

May 11, 2016

MEMORANDUM

TO: State Board of Regents

FROM: David L. Buhler

SUBJECT: The New, Student-Friendly Scholarship Application and Administration System

Issue

This document provides an overview of the new, upgraded Regents' and New Century scholarship application and management systems and the improvements they offer students.

Background

The number of recipients of the Regents' Scholarship program has skyrocketed since its inception with 840 applicants in 2008. This year, 4,766 students applied for Regents' Scholarships, along with 410 students applying for New Century Scholarships. Every year since the scholarships' inception, the staff has used student feedback to make the application and awarding process as simple as possible. Now, however, the exponential growth in scholarship participants and new advances in technology have made it possible to entirely redesign the application and administration systems to streamline them and make them more efficient. The system improvements are being built in phases. This year, the first phase was introduced, including two crucial components: a new student portal to guide applicants through the application and acceptance process; and an internal system to more effectively manage application reviews and the scholarship awarding operations.

The student portal serves as a "one-stop shop" for scholarship applicants. Within the portal, a student can create an online account and apply for the scholarships electronically, exchange messages with staff, and upload documents (other than official high school and college transcripts which must be provided by the schools). The portal generates a personalized checklist for each student of the materials required for their own application based on the courses they report taking. If students have taken a concurrent enrollment course, for example, the checklist will include both the high school and the college transcript for that course. The portal also manages communications with the students, so they no longer run the risk of paper applications getting lost or delayed in the mail, and their communications with the scholarship office are logged so students have easy access to them whenever needed. Once students have completed the application process and been awarded a scholarship, they can also use the same account and portal to request a deferment or renew the scholarship each semester.

Behind the scenes, the new management system is also streamlining administrative operations. Those administrative improvements include:

- Using one management system for both scholarships (Regents' and New Century), thus simplifying internal processes and business flow.
- Eliminating paper applications and forms and thus decreasing staff time spent processing, logging, scanning, and storing documents and linking them to student accounts.

More improvements are still to come. The next phase of implementation will adjust the online application based on feedback received from students this year. It will also include a "course warehouse" tool to help students identify which classes are offered at their high school that fulfill the Regents' Scholarship requirements. High schools often have unique names for mathematics, science, or other courses that are different from the typical names listed in the scholarship program guides; the warehouse will allow students to identify which classes offered by their own specific high school will help them qualify.

#### Policy Issues

There are no policy issues associated with this report.

#### Commissioner's Recommendation

The Commissioner recommends the Regents review this item for their information; no formal action is necessary at this time.

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David L. Buhler  
Commissioner of Higher Education

DLB/JHM/CFB