



WEST VIRGINIA Merit-based and need-based financial aid programs  
**SUMMARY REPORT**



**2014**

## MERIT-BASED AND NEED-BASED FINANCIAL AID PROGRAMS SUMMARY REPORT

*The state of West Virginia funds two major financial aid programs. The West Virginia Higher Education Grant program was created in 1968 and serves as the state's need-based grant program. The West Virginia PROMISE Scholarship was created in 1999 and funded in 2001 to serve as a merit-based scholarship program. Over the last 8 years West Virginia has increased funding for both programs to increase college affordability and has preserved financial aid funding over the past two years amid statewide budget cuts.*

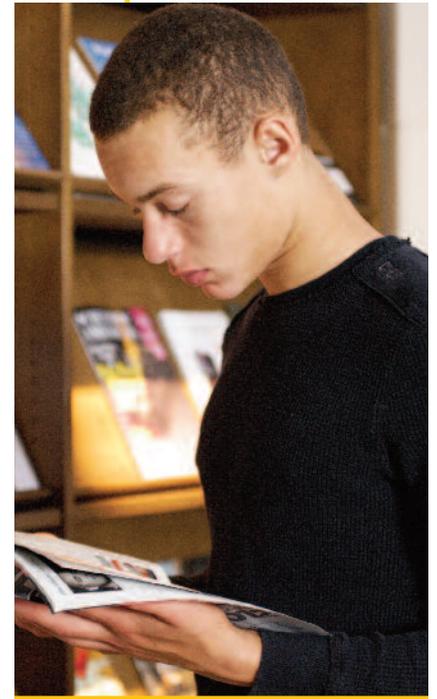
The West Virginia Higher Education Grant is a need-based financial aid program designed to ensure that West Virginia students with financial need are given an opportunity to pursue postsecondary education. The grant may be renewed until the student's course of study is completed, but may not exceed an additional three academic years beyond the initial award. Students must file a FAFSA each year to be eligible for renewal. Awards are based on demonstrated financial need and generally may be used in conjunction with other forms of state, federal, and institutional financial aid. Each year the Higher Education Student Financial Aid Advisory Board makes recommendations to the West Virginia Higher Education Policy Commission to set the maximum Expected Family Contribution (EFC) that a student may have in order to qualify for the West Virginia Higher Education Grant. The EFC is calculated from the Free Application for Federal Student Aid and is used in calculating a student's financial need. A student with an Expected Family Contribution under the threshold set each year for the West Virginia Higher Education Grant must also have remaining financial need when other scholarships and grants are taken into consideration.



The West Virginia Higher Education Grant is available to degree-seeking residents of West Virginia. The following criteria are used to determine student eligibility:

- A citizen of the United States;
- West Virginia residency for at least 12 months prior to the date of application;
- Be a high school graduate or have earned a GED diploma;
- Demonstrate an established level of financial need through submission of the FAFSA;
- Demonstrate academic promise defined as a 2.0 cumulative high school GPA or a score of 2250 on the GED (this requirement does not apply to those more than five years out of high school) and meet institutional admission requirements;
- Enroll at a participating institution in West Virginia or Pennsylvania as a full-time undergraduate student;
- Have not previously earned a bachelor's degree.

The West Virginia Higher Education Grant may be used at approved public and independent postsecondary institutions in West Virginia or Pennsylvania. The grant may be transferred from one eligible institution to another. Renewal is not automatic; students must reapply each year.



Students must meet the above criteria to be eligible for the West Virginia Higher Education Grant. The chart below shows the number of West Virginia Higher Education Grant recipients over the last 7 years.

Award Year	# of Recipients	\$ amount awarded
13-14	19,050	\$40,781,492
12-13	19,334	\$40,794,859
11-12	19,506	\$39,228,028
10-11	20,793	\$37,131,277
09-10	15,203	\$40,082,411
08-09	16,132	\$35,285,378
07-08	11,588	\$30,349,514

The PROMISE Scholarship is a merit-based financial aid program designed to: (1) improve high school and postsecondary academic achievement through scholarship incentives; (2) promote access to higher education by reducing costs to students; (3) retain the “best and brightest” students in West Virginia colleges and universities; and (4) create a more educated workforce, which, in turn, will lead to greater economic development. For students who began receiving the award prior to January 1, 2010, the scholarship amount is full tuition and mandatory fees at public postsecondary institutions and a comparable amount at West Virginia non-profit, independent institutions. Students who began receiving the award after January 1, 2010, receive annual awards up to \$4,750 to cover the cost of tuition and mandatory fees at public or nonprofit, independent institutions in West Virginia. Awards can be used in conjunction with other forms of state, federal, and institutional financial aid.

To qualify for a PROMISE Scholarship, a student must:

- Complete high school graduation requirements at a West Virginia high school with at least half of the credits required for graduation obtained at a public or private high school in the state (unless the student is a West Virginia resident commuting to an out-of-state high school or meets the military dependent exemption);
- Complete the PROMISE core high school curriculum;
- Apply for the scholarship within two years of graduation from high school by submitting both the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and the PROMISE application form;
- Have attained a cumulative core and overall high school GPA of 3.0 on a 4.0 scale according to local standardized grading in coursework required for graduation by the State Board of Education;
- Have attained a composite ACT score of 22 (or the comparable SAT score) with a minimum score of 20 on all four subject tests;
- Have attained a 2500 minimum score on the General Education Development (GED) exam if the student was approved by their county school board to be home-schooled in the 11th and 12th grades or attended an alternative educational program;
- Have resided in West Virginia continuously for 12 months immediately preceding application for the PROMISE (unless meeting the military dependent exemption);
- Be a United States citizen or a legal immigrant to the United States.

The scholarship is automatically renewed for up to eight continuous semesters or until a bachelor's degree is earned. To be considered for scholarship renewal, a student must have a minimum overall 2.75 GPA at the end of the first 12-month period of enrollment on completed college coursework and a 3.0 GPA thereafter as well as earn 30 credit hours over each twelve-month period of enrollment. Recipients are also encouraged to engage in community service activities while in college.

Students must meet the above criteria to be eligible for PROMISE. The chart below shows the number of PROMISE Scholarship recipients over the last 7 years.

Award Year	# of Recipients	\$ amount awarded
13-14	10,108	\$46,396,733
12-13	10,036	\$47,161,143
11-12	9,954	\$47,721,444
10-11	9,782	\$47,020,274
09-10	9,456	\$45,706,663
08-09	9,334	\$42,498,633
07-08	9,526	\$40,264,423

There are students who meet the criteria for both the PROMISE Scholarship and the West Virginia Higher Education Grant program. State policy allows students who meet the criteria for both programs to benefit by receiving funding from each program toward their higher education expenses. The chart below shows the percentage of PROMISE Scholarship recipients who also met the criteria and received the West Virginia Higher Education Grant.

Award Year	Number	Percent
12-13	3,523	35.6%
11-12	3,322	33.8%
10-11	3,252	33.8%
09-10	2,415	26.0%
08-09	1,773	19.3%
07-08	1,818	19.4%

To determine if a student is eligible to receive the West Virginia Higher Education Grant, the institution will take the student's cost of attendance and subtract the student's EFC and all scholarships and grants that a student is receiving, including the PROMISE Scholarship, to determine if a student has remaining financial need to receive the West Virginia Higher Education Grant. A student is not eligible for the West Virginia Higher Education Grant if there is not remaining financial need after an institution subtracts the EFC and scholarships and grants, including the PROMISE Scholarship, from the institution's cost of attendance.

The policy to allow students to receive both the PROMISE Scholarship and the West Virginia Higher Education Grant is called stacking. The ability for students to stack both awards as long as the student demonstrates remaining financial need helps our neediest students who have demonstrated the academic achievement to qualify for the PROMISE Scholarship. The PROMISE Scholarship funds can only be used for tuition and mandatory fees. The West Virginia Higher Education Grant can be used for any part of cost of attendance, which includes tuition, fees, room, board, books, and transportation costs.

The stacking policy does not penalize students from low-income backgrounds who have met the criteria for the merit-based and need-based state aid programs by limiting their eligibility to only one program. In a time of limited resources West Virginia has shown commitment to funding both a merit-based and need-based financial aid program. Both programs are critical in making higher education affordable for students.

