



STATE OF ARKANSAS

House of Representatives

NEWSLETTER FROM REP. Mary Bentley DISTRICT 54

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ARKANSAS ACADEMIC CHALLENGE SCHOLARSHIP

For students just beginning an education or going back to school, the lottery scholarship offers opportunities to pursue dream careers and secure financial futures.

That's why you should mark July 1 on your calendar. That day is the deadline to apply for the Arkansas Academic Challenge Scholarship, which has provided hundreds of millions of dollars in proceeds to help in the pursuit of higher education.

The Academic Challenge Scholarship is largely funded by the Arkansas Scholarship Lottery and provides tuition assistance to students at every state university and two-year college – both public and private. Applicants can be recent high school graduates, students already enrolled in school or non-traditional students at any stage in life. Additionally, the scholarship can be combined with other financial aid programs, such as the ArFuture Grant.

This fall marks the 10-year anniversary of the Lottery. In that time, 542,307 in-state scholarships worth more than \$965 million have been awarded to students seeking both four-year and two-year degrees.

Funds are awarded for the Academic Challenge Scholarship based on a system that incentivizes student success. Individuals enrolled in four-year institutions can receive \$1,000 for the first year. Those who continue in school and meet eligibility criteria are rewarded with \$4,000 for both sophomore and junior years and \$5,000 for senior year. At two-year institutions, students receive \$1,000 for the first year and

\$3,000 for the second.

To be eligible for an Academic Challenge Scholarship, traditional students must have a minimum ACT score of 19 and be in pursuit of a baccalaureate degree, associate degree, qualified certificate or nursing school diploma. Non-traditional students need either a 19 on the ACT or a 2.5-grade point average (GPA) from the last education received. To maintain eligibility, students must keep a 2.5 GPA, take 30 hours each year and be an Arkansas resident for 12 months prior to enrollment.

Lottery proceeds also fund workforce training opportunities through the Arkansas Workforce Challenge Scholarship. This program pays for tuition and fees up to \$800 per eligible program for high-demand occupations in healthcare, information technology and industry. Examples include dental assistants, aircraft mechanics, and computer programmers. Students must apply at least 30 days prior to enrollment in an eligible program.

During the recent legislative session, a law was passed to allow excess lottery proceeds to fund concurrent credit scholarships for high school juniors and seniors seeking college credit. Act 465, the Arkansas Concurrent Challenge Scholarship, will be available in January 2020 and applications must be made through the student's public high school.

Applications for lottery-funded scholarships can be found at the Arkansas Department of Higher Education's website at scholarships.adhe.edu. There you can fill out the Department's YOUniversal application to determine eligibility for all of the state's scholarship programs. Students can also download the YOUniversal financial aid app and apply directly from a smartphone.