Hello, Everyone,

By now you have heard that there are a number of changes being made to the ADHE scholarship programs, mainly for the Academic Challenge Scholarship.  The changes are summarized below, and will be in effect for the 2016 high school graduates.  Their application period opens January 1.  The application deadline for the Governor’s Distinguished Scholarship is February 1, and for all other programs, the deadline is June 1.

**ACADEMIC CHALLENGE SCHOLARSHIP**

The academic eligibility requirement is now simply an ACT composite of at least 19, or an equivalent score on an equivalent test.  Smart Core is no longer required for public high school students, nor is there a minimum GPA requirement.  The equivalent tests we accept are SAT (average score of 730), the COMPASS (average score of 64), the ASSET (average score of 40), and now the Accuplacer (average score of 82).  We have never had a limit on how old a test score can be, so we will accept COMPASS and ASSET scores as long as students submit them.  Those two tests will no longer be offered by their publishers in the near future, but we will continue to accept the scores indefinitely.

The award amounts for Challenge have changed.  The award for the first year will be $1000 ($500 per semester).  The second year will be $4000 ($2000 per semester) at a four-year institution, or $3000 ($1500 per semester) at a two-year institution.  The third year award amount will be $4000 ($2000 per semester) and the last year will be $5000 ($2500 per semester). Students will max out once they earn 120 credit hours.

Students who have earned at least 27 concurrent college credit hours by the end of their senior year of high school can petition ADHE to be considered as second year students, with the award amount increasing to the second year level.  Those students would then be eligible for only six semesters of funding, rather than the eight semesters for which traditional students are eligible.  They need to think twice about making that request, as they can’t change their minds about the scholarship even if they change their minds about their major, or lose a semester because of illness, etc.  Requests musts be made to ADHE by June 1 of the year the student graduates from high school.  We will also require an official college transcript by that date.

**GOVERNOR’S SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM**

This scholarship has been eliminated.

**GOVERNOR’S DISTINGUISHED SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM**

The academic requirements for the GDS are an ACT composite of at least 32, and a GPA of at least 3.5.  Beginning with the class of 2016, the GPA we use will be the student’s over-all GPA, as shown on the transcript, rather than the GPA in academic courses.  The limit of the number of awards made each year remains at 300, unless extra funding is authorized.  Every county is guaranteed a GDS.  When a county does not have a resident that meets the minimum GDS requirements, the highest Academic Challenge Scholarship applicant in that county will be awarded the GDS.  Please note that the Challenge Scholarship will be rescinded when the student is awarded GDS.

**HIGHER EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY GRANT (GO! GRANT)**

There are no changes to the GO! Grant this year.

**CHANGES IN SCHOLARSHIP HOLDS**

Prior to this year, we have authorized scholarship hold requests for up to one year for any reason.  Beginning with the 2015-16 academic year, students can hold their scholarships for up to four semesters, but for only a limited number of reasons:

1. Student’s illness
2. Family member’s illness
3. Death in the family
4. Financial hardship
5. Military training
6. Military deployment
7. Internship or co-op
8. Need an additional semester to earn an associate’s degree, or to complete pre-requisites for a specific program
9. Service in a national or international Humanitarian Project

Please note that students are no longer allowed to put their scholarship on hold if they decide to attend an out-of-state college.  They must decline the scholarship when it is offered to them.  Anyone who decides to return to Arkansas for college can reapply as a non-traditional student in the future.  GDS recipients are now, however, allowed to hold their scholarship for the first semester, which they were previously not allowed to do.

Please let me know if you have any questions or need clarification.  Thank you so much for all you do to help students qualify for and apply for our scholarship programs.

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