

**Massachusetts Assistance for Student Success
Program**

XVII. Gear Up Scholarship

GEAR UP SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM GUIDELINES

PURPOSE:

The Higher Education Amendments of 1998 launched GEAR UP, a national effort to encourage more young people to have high expectations, stay in school and study hard, and go to college. Through the Board of Higher Education, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts received a GEAR UP State Grant to provide early college awareness activities, improved academic support, information on paying for college, and scholarship. These guidelines establish the terms and criteria for awarding scholarships to GEAR UP participants as required by the United States Department of Education.

DEFINITIONS:

ELIGIBLE INSTITUTION:

An eligible institution is defined as a state-approved public, private, independent, for profit or nonprofit institution in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts authorized to offer undergraduate degrees, certificates or diploma programs and that is also approved by the U.S. Department of Education to administer Title IV programs. Massachusetts state-approved public, private, independent and non-profit institutions located in states that have reciprocity agreements with and approved by the Commonwealth (PA, VT, and the District of Columbia) and award associate and bachelor's degrees are also eligible to participate.

ELIGIBLE PROGRAM:

An eligible degree or certificate 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) is fewer than 22 years of age at time of first scholarship award
- b) participated in the Early Intervention component of GEAR UP Massachusetts
- c) has graduated from a Massachusetts public high school beginning in 2005
- d) is a permanent legal resident of Massachusetts for at least one year prior to the start of the academic year and
- e) is a United States citizen or a non-citizen eligible under Federal Title IV
- f) is enrolled full- or part-time in an eligible program at an eligible institution
- g) annually files the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

- h) maintains Satisfactory Academic Progress in accordance with institutional standards
- j) is not in default of any federal or state student education loan for attendance at any institution or owes a refund for any previous financial aid received
- k) has not reached the maximum number of semesters of eligibility under the program

AWARD VALUE:

- a) The minimum amount of the GEAR UP scholarship for each academic year shall not be less than the minimum Federal Pell Grant as published (Section 401, Federal Regs)
- b) GEAR UP scholarships may consist of awards from one or more state financial aid programs
- c) GEAR UP scholarships shall not be considered for the purpose of awarding other federal grant assistance, except in no case shall the total amount of the student financial assistance awarded to a student exceed such student's total cost of attendance
- d) GEAR UP scholarships may be awarded to eligible students for a maximum of one year or two semesters.

AWARD PROCEDURE:

Beginning with the Class of 2005, the Board of Higher Education will annually identify participating GEAR UP Massachusetts students.

- a) Institutions will be required to certify the attendance of GEAR UP Massachusetts students in each fall and spring and provide information regarding the amount of financial aid awarded to these students from all sources.
- b) GEAR UP scholarship funds are disbursed to the institution in two payments for the fall and spring semesters for students for whom eligibility has been certified by the institution.
- c) Payment of GEAR UP funds is sent directly to the institution from the Commonwealth's Comptroller's Office. One hundred percent of the GEAR UP Scholarship shall be used to credit the student's account.
- d) All refunds shall be sent to the Office of Student Financial Assistance and checks made payable to the Commonwealth of Massachusetts GEAR UP Scholarship Fund.

PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT:

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

AUDIT REQUIREMENTS:

- a) It shall be the responsibility of each college and university to maintain adequate documentation of a recipient student's eligibility for the GEAR UP 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 GEAR UP Scholarship Program. The Office of Student Financial Assistance will coordinate specification and procedures for this report to Financial Assistance.
- c) All financial books, records and documents pertaining to this program shall at all times be open to discussion, 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.