARSHIP**

#### **PURPOSE**

The Massachusetts High Demand Professions Scholarship program was created by the Massachusetts Legislature to support economic development in the Commonwealth by providing financial assistance to residents who are pursuing programs of study that will help address the Commonwealth's workforce needs. The program will provide scholarships to students to encourage enrollment and completion of training and degree programs identified by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development's annual reports on labor market conditions.

#### **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 undergraduate degree or certificate program offered by an eligible institution, and identified by the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development as a high-demand occupation.

#### **STUDENT ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS**

An undergraduate student who has been admitted to an eligible institution and meets the following requirements:

- a) is a permanent legal resident of Massachusetts for at least one year prior to the start of the academic year;
- b) is a United States citizen or a non-citizen eligible under Federal Title IV regulations;
- c) has declared a major or is currently pursuing a program of study offered and verifiable by the institution that is also designated as a high-demand professions by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development;
- d) annually files the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA);
- e) has completed the High-Demand Professions Scholarship application and signed the program terms and conditions;
- f) maintains a minimum GPA of 3.0 annually and demonstrates Satisfactory Academic Progress in accordance with institutional standards;

- g) is not in default with applicable law regarding any Federal or State student education loans for attendance at any institution or owes a refund for any previous financial aid received;
- h) if required, is in compliance with applicable law regarding Selective Service Registration;

**AWARD VALUE**

The following are maximum award values; final award values will be based on the Award Procedure, below. Awards for eligible applicants under this program may be used to support tuition, fees and related educational costs, and shall be based on the type of institution and the student's enrollment status as follows:

Community College Students

- \$4,000 per year or \$2,000 per semester - Full-time enrollment (12 credits or more)
- \$2,000 per year or \$1,000 per semester - Part-time enrollment (6-11 credits)

State University Students

- \$5,500 per year or \$2,750 per semester - Full-time enrollment (12 credits or more)
- \$2,750 per year or \$1,375 per semester - Part-time enrollment (6-11 credits)

University of Massachusetts Students

- \$6,500 per year or \$3,250 per semester - Full-time enrollment (12 credits or more)
- \$3,250 per year or \$1,625 per semester - Part-time enrollment (6-11 credits)

Awards are limited to a maximum of four years (eight semesters) for full-time enrollment at a four-year institution, and four semesters for full-time enrollment at a community college.

Part-time students who enroll in consecutive semesters may receive scholarship assistance for a maximum total of eight semesters at a community college; or up to a maximum of twelve semesters if enrolled in consecutive semesters at a four-year college or university.

Students may receive an additional payment up to \$1,000 for summer study at a four-year institution, or \$500 at a community college, if funds are available after all academic year awards are disbursed. Summer awards are limited to a maximum of three terms (one per academic year) for any student attending a four-year or two-year college or university.

The academic year and/or semester awards for this program may be reduced by the Department of Higher Education in accordance with the award procedure, below, and/or if the annual appropriation is not sufficient to meet the maximum scholarship award for the eligible pool of applicants.

The Department of Higher Education will annually review the tuition and fee charges at Massachusetts public colleges and universities and adjust the program award values, as it deems necessary.

## **AWARD PROCEDURE**

Scholarships under this program shall be awarded only to applicants who meet all program eligibility criteria, and may be prioritized based on one or more of the following:

- Awarded only to students who complete the High-Demand Scholarship application and FAFSA by the published priority deadline
- Awarded in proportion to the labor and workforce demand for each discipline/profession, based on data provided by the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, as determined by the Department of Higher Education
- Awarded based on demonstrated student potential for excellence in the discipline/profession including high academic achievement
- Awarded on the basis of demonstrated financial need, based on reported Expected Family Contribution (EFC), to promote access to scholarship funds by diverse populations within academic levels (year of study such as freshman, sophomore, junior, senior), as determined by the Department of Higher Education

Institutions are required to adjust a student's financial aid package, if the sum total of all financial aid, including the High Demand Scholarship, results in an "over award", as defined under Title IV regulations governing federal aid, and related state financial aid policies.

The Board of Higher Education will annually review this scholarship program and, based upon its findings, may revise award procedures accordingly.

## **INSTITUTIONAL DISBURSEMENT OF SCHOLARSHIPS**

Each participating institution must certify that the recipient is eligible in accordance with guidelines established for the High Demand Scholarship program and verify that the student is pursuing a program of study in a designated and approved high demand profession.

Academic year awards will be disbursed in equal payments for the fall and spring semesters. Institutions are required to comply with the Office of Student Financial Assistance's refund policy for any scholarship recipient who is no longer eligible for funds, or who is no longer enrolled.

In addition to completing the verification of enrollment status (credits and GPA) for students each semester, institutions are also responsible for providing the Department of Higher Education and the Office of Student Financial Assistance with related data for scholarship recipients, as requested and required under the annual Institutional Participation Agreement for Massachusetts State Financial Aid.

## **PARTICIPATION AGREEMENTS**

All institutions receiving funds under the Massachusetts High Demand Professions Scholarship Program for eligible recipients must have an active Massachusetts State Financial Aid Participation Agreement on file with the Office of Student Financial Assistance.

## **AUDIT REQUIREMENTS**

- a) It shall be the responsibility of each college and university to maintain documentation of a recipient student's eligibility for the Massachusetts High Demand Professions Scholarship Program.
- b) The Commissioner shall require each campus to furnish annually to the Board of Higher Education a report detailing specific information regarding recipients of the Massachusetts High Demand Professions Scholarship Program. 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 Commissioner, 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.