

A+ Spring 2015 Award Status Update

Last week Governor Nixon released \$2 million previously restricted from the A+ Scholarship program for the 2014-2015 academic year. The budget restriction was a contributing factor in the Missouri Department of Higher Education's announcement in late August that Spring 2015 awards were expected to be reduced by up to four credit hours, or 150 clock hours, as a result of a funding shortfall for the program.

MDHE initially reported the exact amount of the reduction would be dependent on two factors – the actual amount expended for the program during the Summer 2014 and Fall 2014 terms and a positive change in the revenue picture that would enable the governor to lift the expenditure restriction for the A+ Program. Although the governor's release of the \$2 million is expected to reduce the number of credit or clock hours students will be required to pay for out-of-pocket, MDHE is still projecting a funding shortfall as a result of program growth. The size of the Spring 2015 award reduction that will be required to address the shortfall remains dependent on actual Summer 2014 and Fall 2014 payments. In October, MDHE evaluated actual Summer 2014 expenditures and estimated Fall 2014 expenditures and found insignificant change in the amount of the previously projected shortfall. Another evaluation will be conducted based on the release of the restricted funds.

Another factor that could influence the amount of the required Spring 2015 reduction would be the Missouri General Assembly's passage of a supplemental appropriation for the A+ Scholarship. However, if a supplemental appropriation does pass for the program, the timing will be such that Spring 2015 awards still will need to be reduced initially. MDHE will know around February 2015 whether the General Assembly will include funding for the A+ Program in the FY 2015 supplemental appropriations bill. If it is included, the bill likely will be passed sometime in April 2015. Since April is late for the spring term's funding to be finalized, students will have to begin the term under the assumption that there will not be a supplemental appropriation. In the event a supplemental appropriation does pass and reduces the amount of the funding shortfall, the size of the award reduction will be re-evaluated and students will be reimbursed for their out-of-pocket expenses accordingly.

MDHE has encouraged institutions to complete the fall 2014 student certification process early this year, preferably by Dec. 15, 2014. Early certification will provide MDHE with actual data on which to make a timely and accurate assessment of the magnitude of the shortfall, as well as a final determination of the level of spring 2015 A+ awards. In addition to early certification, institutions are also encouraged to return any funds disbursed to ineligible students by Dec. 15 to provide an accurate amount of funding available to the program for the Spring 2015 term.

An announcement of the exact number of hours to be reduced is planned by the end of December, in advance of the Spring 2015 term. The information on MDHE's website related to A+ Scholarship reimbursement for the Spring 2015 semester has been updated with this latest development and will continue to be updated as more information becomes available.

If you have any questions about spring 2015 A+ Scholarship awards, please contact:

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