

Arkansas Academic Challenge Scholarship

Summary of Rule Amendments

The Arkansas Academic Challenge Scholarship rules and regulations are being amended due to changes made during the 2017 Regular Session by Acts 315, 597, 613, 719, 1008 and 1041. A summary of the changes made by each Act are listed below:

Act 315 of 2017 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE ARKANSAS ACADEMIC CHALLENGE SCHOLARSHIP; TO EXPAND ELIGIBILITY AS A TRADITIONAL STUDENT; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Act 315 expanded the definition of a Traditional student for the Academic Challenge Scholarship Program. The expansion of that definition now includes students who are enrolled at an institution of higher education in the immediately preceding academic year as a full-time, first-time freshman that did not receive the Academic Challenge Scholarship in the year following high school graduation and successfully completed at least 27 semester hours as a full-time, first-time freshman and achieved a 2.5 postsecondary GPA. Previously these students were considered nontraditional students under the Academic Challenge Scholarship Program.

Act 597 of 2017 - AN ACT CONCERNING THE AWARDING OF SCHOLARSHIPS UNDER THE ARKANSAS ACADEMIC CHALLENGE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM; TO ALLOW A SCHOLARSHIP TO BE USED TOWARD A GRADUATE-LEVEL OR PROFESSIONAL DEGREE; TO REVISE THE MANNER IN WHICH EARNED SEMESTER CREDIT HOURS ARE CALCULATED; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES

Act 597 allows for an Academic Challenge Scholarship recipient to use the scholarship towards a graduate-level or professional degree if the student has remaining eligibility. A recipient would have remaining eligibility until he or she has earned one hundred twenty (120) semester credit hours. The earned semester credit hours are those semester credit hours earned after graduating from high school or obtaining a high school equivalency diploma.

Act 597 also allows for an Academic Challenge Scholarship - Traditional recipient to receive the scholarship while enrolled as a part-time student if the recipient is enrolled in the number of credit hours necessary to complete the recipient's degree program. The scholarship amount for that semester will be prorated based on the number of credit hours in which the recipient is enrolled.

Act 613 of 2017 - AN ACT TO CREATE THE ARKANSAS WORKFORCE CHALLENGE SCHOLARSHIP; TO PROVIDE FOR THE USE OF EXCESS LOTTERY PROCEEDS TO FUND SCHOLARSHIPS FOR STUDENTS ENROLLED IN HIGHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS THAT WILL LEAD TO THE STUDENTS BEING QUALIFIED TO WORK IN HIGH-NEEDS OCCUPATIONS; TO DECLARE AN EMERGENCY; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Act 613 reduces the aggregate amount of scholarships awarded to nontraditional students from \$16,000,000 to \$12,000,000 beginning with the 2017-2018 academic year.

Act 719 of 2017 - AN ACT TO AMEND PROVISIONS OF THE ARKANSAS CODE CONCERNING THE ARKANSAS ACADEMIC CHALLENGE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Act 719 clarifies the requirements for a student to maintain eligibility for the Academic Challenge Scholarship. A recipient may attend summer terms at the student's own expense to earn credit hours necessary to maintain eligibility for the Academic Challenge Scholarship. A traditional student recipient who loses eligibility for a scholarship may apply as a first-time nontraditional student. A recipient who loses eligibility for the nontraditional student scholarship is not eligible to apply for a scholarship under any eligibility provision of the Academic Challenge Scholarship Program.

Act 1008 of 2017 - AN ACT TO AMEND PROVISIONS OF THE ARKANSAS CODE CONCERNING SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Act 1008 changed the eligibility requirements for a nontraditional student applying for the Academic Challenge Scholarship. The new eligibility requirements are dependent on if an applicant has or has not been enrolled in an approved institution of higher education. If an applicant has not been enrolled in an approved institution of higher education, then the student who graduated from an Arkansas high school must have achieved a 2.5 high school GPA or a 19 on the ACT or an ACT equivalent; or if the student graduated from a private high school, out-of-state high school, home school or obtained a GED must have achieved a 19 on the ACT or an ACT equivalent. If an applicant has been enrolled in an approved institution of higher education, the applicant must have a 2.5 postsecondary GPA.

Act 1008 also clarifies that a first-time recipient shall submit a college or university transcript to the Department in order for the Department to determine the initial scholarship award amount for the first-time scholarship recipient.

Act 1041 of 2017 - AN ACT TO ESTABLISH AMOUNTS FOR ARKANSAS ACADEMIC CHALLENGE SCHOLARSHIP AWARDS; AND FOR OTHER PURPOSES.

Act 1041 allows for an Academic Challenge Scholarship applicant to elect for the earned semester credit hours considered when determining the scholarship award amount to be only those hours earned after graduating from high school or obtaining a high school equivalency diploma. If an applicant makes that election, any semester credit hours earned through concurrent credit or any other method before graduating high school or obtaining a high school equivalency diploma shall not be counted as earned semester credit hours for the purposes of determining a recipient's scholarship award amount.