

TITLE 23: EDUCATION AND CULTURAL RESOURCES
SUBTITLE A: EDUCATION
CHAPTER XIX: ILLINOIS STUDENT ASSISTANCE COMMISSION

PART 2761
MERIT RECOGNITION SCHOLARSHIP (MRS) PROGRAM

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AUTHORITY: Implementing Section 31 and authorized by Section 31(h) of the Higher Education Student Assistance Act [110 ILCS 947/31 and 31(h)].

SOURCE: Adopted at 9 Ill. Reg. 10277, effective July 5, 1985; amended at 9 Ill. Reg. 20849, effective January 1, 1986; amended at 11 Ill. Reg. 3220, effective January 29, 1987; amended at 11 Ill. Reg. 14127, effective August 10, 1987; amended at 12 Ill. Reg. 11543, effective July 1, 1988; transferred from Chapter IX, 23 Ill. Adm. Code 1761 (State Scholarship Commission) to Chapter XIX, 23 Ill. Adm. Code 2761 (Illinois Student Assistance Commission) pursuant to P.A. 86-168, effective July 1, 1989, at 13 Ill. Reg. 17863; amended at 14 Ill. Reg. 10578, effective July 1, 1990; amended at 16 Ill. Reg. 11290, effective July 1, 1992; amended at 17 Ill. Reg. 10579, effective July 1, 1993; amended at 18 Ill. Reg. 10318, effective July 1, 1994; amended at 20 Ill. Reg. 9215, effective July 1, 1996; old Part repealed and new Part adopted at 21 Ill. Reg. 11166, effective July 18, 1997; amended at 22 Ill. Reg. 11135, effective July 1, 1998; amended at 23 Ill. Reg. 7587, effective July 1, 1999; amended at 24 Ill. Reg. 9176, effective July 1, 2000; amended at 30 Ill. Reg. 11674, effective July 1, 2006.

Section 2761.10 Summary and Purpose

- a) The Merit Recognition Scholarship (MRS) Program encourages and rewards the distinguished academic achievement of Illinois high school graduates, without regard to financial need. The scholarship is a \$1000 award which must be used for enrollment at an institution of higher learning or any service academy. The names and addresses of MRS recipients are a matter of public record.
- b) This Part establishes rules which govern the MRS Program. Additional rules and definitions are contained in General Provisions, 23 Ill. Adm. Code 2700.

(Source: Amended at 30 Ill. Reg. 11674, effective July 1, 2006)

Section 2761.20 Applicant Eligibility

- a) A qualified applicant shall:
 - 1) be due to graduate from an Illinois high school by the end of the academic year;
 - 2) have earned a cumulative grade point average at or above the 95th percentile of his or her high school class by the end of the third semester prior to graduation from high school (normally the sixth semester), or have achieved a score on the ACT Assessment examination or SAT I: Reasoning Test, taken during the third or fourth semester prior to graduation, which is at or above the 95th percentile of students in the State who have taken the test during that same time period.
 - A) A student may take either or both examinations during the designated period.
 - B) All scores from such tests taken during the designated period must be submitted to ISAC.
 - C) If a student submits scores from multiple examinations taken during the designated period, ISAC will use the highest score.
 - D) When a student submits scores to ISAC, the student must report his or her academic level at the time the test was taken.
 - E) ISAC will accept supplementary score reports of tests taken during the designated period upon the student's authorization to the test service. Such authorization by the student must be received by ISAC before August 1.
 - F) Students who, for any reason, are unable to take a test on a regular testing date should make special arrangements to be tested in accordance with the procedures of the testing service. Any such special arrangements must take into account the test score submission deadlines;
 - 3) be in good academic standing;
 - 4) be a resident of Illinois;

- 5) be a United States citizen or permanent resident of the United States; and
 - 6) enroll, on at least a half-time basis, at an institution of higher learning or service academy as an undergraduate student or cadet.
- b) A qualified applicant shall not have already received a baccalaureate degree.

(Source: Amended at 24 Ill. Reg. 9176, effective July 1, 2000)

Section 2761.30 Program Procedures

- a) By February of every year, participating high schools in Illinois shall certify to the Illinois Student Assistance Commission (ISAC) the names of students who are qualified applicants.
 - 1) The certification of names shall be submitted in a format approved by ISAC. Certifications submitted by participating high schools shall be subject to audit by ISAC.
 - 2) ISAC shall then promptly notify those qualified applicants who are reasonably assured of receiving MRS awards in accordance with annual funding levels recommended in the Governor's Budget.
- b) Qualified applicants shall be sent an MRS application which must be completed by the student and the postsecondary institution attended by the applicant. A complete application must be received by ISAC within one year after and including the date of high school graduation but absolutely no later than June 15 of the academic year immediately following graduation from the approved Illinois high school. Should the recipient transfer to a different institution after submission of the application, the enrollment transfer must be reported to ISAC in order to receive scholarship payments.
- c) ISAC shall disburse scholarship funds in two installments based on the terms financed by the scholarship. Scholarship funds may be used to finance expenses for a summer term.
- d) Funds shall be remitted to institutions on behalf of the recipients.
- e) Scholarship funds are applicable to two semesters or three quarter terms and must be used for educational expenses, including, but not limited to, tuition and fees, room and board, books and supplies, required service academy uniforms, and travel and personal expenses related to the recipient's enrollment.

- f) Should the recipient withdraw from enrollment during the first term financed by the scholarship, the recipient shall return to ISAC the full amount of the award.

(Source: Amended at 24 Ill. Reg. 9176, effective July 1, 2000)

Section 2761.40 Institutional Procedures

- a) The application form constitutes the institution's request for payment of first term benefits. Institutions shall submit a payment request for payment of subsequent terms.
- b) When requesting payment of scholarship funds, the institution shall certify that the recipient is: a U.S. citizen or eligible noncitizen; a resident of Illinois; of good moral character; accepted for enrollment on at least a half-time basis; not the recipient of a baccalaureate degree.
- c) Upon receipt of scholarship funds, the institution shall verify the recipient's enrollment status. If the recipient is enrolled, the institution may credit the funds to the recipient's account for expenses due and payable. The balance of the funds shall be released to the recipient.
- d) If the recipient has withdrawn from enrollment or drops to less than half-time enrollment prior to receiving funds, the institution shall notify ISAC to prevent payment processing or, if funds have been received by the institution, the institution shall return the full amount of the funds to ISAC.
- e) To provide sufficient time for processing and vouchering through the State Comptroller's Office in Springfield, all payment requests except for summer term must be received by ISAC no later than July 1. Summer term payment requests must be received no later than July 31.

(Source: Amended at 30 Ill. Reg. 11674, effective July 1, 2006)