

Cybersecurity Public Service Scholarship Program

~ Administrative Policies and Procedures ~

Governing language

2016 Act of the Assembly, Chapter 780, Item 144

J. Out of this appropriation, \$500,000 the first year and \$500,000 the second year from the general fund is designated for cybersecurity public service scholarships. This award requires a state government employment commitment in the Commonwealth by the recipient equal to the number of years the scholarship is awarded. The State Council of Higher Education for Virginia shall develop eligibility criteria for this program, as well as establish the award amounts.

Eligible institutions

Virginia public institutions and private colleges and universities participating in the Virginia Tuition Assistance Grant Program offering an undergraduate or graduate program in computer sciences.

Eligible programs

Accredited degree programs specifically designed for a career in cybersecurity defense; such programs should include digital forensics or a comparable knowledge. Note that not all computer science or information systems programs will qualify. Only degree programs listed on cyberva.virginia.gov/colleges/ are approved programs. Minors, certificates, and individual courses do not qualify.

Institutional requests to include additional degree programs may be submitted to SCHEV. The department head of the respective program should include with the request: the program name, degree level, CIP Code, program description, when program was initiated, list of required cybersecurity-related courses, and a program web address, if applicable.

Student eligibility

The eligible student must:

1. Be a Virginia domiciled resident or eligible for a military-related exception for in-state tuition,
2. Enroll full-time into an eligible program at an eligible institution,
3. Be within two years of graduation from an undergraduate program or enrolled into a graduate program,
4. Have and maintain a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.0 and
5. Not have received, or plan to receive, a federal CyberCorps Scholarship for Service.

Process

The application period for the upcoming award year will be published on the SCHEV webpages and the program application. Approved applications will be prioritized based on enrollment level – graduate, baccalaureate, associate – then by application receipt date.

Applicant:

1. Submits a completed Cybersecurity Public Service Scholarship Application,
2. Submits a completed Cybersecurity Public Service Scholarship Promissory Note, and
3. Provides verification from institution that all of the student eligibility criteria are met.

SCHEV:

1. Reviews the application, determines eligibility, and sends response to applicant,
2. Contacts institution to verify enrollment as of the end of the term's add/drop period and whether the student received any other a federal scholarship, and
3. Disburses funds to the institution approximately four weeks into the term.

Institution:

1. Applies the funds to the student's account, first to direct charges, such as tuition, fees, room, and board, and
2. Disburses excess funds, if any, to the student, subject to institutional policy.

Award amount

A \$20,000 annual award will be divided into two \$10,000 awards, one for each of the fall and spring terms. Fall-only awards of \$10,000 will be considered if the student is scheduled to graduate by December.

Impact on other financial aid

The Cybersecurity Public Service Scholarship is not based upon need but since this program is a form of educational assistance, receipt of these funds may impact the student's eligibility for other forms of aid, subject to individual program criteria.

Student withdrawal

If the student withdraws or drops below full-time enrollment at any time during the term, the award may be fully refundable back to the Commonwealth.

Renewability

Renewal awards are not guaranteed and interested students must complete the application process in its entirety each year. An individual may receive an award for no more than two years, pending availability of funds.

Post enrollment responsibility

Award recipients are expected to work in Virginia within the cybersecurity field with a Virginia state government agency for one year for each year a scholarship is received. If the recipient fails to fulfill the work agreement, the obligation converts to a loan. Further details on loan repayment and work requirements are provided within the Cybersecurity Public Service Scholarship Promissory Note.

Circumstances not covered by these policies will be resolved by Council staff in a manner that is consistent with the authorizing language, best use of state funds, and meeting the program's purpose of securing cybersecurity expertise in public service.