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# Benacquisto Scholarship Program

[Florida Statutes 1009.893](#)

[State Board of Education Rule 6A-20.0281](#)

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## Program Description

The Benacquisto Scholarship Program is a merit scholarship for high school graduates who receive recognition as a National Merit® Scholar. Eligible scholars will receive an award equal to the institutional cost of attendance for an in-state student minus the sum of Bright Futures and the National Merit® award. **An initial application is not required.**

## Program Requirements

A student who is a Florida resident seeking initial funding must:

- Earn a standard Florida high school diploma or its equivalency (*unless the student completes a home education program or earns a high school diploma from a non-Florida high school while living with a parent who is on military or public service assignment away from Florida*).
- Be a 2024 National Merit® Scholar.
- Enroll at an eligible Florida postsecondary institution during the 2024-25 fall academic term following high school graduation.

A 2024 National Merit® Finalist becomes a Scholar by receiving:

- (a) a National Merit® \$2500 Scholarship,
- (b) a Corporate-sponsored Merit Scholarship®, or
- (c) a College-sponsored Merit Scholarship®.

*NOTE: “Special” Corporate Scholarships and “Presidential” awards do not qualify a student for the Benacquisto Scholarship.*

All students must:

- Be a U.S. citizen or eligible noncitizen (*as determined by the institution*) and enroll at an eligible, regionally accredited, public or independent Florida postsecondary institution.
- Enroll full-time (*minimum 12 credit hours per term or quarter equivalency*) in a baccalaureate degree program.

## National Merit® College-Sponsors

While there are many institutions in Florida that meet the eligibility criteria, only nine institutions participate with the National Merit Scholarship Corporation as a College-Sponsor for the 2024-25 academic year:

- Embry-Riddle Aeronautical University,
- Florida Atlantic University,
- Florida International University,
- Florida State University,
- New College of Florida,
- University of Central Florida,
- University of Florida,
- University of Miami, and
- University of South Florida.

To be considered for college sponsorship, the student must choose one of the above institutions as a first choice when responding to the National Merit Scholarship Corporation. Once the National Merit Scholarship Corporation has mailed out an offer, the student will not be able to change the institution designation.

## Student Award Renewal

An application is not required to renew the award. Eligibility for renewal is determined at the end of the second semester, third quarter or the equivalent of each academic year.

For automatic renewal, an award recipient will have:

- Earned credit for all hours enrolled by the end of the regular drop/add period each term.
- Earned a minimum cumulative grade point average (GPA) of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale.

## Failure to Meet the Minimum Renewal GPA

A student who does not maintain a minimum 3.0 GPA by the end of the spring semester or third quarter of the academic year shall be ineligible to continue in the program.

## Failure to Meet the Minimum Renewal Credit Hours

A student who does not meet the required credit hours shall be ineligible to continue in the program.

## Award Procedures

- Eligible students will receive an award equal to the per-term institutional in-state cost of attendance (COA), minus the sum of the Bright Futures (BF) award and an award associated with the National Merit® (NM) process.

$$\text{Benacquisto Scholarship Award} = \text{COA} - (\text{BF} + \text{NM})$$

- The COA is the total estimated amount of cost to attend college full-time each term, and may include but is not limited to: tuition & fees, on-campus room & board, books, supplies, travel, and miscellaneous expenses.
- The highest in-state institutional COA, as reported by the Board of Governors of the State University System, will be used in the calculation of awards for students who attend an eligible four-year independent postsecondary institution.
- The award may not be used to pay for remedial coursework or developmental education.

## Award Disbursement

The postsecondary institution will disburse awards to eligible students each term. Awards are not currently available for the summer.

## Terms of Eligibility

- This program will provide funds for 100 percent of the number of credit hours required to complete a baccalaureate degree program, or until completion of a baccalaureate degree program, whichever comes first.
- Extended hours of funding are available to students enrolled in a single program of study requiring more than 120 hours by submitting the [Extended Hours Application](#).
- A student may receive an award for up to 5 years following high school graduation and may not receive the award for more than 10 semesters.
- Students who received a college-sponsored Merit Scholarship® must maintain enrollment at the institution where the student was initially funded to maintain scholarship eligibility.

## Institutional Appeal Process

An applicant who believes financial aid has been wrongly denied has certain rights to appeal. If aid is denied for failure to meet state academic progress requirements, an applicant may appeal the denial to the institution by providing proof of illness or other emergency beyond the applicant's control. An institutional academic progress appeal is to be filed within 30 days of the denial letter or by the date established by the institution's financial aid office, whichever is later.

## Updating Information

A recipient must notify OSFA of any change in name, address, or institution attended.

**Transferring from one institution to another will affect an applicant's award.**

A student may update information by contacting Customer Service at 888-827-2004 or logging into his or her online OSFA account:

<https://www.FloridaStudentFinancialAidsg.org>

## Use of an Applicant's Social Security Number/Non-discrimination Statement

The Privacy Act of 1974 requires state agencies to inform applicants of the reasons for requesting their Social Security numbers (SSN). The FDOE requests an SSN on all applications for student financial assistance in order to correctly identify applicants, match each applicant's financial aid record with the student record at the postsecondary institution the applicant attends, and help coordinate state student aid programs with federal student aid programs.

An applicant will not be denied financial assistance for failure to disclose the SSN. Without an SSN, correct identification of an applicant's record cannot be assured and may result in an error in the award amount or a delay in the award disbursement.

Pursuant to section 1000.05, Florida Statutes, state student financial assistance is provided to eligible applicants without discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or marital status. Minority status will be considered when required by law as a condition of eligibility or selection.

## Contact Information

**Address:**

Florida Department of Education  
Office of Student Financial Assistance  
State Scholarship and Grant Programs  
Suite 1344  
325 West Gaines Street  
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-0400

**Phone:**

888-827-2004

**Email:**

[OSFA@fldoe.org](mailto:OSFA@fldoe.org)