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2-321 WICHE Professional Student Exchange Program

A. Authorization

The Arizona Board of Regents is the designated agency of the State of Arizona charged with the duty of selecting and contracting with Arizona students who participate in the Professional Student Exchange Program of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education. The executive director of the board shall be responsible for administration of the program and the execution of policies the board adopts for this program. (A.R.S. 15-1743, 1744, 1745, 1746)

B. Funding

1. The board will include in its annual legislative request budget funds necessary to pay the WICHE membership fee, the support fees for students continuing in the program, and the support fees for any new positions.
2. Funds requested from the Legislature to support continuing students will not be used to support new students and funds requested to support new students will not be used to support continuing students except in extraordinary circumstances.
3. The priorities for funding students who have been certified are the following: All students eligible for funding in each category shall be funded before any student in the next lower category is funded.
 - a. Continuing students who were supported during the preceding year and who are making satisfactory progress in their academic programs.
 - b. New students who applied for certification prior to October 15 who have been admitted to a participating institution.
 - c. New students who applied for certification after October 15, who have been certified, and who have been admitted to a participating institution.

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- d. Continuing students beyond their first year of professional studies who were eligible for support for an earlier year but not supported due to a lack of funds.
- e. Continuing students beyond their first year of professional studies who have not previously applied for support.
- f. Continuing students who previously dropped WICHE support but who continued in their professional studies.
- g. Continuing students who have completed their basic professional training and who have taken additional graduate or specialized training involving formal class and laboratory work.

C. Certification and Eligibility

1. In each fiscal year, the executive director of the board or the director of WICHE Student Exchange will certify as eligible for participation in the Student Exchange Program those students who meet the following requirements:
 - a. Have a cumulative grade point average of at least 2.5 on a 4.0 scale;
 - b. Are citizens of the United States;
 - c. Have been actual bona fide residents of Arizona for at least the last 5 consecutive years prior to the first day of the semester for which support would be received; and,
 - d. Have completed such preliminary education as will qualify them for admission to a professional or graduate school participating in the program. (A.R.S. ' 15-1744)
2. Certified students who are not admitted to a participating institution must reapply for certification to be eligible to participate in the next academic year.

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3. Before funding a student, the board shall, on behalf of the state, enter into a written contract with the student. The contract shall set forth the method and terms of repayment by the student to the state and shall be on terms and conditions and in a form provided by the board. (A.R.S. §15-1745)
4. The executive director of the board or the Director of WICHE Student Exchange shall approve all new and continuing students to be supported each year in accordance with the funding priorities set forth in section B(3) of this Policy. No funds shall be committed in excess of those appropriated by the Legislature for student subsidies.
5. Students supported by this program may not receive any other scholarships that pay the students' full tuition and fees, such as those available from the military or Public Health Service, concurrently with WICHE support.

D. Rate of Interest

1. The interest rate for a certified student's contract with the board shall be the rate in effect for the fiscal year during which the student begins the approved course of professional study as a certified and funded student under the Professional Student Exchange Program. The rate shall remain unchanged during the student's participation in the Student Exchange Program.
2. By November 1 of each current fiscal year, the executive director of the board or the Director of WICHE Student Exchange shall set the interest rate in effect for the following fiscal year, which shall be the rate which is equal to the average interest rate, rounded to the nearest one-half percent, of auctioned ninety-one day United States Treasury Bills over the 24 month period ending September 30 of the current fiscal year. (A.R.S. §15-1745B).

E. Obligated Service

1. Within 1 year after completing the professional education and internship/residency, the student must begin the practice of this

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profession within Arizona. Students may fulfill their obligation to Arizona by practicing their profession one calendar year for each academic year they receive WICHE support.

- a. "Practice" is defined as engaging in the customary activities of the profession for which the person was trained, under the sponsorship of the Western Interstate Commission for Higher Education (WICHE) Professional Student Exchange Program, within the State of Arizona for a minimum of 20 hours per week with domicile in the State of Arizona. (A.R.S. §15-1745A.1.)
 - b. "Customary Activities" are understood to include but not necessarily be limited to, the following: (1) direct provision of clinical services; (2) teaching graduate and undergraduate students in the biological life sciences or health-related courses in a recognized allied health program, in which the professional degree obtained by the recipient is a requirement for the position; and (3) performing research or public health activities in a public or private setting in which the professional degree obtained by the recipient is a requirement for the position.
2. For each year of practice or internship within the state or in military service resulting from involuntary induction, there shall be discharged an obligation for 1 year of study for which a portion of the cost was paid by the state. For each 6 months of practice in a locality where the board of examiners or licensing board has certified that there is an exceptional need for this profession there shall be discharged an obligation for 1 year of study for which a portion of the cost was paid by the state. (A.R.S. §15-1745A.2.(b))
 3. Students enrolled in accelerated calendar year programs who elect to fulfill their obligation to Arizona by in-state practice must practice their profession in Arizona 1 year for each 9-month period they received support.
 4. Delays in Establishing Practice

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- a. Graduates who are involuntarily inducted into military service must establish practice in Arizona or begin repayment within 1 year following completion of the required military service.
- b. Students who begin formal postgraduate studies within 1 year following completion of their professional degree program must establish practice in Arizona or begin repayment within 1 year following completion of their postgraduate studies.
- c. A student who is unable to initiate professional practice in Arizona within 1 year after graduation due to a severe medical or other unavoidable problem beyond the student's control may petition the executive director of the board for an extension of the 1-year grace period. The student's failure to find satisfactory employment in Arizona will not be considered sufficient cause for an extension of the grace period. (A.R.S. §15-1745A.1.)

F. Repayment

1. Students who do not practice the profession for which they were trained under the sponsorship of the WICHE Professional Student Exchange Program and students who fail to complete their training shall repay to the state all sums expended by the state for and in behalf of the student under the provisions of the student's contract and Arizona statutes. (A.R.S. §15-1745A.3.)
2. For each student who is obligated to repay, a schedule of payments will be prepared according to the requirements of A.R.S. §15-1745A.2. and A.3. The schedule will be based on the total principal and the accumulated interest which is due on the date the student is obligated to begin repayment. The amount of interest collected in each payment will be determined by the rate of interest required by Arizona statute, the declining balance of the outstanding obligation, and the length of time between payment due dates.

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3. Individuals who fail to make payments according to their repayment schedule will be referred to Legal Counsel for the board for appropriate action.
4. Except as specified in E.5. below, a student who fails to complete the course of study for which WICHE support was received must begin repayment within 3 months following the last day of the final semester in which the student was enrolled. (A.R.S. §15-1745A.3.)
5. A student who fails to complete a course of study because of an interruption for 1 school year or more due to a cause or causes beyond the student's control and who expects to continue and complete the required course of study may petition the executive director of the board for a delay in beginning the repayment obligation not to exceed 12 months. The petition must explain in detail the circumstances which led to the interruption and must include a statement from the institution in which the student was enrolled indicating that the student will be readmitted for continuation of the program of studies. (A.R.S. §15-1745A.3.)
6. Students who fail to practice their profession within the state for such continuous time as completely discharges their obligation, except for the delays identified in D.4. above, shall begin repayment of the balance of their obligation within 3 months following the termination of practice in Arizona. (A.R.S. §15-1745A.3.)
7. Students who elected to repay the state rather than discharge their obligation through practice in Arizona, and who have repaid a part of the amount owed to the state, may discharge the balance of their obligation by subsequent practice within Arizona. (A.R.S. §15-1745A.4.)
8. In the event of the death of a student during the period of education, internship, or practice, that student's obligation to the state under the WICHE Program shall cease except as to any portion thereof which is then past due. (A.R.S. §15-1745A.5.)

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G. Appeals

The student may appeal decisions made by the executive director of the board on matters of delay in repayment or extension of period of grace to the board of Regents. The appeal must be in writing and must be submitted to the Counsel to the board within 15 calendar days after receipt of the executive director of the board's decision. The decision of the board shall be final.