

AN ACT concerning education.

**Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,
represented in the General Assembly:**

Section 5. The Higher Education Student Assistance Act is amended by changing Section 25 as follows:

(110 ILCS 947/25)

Sec. 25. State scholar program.

(a) An applicant is eligible to be designated a State Scholar when the Commission finds the candidate:

(1) is a resident of this State, including a resident attending a Department of Defense school, and a citizen or permanent resident of the United States;

(2) has successfully completed the program of instruction at an approved high school, or is a student in good standing at such a school and is engaged in a program which in due course will be completed by the end of the academic year, and in either event that the candidate's academic standing is above the class median; and that the candidate has not had any university, college, normal school, private junior college or public community college, or other advanced training subsequent to graduation from high school; and

(3) has superior capacity to profit by a higher

education.

(b) In determining an applicant's superior capacity to profit by a higher education, the Commission shall consider the candidate's scholastic record in high school and the results of the examination conducted under the provisions of this Act. The Commission shall establish by rule the minimum conditions of eligibility in terms of the foregoing factors, and the relative weight to be accorded to those factors.

(c) The Commission shall base its State Scholar designations upon the eligibility formula prescribed in its rules, except that notwithstanding those rules or any other provision of this Section, a student nominated by his or her school shall be designated a State Scholar if that student achieves an Illinois Standard Test Score at or above the 95th percentile among students taking the designated examinations in Illinois that year, as determined by the Commission.

(d) The Commission shall obtain the results of a competitive examination from the applicants. The examination shall provide a measure of each candidate's ability to perform college work and shall have demonstrated utility in such a selection program. The Commission shall select, and designate by rule, the specific examinations to be used in determining the applicant's superior capacity to profit from a higher education. Candidates may be asked by the Commission to take those steps necessary to provide results of the designated examination as part of their applications. Any nominal cost of

obtaining or providing the examination results shall be paid by the candidate to the agency designated by the Commission to provide the examination service. In the event that a candidate or candidates are unable to participate in the examination for financial reasons, the Commission may choose to pay the examination fee on the candidate's or candidates' behalf. Any notary fee which may also be required as part of the total application shall be paid by the applicant.

(e) The Commission shall award to each State Scholar a certificate or other suitable form of recognition. The decision to attend a non-qualified institution of higher learning shall not disqualify applicants who are otherwise fully qualified.

(f) Subject to appropriation, each State Scholar who enrolls or is enrolled in an institution of higher learning in this State shall also receive a one-time grant of \$1,000 to be applied to tuition and mandatory fees and paid directly to the institution of higher learning. However, a student who has been awarded a Merit Recognition Scholarship under Section 31 of this Act may not be awarded a grant under this subsection (f), although he or she may still be designated a State Scholar.

(g) ~~(f)~~ The Commission shall conduct a study detailing all of the following information:

(1) The number of students designated State Scholars in 2008 and 2009.

(2) The number of State Scholars who applied to State universities in 2008 and 2009.

(3) The number of State Scholars who were denied admittance into the State universities to which they applied in 2008 and 2009.

All data collected from a State university in regards to the study conducted under this subsection (g) ~~(f)~~ must be verified by that university.

On or before January 1, 2010, the Commission must submit a report to the General Assembly that contains the findings of the study conducted under this subsection (g) ~~(f)~~ and the Commission's recommendations on how to make State universities more accessible to State Scholars.

(h) ~~(g)~~ The Commission shall adopt all necessary and proper rules not inconsistent with this Section for its effective implementation.

(Source: P.A. 95-715, eff. 1-1-09; 95-760, eff. 7-28-08; revised 9-5-08.)

Section 99. Effective date. This Act takes effect July 1, 2009.