

BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION
REQUEST FOR COMMITTEE AND BOARD ACTION

COMMITTEE: Fiscal Affairs and Administrative Policy **NO.:** FAAP 10-10

COMMITTEE DATE: December 1, 2009

BOARD DATE: December 8, 2009

AMENDED GUIDELINES FOR VALEDICTORIAN PROGRAM TUITION WAIVER

MOVED: The Board of Higher Education hereby adopts the attached amended guidelines for the Valedictorian Tuition Waiver Program.

Authority: Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 15A, Section 9 (i) and 19

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

Motion Background

The Valedictorian Program recognizes students ranked first in their high school graduation class who enroll in a public college or university. Each Valedictorian is awarded a waiver of tuition for undergraduate degree programs (state-supported courses only). On average, less than \$100,000 of tuition is waived annually for eligible students under this program.

The initial guidelines required institutions to request approval of a waiver expenditure appropriation for each semester. This process has proven cumbersome, and institutions do not always comply with this requirement. Given the relatively low number of waivers granted each year, the amended guidelines eliminate this provision, while also providing further clarification of student eligibility to guide institutions in the awarding of this waiver.

SECTION S: VALEDICTORIAN PROGRAM TUITION WAIVER

DEFINITIONS:

ELIGIBLE INSTITUTIONS:

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

ELIGIBLE PROGRAM:

Any state-supported undergraduate degree program offered by an eligible institution.

ELIGIBLE STUDENT:

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

- a) a student who has graduated (earning a high school diploma) from a Massachusetts public or private high school and ranked first in the graduating class, or otherwise designated as the Valedictorian by the appropriate school authorities
- b) is a permanent legal resident of Massachusetts for at least one year prior to the start of the academic year and who is a United States citizen or non-citizen eligible under Title IV regulations
- c) is enrolled full-time in a Massachusetts college or university in the first traditional academic semester (fall) following high school graduation
- d) continues to enroll as a full-time student in consecutive traditional semesters in an eligible Massachusetts college or university.
- e) maintains satisfactory academic progress in accordance with institutional standards
- f) annually files the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)
- g) maintains Satisfactory Academic Progress in accordance with institutional standards
- h) is in compliance with applicable law regarding Selective Service
- i) is not in default with applicable law regarding any federal or state education loans for attendance at any institution or owes a refund for any previous financial aid received

AWARD VALUE:

The Board of Higher Education is authorized to award non-need-based tuition waivers for state-supported undergraduate courses to students designated as the Valedictorian of their high school class.

The award under this program shall be equal to the value of required tuition (not including fees) for all state-supported undergraduate courses. The waiver of tuition may be awarded to eligible students for a maximum of four years or eight semesters of continuous enrollment (not including summer terms).

AWARD PROCEDURE:

Institutions may award the Valedictorian Tuition Waiver on the basis of documentation received through the admissions process. Valedictorians, however, may also submit proof of their eligibility for this waiver to the institution to facilitate the awarding of the tuition waiver.

The institution shall award tuition waivers to eligible students based on the defined eligibility criteria and any institution specific criteria as established by the participating college or university.

PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT:

All institutions must file a State Financial Aid Participation Agreement to be maintained on file in the State Office of Student Financial Assistance.

AUDIT REQUIREMENTS:

- a) It shall be the responsibility of each college and university to maintain adequate documentation of a student's eligibility
- b) The Commissioner shall require each campus to furnish annually by August 31 a report detailing the number of Valedictorian Program Waiver recipients for the previous year and the corresponding amount of tuition waived
- 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.