



Tab 25

## Bright Flight Score Change and Superscoring

Coordinating Board for Higher Education  
December 8, 2021

### BACKGROUND

The Higher Education Academic Scholarship Program, aka Bright Flight, was established in 1986 and is codified in section 173.250, RSMo. It is a merit-based program that establishes student eligibility based on a “composite score on the ACT or the SAT achieved in an eligible student’s high school sophomore, junior, or senior year that is in the top five percent of Missouri test-takers, as established at the beginning of an eligible student’s final year of secondary coursework.” Awards are differentiated in that students who score in the top three percent of test takers are eligible to receive a maximum award of \$3,000 and those in the top fourth and fifth percentiles are eligible for a maximum award of \$1,000. All students in the top three percent must receive awards of \$3,000 before any student in the top fourth and fifth percentiles receives any award. To date, students in the top fourth and fifth percentiles have never received an award.

### CURRENT STATUS

#### Score Change

Each fall, the department receives information from ACT and the College Board that includes the score distribution for the prior academic year’s high school graduating class. This score distribution is what is used to determine the minimum qualifying score for the program. Because the qualifying score is based on a percentage of test takers, qualifying scores can change from year to year. For example, although the qualifying ACT score had been 30 for more than 20 years, in 2008 the score for the top three percent increased to a 31 on the ACT. It is important to keep in mind that the second tier of awards was not established until 2010.

In October of this year, the department received score distribution information from ACT for the 2021 high school seniors. That data indicated the score required to be considered within the top three percent of test takers had increased to a 32. Since the department was unable to meet the statutory requirement to notify the 2022 high school seniors of this change “at the beginning of an eligible student’s final year of secondary coursework,” the change will not be implemented until the fall 2023 semester, impacting 2023 high school seniors. While SAT scores can qualify a student for Bright Flight, less than one percent of qualifying students take the SAT. Since the qualifying score is already at near maximum for the SAT, primarily due to the small number of students taking the test, any score change should not impact students that qualify with only an SAT score. The department has not yet received the information necessary to determine the qualifying SAT scores for the 2023 seniors from the College Board.

Obviously, we do not have information regarding the number of 2023 high school seniors the change in the ACT score will impact. Based on the data for 2021 seniors, we would estimate this will reduce the number of eligible incoming freshmen in the fall of 2023 by approximately 900 individuals. Renewal students, those that received a payment before the 2022-2023 academic year, are not impacted by this change and will remain eligible as long as they meet the other requirements (GPA, full-time enrollment, and continuous enrollment).

#### Superscoring

In April of this year, ACT announced that it will provide an automatically calculated ACT superscore to all students who have taken the ACT test more than once since September of 2016. Although questions had been circulating about a move toward superscoring for more than a year and some postsecondary institutions had been calculating and using a superscore for some purposes, this was the first time this approach was formally adopted by ACT.

The superscore is the average of the four best subject scores (English, math, reading and science) across all ACT tests taken by the individual. Consequently, a student must have scores from at least two test administrations for ACT to calculate a superscore.

ACT has conducted extensive research related to superscoring. That research suggests that—among students who take the ACT more than once—superscoring is the best scoring method for predicting how students will perform in their college courses. This is true across income level, race/ethnicity, gender, and other subgroups, meaning students from traditionally underserved populations may benefit most from superscoring.

Based on this information, staff is planning to begin accepting superscores as qualifying a student for Bright Flight beginning with the 2022-2023 high school seniors. Since a superscore is considered a “composite” score, this approach remains consistent with the statutory definition of a qualifying score. Based on the data available from ACT, staff estimate this change will increase the number of eligible Bright Flight students by between 700 and 800 individuals. As with the score change, this change will not impact renewal students.

Conclusion

Taken in tandem, these two changes will have a minimal impact on the number of eligible students and the overall cost of the program. However, the changes will ensure the program remains compliant with statutory requirements while also implementing a process that will improve access to this program for all Missouri students.

**NEXT STEPS**

As indicated above, these changes will not go into effect for high school seniors until the 2022-2023 academic year. In preparation, the department intends to provide early information about the impending change in order to allow students time to adapt and prepare. The following is the proposed timeline for that process.

December 2021	Coordinating Board agenda information item
	News release about coming changes
	Preliminary conversations with legislative leaders
	Preliminary communication with school counselors, financial aid officers, and other interested constituencies.
January – May 2022	Update interested legislators/other policymakers about change and its impact
	Follow up information to high schools and students
August 2022	Formal notification to students and high schools of score change
September 2022	Update to Coordinating Board
January 2023	Reminder of upcoming changes to the program
Fall 2023	Implementation of score change and superscore acceptance

**RECOMMENDATION**

This is an information item only

**ATTACHMENT**

- Statutory Provisions

## Tab 25 Attachment Bright Flight Score Change and Superscoring

**173.250. Higher education academic scholarship program, definitions, board to administer — requirements, amounts — transfer, withdrawal, illness or disability of student. —** 1. There is hereby established a “Higher Education Academic Scholarship Program” and any moneys appropriated by the general assembly for this program shall be used to provide scholarships for Missouri citizens to attend a Missouri college or university of their choice pursuant to the provisions of this section.

2. The definitions of terms set forth in section 173.1102 shall be applicable to such terms as used in this section. In addition, the following definitions shall apply:

(1) “**Academic scholarship**”, an amount of money paid by the state of Missouri to a student pursuant to the provisions of this section;

(2) “**ACT**”, the American College Testing program examination;

(3) “**Approved institution**”, an approved public or approved private institution as defined in section 173.1102;

(4) “**Eligible student**”, an individual who meets the criteria set forth in section 173.1104, excluding the requirements of financial need and undergraduate status and, in addition, meets the following requirements:

(a) Has achieved a qualifying score on the ACT or SAT;

(b) Is a Missouri resident who has completed secondary coursework through graduation from high school or the virtual public school established in section 161.670, receipt of a general education development (GED) diploma, completion of a program of study through homeschooling or any other program of academic instruction that satisfies the compulsory attendance requirement under section 167.031; and

(c) Is enrolled full time or accepted for full-time enrollment as a postsecondary student at an approved institution during the academic year immediately following the completion of his or her secondary coursework;

(5) “**Missouri test-takers**”, all Missouri high school seniors who take the ACT or the SAT;

(6) “**Qualifying score**”, a composite score on the ACT or the SAT achieved in an eligible student's high school sophomore, junior, or senior year that is in the top five percent of Missouri test-takers, as established at the beginning of an eligible student's final year of secondary coursework;

(7) “**Recipient**”, an eligible or renewal student who receives an academic scholarship pursuant to this section;

(8) “**Renewal student**”, an eligible student who remains in compliance with the provisions of section 173.1104, maintains continuous enrollment, and makes satisfactory academic degree progress; and

(9) “**SAT**”, the Scholastic Aptitude Test.

3. The coordinating board for higher education shall be the administrative agency for the implementation of the program established by this section, and shall:

(1) Promulgate reasonable rules and regulations for the exercise of its functions and the effectuation of the purposes of this section, including regulations for granting scholarship deferments;

(2) Prescribe the form and the time and method of awarding academic scholarships, and shall supervise the processing thereof; and

(3) Select qualified recipients to receive academic scholarships, make such awards of academic scholarships to qualified recipients and determine the manner and method of payment to the recipient.

4. Eligible students shall be offered academic scholarships in the following amounts and in the following order of priority, within the limits of the funds appropriated and made available:

(1) Each eligible student with a qualifying score in the top three percent of all Missouri test-takers shall be offered an academic scholarship of up to three thousand dollars per year. All students in the top three percent shall receive awards of three thousand dollars before any student in the top fourth and fifth percentiles receives any award;

(2) Provided sufficient funds are appropriated, each eligible student with a qualifying score in the top fourth and fifth percentiles shall be offered an academic scholarship of up to one thousand dollars per year.

5. Eligible students may renew academic scholarships for their second, third, and fourth years of postsecondary education, or as long as the recipient is in compliance with the criteria to be a renewal student.

6. If an eligible student is unable to enroll during the first academic year or a renewal student ceases attendance

at an approved institution for the purpose of providing service to a nonprofit organization, a state or federal government agency, or any branch of the Armed Forces of the United States, such student shall be offered an academic scholarship upon enrollment in any approved institution after the completion of their service, if the student meets all other requirements for an initial or renewal award and if the following criteria are met:

(1) For an eligible student who cannot attend an approved institution as a result of service to a nonprofit organization or the state or federal government, the student returns to full-time status within twenty-seven months and provides verification to the coordinating board for higher education that the service to the nonprofit organization was satisfactorily completed and was not compensated other than for expenses, or that the service to the state or federal government was satisfactorily completed; or

(2) For an eligible student who cannot attend an approved institution as a result of military service in the Armed Forces of the United States, the student returns to full-time status within six months after the eligible student first ceases service to the Armed Forces and provides verification to the coordinating board for higher education that the military service was satisfactorily completed.

7. A recipient of an academic scholarship awarded under this section may transfer from one approved institution to another without losing eligibility for the academic scholarship.

8. If a recipient of an academic scholarship at any time withdraws from an approved institution so that under the rules and regulations of that institution he or she is entitled to a refund of any tuition, fees or other charges, the institution shall pay the portion of the refund attributable to the academic scholarship for that term to the coordinating board for higher education.

9. Other provisions of this section to the contrary notwithstanding, if an eligible student has been awarded an initial academic scholarship pursuant to the provisions of this section but is unable to attend an approved institution during the first academic year because of illness, disability, pregnancy or other medical need or if a renewal student ceases all attendance at an approved institution because of illness, disability, pregnancy or other medical need, the recipient shall be eligible for an initial or renewal academic scholarship upon enrollment in or return to any approved institution, provided the recipient:

(1) Enrolls in or returns to full-time status within twenty-seven months;

(2) Provides verification in compliance with coordinating board for higher education rules of sufficient medical evidence documenting an illness, disability, pregnancy or other medical need of such person to require that that person will not be able to use the academic scholarship during the time period for which it was originally offered; and

(3) Meets all other requirements established for eligibility to receive an academic scholarship.

(L. 1986 H.B. 1356 § 1, A.L. 1988 H.B. 1456, A.L. 1990 H.B. 1141, A.L. 1990 H.B. 1142, A.L. 1991 H.B. 51, et al., A.L. 2007 S.B. 389, A.L. 2010 S.B. 733)