
Robert C. Byrd Honors Scholarship Program

Under this program, the Secretary of Education 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.

APPLYING FOR A SCHOLARSHIP

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, and the Freely Associated States (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. You can find a list of contacts for these agencies (in PDF format) at the following web site:

<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OPE/OHEP/idues/byrd.html>

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 *FSA Handbook: Volume 2, Institutional Eligibility and Participation*. 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 attending a U.S. Department of Defense overseas school or an out-of-state boarding school.

STATE ESTABLISHES SCHOLARSHIP SELECTION CRITERIA

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.

Byrd Program Contacts

OPE maintains a website on the Byrd Program at: <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OPE/HEP/idues/byrd.html#perform>

This website has contact information if you have questions about the Byrd Program (it is not administered by FSA)

Selection Criteria Designed to Meet State Funding Allotments

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:

- Each state selects no fewer than the number of scholars allotted to that state by the Secretary under the statutory formula.
- The District of Columbia, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, Guam, American Samoa, Virgin Islands, the Northern Mariana Islands, and the Freely Associated States (the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of the Marshall Islands, and the Republic of Palau) select no fewer than 10 scholarships from each of these jurisdiction's residents.
- All participating states select enough scholars 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,
- in such a way that each part of the state, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico is represented fairly, and
- regardless of
 - Δ whether the secondary schools they attend are within or outside the scholars' states of legal residence;
 - Δ whether the postsecondary schools they plan to attend are public or private or are within or outside their states of legal residence;
 - Δ the scholars' sex, race, color, national origin, religion, disability, or economic background; and
 - Δ 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.

ELIGIBILITY TO RECEIVE A 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 (military schools and home schooled students are not eligible for Byrd) or receive the recognized equivalent of a high school diploma as recognized by the state in which the student resides, and

- have applied to or been accepted for enrollment as a full-time student at an institution of higher education.

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.

In addition to the two eligibility requirements listed above, 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

Δ a permanent resident of the United States; or

Δ 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 Freely Associated States (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 75.60);
- is registered with the Selective Service if so required in accordance with the Student Assistance General Provisions regulations (34 CFR 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.

Initial scholarship awards

Students can receive up to \$1,500 for one year of study. 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.

CONTINUING ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Awards can be renewed for up to three additional years, provided that funds are appropriated and students remain eligible. 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 (34 CFR 668).

Byrd Scholarships are awarded for a period of not more than four years. 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.

Part-time enrollment allowed after first year

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.

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.

Scholarship suspension

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.

Full-time Attendance Waiver Example

Wendy F. enrolls full time for the fall semester and enrolls half time for the spring semester. During the spring semester, Wendy's full-time enrollment requirement has been waived. Wendy would then be eligible for half of her full scholarship for the fall ($\$1,500 \times 1/2 = \750). Because Wendy will be attending half time in the spring and her full-time attendance requirement has been waived, she will be eligible to receive half of the remaining \$750 ($\$750 \times 1/2 = \375).

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

Scholars may postpone or interrupt enrollment

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
- 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 re-enrollment at an institution of higher education, the scholar resumes eligibility to receive scholarship payments. Note that in calculating the scholar's period of suspension, these periods of postponement or interruption are not considered. Thus, any period of postponement or interruption will not be counted against the scholar in calculating the 12 months of suspension.

Scholar may not use funds to attend a foreign school

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, and the Freely Associated States (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:

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 FSA FUNDS

FORMULA

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

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.