

## Benacquisto Scholarship Program Frequently Asked Questions

### 1. Who is eligible for the Benacquisto Scholarship award?

The scholarship is available to National Merit® Finalists who receive one of the following qualifying scholarships:

- National Merit® \$2500 Scholarship,
- Corporate-sponsored Merit Scholarship®, or
- College-sponsored Merit Scholarship®.

### 2. How do I become a National Merit® Finalist?

The National Merit Corporation determines these designations. Visit the Corporation's website at <http://nationalmerit.org> to learn more about the process.

### 3. Do I need to complete an application to be considered for this scholarship?

No. Students are not required to submit the *Florida Financial Aid Application (FFAA)* to be eligible for the Benacquisto Scholarship. However, students may be eligible for other types of state aid once an application has been completed and evaluated.

### 4. Who determines if I am eligible to receive the scholarship?

Postsecondary institutions determine scholarship eligibility. The National Merit Corporation provides institutions with verified National Merit® Finalists who received one of the qualifying awards. The institution will ensure that finalists meet all of the following funding requirements:

- Must be a U.S. citizen or eligible non-citizen (*as determined by the institution*).
- Earn an approved secondary education credential based on residency status:
  - If a Florida resident, the student 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 out of Florida.
  - If a non-Florida resident, the student must earn a high school diploma comparable to a standard Florida high school diploma or its equivalency, unless the student completes a home education program.
- Enroll at an eligible, regionally accredited, public or independent postsecondary institution.
- Enroll full-time (*minimum 12 credit hours per term or quarter equivalency*) in a baccalaureate degree program.
- Initially enroll at an eligible postsecondary institution during the fall academic term immediately following high school graduation.
- Physically reside in Florida on or near the institution's campus where enrolled if a non-Florida resident.

**5. I am a National Merit® Finalist who was awarded a College-sponsored scholarship from the University of Georgia. However, I plan to attend University of Florida instead. Am I eligible for the Benacquisto Scholarship award?**

No. The College-sponsored award must be received by your **first choice** institution (must also be an eligible Florida institution) where you will be attending.

**6. I received a Special Scholarship from a corporate sponsor. Am I eligible for the Benacquisto Scholarship award?**

No. A National Merit® Special Scholarship is not a qualifying scholarship.

**7. What Florida institutions can offer a College-sponsored qualifying scholarship?**

Currently, only nine Florida institutions participate with the National Merit Scholarship Corporation as a College-sponsor for the 2021-22 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.

**8. Which colleges or universities can I attend?**

A student who was awarded a National Merit® \$2500 Scholarship or a Corporate-sponsored Scholarship can attend any of the eligible regionally accredited Florida institutions listed on OSFA's website.

A student who was awarded a College-sponsored Scholarship must attend the institution that financed the scholarship or award (*see #8 above*).

**9. If I receive a College-sponsored Scholarship from an eligible Florida institution, can I attend any of the other eligible Florida institutions instead?**

No. A student who receives an offer for a College-sponsored Scholarship **must** attend the institution financing the scholarship or award.

**10. How does my college or university know that I am eligible for the scholarship?**

The college or university will verify your status against a roster from the National Merit Scholarship Corporation. You should retain a copy of the official letter or certificate received from the National Merit Scholarship Corporation denoting your status as a 'Finalist' and a copy of the scholarship award letter in case questions arise regarding your status.

**11. I am a National Merit® Finalist and have received a sponsorship offer; however, my institution has no record of my National Merit® Award. How can I confirm that I will be awarded the Benacquisto Scholarship?**

The National Merit Corporation will provide a list of National Merit® Award recipients to the appropriate institution after the May 31<sup>st</sup> deadline to report college choice. After the institution receives the list, eligibility determinations will be made and awards offered accordingly.

**12. When will I receive my funding?**

Your institution will disburse funding to you after the drop/add period. Contact your institution's Financial Aid office for information concerning specific disbursement dates.

**13. I am eligible for the Benacquisto Scholarship, but do not want to start my postsecondary career in the Fall. Can I delay accepting the initial scholarship award?**

No. Eligible students must begin enrollment and accept funding at an eligible postsecondary institution no later than the fall term following high school graduation to receive the scholarship award.

**14. I am non-Florida resident who has chosen stay at home and take online courses. Can I still qualify for my award if I am living out of state?**

No. There is not a waiver to exempt students from the statutory requirement to physically reside in Florida on or near the institution's campus where enrolled.

**15. How do I renew my scholarship?**

To renew, a student must earn a minimum 3.0 cumulative grade point average (GPA) and earn all credit hours enrolled at the end of the drop/add period each term. The scholarship renews automatically at the end of the second semester, third quarter, or the equivalent, at the end of the academic year, provided the student meets the renewal requirements.

**16. What happens if I do not meet the renewal requirements?**

The scholarship will be lost if the student does not meet both the GPA and credit hour requirements. The scholarship cannot be restored once lost.

**17. Can I drop a class after drop/add period and still meet the renewal requirements?**

No. If the student drops a class after the drop/add period, the student will not be able to earn all credit hours enrolled and therefore, will not meet renewal requirements.

**18. Can I take additional courses in the second term to make up for hours not earned during the first term in order to meet the renewal requirements?**

No. The credit hour requirement must be met each term.

**19. Can I get my scholarship back if I lose it?**

No. The Benacquisto Scholarship does not provide a restoration opportunity for students. Once eligibility is lost, it may not be restored.

**20. Will my scholarship renew if I skip the spring semester?**

Benacquisto Scholars are required to enroll the fall term after high school graduation. You are not obligated to attend both fall and spring terms. However, you must meet renewal requirements to have the scholarship available again in the following fall term.

**21. Is my eligibility compromised if I start attending classes the summer after graduating from high school?**

No. Eligible students who begin to take classes during the summer and continue enrollment in the fall term will not forfeit their scholarship eligibility. The requirement is that you be enrolled the fall after high school graduation. Eligible students will only be funded fall and spring terms. Awards are not currently available for the summer term.

**22. I am an eligible scholarship recipient enrolled in my final term. I am only required to take 6 hours to graduate. Can I still receive my funding?**

Yes. An eligible scholarship recipient may be funded for less than full-time hours if the student is enrolled in the last courses required for graduation. The scholarship will cease after that term of funding. Your institution will verify your enrollment status.

**23. How much is the scholarship award amount?**

The award amount is equivalent to the per term institutional cost of attendance (COA), provided by the Florida Board of Governors, minus the sum of the Bright Futures (BF) award and National Merit® award (NM).

The institution may adjust an award based on a student's other qualifying awards in order to satisfy federal or institutional regulations.

**24. What is included in the cost of attendance (COA)?**

The COA is the total estimated cost to attend college full-time per term and may include, but is not limited to, tuition and fees, on-campus room and board, books, supplies, travel, and miscellaneous expenses.

**25. Is funding currently available to cover the summer?**

No. Legislative appropriated funds are not sufficient to cover the summer terms.

**26. Can I transfer to another institution once I begin receiving the Benacquisto Scholarship?**

Benacquisto scholars who received a College-sponsored Merit Scholarship must maintain enrollment at the institution where the student was initially funded in order to maintain scholarship eligibility.

**27. If I maintain eligibility, how long can I receive the scholarship?**

This scholarship 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. A student is eligible to receive an award for up to 5 years following high school graduation and may not receive the award for more than 10 semesters.