



### **A+ Scholarship Reimbursement Requirements for the 2015-2016 Academic Year**

The following is important information regarding A+ Scholarship funding and, *temporary* changes to student eligibility that are being implemented to avoid a funding shortfall in the 2015-2016 academic year. Please read this information completely and carefully.

During the past several years, the A+ Scholarship has experienced unprecedented growth and success. While positive, this success is also beginning to put substantial pressure on the funding level necessary to ensure all eligible students receive the financial assistance promised by the program. Last year, the Missouri Department of Higher Education announced a reduction of one credit hour or 37.5 clock hours for the spring 2015 semester to address an anticipated shortfall. That reduction was reversed in the middle of the spring term based on the determination that sufficient funding was available to award all eligible students, but the funding margin was narrow.

The Missouri General Assembly approved an increase for the A+ Scholarship program of \$2 million for the 2015-2016 academic year. However, even with this additional funding, MDHE believes there is substantial risk of a funding shortfall this year given the program's growth. To mitigate this situation, the Missouri Department of Higher Education has taken action to avoid a funding shortfall while providing stable award amounts for students.

The plan of action establishes additional eligibility requirements for A+ students currently enrolled in college. The additional requirements include a completion requirement for all students and a grade point average requirement for students receiving A+ for the first time. In addition to the anticipated cost-saving benefit of these measures, they also have the benefit of strengthening the academic integrity of the program.

#### The Completion Requirement

Currently, students are required to enroll full-time (at least 12 credit hours in the fall and spring and 6 credit hours for summer) in order to be eligible for reimbursement. The lack of reimbursement for withdrawn coursework encourages, but does not require, students to complete all of the hours in which they enroll.

For the 2015-2016 academic year, students are *required* to complete a minimum of 12 credit hours in the fall 2015 term to be eligible for a spring 2016 award. Students enrolled in clock hour programs are *required* to complete 90 percent of the hours required in the fall federal payment period to maintain eligibility for the next payment period. A course is considered complete if the student earns a standard

grade, including a failing grade but excluding a grade at withdrawal prior to completion. Withdrawn coursework remains ineligible for reimbursement in any term.

For the 2015-2016 academic year, a student that does not complete 12 credit hours in the fall 2015 term will be ineligible for a spring 2016 award. During the spring 2016 semester of ineligibility, the student would need to complete at least enough credit hours to total 12 credit hours when combined with the fall 2015 term in order to regain eligibility for the next period of enrollment. For example, a student that completed 9 credit hours in the fall 2015 term would have to complete a minimum of 3 credit hours in the spring 2016 term to regain eligibility for the next period of enrollment. Students in clock hour programs would remain ineligible until they have made up the missed hours.

### The Grade Point Average Requirement

Currently, students who have never received an A+ Scholarship (initial recipients) must comply with the A+ participating institution's satisfactory academic progress policy, including any grade point average requirement included in that policy, during their first academic year. After their first academic year, students must maintain a 2.5 cumulative GPA to renew the scholarship.

For the 2015-2016 academic year, A+ institutions are required to verify that students who initially received the A+ Scholarship in either the summer or fall 2015 term have at least a 2.0 grade point average at the end of the fall 2015 term. Initial recipients that do not achieve at least a 2.0 cumulative GPA at the end of the fall 2015 term will not be eligible for a spring 2016 award. They may regain eligibility as a renewal student once they have achieved a minimum 2.5 cumulative GPA.

At this time, this plan is a temporary measure that only applies to the 2015-2016 academic year. However, MDHE will monitor the implementation of these measures and, if they are found to be successful, will consider adopting them as permanent program requirements.