

1 STATE OF OKLAHOMA

2 1st Session of the 60th Legislature (2025)

3 HOUSE BILL 1282

By: Caldwell (Chad)

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8 AS INTRODUCED

9 An Act relating to higher education; creating the
10 Distinguished Oklahoma Scholars Award Program;
11 providing purpose of program; authorizing Oklahoma
12 State Regents for Higher Education to promulgate
13 rules; providing for eligibility for award; providing
14 for retention of eligibility; providing for amount of
15 award; limiting awards; permitting State Regents to
16 set aside certain funds; requiring awards be returned
17 under certain circumstances; creating the
18 Distinguished Oklahoma Scholars Award Revolving Fund;
19 providing for codification; providing effective date;
20 and declaring an emergency.

21 BE IT ENACTED BY THE PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF OKLAHOMA:

22 SECTION 1. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified
23 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 2633 of Title 70, unless there
24 is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

A. There is hereby created the Distinguished Oklahoma Scholars
Award Program. The purpose of the program is to provide an award to

1 students who score in the top zero point five percent (0.5%) of the
2 students in the nation on a nationally recognized college entrance
3 exam, who are pursuing studies in this state leading to an associate
4 or baccalaureate degree, and who are in good academic standing in
5 the institution or school in which the student is enrolled.

6 B. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education shall
7 promulgate rules to implement the Distinguished Oklahoma Scholars
8 Award Program in accordance with this act.

9 SECTION 2. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified
10 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 2634 of Title 70, unless there
11 is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

12 A. To be eligible to participate in the Distinguished Oklahoma
13 Scholars Award Program and to qualify for an award which includes
14 payment of an amount equivalent to resident tuition for the first
15 semester or other academic unit of postsecondary enrollment, a
16 student shall:

- 17 1. Be a resident of this state;
- 18 2. Be a United States citizen or lawfully present in the United
19 States;
- 20 3. Have achieved a composite score in the top zero point five
21 percent (0.5%) of the students in the nation on a nationally
22 recognized college entrance exam such as the ACT or SAT;
- 23 4. a. have graduated within the previous three (3) years
24 from a high school accredited by the State Board of

1 Education or the Oklahoma School of Science and
2 Mathematics with a minimum 3.0 cumulative grade point
3 average on a 4.0 scale for all work attempted in
4 grades nine through twelve,

5 b. have graduated within the previous three (3) years
6 from a high school not accredited by the State Board
7 of Education with a minimum 3.0 cumulative grade point
8 average on a 4.0 scale for all work attempted in
9 grades nine through twelve, or

10 c. have satisfactorily completed within the previous
11 three (3) years an educational program that was
12 provided through a means other than a public or
13 private school;

14 5. Have completed the curricular requirements for admission to
15 an institution within The Oklahoma State System of Higher Education.
16 Students shall also have attained a 3.0 grade point average in the
17 core curriculum courses. Students who attended a high school which
18 did not offer all the core curriculum courses or students who were
19 educated by other means and were not offered all the core curriculum
20 courses shall be allowed to satisfy this curriculum requirement by
21 participating in a program approved by the Oklahoma State Regents
22 for Higher Education for remediation of high school curricular
23 deficiencies;

1 6. Have satisfied admission standards as determined by the
2 Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education for first-time students
3 for the appropriate type of institution, or, if attending a private
4 institution, have satisfied admission standards as determined by the
5 private institution. No student participating in the Distinguished
6 Oklahoma Scholars Award Program shall be admitted into an
7 institution of higher education by special admission standards;

8 7. Have secured admission to, and enrolled in, an institution
9 which is a member of The Oklahoma State System of Higher Education,
10 or a private institution of higher learning located within this
11 state and accredited pursuant to Section 4103 of Title 70 of the
12 Oklahoma Statutes; and

13 B. To retain eligibility while pursuing the program of higher
14 learning in which enrolled, the student shall:

15 1. Meet the requirements for retention and degree completion as
16 established by the institution in which the student is enrolled;

17 2. Maintain good academic standing and satisfactory academic
18 progress according to standards of the Oklahoma State Regents for
19 Higher Education;

20 3. Maintain satisfactory academic progress as required for
21 eligibility for federal Title IV student financial aid programs;

22 4. Comply with the standards related to maintenance of
23 eligibility as promulgated by the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher
24 Education; and

1 5. Refrain from conduct that leads to expulsion or suspension
2 of more than one semester from an institution of higher education.
3 A student who violates the provisions of this paragraph shall
4 permanently lose eligibility for program benefits.

5 SECTION 3. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified
6 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 2635 of Title 70, unless there
7 is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

8 A. Subject to the availability of funds, an amount equivalent
9 to the nonguaranteed resident tuition for which an eligible student
10 is obligated at an institution of The Oklahoma State System of
11 Higher Education shall be awarded by allocation from the
12 Distinguished Oklahoma Scholars Award Revolving Fund.

13 B. 1. An award allowed by this section shall not be allowed
14 for courses or other postsecondary units taken in excess of the
15 requirements for completion of a baccalaureate program or taken more
16 than five (5) years after the student's first semester of
17 postsecondary enrollment. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher
18 Education may award the Distinguished Oklahoma Scholars Award
19 Program benefits for courses of postsecondary units taken more than
20 five (5) years after the student's first semester of postsecondary
21 enrollment only in hardship circumstances; provided, however, no
22 Distinguished Oklahoma Scholars Award Program participant may
23 receive benefits beyond a cumulative time period of five (5) years.

1 2. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education shall
2 establish a maximum limit on the number of courses or other
3 postsecondary units to which Distinguished Oklahoma Scholars Award
4 Program benefits will apply.

5 C. Benefits awarded under the Distinguished Oklahoma Scholars
6 Award Program shall be awarded to all eligible applicants without
7 any limitation on the number of awards in any year other than the
8 amount of funds available for the program and the number of eligible
9 applicants. Subject to the provisions of subsection D of this
10 section, if funds are not sufficient to provide awards for all
11 eligible applicants, the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education
12 shall make awards on the basis of need. Provided, the Oklahoma
13 State Regents for Higher Education shall take into consideration
14 other grants and scholarships received by an eligible applicant when
15 making awards.

16 D. The Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education may, at the
17 time an award is made on behalf of a Distinguished Oklahoma Scholars
18 Award Program student, set aside in the Distinguished Oklahoma
19 Scholars Award Revolving Fund funds for the full commitment made to
20 such Distinguished Oklahoma Scholars Award Program student.

21 E. If a student withdraws from a class in which he or she has
22 received an award from the Distinguished Oklahoma Scholars Award
23 Program, the awarded funds shall be returned to the Distinguished
24 Oklahoma Scholars Award Program. The provisions of this subsection

1 shall only apply to awarded funds when a student withdraws prior to
2 the end of the add/drop period for the session in which the student
3 is enrolled.

4 SECTION 4. NEW LAW A new section of law to be codified
5 in the Oklahoma Statutes as Section 2636 of Title 70, unless there
6 is created a duplication in numbering, reads as follows:

7 There is hereby created in the State Treasury a revolving fund
8 for the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education to be designated
9 the "Distinguished Oklahoma Scholars Award Revolving Fund". The
10 fund shall be a continuing fund, not subject to fiscal year
11 limitations, and shall consist of all monies received by the State
12 Regents from the Legislature and any donations, grants and gifts
13 from any public or private source. All monies accruing to the
14 credit of the fund are hereby appropriated and may be budgeted and
15 expended by the State Regents for the purpose of implementing the
16 Distinguished Oklahoma Scholars Award Program. Expenditures from
17 the fund shall be made upon warrants issued by the State Treasurer
18 against claims filed as prescribed by law with the Director of the
19 Office of Management and Enterprise Services for approval and
20 payment.

21 SECTION 5. This act shall become effective July 1, 2025.

22 SECTION 6. It being immediately necessary for the preservation
23 of the public peace, health or safety, an emergency is hereby
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1 declared to exist, by reason whereof this act shall take effect and
2 be in full force from and after its passage and approval.

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