



## Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education

### Montana Resident Undergraduate Student Financial Aid – Montana STEM Scholarship

#### Montana STEM Scholarship – Eligibility Criteria and Procedures

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Statutory authority: 20-26-614 Montana Code Annotated (MCA)

The purpose of the Montana STEM Scholarship Program is to provide an incentive for Montana high school students to prepare for, enter into, and complete degrees in postsecondary fields related to science, technology, engineering, mathematics, and health care, with the goal of increasing the number of STEM degree recipients participating in Montana's workforce. The Montana STEM Scholarship will be awarded in accordance with Board of Regents Policy 940.8 – *Montana Resident Undergraduate Student Financial Aid*, and the following eligibility criteria and procedures.

#### A. ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS

1. A student is eligible to receive a Montana STEM Scholarship providing the student:
  - a. is a Montana resident who graduated from a Montana accredited high school with a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.25;
  - b. is eligible for resident tuition pursuant to Board of Regents Policy 940.1 – Residency;
  - c. has completed a rigorous college preparation program, including 4 years of mathematics and 3 years of science;
  - d. enrolls in a minimum of 12 credits each semester and completes at least 30 credit hours after two semesters, 60 credit hours after four semesters, and 90 credit hours after six semesters;
  - e. maintains a 3.0 cumulative GPA at an eligible Montana postsecondary institution;
  - f. begins utilizing the scholarship the fall semester immediately following the student's graduation from high school;
  - g. is seeking the student's first certificate, 2-year, or 4-year degree;
  - h. has declared a STEM or health care major as the student's intended course of study;
  - i. meets the federal Title IV selective service registration requirements;
  - j. has not defaulted on a Title IV or state of Montana educational loan;
  - k. does not owe a refund to a federal Title IV or state of Montana student financial aid program; and
  - l. is not incarcerated; a student may receive a Montana STEM scholarship upon release from incarceration if the student meets all other eligibility requirements.

#### B. AWARD AMOUNTS

1. A student who meets the requirements of Section A will receive \$1,000 for the first academic year the student is enrolled at an eligible postsecondary institution.
2. A student who continues to meet the requirements of this subsection will receive \$1,500 for the student's second academic year, \$1,500 for the student's third academic year, and \$2,000 for the student's fourth academic year.
3. Continued eligibility for the STEM scholarship in subsequent years (years 2-4), the student must:
  - a. complete at least 30 credit hours after two semesters, 60 credit hours after four semesters, and 90 credit hours after six semesters;
  - b. maintain a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.0 per academic year;
  - c. remain enrolled in a minimum of 12 credit hours each semester for the duration of the scholarship; and

- d. continue to pursue a STEM or healthcare major.

#### C. ELIGIBLE INSTITUTIONS

1. Recipients of the Montana STEM Scholarship may utilize the award at any of the following eligible postsecondary institutions:
  - a. campus of the Montana University System (MUS), as defined in § 20-25-201;
  - b. Montana community college, defined and organized as provided in § 20-15-101; or
  - c. two-year, accredited tribal community college located in the state of Montana or a four-year accredited tribal college located in the state of Montana.
2. STEM Scholarships are transferable between eligible institutions upon proper transfer notification to OCHE, and continued adherence to all eligibility requirements.

#### D. AUTHORIZATION TO DISTRIBUTE FUNDS

1. Except for funds donated from private sources, the obligation for funding the Montana STEM Scholarship is an obligation of the State. The Board of Regents is not required to provide a scholarship to an eligible student without a line-item appropriation to the Board for this purpose.
2. If the appropriation is insufficient to fully fund the Montana STEM Scholarship Program, the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education (OCHE) shall prorate the individual scholarships so that each eligible student still receives a STEM scholarship.
3. Funds from a STEM scholarship must be used toward the cost of attendance at a qualifying postsecondary institution and may not be used to pay for remedial or college-preparatory course work. Each Montana STEM Scholarship will be distributed directly to the institution.

#### E. APPEALS

1. Initial scholarship award determinations are not subject to appeal; however, recipients may appeal termination or non-renewal of their awards to the OCHE based on extenuating circumstances. The Commissioner's decision is final.
  - a. Extenuating circumstances include, but are not limited to:
    - i. Documentable serious illness, injury, and/or recovery that prevented a student from attending class;
    - ii. Documentable death or serious illness of an immediate family member;
    - iii. Documentable significant trauma that impaired a student's emotional and/or physical health;
    - iv. A leave of absence for a student participating in active or inactive duties in the United States military, including the National Guard and Reserve of the Armed Forces; and
    - v. Other difficulties caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### F. ADMINISTRATION

1. OCHE is charged with the administration of the Montana STEM Scholarships.

#### G. REPORTS

1. OCHE shall submit an annual report to the education interim committee provided for in § 5-5-224, MCA, regarding the STEM Scholarship Program pursuant to 20-26-102(2)(a). The report will include, but not be limited to, the number of Montana STEM scholarships awarded, the amount of scholarship funds awarded, the workforce development needs targeted, the number and type of postsecondary credentials earned by Montana STEM recipients, and any measurable impacts on the Montana workforce.