

Massachusetts Assistance for Student Success Program

IX. Cash Grant

BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION CASH GRANT PROGRAM

PURPOSE:

A founding principle of the Tuition Policy adopted by the Board of Higher Education is the belief that the benefits of higher education must be available to all citizens. The Board of Higher Education has developed a system of financial aid policy designed to assure and maintain access to the Commonwealth's public colleges and universities. An underlying goal of the policy is that future public sector tuition increases be matched with a concomitant increase in the maximum award for the financially neediest students. Further, financial aid provides an important tool for improving student quality and collaborations that enhance the efficiency and effectiveness of the system.

The Cash Grant Program was designed to assist needy students in meeting institutionally-held charges such as mandatory fees and non-state-supported tuition. It is a complementary program to the Need-Based Tuition Waiver Program. The Cash Grant is designed as an offset of the Tuition Waiver Program for the purpose of providing financial support to those individuals who would be denied the opportunity for higher education, without such assistance. Since its inception, the Cash Grant has been utilized as supplemental grants in campus-based financial aid packaging strategies, representing an important mechanism for public institutions to assist needy students.

DEFINITIONS:

ELIGIBLE INSTITUTION:

An institution within the system of public institutions of higher education under Section 5 of Chapter 15A of the General Laws.

ELIGIBLE PROGRAM:

Any state supported undergraduate degree or certificate program offered by an institution. Institutions are encouraged, where appropriate, to extend grant eligibility to students enrolled in non-state supported degree or certificate programs. The institutional definition of "certificate" program shall apply.

ELIGIBLE STUDENT:

A student enrolled in an eligible program and meeting the following requirements:

- a) Physically reside in Massachusetts for at least one year, as of the start of the enrolled term, with an intent to remain in Massachusetts consistent with the Board of Higher Education policy;
- b) be a U.S. citizen, permanent legal resident, or non-citizen eligible under Title IV regulations, or have an approved eligibility status designated by the Board of Higher Education pursuant to Section 9 of Chapter 15A, as amended by Section 11 of Chapter 28 of the Acts of 2023;
- c) Not in default of any federal or state student loan for attendance at any institution or owe a refund for any previous financial aid received;
- d) complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), or another state-approved equivalent form, annually for consideration of assistance by any designated deadline, as may be determined by the Department of Higher Education, and comply

with financial aid verification requirements in either the FAFSA or the alternative state-approved form, as applicable;

- e) Enroll for at least three undergraduate credits per semester in an eligible program;
- f) Maintain satisfactory academic progress in accordance with the institution's academic standards policy;
- g) Has not earned a baccalaureate or professional degree.

INSTITUTIONAL ALLOCATION:

- a) **Base Allocation:** The base allocation of Cash Grant is calculated using the same methodology as the Need-Based Tuition Waivers. Allocations are determined by a formula which utilizes three-year average enrollment and financial aid data.
- b) **De-obligation/Reallocation:** On or before November 1 of each year, institutions may request the Commissioner to reallocate any unused/uncommitted Cash Grant funds that are released by other institutions. Subject to the availability of de-obligated resources, the Commissioner may reallocate Cash Grant resources on or before December 31.

DETERMINATION OF NEED:

Unless otherwise designated, all Cash Grants must be awarded on the basis of demonstrated financial need as follows:

- a) Students qualifying for the Cash Grant must complete the institution's required application process for financial aid.
- b) Students selected by the U.S. Department of Education for verification must complete all required documentation prior to receipt of a Cash Grant.
- c) Awards made for Access Grant Programs must be clearly documented in the student record for auditing purposes.

STUDENT AWARD VALUE:

- a) Unless otherwise designated, an individual student Cash Grant award for an academic period may not exceed the combined institutional tuition and fees charged for the award period.
- b) Cash Grants, in combination with other resources in the student's financial aid package, may not exceed the student's demonstrated financial need.
- c) Students qualifying for the Cash Grant may be granted partial or full grants to cover direct charges, according to the institution's financial aid packaging policies.
- d) Cash Grants should generally be awarded during the financial aid process as a component of the student's financial aid package. Therefore, students should be notified of Cash Grant awards via the financial aid award letter.

PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT:

All institutions must file a State Financial Aid Participation Agreement to be maintained on file in the Office of Student Financial Assistance.

AUDIT REQUIREMENTS:

- a) The Commissioner shall require each campus to furnish, annually by August 31, a report detailing the number and characteristics of Cash Grant recipients for the previous academic year.
- b) All financial books, records and documents pertaining to this program shall at all reasonable times be opened to inspection, review and audit by the Commissioner, the State Auditor or their authorized representatives who shall have access to the premises wherever such books, records and documents are located. The institution shall retain such financial books, records and documents for seven years. An institution may retain records for a period of five years if approval is received from the Records Conservation Board in accordance with General Laws, Chapter 30, Section 42.