

By: Senator(s) Blackmon

To: Universities and  
Colleges

SENATE BILL NO. 2629

1 AN ACT TO AMEND SECTION 37-106-31, MISSISSIPPI CODE OF 1972,  
2 TO DECREASE THE MINIMUM ACT SCORE REQUIRED FOR STUDENTS TO BE  
3 ELIGIBLE FOR A SCHOLARSHIP UNDER THE MISSISSIPPI EMINENT SCHOLARS  
4 PROGRAM; AND FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

5 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

6 **SECTION 1.** Section 37-106-31, Mississippi Code of 1972, is  
7 amended as follows:

8 37-106-31. (1) There is created a Mississippi Eminent  
9 Scholars Fund, to be administered by the Mississippi Postsecondary  
10 Education Financial Assistance Board established under Section  
11 37-106-9. The board shall set the date that will serve as the  
12 deadline for applying for an award under this section and award  
13 scholarships to each Mississippi student who:

14 (a) (i) Is recognized by the merit or achievement  
15 programs of the National Merit Scholarship Corporation or the  
16 National Achievement Scholarship as a semifinalist or finalist,  
17 and has obtained a minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.5  
18 calculated on a 4.0 scale in high school subjects acceptable for  
19 credit toward a diploma, after seven (7) semesters certified by  
20 the high school counselor or other authorized school official on  
21 the application, and graduation from high school verified by the  
22 institution before disbursement of award; or

23 (ii) Has scored twenty-six (26) on the American  
24 College Testing Program or its equivalent, and has obtained a  
25 minimum cumulative grade point average of 3.5 calculated on a 4.0  
26 scale after seven (7) semesters certified by the high school  
27 counselor or other authorized school official on the application,  
28 and graduation from high school verified by the institution before



29 disbursement of award, or the equivalent in high school subjects  
30 acceptable for credit toward a diploma; or

31 (iii) Has attended a home education program during  
32 grade levels 9 through 12 and has scored twenty-six (26) on the  
33 American College Testing Program or its equivalent; and

34 (iv) Has been certified by the college or  
35 university to the Mississippi Postsecondary Education Financial  
36 Assistance Board as a Mississippi Eminent Scholar.

37 (b) Meets the general requirements for student  
38 eligibility, except as otherwise provided in this section.

39 (c) Dependents of Mississippi residents who are on  
40 military or public service assignments away from Mississippi when  
41 such dependents live with such Mississippi residents and receive  
42 high school diplomas from non-Mississippi schools shall be  
43 exempted from certain requirements by the board.

44 (d) Files an application for an award during his last  
45 year in high school within established time limits.

46 (e) Attends, on a full-time basis, any state  
47 institution of higher learning or public community or junior  
48 college, or any regionally accredited, state-approved, nonprofit  
49 four- or two-year college or university located in the State of  
50 Mississippi as listed in subsection (4) (d) of Section 37-106-29.

51 (f) Enrolls as a first-time-in-college student. Any  
52 student who earns postsecondary academic credit prior to or during  
53 the summer immediately subsequent to receiving a high school  
54 diploma, who is dually enrolled in secondary and postsecondary  
55 educational institutions, or who is enrolled in the early  
56 admission program of a postsecondary institution shall be exempt  
57 from this requirement.

58 (g) Is a resident of the State of Mississippi.  
59 Residency status for purposes of receiving grants under this  
60 section shall be determined in the same manner as resident status



61 for tuition purposes as set forth in Sections 37-103-1 through  
62 37-103-29, with the exception of Section 37-103-17.

63 (2) (a) Students who apply for awards no later than the  
64 date set by the Mississippi Postsecondary Education Financial  
65 Assistance Board as the deadline for applying for an award during  
66 their last year in high school may later reapply to receive awards  
67 during subsequent application periods when they do not accept  
68 their initial awards. Similarly, students who receive initial  
69 awards and who later do not accept renewal awards may reapply to  
70 receive awards during subsequent application periods. Students  
71 who apply under this paragraph must submit reinstatement  
72 applications within three (3) years of filing their initial  
73 applications. The institution shall accept reinstatement  
74 applications according to dates set by the Mississippi  
75 Postsecondary Education Financial Assistance Board and shall  
76 determine the eligibility of such applicants in the same manner as  
77 first-time applicants, except that students who apply pursuant to  
78 this paragraph shall be required to have maintained the equivalent  
79 of a 3.5 cumulative grade point average on a 4.0 scale for all  
80 college work attempted. The board shall not make awards to  
81 reinstatement applicants who submit applications that are received  
82 after the deadline set by the Mississippi Postsecondary Education  
83 Financial Assistance Board.

84 (b) The board shall create a renewal application for  
85 each student who received the award for one or more terms during  
86 the immediately preceding academic year.

87 (3) (a) The annual award to a student shall be up to Two  
88 Thousand Five Hundred Dollars (\$2,500.00) for tuition and fees.  
89 Payment of the Mississippi Eminent Scholars Grant shall be made  
90 payable to the recipient and the educational institution and  
91 mailed directly to the institution, to be applied first to  
92 tuition.



93           (b) Within six (6) weeks of the end of regular  
94 registration, inclusive of a drop-add period, institutions shall  
95 certify to the board the eligibility status of each awarded  
96 student. The eligibility status of each student to receive a  
97 disbursement shall be determined by each institution as of this  
98 date. Institutions shall not be required to reevaluate a  
99 student's eligibility status after this date for purposes of  
100 amending eligibility determinations previously made. However, an  
101 institution shall be requested to make refunds for students who  
102 receive award disbursements and terminate enrollment for any  
103 reason during the academic term when an institution's refund  
104 policies permit a student to receive a refund under the  
105 circumstances.

106           (c) Institutions shall certify to the board the amount  
107 of funds disbursed to each student and shall remit to the board  
108 any undisbursed advances within sixty (60) days of the end of  
109 regular registration.

110           (4) A recipient shall maintain the equivalent of a 3.5  
111 cumulative grade point average on a 4.0 scale, or shall maintain  
112 an approved equivalent student progress evaluation plan, on at  
113 least twelve (12) hours per quarter, trimester or semester in  
114 order to be eligible for a continuation of the award. No student  
115 may receive a Mississippi Eminent Scholars' Fund award for more  
116 than the equivalent semesters or quarters required to complete one  
117 (1) degree or certificate program per institution. The award may  
118 be renewed annually upon certification of eligibility by the  
119 eligible institutions that the recipient meets the necessary  
120 qualifications. If any recipient transfers from one university,  
121 community college or junior college to another, his award will be  
122 transferable, provided he is otherwise eligible for the award. If  
123 a student fails to maintain continuous enrollment, and is not  
124 granted an exception for cause by the administering agency, the  
125 student is ineligible to receive the Mississippi Eminent Scholars



126 Grant during the following semester or trimester or term of the  
127 regular academic year.

128 (5) The board may conduct its own annual audits of any  
129 institution participating in the Mississippi Eminent Scholars  
130 Grant Program. The board may suspend or revoke an institution's  
131 eligibility to receive future monies under the program if it finds  
132 that the institution has not complied with the provisions of this  
133 section.

134 (6) For purposes of this section, certificated shall mean,  
135 but not be limited to, all postsecondary vocational programs in  
136 eligible institutions as identified in subsection (4)(d) of  
137 Section 37-106-29.

138 **SECTION 2.** This act shall take effect and be in force from  
139 and after July 1, 2002.

