

WMU Undergraduate Scholarship Offer Guidelines

The purpose of this policy is to clearly describe how financial aid offers are distributed to students, in the form of scholarships, should be made at Western Michigan University. WMU must remain in compliance with federal regulations, which require that all sources of funding be taken into account in determining federal aid eligibility. This policy is also needed for WMU to be competitive with other universities, most of which follow similar policies, according to Western's enrollment management consultants.

Scholarships are for degree seeking students and are funds for educationally related expenses that do not need to be repaid by the student. These funds are ideally offered prior to the beginning of the semester in which they will pay. Scholarships should incentivize and support future enrollment, therefore they should not be offered retroactively.

APPLICATIONS

If departments solicit applications for scholarships, it is recommended that applications be made available October of the prior year and close in February. This recommendation is for scholarships offered for the academic year or the fall semester only. Spring only or summer offers may require a different application period.

OFFER DECISIONS

As departments may be subject to internal audit, they are responsible for assuring that any requirements stated in the DOI (Declaration of Intent), MOU (Memorandum of Understanding) or Gift Agreements, which govern scholarships, are met when choosing recipients.

Financial aid offers are generated for incoming freshmen undergraduate students beginning in December of the student's senior year in high school. Departments are encouraged to offer incoming freshmen scholarships by the end of November. While it is ideal to offer students scholarships at this time, we acknowledge that offering students so early may not be possible. When feasible, all scholarships for the upcoming academic year should be made for fall and spring, and not on a semester-by-semester basis.

It is recommended that offer decisions be made and communicated to all students (new and returning) by the end of March. It is best practice to make an offer "in writing" (either via paper or electronic communication) and have the student affirm that they understand any terms and conditions of receiving the offer.

It is required that students be advised that the acceptance of their offer may impact their other aid and that the financial aid office will determine if any adjustments are required and notify the student accordingly. The financial aid office will coordinate all offers with other sources of funding including other scholarships, tuition remission or need based offers the student is eligible to receive. Offers, including student loans, may be restricted by federal law or donor limitations. Students can contact Bronco Express to discuss their specific situation if they are concerned.

ADDING OFFERS TO THE STUDENT'S AID OFFER

All scholarships for the academic year and/or the fall semester only should be communicated to the financial aid office by the end of April. It may be difficult or impossible for some scholarships to be offered in the timeframe (i.e. offers for international students, graduate students, students receiving EUP scholarships, late new FTIAC admits, incoming students receiving scholarships funded by differential tuition, renewal scholarships, new students entering the spring and summer semesters, students receiving study abroad scholarships, DOI/Gift agreements that cannot be changed, Seita scholarships for incoming students, scholarships funded by grants (i.e. TRIO, CAMP), KVCC Police Academy scholarships, scholarships given by national organizations with deadlines beyond our control (i.e. AMBUCs), art exhibition offers, mentor incentive offers, Emergency Funds for Students) but

offers such as these should be made as early as possible to support enrollment and avoid student confusion.

All scholarships should be sent to the financial aid office before the end of their semester in which they are to pay. Departments wishing to make a late offer should contact the financial aid office to disclose why a late payment is necessary. Students who are receiving a scholarship or financial offer in their last semester are exempt from this rule if the offer decision was made during the student's final semester AND the financial aid office is notified no later than one month before the end of the semester. *Once a student has graduated from the University, scholarship offers will not be made regardless of the situation.*

Units and colleges must notify the financial aid office of all offers in one of two ways.

1. Via e-mailed the appropriate scholarship authorization disbursement form <https://wmich.edu/finaid/scholarships-grants/fs-resources> and listing on a spreadsheet the fund & cost center, the amount of the offer by semester and the name and WIN of the student.
2. Beginning in 2020 departments using ScholarshipUniverse will communicate student scholarship offers to the financial aid office electronically, in the online platform.

Once received by the financial aid office offers should be added to the student's account within 5 business days.

Changes to student offers should be communicated to the financial aid office via email and a new scholarship authorization disbursement form or an edit in ScholarshipUniverse should be submitted. It is best practice to also inform the student of any changes to their aid as well.

Changes requesting the fund that a student is offered out of be altered (i.e. cancelling one offer and replacing it with another offer that draws from a different account) will not be made without prior approval from the financial aid office.

PAYMENT OF OFFERS

Like all aid, scholarships will not pay any sooner than 10 days prior to the beginning of the semester in which they were offered. In order for a scholarship to pay, students must be enrolled in the semester of the offer. Exceptions to this rule are not possible.

All scholarships will first be applied to the student's University bill. If the payment of the scholarship is in excess of the student's balance, a refund will be generated and paid by the accounts receivable office. Checks for offered scholarship dollars cannot be issued directly to students.

At this time, the financial aid office does not monitor the payment of departmental scholarships. Departments should monitor scholarship payments in GLOW and notify the financial aid office of any non-payment issues. Oftentimes, scholarships do not pay to a student's account due to under-enrollment (i.e. the amount of credits the student is enrolled in is fewer than the credits the fund code was set up to require). If this is the case, the enrollment requirement may be over-ridden on a case by case basis *if* the DOI/MOU/Gift Agreement allows. Please contact the financial aid office via email to request such overrides, after assessing if the enrollment requirement can be waived.