

**BOARD OF HIGHER EDUCATION
MASSACHUSETTS IN-DEMAND SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM**

PURPOSE

The Massachusetts In-Demand Scholarship Program was created by the Massachusetts Legislature in the 2024 Fiscal Year Budget to support economic development in the Commonwealth by providing financial assistance to residents who are pursuing programs of study that will help address the Commonwealth's workforce needs. The program will provide scholarships to students to encourage enrollment and completion of training and degree programs identified by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development's annual reports on labor market conditions, who intend to remain in the Commonwealth to pursue their professional careers.

DEFINITIONS

ELIGIBLE INSTITUTION:

Any public four-year or two-year college or university within the Massachusetts public system of higher education, as identified in Section 5 of Chapter 15A of the General Laws.

ELIGIBLE PROGRAM:

Any undergraduate or graduate degree or certificate program offered by an eligible institution and identified by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development (EOLWD) as an in-demand profession or occupation.

ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

To be eligible for the In-Demand Scholarship program, the student must:

- a) Be an undergraduate or graduate student who has been admitted to an eligible institution, as defined;
- b) 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 Board of Higher Education (BHE) policy;
- c) be a U.S. Citizen, lawful permanent resident, or non-citizen eligible under Title IV regulations; or have an approved eligibility status designated by the BHE pursuant to the Massachusetts Tuition Equity Law or otherwise;
- d) complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) or the Massachusetts Application for State Financial Aid (MASFA) as applicable for eligible students under the Massachusetts Tuition Equity Law annually;

- e) comply with financial aid verification requirements;
- f) not be in default on any federal or state student loans for attendance at any institution, or owe a refund for any previous state financial aid program;
- g) have declared a major or be currently pursuing a program of study offered and verifiable by the institution that is designated as an in-demand profession by the Massachusetts Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development; and
- h) achieves and maintains a minimum college-level GPA of 3.0 annually and demonstrates Satisfactory Academic Progress in accordance with institutional standards.

AWARD VALUE

Awards for eligible applicants under this program may be used to support the full cost of tuition and fees charged to a student, plus a \$1,200 allowance for books and supplies for the academic term (year or semester), as follows:

- Maximum of four years (eight semesters) for full-time undergraduate students enrolled in a 4-year college or university; or maximum of two years (four semesters) if enrolled in a community college.
- Maximum of six years (twelve semesters) for part-time undergraduate students enrolled in a 4-year college or university; or four years (eight semesters) if enrolled in a community college; minimum of six credits per term is required for part-time students.
- Maximum of two years (four semesters) for graduate students, minimum of six credits per semester required.

Students may receive an additional payment up to a maximum of \$2,500 to support a trailing academic summer term of study if funds are available after all academic year awards are disbursed. Summer awards are limited to a maximum of two terms (one per academic year) for any student.

The academic year and/or semester awards for this program may be modified by the Department of Higher Education in accordance with the award procedure, below, if the annual appropriation for this program is not sufficient to meet the maximum scholarship award for the pool of eligible students.

The Department of Higher Education will annually review the program. Including institutional cost of attendance and may adjust the program's award values as it deems necessary.

AWARD PROCEDURE

Scholarships under this program shall be awarded only to students who meet all program eligibility criteria, and prioritized based on the following:

- Awarded to students who demonstrate high financial need, based on the reported Expected Family Contribution (EFC), to promote access to scholarship funds by diverse populations within academic levels (year of study such as first year, sophomore, junior, or senior), as determined by the Department of Higher Education
- Awarded in proportion to the labor and workforce demand for each discipline or profession, based on data provided by the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development, as determined by the Department of Higher Education
- Awarded based on demonstrated student potential for excellence in the discipline or profession, including high academic achievement.

Institutions are required to adjust a student's financial aid package, if the sum total of all financial aid, including the In-Demand Scholarship, results in an "over award", as defined under Title IV regulations governing federal aid, and related state financial aid policies.

INSTITUTIONAL DISBURSEMENT OF SCHOLARSHIPS

- Each participating institution must certify that the recipient is eligible in accordance with guidelines established for the In-Demand Scholarship program and verify that the student is pursuing a program of study in a designated and approved in-demand profession.
- Academic year awards will be disbursed in equal payments for the fall and spring semesters. Institutions are required to comply with the Office of Student Financial Assistance's refund policy for any scholarship recipient who is no longer eligible for funds, or who is no longer enrolled.
- In addition to completing the verification of enrollment status (credits and GPA) for students each semester, institutions are also responsible for providing the Department of Higher Education and the Office of Student Financial Assistance with related data for scholarship recipients, as requested and required under the annual Institutional Participation Agreement for Massachusetts State Financial Aid.

ANNUAL REVIEW

The Department of Higher Education is responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of the In-Demand Scholarship program. Institutions that have signed an agreement to participate in the Massachusetts State financial aid programs are required to share data for all students with the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education (DHE) or its designee, and the Office of Student Financial Assistance for this purpose. The program may be evaluated annually to

determine any immediate impact or to determine if adjustments are required for various processes, such as disbursement of funds.

PARTICIPATION AGREEMENT

All institutions receiving funds under the In-Demand Scholarship program must have an active Massachusetts State Financial Aid Participation Agreement on file with the Massachusetts Office of Student Financial Assistance (OSFA).

AUDIT REQUIREMENT

- a) It shall be the responsibility of each college to maintain documentation of a recipient student's eligibility for the In-Demand Scholarship program.
- b) The Commissioner shall require each college to furnish annually to the BHE a report detailing specific information regarding recipients of the In-Demand Scholarship program. OSFA will establish the timeline, specifications, and procedures for this report.
- c) All financial books, records and documents pertaining to this Program shall, at all times, be open 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 for seven years. An institution may retain such 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.