

Archived Information



Robert C. Byrd Honors Scholarship Program

The Robert C. Byrd Honors Scholarship Program is authorized under Title IV, Part A, Subpart 6 of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended. Under this program, the Secretary of Education (the Secretary) makes available, through grants to the states, scholarships to exceptionally able students for study at postsecondary schools in order to recognize and promote student excellence and achievement. Student recipients under this program are known as Byrd Scholars.

SELECTION OF SCHOLARS

To apply for a scholarship, a student follows the application procedures established by the State Educational Agency (SEA) in the state in which he or she is a legal resident. A "state" is any of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, Virgin Islands, Northern Mariana Islands, Federated States of Micronesia, Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau. The SEA is the state board of education (or other agency in the state) that is primarily responsible for the supervision of public elementary and secondary schools.

The SEA establishes procedures for selecting the scholars after consulting with school administrators, school boards, teachers, counselors, and parents. Before each state's selection criteria and application procedures are implemented, they are reviewed and approved by the Department.

Under a provision of the Omnibus Consolidated Rescissions and Appropriations Act of 1996 (Public Law 104-134), each scholarship must be prorated so that the number of new scholarship awards for 1997-98 is maintained at the same level as the new scholarships awarded in 1996-97. The amount each Byrd Scholar may receive for 1997-98 will again be prorated, as it was for 1996-97. For the 1997-98 award year, both first year and continuing scholars will receive a prorated scholarship amount of up to \$1,110 for full-time study.

Purpose of program

Definition of state

Procedures for selecting scholars established by the SEA

Scholarship amount will be prorated

A year of study under current Byrd regulations means the period of time during which a full-time student at an institution of higher education is expected to complete the equivalent of one year of coursework (as defined by the school).

Renewability of awards

Awards can be renewed for up to three additional years, provided that funds are appropriated and students remain eligible. This continuing eligibility is discussed further on page 9-17 of this section.

Selection criteria designed for equitable representation

Each SEA designs its own selection criteria and procedures to ensure that it selects scholars for each award period for which funds are received according to the following allotments:

- ◇ For each state, no fewer than the number of scholars allotted to that state by the Secretary under the statutory formula are selected.
- ◇ For the District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, Virgin Islands, the Northern Mariana Islands, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau, no fewer than 10 scholarships from each of these jurisdiction's residents are selected.
- ◇ For all participating states, enough scholars are selected to award all funds allotted for scholarships for each award period.

In addition, the SEA

- ◇ selects scholars solely on the basis of demonstrated outstanding academic achievement and promise of continued achievement;
- ◇ selects scholars in such a way that each part of the state, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico is represented fairly; and
- ◇ selects scholars regardless of
 - whether the secondary schools they attend are within or outside the scholars' states of legal residence;
 - whether the postsecondary schools they plan to attend are public or private or are within or outside their states of legal residence;

- the scholars' sex, race, color, national origin, religion, disability, or economic background; and
- the scholars' education expenses or financial need, except that the total amount of financial aid awarded to a scholar for a year of study may not exceed the scholar's total cost of attendance.

A scholar may attend any public or private nonprofit institution of higher education, proprietary institution of higher education, or postsecondary vocational institution as defined in Chapter 3.

Under current program regulations, a student who is attending a secondary school outside of his or her state of residency must apply for a Byrd Scholarship through the SEA of his or her state of residency. This would include a student who was attending a U.S. Department of Defense overseas school or an out-of-state boarding school.

ELIGIBILITY TO RECEIVE SCHOLARSHIP

To receive a Byrd Scholarship, each student must meet the criteria listed below during the same secondary academic year in which the student submits the scholarship application.

The student must

- ◇ graduate from a public or private secondary school or receive the recognized equivalent of a high school diploma as recognized by the state in which the student resides, and
- ◇ have applied or been accepted for enrollment at an institution of higher education as a full-time student.

Note that the "recognized equivalent of a high school diploma" means

- ◇ a General Education Development (GED) Certificate, or
- ◇ a state certificate received by a student after the student has passed a state-authorized examination that the state recognizes as the equivalent of a high school diploma.

A full-time student is one who is enrolled at an institution of higher education and who is carrying a full-time academic workload as determined by the school under standards applicable to all students enrolled in the same program.

***Schools
scholars may
attend***

***Students
apply
through their
state of
residency***

***Full-time
student***

**Additional
eligibility
requirements
for selection**

In addition to the two requirements listed on the previous page, a student is eligible to be selected as a scholar if he or she

- ◇ is a legal resident of the state to which he or she is applying for a scholarship;
- ◇ is a U.S. citizen or national, or provides evidence from the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) that he or she is
 - a permanent resident of the United States; or
 - in the United States for other than a temporary purpose and has the intention of becoming a citizen or permanent resident;
- ◇ is a citizen of the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, or the Republic of Palau;
- ◇ is not ineligible to receive assistance as a result of default on a federal student loan or other obligation, in accordance with the Education Department General Administrative Regulations (34 CFR Part 75.60);
- ◇ is registered with the Selective Service if required in accordance with the Student Assistance General Provisions regulations (34 CFR Part 668); and
- ◇ is planning to pursue a course of study at an institution of higher education.

A scholar is deemed to be “pursuing a course of study” if he or she is enrolled as a full-time student, as determined by the school he or she is attending under standards applicable to all students enrolled in the same course of study.

CONTINUING ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

A scholar continues to be eligible for scholarship funds as long as he or she continues to

- ◇ meet the citizenship/permanent resident requirements listed on the previous page,
- ◇ be enrolled as a full-time student at an institution of higher education, and

- ◇ maintain the satisfactory academic progress standards of the school in accordance with the Student Assistance General Provisions.

Byrd Scholars must be enrolled full time for the first year of study. If, after the first year of study, the SEA determines that unusual circumstances justify waiving the full-time attendance requirement, the scholar may enroll part time and continue to receive a scholarship payment.

Part-time enrollment allowed after first year

The SEA must prorate any payment for a scholar enrolled part time according to the scholar's enrollment status for the academic period during which he or she

- ◇ continues to be enrolled part time, and
- ◇ remains otherwise eligible for the award.

The example below shows how a Byrd Scholarship is paid when full-time attendance is waived.

EXAMPLE:

During the 1997-98 year, Michelle S. enrolls full time for the fall semester and enrolls half time for the spring semester. During the spring semester, Michelle's full-time enrollment requirement has been waived. Michelle would then be eligible for half of her full scholarship for the fall:

$$\$1,110 \times 1/2 = \$555$$

Because Michelle will be attending half time in the spring and her full-time attendance requirement has been waived, she will be eligible to receive half of the remaining \$555, or \$277.50.

A scholar who fails to meet any of the eligibility requirements within an award year will have his or her scholarship suspended by the SEA. The scholar's eligibility remains suspended until the scholar is able to demonstrate to the satisfaction of the SEA that he or she meets these requirements. Once the suspension period reaches 12 months, the scholar's eligibility for that scholarship is terminated.

Scholarship suspension

**Postponement
of enrollment**

In exceptional circumstances (defined by the SEA) the scholar's 12-month suspension period may be extended without terminating the scholar's eligibility.

A state agency may permit a scholar to postpone or interrupt his or her enrollment at a postsecondary school for up to 12 months, beginning on the date the scholar otherwise would have enrolled in the school after the state agency awarded him or her the scholarship or on the date the scholar interrupts enrollment.

Each state agency establishes standards to determine when it will approve a period of postponement or interruption for a scholar. If the state does approve the postponement or interruption, it must document the scholar's subsequent enrollment.

A scholar who postpones or interrupts his or her enrollment is not eligible to receive scholarship funds during the period of postponement or interruption. Upon enrollment or reenrollment at an institution of higher education, the scholar resumes eligibility to receive scholarship payments. Note that these periods of postponement or interruption are not considered in calculating the scholar's period of suspension. Thus, any period of postponement or interruption will not be counted against the scholar in calculating the 12 months of suspension.



**Scholarship
funds cannot
be used to
attend foreign
school**

Byrd Scholarships are awarded for a period of not more than four years for the first four years of study. If the Byrd Scholar completes his or her undergraduate course of study in three years, that scholar is eligible to receive scholarship funds for only those three years of undergraduate study.

Note that a Byrd Scholar may not use his or her scholarship to attend a foreign school. The scholar must attend an eligible postsecondary education institution that is located in one of the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, the Virgin Islands, Guam, the Northern Mariana Islands, American Samoa, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau.

However, a scholar who is studying abroad through an institution (home school) that meets the definition of higher education and is located in a state (as described in the previous paragraph) is considered to be eligible to receive funds as long as he or she is

- ◇ enrolled at the home school; and
- ◇ receives credit from the home school.

ALLOCATION FORMULA

The Secretary uses the formula illustrated below to assign Byrd Scholarships to each participating state:

FORMULA

$$\frac{\text{Number of scholarships made to the individual state}}{\text{Number of scholarships made to all states}} = \frac{\text{That individual state's ages 5-17 population}}{\text{All states' ages 5-17 population}}$$

The population figures used in this formula are determined from the most recently available data from the Bureau of the Census.

PACKAGING OF BYRD SCHOLARSHIP WITH OTHER SFA FUNDS

Under Byrd regulations that took effect in September 1993, the SEA must ensure that the total amount of federal financial aid awarded to the Byrd Scholar does not exceed the scholar's total cost of attendance. If any federal loans are part of the scholar's financial aid package, they must be reduced prior to reducing the Byrd Scholarship. If the scholar is receiving a Pell Grant, though, the Byrd Scholarship must be reduced prior to reducing the Pell Grant. Section 419 J of the Higher Education Act, as amended, states that a Federal Pell Grant must not be reduced on the basis of the receipt of a Byrd Scholarship.

Byrd scholarship must be reduced prior to reducing a Pell Grant