

## **Benacquisto Scholarship Program Frequently Asked Questions**

### **1. Who is eligible for the Benacquisto Scholarship award?**

The scholarship is available to National Merit® Finalists who graduate from a Florida high school during the 2013-14 school year and thereafter and receive one of the following qualifying scholarships:

- National Merit® \$2500 Scholarship,
- Corporate-sponsored Merit Scholarship®, or
- College-sponsored Merit Scholarship®.

### **2. How do I become a National Merit® Finalist?**

The National Merit Corporation determines these designations. Visit the Corporation's website at <http://nationalmerit.org> to learn more about the process.

### **3. I graduated high school in 2012 and received a National Merit® \$2500 scholarship; do I qualify for a Benacquisto Scholarship?**

No. The scholarship is effective with Florida high school graduates of 2013-14 and thereafter.

### **4. Do I need to complete an application to be considered for this scholarship?**

No. Students are not required to submit the *Florida Financial Aid Application (FFAA)* to be eligible for the Benacquisto Scholarship. However, students may be eligible for other types of state aid once an application has been completed and evaluated.

### **5. Who determines if I am eligible to receive the scholarship?**

Postsecondary institutions determine scholarship eligibility. Information from the National Merit Corporation is sent to institutions verifying National Merit® Finalists who received one of the qualifying awards. Institutions also ensure that finalists meet all of the following funding requirements:

- Must be a Florida resident. (*Residency status is determined by the institution.*)
- Beginning with the 2013-14 high school graduates, earn a standard Florida high school diploma or its equivalency unless the student completes a home education program or earns a high school diploma from a non-Florida high school while living with a parent who is on military or public service assignment out of Florida.
- Enroll at an eligible, regionally accredited, public or independent postsecondary institution.
- Enroll full-time (*minimum 12 credit hours per term or quarter equivalency*) in a baccalaureate degree program.
- Initially enroll at an eligible postsecondary institution during the fall academic term immediately following high school graduation.

**6. I am a National Merit® Finalist who was awarded a College-sponsored scholarship from the University of Georgia. However, I plan to attend University of Florida instead. Am I eligible for the FIS award?**

No. The College-sponsored award must be received by your **first choice** institution (must also be an eligible Florida institution) where you will be attending.

**7. I received a Special Scholarship from a corporate sponsor. Am I eligible for the Benacquisto Scholarship award?**

No. A National Merit® Special Scholarship is not a qualifying scholarship.

**8. I am a 'National Hispanic Scholar'. Am I eligible for the FIS award?**

No. Only National Merit® Finalists through the National Merit Scholarship Corporation are eligible for the scholarship award.

**9. What Florida institutions can offer a College-sponsored qualifying scholarship?**

Currently six Florida institutions participate with the National Merit Scholarship Corporation as a College-sponsor for the 2016-17 academic year:

- Florida State University
- New College of Florida
- University of Central Florida
- University of Florida
- University of Miami
- University of South Florida

**10. Which colleges or universities can I attend?**

A student who was awarded a National Merit \$2500 Scholarship or a Corporate-sponsored Scholarship can attend any of the [eligible regionally accredited Florida institutions](#) listed on OSFA's website.

A student who was awarded a College-sponsored Scholarship must attend the institution that financed the scholarship or award.

**11. If I receive a College-sponsored Scholarship from an eligible Florida institution, can I attend any of the other eligible Florida institutions instead?**

No. A student who receives an offer for a College-sponsored Scholarship **must** attend the institution financing the scholarship or award.

**12. How does my college or university know that I am eligible for the scholarship?**

The college or university will verify your status against a roster from the National Merit Scholarship Corporation. You should retain a copy of the official letter or certificate you received from the National Merit Scholarship Corporation denoting your status as a 'Finalist' and a copy of the scholarship award letter in case questions arise regarding your status.

**13. I am a National Merit Finalist and have received a sponsorship offer; however my institution has no record of my National Merit Award. How can I confirm that I will be awarded the Benacquisto Scholarship?**

The National Merit Corporation will provide a list of National Merit Award recipients to the appropriate institution after the May 31<sup>st</sup> deadline to report college choice. After the institution receives the list, eligibility determinations will be made and awards offered accordingly.

**14. I was a 2014-15 National Merit Finalist who received the National Achievement Scholarship. Can I continue receiving FIS even though the National Merit Corporation no longer sponsors the program?**

Yes, your current eligibility will not be affected by the transition of the National Achievement Scholarship program. You must continue to meet the annual renewal requirements to maintain scholarship eligibility.

**15. When will I receive my funding?**

Your institution will disburse funding to you after the drop/add period. Contact your institution's Financial Aid office for information concerning specific disbursement dates.

**16. I am eligible for the Benacquisto Scholarship but do not want to start my postsecondary career in the Fall. Can I delay accepting the initial scholarship award?**

No. Eligible students must begin enrollment at an eligible postsecondary institution no later than the fall term following high school graduation to receive the scholarship award.

**17. How do I renew my scholarship?**

To renew, a student must earn a minimum 3.0 cumulative Grade Point Average (GPA) and earn all credit hours enrolled as of the drop/add period each term. The scholarship renews automatically at the end of the second semester, third quarter, or the equivalent, at the end of the academic year, provided the student meets the renewal requirements.

**18. What happens if I do not meet the renewal requirements?**

If the student does not meet both the GPA and credit hour requirements for renewal, the student will lose the scholarship. Once lost, the scholarship cannot be restored.

**19. Can I drop a class after drop/add period and still meet the renewal requirements?**

No. If the student drops a class after the drop/add period, the student will not be able to earn all credit hours enrolled and therefore, will not meet renewal requirements.

**20. Can I take additional courses in the second term to make up for hours not earned during the first term in order to meet the renewal requirements?**

No. The credit hour requirement must be met each term.

**21. Can I get my scholarship back if I lose it?**

No. The Benacquisto Scholarship does not provide a restoration opportunity for students. Once eligibility is lost, it may not be restored.

**22. Will my scholarship renew if I skip the spring semester?**

Benacquisto Scholars are required to enroll the fall term after high school graduation. You are not obligated to attend both fall and spring terms. However, you must meet renewal requirements to have the scholarship available again in the following fall term.

**23. Is my eligibility compromised if I start attending classes the summer after graduating from high school?**

No. Eligible students who begin to take classes during the summer and continue enrollment in the fall term will not forfeit their scholarship eligibility. The requirement is that you be enrolled the fall after high school graduation. Eligible students will only be funded fall and spring terms. Summer funding is not available.

**24. How much is the scholarship award amount?**

The award amount is equivalent to the per term institutional cost of attendance (COA), provided by the Florida Board of Governors, minus the sum of the Bright Futures (BF) award and National Merit award® (NM).

The institution may adjust an award based on a student's other qualifying awards in order to satisfy federal or institutional regulations.

**25. What is included in the cost of attendance (COA)?**

The COA is the total cost to attend college full-time per term and may include, but is not limited to, tuition and fees, on-campus room and board, books, supplies, travel, and miscellaneous expenses.

**26. Is funding currently available to cover the summer?**

No. Legislative appropriated funds are not sufficient to cover the summer terms.

**27. Can I transfer to another institution once I begin receiving the Benacquisto Scholarship?**

No. Benacquisto scholars must maintain enrollment at the institution where the student was initially funded in order to maintain scholarship eligibility.