

**TITLE 610. STATE REGENTS FOR HIGHER EDUCATION
CHAPTER 25. STUDENT FINANCIAL AID AND SCHOLARSHIPS**

RULEMAKING ACTION:

Notice of proposed PERMANENT rulemaking

PROPOSED RULES:

Subchapter 7. Oklahoma Tuition Aid Grant Program

610:25-7-1. Program purpose [AMENDED]

610:25-7-2. Legislative authority [REVOKED]

610:25-7-6. Eligibility; amount of grant; application procedures and deadlines; disbursement of funds [AMENDED]

SUMMARY:

The Oklahoma Tuition Aid Grant (OTAG) program was created in 1971. OTAG provides grant assistance to resident students with the least financial resources. During the 2021 legislative session, the State Regents requested amendments to the OTAG statutes in HB 1821 to create greater flexibility and focus in the awarding of the OTAG grants. The goal of the changes is to enhance student retention and graduation rates through more effective allocation of the awards at the institution level. HB 1821 passed with near unanimous votes in both the House and Senate. Until now, the OTAG grant has been awarded directly by the State Regents to lower-income students primarily on a "first-come, first-served" basis without regard to other financial aid the student is receiving (federal Pell Grants, Oklahoma's Promise, Academic Scholars Program, Regional Baccalaureate Scholarship, tuition waivers, foundation scholarships, other scholarships, etc.). To increase student retention and graduation rates, the new changes will allow OTAG awardees to be selected by the institution based on the student's overall financial need and other priority factors. These changes will become effective for the 2022-2023 academic year. The proposed rule changes are intended to support the State Regents' goals of increasing student retention and graduation rates while meeting the employment needs of the state economy. The changes allow institutions to consider the following factors when awarding the grants: unmet financial need, continuous enrollment, nearness to completion of a degree or certificate, state employment needs, and eligibility for other state or institutional student financial aid. The proposed rule changes address the following items:

Incorporating statutory changes authorized by HB 1821.

Allowing greater flexibility in the awarding of the grants.

Removing restrictions on the State Regents' authority to set maximum award amounts.

Identifying priority factors that may be used in awarding the grants.

Deleting obsolete language referring to federal legislation and programs that are no longer in effect.

Deleting text citing the state legislative history of the program (this information is readily available and kept current on the Oklahoma Legislature's website).

AUTHORITY:

70 O.S. § 626.1 et seq.; 70 O.S. § 3206(i) and (o); Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education

COMMENT PERIOD:

Persons wishing to present their views in writing may do so before 5:00 p.m. on March 17, 2022, at the following address: Matt Stangl, General Counsel, 655 Research Parkway, Suite 200, Oklahoma City, OK 73104-3603; or, at P.O. Box 108850, Oklahoma City, OK 73101-8850; or, at mstangl@osrhe.edu.

PUBLIC HEARING:

A public hearing has not been scheduled; however, pursuant to 75 O.S. § 303(B)(9), "persons may demand a hearing" by contacting Matt Stangl, General Counsel, at mstangl@osrhe.edu or 405.225.9129 no later than 5:00 p.m. on March 17, 2022.

REQUESTS FOR COMMENTS FROM BUSINESS ENTITIES:

N/A

COPIES OF PROPOSED RULES:

Copies of proposed rules are available in the office of the Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education (655 Research Parkway, Suite 200, Oklahoma City, OK 73104), by email to mstangl@osrhe.edu, and on the agency's website at <https://www.okhighered.org>.

RULE IMPACT STATEMENT:

Pursuant to 75 O.S. O.S. § 303(D), a rule impact statement will be prepared and will be available on the agency's website at <https://www.okhighered.org>.

CONTACT PERSON:

Matt Stangl, General Counsel, 405.225.9129, or mstangl@osrhe.edu