

Questions and comments re: clarifications and process improvements that would help in the administration of the Technical Excellence Scholarships (TES)

c/o WTCS Financial Aid Director, October 2016

1. If TES is merit based (earned on GPA) why does it have to be returned if Pell/Wi Grant cover tuition? This seems discriminatory for Pell recipients. Students do not feel that they are being recognized based on their merit and that merit is only something that can be awarded to someone who has the means to pay for college.

HEAB reply:

First, we must point out that the TES is merit based, but it is NOT earned entirely on GPA as is the AES. At schools using HEAB's recommended scoring system for ranking candidates, GPA in technical courses is a tie-breaker; at most schools using their own ranking system, GPA is either a tie-breaker or a secondary criterion.

The legislature created TES with a clause in the statutes that simply states that a TES scholar is to receive a scholarship in the amount of \$1,125 (state portion) per year. There is no requirement that TES funds be used only for tuition as there is with some programs.

In the instance that the TES award exceeds a student's tuition owed, HEAB recommends that any amount over tuition be paid to the student's account with the school.

Regarding TES funds being "returned," TES scholarships need be refunded to HEAB when a student drops out mid-semester; but as we go forward, other reasons for a refund to HEAB will probably be quite rare.

The issue of "full time status" may be playing a role in this question. That is addressed in question #2.

2. Please clarify, "How is full-time defined for TES?"

HEAB reply:

HEA 2.01 assigns to HEAB the determination of "Full time" status, but HEA 2.01 covers only need-based awards, and TES is merit-based.

HEAB has been told repeatedly since passage of the TES law that the reality is that students are unable to enroll at 12 credits at a WTCS school, often for reasons that are an inherent part of the program the student is pursuing.

Given this, HEAB concludes that it would be most appropriate for each school to determine who is enrolled on a "full time basis". Therefore HEAB asks that you the schools make that determination for TES, since HEA 2.01 does not apply.

3. There have been sporadic emails regarding special exceptions from Nancy to students, but there are not concurring emails sent to the colleges. This causes us confusion.

HEAB reply:

The occasional emails the TES program (including the current Fall 2016 semester) were meant to assist and inform designated contacts in lieu of a formal and complete notification list, which HEAB could not complete until the necessary programming was completed.

HEAB has had challenges producing regular notification lists of all TES scholars (as is done for other HEAB programs) due to staff turnover in our programmer position. We have done our best to convey this to everyone.

After much work, fund requests were processed on Friday October 14 and will be available Wednesday October 19, 2016.

The new TES notification lists will be ready approximately monthly. Regular notification lists should eliminate any need for occasional emails of this sort.

4. There have been sporadic emails and notification lists. This makes it difficult to know if students are eligible, if multiple staff at the same institution are handling TES.

HEAB reply:

See response to question #3, above.

5. Is it possible to have one method that includes both potential and confirmed recipients? We would also like to see this list identify students have been granted special exceptions? Such a "master list" by semester would be very helpful for the administration of these grants.

HEAB reply:

The TES notification list will be going out the week of October 17. Once that happens, new lists will be ready approximately monthly. Regular notification lists should eliminate any need for occasional emails of this sort.

It was suggested at the state-called meeting on September 30, 2016 that Nancy needs to create and share a list of students to whom she has made promises about special exceptions. She will do this as soon as she is able.

It was also discussed at the state-called meeting on September 30 that HEAB could add to its comprehensive Notification List for TES, an S code for students for whom a waiver or other

exception has been granted by Nancy. HEAB plans to proceed with this change for the 17-18 academic year.

6. Funds vouchered for fall 2016 still are not available as of 10-1-2016. This is either delaying school's reimbursement or preventing disbursement to students altogether.

HEAB reply:

As noted, HEAB has had challenges producing regular notification lists of all TES scholars (as is done for other HEAB programs) due to staff turnover in our programmer position. After much work, fund requests were processed on Friday October 14 and will be available Wednesday October 19, 2016.

7. Students not fulfilling their paperwork were determined on September 28<sup>th</sup>, leaving only 24 hours for students to be contacted by someone from our colleges to turn in their paper work.

HEAB reply:

As noted, HEAB has had challenges producing regular notification lists of all TES scholars (as is done for other HEAB programs) due to staff turnover in our programmer position. After much work fund requests were processed on Friday October 14 and will be available Wednesday October 19, 2016.

That being said, the contact on September 29 was not their first reminder; it was Nancy's last attempt to find TES students who were enrolled. Schools were only asked if they were enrolled, and were not asked to contact students.

8. If the TES notification list will be late each year, instead of receiving multiple word documents and emails, can there be an all-encompassing spreadsheet for all students that provides name, DOB, and SSN? This would reduce risk of missing emails. It would be helpful to have a comprehensive list so we aren't searching multiple documents to find out if we have received notice on a student.

HEAB reply:

As noted, HEAB has had challenges producing regular notification lists of all TES scholars (as is done for other HEAB programs) due to staff turnover in our programmer position. We have done our best to convey this to everyone.

After much work, fund requests were processed on Friday October 14 and will be available Wednesday October 19, 2016.

New TES notification lists will be ready approximately monthly. Regular notification lists should

meet the need for information on TES students at that point.

9. Can we receive a list of what the colleges should be responsible for? It was brought up that colleges are to notify students when they lose TES eligibility. We were under the impression that Nancy does this.

HEAB reply:

HEAB is asking schools to make the determination that a student has maintained in June-July of each academic year.

Nancy will continue to provide approval for students to retain the TES in cases of medical situations, military service and other circumstances that do not include SAP or full-time enrollment.

Since HEAB is asking that schools make the determination that a student is (or is not) full time, HEAB will need to be notified by schools when a determination has been made that a student dipped below full time and has forfeited their TES scholarship for this reason.

HEAB will be asking for student status in June/July of each year, as part of the SAP process. This process will consist of a spreadsheet in Excel that would be emailed to offices and filled in at the appropriate places; it would be emailed back to HEAB. This process works well and should be minimally time-consuming.

It was also mentioned at the state-called meeting on September 30 that some students believed that an exception made by Nancy would be valid for future semesters of their enrollment. That was not Nancy's intent, but her intent (to limit any exceptions to the current school year) seems to have been imperfectly understood by some students.

HEAB feels most-consistent course of action would be to state now, to all students who have been given an exception, that their exceptions are valid for the current school year for which the exception was given (2016-17) but that any exceptions for full-time status for future semesters or school years will have to come from the financial aid office at the individual schools.