

CHAPTER 59

AN ACT establishing the NJ STARS Program for county college students, supplementing chapter 71B of Title 18A of the New Jersey Statutes.

BE IT ENACTED *by the Senate and General Assembly of the State of New Jersey:*

C.18A:71B-81 Short title.

1. This act shall be known and may be cited as the "New Jersey Student Tuition Assistance Reward Scholarship (NJ STARS) Program Act."

C.18A:71B-82 Findings relative to NJ STARS Program.

2. The Legislature finds that it is necessary for the State's citizens to acquire an education beyond the secondary level in order to succeed during the 21st century. A well-trained and educated population, moreover, is vital to New Jersey's efforts to attract and retain highly skilled businesses, and to ensure the State's continued economic well-being. It is therefore incumbent upon the Legislature to institute a program which will help high achieving students to pursue a post-secondary education.

C.18A:71B-83 Definitions relative to NJ STARS Program.

3. As used in this act:

"Authority" means the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority established pursuant to N.J.S.18A:71A-3.

"Full-time course of study" in any semester means a course of study, leading to a degree from the county college of enrollment, that includes at least 12 credit hours, not including any credit hours in a remedial or developmental curriculum.

"Program" means the New Jersey Student Tuition Assistance Reward Scholarship (NJ STARS) Program for county college students.

C.18A:71B-84 NJ STARS Program.

4. There is hereby created the New Jersey Student Tuition Assistance Reward Scholarship (NJ STARS) Program for county college students. It shall be the duty of the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority to administer the program.

C.18A:71B-85 NJ STARS scholarships; eligibility.

5. a. A scholarship under the NJ STARS Program shall cover the full cost of tuition and fees, subject to the prior application of other grants and scholarships against those costs as provided under paragraph (2) of subsection c. of this section, for up to 15 credit hours in any semester, for an eligible student enrolled in a full-time course of study at the New Jersey county college serving the student's county of residence. An otherwise eligible student who demonstrates to the authority, in accordance with such criteria and by means of such documentation as the authority shall establish by regulation, that the county college serving the student's county of residence does not offer the curriculum that the student chooses to study shall be eligible for such scholarship at another New Jersey county college offering that curriculum. The amount of any scholarship allowed hereunder to a student at a county college serving a county other than the student's county of residence shall be computed as though the student were a resident of the county served by that college, and the college shall likewise compute the amount of any additional payment, required with respect to the enrollment of that student for credit hours of study during a semester in which the scholarship is awarded that are not covered by that scholarship, as though the student were a resident of the county.

b. A student shall be eligible for a scholarship under the NJ STARS Program for up to five semesters. The scholarship shall be payable for the first year of enrollment in a county college to a student who graduated in the top 20% of the student's high school graduating class, provided that in the case of students graduating from high schools that do not calculate the class rank of their students, the student's ranking shall be determined by the high school in consultation with the authority. During a student's enrollment in a county college after the first year of enrollment, the scholarship shall be payable to that student if, based on the student's performance in the first year of enrollment, the student was ranked in the top 20% of all first-time students enrolled in a full-time course of study at the county college during the student's initial

year of county college enrollment.

c. To be eligible to receive a scholarship under the NJ STARS Program a student shall:

- (1) be a State resident pursuant to guidelines established by the authority;
- (2) have applied for all other available forms of State and federal need-based grants and merit scholarships, exclusive of loans, the full amount of which grants and scholarships shall be applied to tuition and fee charges to reduce the amount of any scholarship that the student shall receive under the provisions of this act;
- (3) be enrolled in a full-time course of study at a New Jersey county college;
- (4) have graduated from high school in 2004 or later, and not earlier than the calendar year two years prior to the first calendar year in which a scholarship payment is to be made; and
- (5) maintain continuous enrollment in a full-time course of study, unless on medical leave due to the illness of the student or a member of the student's immediate family or emergency leave because of a family emergency, which medical or emergency leave shall have been approved by the county college.

d. A student who is dismissed for academic or disciplinary reasons from a county college shall no longer be eligible for a scholarship under this act. If a student participating in the program is dismissed for disciplinary reasons, the student shall repay in full all amounts received under the program. The county college shall be responsible for collecting the repayment, or the amount of any overpayment or other improper payment, of any State awards under the program, in accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.18A:71B-10.

e. A student scholarship under the NJ STARS Program may be renewed upon the student's filing of a renewal financial aid application and providing evidence that the student has satisfied the requirements pursuant to subsection b. of this section.

C.18A:71B-86 Report to Legislature, Governor on NJSTARS Program; guidelines rules, regulations.

6. a. Not later than September 30, 2006, the Higher Education Student Assistance Authority shall prepare and submit to the Legislature and the Governor a report on the implementation of the NJ STARS Program at the several county colleges. The report shall, for each college, set forth statistics on and include an analysis of student participation in the program at the college, the amounts of funding provided under the program to students enrolled at the college, the amounts of funding made available to those participating students from State sources other than the NJ STARS Program and from federal and institutional sources, and such other factors as the authority deems to be necessary or useful to the evaluation of the program.

b. The Higher Education Student Assistance Authority shall administer the provisions of this act and shall establish appropriate criteria, procedures, and guidelines for awarding New Jersey Student Tuition Assistance Reward Scholarships to eligible students in accordance with the provisions of this act. The authority shall adopt in accordance with the "Administrative Procedure Act," P.L.1968, c.410 (C.52:14B-1 et seq.), rules and regulations as may be necessary to implement the provisions of this act.

7. This act shall take effect on July 1, 2004.

Approved June 29, 2004.