

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

**COMMITTEE:** Fiscal Affairs and Administrative Policy      **NO.:** FAAP 11-27

**COMMITTEE DATE:** March 15, 2011

**BOARD DATE:** March 22, 2011

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**JOHN AND ABIGAIL ADAMS SCHOLARSHIP GUIDELINES**

**MOVED:**            The Board of Higher Education hereby adopts the following amended Guidelines for the John and Abigail Adams Scholarship Program.

**Authority:**            Massachusetts General Laws, Chapter 15A, Sections 9(i) and 16

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

## **John and Abigail Adams Scholarship**

### **Background Information**

The John and Abigail Adams Scholarship Program was established by the Board of Higher Education in June 2004. The program provides four years (eight semesters) of free tuition for state-supported undergraduate degree programs at public higher education institutions in Massachusetts. The John and Abigail Adams Scholarship was created to: (1) reward and inspire student achievement; (2) attract more high-performing students to Massachusetts public higher education; and (3) provide families of college-bound students with financial assistance

As stipulated in the program guidelines, the Board of Higher Education is charged with conducting annual reviews of the Adams Scholarship program and to make revisions as warranted. The attached guidelines incorporate four changes that are designed to improve the effectiveness and impact of the program, and to allow greater flexibility for students in their utilization of the scholarship. These changes are:

- Adding the Science component of the MCAS as a standard for scholarship selection, effective with the high school graduating Class of 2016
- Increasing the length of time that a student is permitted to utilize the Adams Scholarship Tuition Waiver support from four years to six years beyond high school graduation (the maximum eight semester eligibility remains unchanged)
- Allowing students who fail to initially attend a Massachusetts public college immediately after graduating from high school, an opportunity to receive the Adams Scholarship Tuition Waiver support upon transfer to a Massachusetts public college
- Revising the program guidelines to permit a designee of the Commissioner to review and grant appeals for students seeking continued scholarship eligibility

In January, the Board of Higher Education was presented with a comprehensive overview of the John and Abigail Adams Scholarship program. This information included a review of the program's purpose, annual costs to the Commonwealth, and an examination of the scholarship selection criteria and award process. The recommended changes are a result of the Board's discussion, dialogue with the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and feedback from public college and university presidents and chancellors. These changes are not expected to significantly impact the number of students that will qualify annually for the John and Abigail Adams Scholarship. The changes will, however, result in greater flexibility for students who seek to benefit from the program throughout the course of their undergraduate careers.

**BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION  
JOHN AND ABIGAIL ADAMS SCHOLARSHIP**

**DEFINITIONS:**

***ELIGIBLE INSTITUTION:***

An institution within the system of public institutions of higher education as identified in Section 5 of Chapter 1 5A of the Massachusetts General Laws, except those institutions retaining Massachusetts resident tuition payments.

***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 requirements:

- a) has graduated from or under the auspices of a Massachusetts public high school, and  
  
as of June 2005 thru June 2015, and by the end of the junior year, was in the highest 25 percent in their district on the 10<sup>th</sup> grade Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) English Language Arts and Mathematics test, and scored in the Advanced category on one test and Proficient or Advanced on the other test; **or**  
  
as of June 2016 or thereafter, and by the end of their junior year, was in the highest 25 percent in their district on the 10<sup>th</sup> grade Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System (MCAS) English Language Arts, Mathematics and Science test, and scored in the Advanced category on one test and Proficient or Advanced on the other tests  
  
(Note: an earned GED does not fulfill the high school graduation requirement)
- 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 a non-citizen eligible under Federal Title IV guidelines
- c) is enrolled full-time in a Massachusetts public college or university
- d) maintains a cumulative 3.0 GPA on all academic coursework at the institution awarding the degree; or if transferring, has maintained a cumulative 3.0 GPA at the transfer institution;

*(The institution is responsible for verifying the cumulative GPA at the end of the spring semester of each academic year; if the student drops below the required 3.0 GPA, the scholarship is permanently forfeited.)*

- e) annually files the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)
- f) maintains Satisfactory Academic Progress in accordance with institutional standards

- g) is in compliance with applicable law regarding Selective Service Registration
- h) 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

The institution may not grant an exception to the above requirements. In rare and extenuating circumstances, the Commissioner, or the Commissioner's designee, may permit an exception to the above criteria and authorize (in writing) the institution to award the Adams Scholarship. In such cases, supporting documentation must be provided by the student and maintained by the institution and the Office of Student Financial Assistance.

#### **AWARD VALUE:**

The award under this program shall be equal to the value of required tuition (not including fees) for all state-supported undergraduate courses.

The scholarship may be awarded to eligible students for a maximum of eight semesters of enrollment (not including summer terms), which must occur within six years following high school graduation.

The program will be awarded at no cost to the institution.

#### **AWARD PROCEDURE**

Beginning with the Class of 2005, the State Department of Education will annually certify the eligibility of student recipients for the John and Abigail Adams Scholarship. Consistent with other programs, the State Department of Education will provide students with a letter of eligibility and provide the Board of Higher Education and Office of Student Financial Assistance with a list of eligible students designated as Adams Scholarship recipients.

Each John and Abigail Adams Scholarship recipient shall be responsible for submitting documentation of eligibility to the institution where he/she will enroll.

The Office of Student Financial Assistance shall annually provide institutions with a roster of eligible students that have met the requirements of completing the FAFSA. Institutions may use this roster to verify student eligibility whenever other documentation is not available.

The institution shall award scholarships equal to the value of required tuition. The Adams Scholarship is a non-need based program. Financial need is not a requirement for eligibility. However, recipients must meet all requirements as defined for eligible students including filing the FAFSA.

#### **ANNUAL REVIEW**

One year after the date of implementation, the Board of Higher Education shall evaluate the effectiveness of this program to determine adjustments to the selection and eligibility criteria, as necessary and as warranted by state-wide performance of students on the MCAS, and by any changes to the exam contents (e.g., the addition of Science and History test to the competency determination). Thereafter, a comprehensive evaluation will be conducted annually to assess the program's effectiveness, the results of which will be reported to the Governor and members of the Massachusetts Legislature.

## **PARTICIPATION AGREEMENTS**

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 documentation of a recipient student's eligibility for the John and Abigail Adams Scholarship.
- 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 John and Abigail Adams 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.