
THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF PENNSYLVANIA

SENATE BILL

No. 373 Session of
2007

INTRODUCED BY BOSCOLA, O'PAKE, WASHINGTON, GREENLEAF, ERICKSON,
MUSTO, KASUNIC, LAVALLE, KITCHEN, FONTANA, COSTA AND BROWNE,
MARCH 13, 2007

REFERRED TO EDUCATION, MARCH 13, 2007

AN ACT

1 Providing for academic excellence scholarships for persons
2 entering a college or university within this Commonwealth.

3 The General Assembly of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
4 hereby enacts as follows:

5 Section 1. Short title.

6 This act shall be known and may be cited as the Academic
7 Excellence Scholarship Program Act.

8 Section 2. Purpose.

9 The purpose of this act is to reward educational excellence
10 and provide an incentive to Pennsylvania students to pursue
11 higher education.

12 Section 3. Definitions.

13 The following words and phrases when used in this act shall
14 have the meanings given to them in this section unless the
15 context clearly indicates otherwise:

16 "Agency." The Pennsylvania Higher Education Assistance
17 Agency.

1 "Approved educational institution." A postsecondary
2 educational institution located in this Commonwealth that is
3 authorized to provide approved courses of study and grant
4 degrees, and has been approved by the Pennsylvania Higher
5 Education Assistance Agency as an institution in which students
6 may enroll to participate in the Academic Excellence Scholarship
7 Program.

8 "Grant." The term includes a program grant and a scholarship
9 grant.

10 "Program." The Academic Excellence Scholarship Program
11 established under section 4.

12 "Program grant." A grant issued under section 4.

13 "Scholarship grant." A grant issued under section 6.

14 "Student." A school-age resident of this Commonwealth who
15 attends or is about to attend a secondary school or
16 postsecondary educational institution located in this
17 Commonwealth and whose annual family income does not exceed
18 \$250,000.

19 "Work requirement." Postgraduate, full-time employment with
20 an employer located in this Commonwealth. The term does not
21 include a paid student internship, a paid fellowship, volunteer
22 service or employment before graduation.

23 Section 4. Academic Excellence Scholarship Program.

24 (a) Establishment of program.--The Academic Excellence
25 Scholarship Program is established within the agency.

26 (b) Issuance of program grants.--

27 (1) The agency may provide program grants which may be
28 referred to as Academic Excellence Scholarship Program
29 Grants, to not more than 1,000 students. If more than 1,000
30 students apply, a lottery system shall be employed. The

1 program grants may be issued to students only upon
2 confirmation from approved educational institutions to which
3 the students have enrolled full time immediately following
4 their high school graduation.

5 (2) The program grants shall be for the amount set forth
6 in section 5(a) and shall only be used for tuition and
7 mandatory fees.

8 (3) The program grants shall be awarded solely on the
9 basis of merit and without regard to need.

10 (c) Eligibility.--To receive a program grant under this
11 section, a student shall meet all of the following requirements:

12 (1) Maintenance of Pennsylvania residency during the
13 term of the program grant.

14 (2) Graduation within the top five percent from a high
15 school in this Commonwealth. The student must have attended a
16 public or private high school within this Commonwealth during
17 the junior and senior years.

18 (3) High school grade point average of 95%.

19 (4) Scholastic Achievement Test score of no less than
20 1400.

21 (5) Maintenance of a grade point average of 3.0 or
22 higher, on a scale of 4.0, or its equivalent, beginning with
23 the first semester of the freshman year and through the term
24 of the program grant.

25 (6) Entrance into a written agreement with the agency
26 to:

27 (i) Satisfy all degree requirements for graduation
28 unless the agency determines that there are extenuating
29 circumstances.

30 (ii) Commence employment in this Commonwealth within

one year after completion of an undergraduate degree for a period of two years.

(iii) Reimburse the Commonwealth all amounts received under this act and interest thereon, as determined by the agency, if the student fails to comply with subparagraph (i).

(iv) Reimburse the Commonwealth 50% of the amount received under this act and interest thereon, as determined by the agency, if the student fails to comply with subparagraph (ii).

(d) Application.--A student must apply to the agency for a program grant as prescribed by the agency, to include the provision of all information and documentation required by the agency. The application of a student under 18 years of age must include the signature of a parent or guardian. The application must include a verified statement of grade point average from the appropriate educational institution.

(e) Work requirement.--The work requirement under subsection (c)(5)(ii) shall begin after the receipt of bachelor's degree from an approved educational institution.

(f) Termination.--If a student who has received a program grant terminates enrollment in the approved educational institution during the academic year or prior to completion, the approved education institution shall notify the agency in writing and shall return all unused portions of the program grant. Returned amounts shall be used to fund other program grants under this act.

(g) Transfer.--A program grant may only be transferrable to another educational institution if approved by the agency.

(h) Limitation.--A program grant shall be paid from funds

1 appropriated for that purpose. First priority for awarding
2 program grants shall be given to renewal applicants. Thereafter,
3 the program grants shall be awarded on a first-come-first-served
4 basis.

5 Section 5. Academic Excellence Scholarships.

6 (a) Amount of scholarship grants.--In addition to the
7 program grants issued under section 4, the agency shall issue
8 grants under this program, which grants may be referred to as
9 Academic Excellence Scholarships in the amount of \$5,000 per
10 academic year, to a student enrolled full time in an approved
11 educational institution pursuing a bachelor's degree. The
12 student shall take at least 12 semester hours or their
13 equivalent.

14 (b) Term of grant.--The scholarship grant shall be for a
15 maximum of four consecutive academic years.

16 (c) Exception.--If the student fails to meet the GPA
17 requirements during a semester and is denied scholarship grant
18 money, the student may reapply the following year for a second
19 chance program grant and shall continue at the student's expense
20 for the next year. If the student earns 3.0 at the end of that
21 year, the student may reapply for the remaining years. If the
22 student does not obtain a GPA of 3.0 or higher within the year
23 following dismissal from the program, the student may not
24 reapply.

25 Section 6. Administration.

26 (a) Verification.--The agency shall monitor and verify a
27 student's fulfillment of all the work requirements under this
28 act.

29 (b) Enforcement.--The agency shall enforce repayment of all
30 grants for a student who does not comply with the provisions of

1 this act, to include use of all lawful collection procedures and
2 the use of private collection agencies.

3 (c) Exclusion from taxation.--No grant received by a student
4 shall not be considered taxable income for purposes of Article
5 III of the act of March 4, 1971 (P.L.6, No.2), known as the Tax
6 Reform Code of 1971.

7 (d) Financial assistance.--No grant received by a student
8 shall be considered financial assistance or appropriations to
9 the approved education institution.

10 (e) Appeals.--The provisions of this act shall be subject to
11 2 Pa.C.S. Ch. 5 Subch. A (relating to practice and procedure of
12 Commonwealth agencies).

13 (f) Regulations.--The agency shall adopt regulations and
14 procedures necessary to carry out the purposes of this act.

15 Section 7. Effective date.

16 This act shall take effect July 1, 2008, or immediately,
17 whichever is later.