

MEDIA ALERT

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Number of Bright Futures scholarships awarded to Hispanic university students expected to drop by over 60%

Tampa, FL—The total number of Bright Futures scholarships for Hispanic university students would drop by 60% under changes in eligibility criteria set to go into effect July 1, 2013. According to an internal analysis produced by the USF Office of Admissions, Recruitment, and Enrollment Planning and obtained by the Florida College Access Network, the initial eligibility requirements for Bright Futures scheduled to take effect for the high school graduating class of 2013-2014 would have a disparate impact on underrepresented minorities, particularly Hispanic and African American students. A summary of the projected impact of the changes in Bright Futures initial eligibility criteria by SUS institution is attached. The summary reflects the total number and percentage of students who would have met specified Bright Futures criteria for minimum test score based on SUS data for enrolled First-Time-In College students for Summer/Fall 2010 and Summer/Fall 2011.

The USF analysis suggest that based on the Bright Futures eligibility criteria scheduled to go into effect the Fall of 2014:

1. The impact of the changes would fall most heavily on Hispanic and African American students:
 - a. Between 7,000 and 7,500 Hispanic freshmen met minimum criteria for Bright Futures for Fall 2012, only between 2,700 and 3,000 would meet the new criteria set for Fall 2014, a drop of over 60%;
 - b. Approximately 2,700 black freshmen met minimum criteria for Bright Futures for Fall 2012, only 650 would meet the new criteria set for Fall 2014, a drop of more than 75%; but,
 - c. By comparison, around 17,000 white freshmen met minimum criteria for Bright Futures for Fall 2012, 10,000 would meet the new criteria set for Fall 2014, a drop of just 41%; and,
 - d. Between 1,600 and 1,700 Asian freshmen met minimum criteria for Bright Futures for Fall 2012, about 950 still would meet the new criteria set for Fall 2014, a drop of 42%.
 - e. 87% of Hispanic freshmen in these cohorts met the Fall 2012 criteria, but only 35% would qualify in Fall 2014;
 - f. 50%-55% of black freshmen in these cohorts met the Fall 2012 criteria, but mere 12%-14% would qualify in Fall 2014; but,
 - g. Over 90% of both white and Asian freshmen in these cohorts met the Fall 2012 criteria, and between 50%-55% would still qualify in Fall 2014.
2. The impact of the changes for Fall 2014 would fall most heavily on eight of the eleven SUS institutions:
 - a. The percentage of Bright Futures recipients would drop below 25% at FAU, FIU, FAMU, FGCU and UWF;
 - b. The percentage of Bright Futures recipients would drop below 50% at UCF, UNF and USF;
 - c. UF, FSU and New College would be less significantly impacted, with between 65% and 90% of their students still qualifying; however, black freshmen recipients would drop below 40% at all institutions except New College, which enrolled three or fewer black freshmen in either cohort.
3. The impact is disparate on Florida counties as well, with students and families from Broward, Collier, Dade, Lee, Osceola and St. Lucie standing to lose the most.

Beginning for high school students graduating during the 2013-14 academic year, students must score a minimum of 1170 on the SAT or 26 on the ACT and earn a high school GPA of 3.0 in order to meet the minimum academic requirements for Bright Futures eligibility. Those requirements reflect a significant leap from the current criteria which asks for a 1020 on the SAT or 22 on the ACT with a 3.0 high school GPA.

“We believe all students can rise and meet high academic standards, but the current scheduled increase in eligibility requirements for this important scholarship program is a dramatic jump that is unfair to all students and relies too heavily on standardized test scores for measuring academic merit,” said Braulio Colón, Executive Director for the Florida College Access Network.

Proposed Recommendations:

1. Maintain the current minimum test score criteria (SAT \geq 1020 or ACT \geq 22), but raise the minimum GPA requirement from 3.0 to 3.5 or higher or introduce a sliding scale with students meeting one of the following:
 - a. HSGPA \geq 4.33 (A+) and SAT \geq 920 or ACT \geq 19, or
 - b. HSGPA \geq 4.00 (A) and SAT \geq 980 or ACT \geq 21, or
 - c. HSGPA \geq 3.67 (A-) and SAT \geq 1050 or ACT \geq 23, or
 - d. HSGPA \geq 3.33 (B+) and SAT \geq 1130 or ACT \geq 25, or
 - e. HSGPA \geq 3.00 (B) and SAT \geq 1210 or ACT \geq 27
2. Introduce a need component on a sliding scale by EFC to determine the amount of the Bright Futures awarded to students with all meeting the minimum criteria anteed an annual award of \$1,000 regardless of need (including those who choose not to file the FAFSA);
3. Require the FLBOG and FLDOE to conduct annual reviews of the impact of Bright Futures on access of students by Estimated Family Contribution (EFC) or Average Family Income (AFI)