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23 ILLINOIS ADMINISTRATIVE CODE CH. XIX, SEC. 2741  
OPTOMETRIC EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

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

PART 2741  
OPTOMETRIC EDUCATION SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

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**AUTHORITY:** Implementing Section 65.70 of the Higher Education Student Assistance Act [110 ILCS 947/65.70 and authorized by Sections 20(f) and 65.70 of the Higher Education Student Assistance Act [110 ILCS 947/20(f) and 65.70].

**SOURCE:** Adopted at 27 Ill. Reg. 10369, effective July 1, 2003; amended at 37 Ill. Reg. 9540, effective July 1, 2013; amended at 43 Ill. Reg. 15037, effective January 1, 2020; amended at 45 Ill. Reg. 8461, effective July 1, 2021.

**Section 2741.10 Summary and Purpose**

- a) The Optometric Education Scholarship Program provides scholarship assistance to encourage eligible students to pursue a graduate degree in optometry.
- b) This Part establishes rules that govern the Optometric Education Scholarship Program. Additional rules and definitions are contained in General Provisions, 23 Ill. Adm. Code 2700.

**Section 2741.20 Applicant Eligibility**

A qualified applicant shall be:

- a) a United States citizen or eligible noncitizen;
- b) a resident of Illinois; and
- c) enrolled, or accepted for enrollment, on a full-time basis in a public or private college of optometry located in Illinois that awards a doctorate degree in optometry and is approved by the Illinois Department of Professional Regulation (see 68 Ill. Adm. Code 1320).

**Section 2741.30 Program Procedures**

- a) All applicants must complete and file the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) for the purpose of determining the Expected Family Contribution (EFC), which is used as a selection criterion for this award. (See Section 483 of the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended (20 USCA 1070a).)
- b) A completed ISAC application for the Optometric Education Scholarship Program must be postmarked on or before March 1 immediately preceding the academic year for which the scholarship is being requested in order to receive priority consideration for an award.
- c) A total of 10 scholarships shall be awarded each year; 2 each for eligible applicants in their first year, second year, third year, and fourth year; the remaining 2 shall be awarded to students in any academic level.
- d) If in any year the number of qualified applicants exceeds the number of scholarships to be awarded, priority will be given to students demonstrating exceptional merit and who are in financial need based on a combination of the following criteria:
  - 1) cumulative grade point averages, prioritized from the highest to the lowest. All grade point averages will be converted to a four-point scale; and
  - 2) EFC, from the lowest to the highest; and
  - 3) recipients of assistance under the Optometric Education Scholarship Program during the previous academic year shall receive first priority consideration provided the student:
    - A) maintains a qualified applicant status;
    - B) maintains satisfactory academic progress as determined by the institution; and
    - C) submits an application on a timely basis.
- e) If all other criteria are equal, priority consideration will be given to the qualified applicant who submitted a completed application on the earliest date.
- f) A recipient may receive the equivalent of 8 semesters/12 quarters of scholarship assistance under this Part.

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- g) Scholarship funds are applicable toward 2 semesters/3 quarters of full-time study within an academic year.
- h) The total number of scholarships awarded in a given fiscal year is contingent upon available funding.
- i) To the extent necessary to administer this program within the limits of the State appropriation, the Commission may adjust the priority consideration factors established by this Section.
- j) ISAC shall publish guidelines for the awarding of Optometric Education Scholarships.
- k) Each qualified applicant who is selected to receive an Optometric Education Scholarship shall be notified.
- l) Prior to receiving scholarship assistance for any academic year, the qualified applicant must sign a Practice Agreement/Promissory Note that is submitted to ISAC. The Practice Agreement/Promissory Note shall include the following stipulations:
  - 1) the recipient pledges to practice in Illinois as a licensed optometrist under the Illinois Optometric Practice Act of 1987 for a period of not less than one year for each year of scholarship assistance awarded under this Part;
  - 2) the recipient shall begin practicing optometry in Illinois within one year following completion of the academic program for which the recipient was awarded a scholarship, and shall practice on a continuous basis for the required period of time;
  - 3) if the recipient does not fulfill the requirement to practice optometry in Illinois, the scholarship converts to a loan and the recipient must repay the entire amount of the scholarships prorated according to the fraction of the obligation not completed, plus interest at a rate of 5% and, if applicable, reasonable collection fees;
  - 4) the recipient agrees to provide ISAC with evidence of compliance with program requirements;
  - 5) the recipient promises to use the proceeds of the scholarship for educational expenses.

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- m) A recipient of a scholarship awarded under this Part shall not be in violation of the agreement entered into pursuant to Section 2741.30(l) during periods in which the recipient:
  - 1) serves, for not more than 3 years, as a member of the United States Armed Forces;
  - 2) is enrolled full-time in a residency program at an approved institution for one continuous period of time, not to exceed one year, following graduation;
  - 3) is temporarily totally disabled for not more than 3 years, as established by the sworn affidavit of a qualified physician;
  - 4) cannot fulfill the practice obligation due to the recipient's death, verified by a certified copy of a death certificate; or
  - 5) cannot fulfill the practice obligation due to the recipient's disability or incompetency, as established by sworn affidavit of a qualified physician.
- n) No claim for repayment may be filed against the estate of a decedent or incompetent.
- o) If a recipient is required to repay any portion of the scholarship, the repayment period shall be completed within 10 years after the scholarship converts to a loan. This 10-year period may be extended if the recipient:
  - 1) serves, for not more than 3 years, as a member of the United States Armed Forces;
  - 2) is enrolled full-time in a residency program at an approved institution for one continuous period of time, not to exceed one year, following graduation; or
  - 3) is temporarily disabled, for not more than 3 years, as established by the sworn affidavit of a licensed physician.
- p) A recipient shall enter repayment status on the earliest of the following dates:
  - 1) the first day of the first calendar month after the recipient has ceased to pursue a course of study leading to certification as an optometrist;

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- 2) the date the recipient informs ISAC that the recipient does not plan to fulfill the practice obligation; or
  - 3) the day after the latest date upon which the recipient must have begun practicing as an optometrist after completing the education for which the scholarship was awarded.
- q) A recipient shall not be required to repay the amount of the scholarships received if the recipient becomes permanently totally disabled, as established by the sworn affidavit of a licensed physician (see, e.g., 34 CFR 653.42(k)(1)), or if the recipient's representative provides ISAC with a certified death certificate.

(Source: Amended at 45 Ill. Reg. 8461, effective July 1, 2021)

**Section 2741.40 Institutional Procedures**

- a) Institutions shall submit payment requests to ISAC.
- b) Funds shall be remitted by ISAC annually to participating institutions on behalf of the recipients.
- c) All scholarships shall be applicable only to tuition and mandatory fees for two semesters or three quarters in an academic year.

The institution shall determine the amount of each grant, which shall be the lesser of:

- 1) \$5,000; or
  - 2) tuition and mandatory fees.
- d) The total amount of Optometric Education Scholarship assistance awarded to a qualified applicant in a given academic year, when added to other financial aid available to the qualified applicant for that year, shall not exceed the cost of attendance.
- e) Upon receipt of scholarship funds, the institution shall verify the recipient's enrollment status for the term for which the award was intended. If enrolled, the institution may credit the scholarship funds to the recipient's account for expenses due and payable. The balance of the disbursement shall be released to the recipient.

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- f)      Upon receipt of the scholarship funds, if the recipient has withdrawn from enrollment for the terms for which the award was intended, the institution shall return the amount of the scholarship payment to ISAC.

(Source: Amended at 37 Ill. Reg. 9540, effective July 1, 2013)