

FAQ

What is the Scholarship for Academic Excellence?

The Scholarship for Academic Excellence (SAE) will be awarded in 2026 for the 2025-2026 academic year. Pending the appropriation of State funds during the 2026 session of the New York State Legislature, 8,000 scholarships will be awarded. Of the 8,000 awards, 2,000 scholarships will have a value of \$1,500 each and 6,000 scholarships will have a value of \$500 each. Winners of this scholarship may concurrently receive any other New York State academic or general award for which he or she may be eligible. However, winners cannot be awarded a Scholarship for Academic Excellence in any amount when the combination of all awards would exceed their cost of attendance. **Scholarship winners must attend a college or university (SAEs cannot be used for trade schools) in New York State. Those who do not attend a college or university in New York State forfeit the award.** In no event shall the amount of the annual award exceed the recipient's cost of attendance at the institution attended. Cost of attendance includes tuition, required fees, laboratory and other institution-related expenses, books, transportation, and room and board.

Awards are renewable for up to four academic years of undergraduate study or five academic years, if the program of study normally requires five years as defined by the Commissioner of Education. If a scholarship is declined by the student or revoked by the Commissioner of Education, its benefits will lapse, and no re-awards will be made.

Who is eligible for a scholarship?

A. Each scholarship candidate must be eligible to graduate from a New York State high school by the end of the 2025-2026 school year.

B. If the scholarship candidate is a U.S. citizen, or an alien lawfully admitted for permanent residence in the United States; or be an individual of a class of refugees paroled by the attorney general of the United States under the parole authority pertaining to the admission of aliens to the United States then the student must:

1. have graduated from a New York State high school.
2. study full time and be matriculated in an approved undergraduate program of study in a New York State postsecondary institution.
3. be in good academic standing.
4. not be in default on any State or federal student loan or on any repayment of state awards; and
5. be New York State resident.

C. DREAM ACT CRITERIA: The Senator Jose Peralta NYS DREAM Act (DREAM Act) allows undocumented and other eligible students to apply for New York State financial aid programs provided they meet the following eligibility requirements.

1. If the student's permanent home is in NYS, and the student is or has ONE of the following:

a. U-Visa b. T-Visa c. Temporary protected status, pursuant to the Federal Immigration Act of 1990 d. Without lawful immigration status (including those with DACA status)

b. AND you meet ONE of the following criteria:

i. You attended a NYS high school for 2 or more years, graduated from a NYS high school, and are applying for an award for undergraduate study at a NYS college within five years of receiving your NYS high school diploma OR

ii. You attended a NYS high school for 2 or more years, graduated from a NYS high school, and are applying for an award for graduate study at a NYS college within ten years of receiving your NYS high school diploma OR

iii. You received a NYS high school equivalency diploma, and are applying for an award for undergraduate study at a NYS college within five years of receiving your NYS high school equivalency diploma OR

iv. You received a NYS high school equivalency diploma, and are applying for an award for graduate study at a NYS college within ten years of receiving your NYS high school equivalency diploma OR

v. You are or will be charged the NYS resident in-state tuition rate at a SUNY or CUNY college for a reason other than residency.

2. The student's permanent home is outside of NYS and the student is or has ONE of the following:

a. U.S. citizen

b. Permanent lawful resident

c. Of a class of refugees paroled by the attorney general under his or her parole authority pertaining to the admission of aliens to the U.S. d. U-Visa e. T-Visa f. Temporary protected status, pursuant to the Federal Immigration Act of 1990 g. Without lawful immigration status (including those with DACA status)

d. AND you meet ONE of the following criteria:

i. You attended a NYS high school for 2 or more years, graduated from a NYS high school, and are applying for an award for undergraduate study at a NYS college within five years of receiving your NYS high school diploma OR

ii. You attended a NYS high school for 2 or more years, graduated from a NYS high school, and are applying for an award for graduate study at a NYS college within ten years of receiving your NYS high school diploma OR

iii. You received a NYS high school equivalency diploma, and are applying for an award for undergraduate study at a NYS college within five years of receiving your NYS high school equivalency diploma OR

iv. You received a NYS high school equivalency diploma, and are applying for an award for graduate study at a NYS college within ten years of receiving your NYS high school equivalency diploma OR

v. You are or will be charged the NYS resident in-state tuition rate at a SUNY or CUNY college for a reason other than residency.

3. To utilize the benefits of this scholarship, the winner must be in attendance as a full-time, matriculated student at an approved New York State postsecondary institution by the Fall 2026 semester. Winners who enroll in an out-of-state institution in Fall 2026 are not eligible and forfeit the award.

D. If a winner is not accepted as a full-time, matriculated student at an approved postsecondary institution in New York State by the Fall 2026 semester, the scholarship may be accepted, and enrollment postponed for a period of one year.

How is a scholarship winner determined?

The selection criteria for nominees for the Scholarships for Academic Excellence must be published and made available to students by the high school at the beginning of each school year. For the 2026 competition, the selection criteria must be published and made available to students on or before September 30, 2025.

****Note:** The high school should use selection criteria “Method A: Regents test scores,” whenever possible; if “Method A: Regents test scores” is not possible, the school should then select between Method B or C.

A high school shall use uniform criteria for the selection of scholarship nominees, applicable to all competing students, such criteria to be in accordance with the requirements of this section.

Please note, if an award is declined by a student prior to the end of their high school

program, the scholarship may be awarded, to the extent practicable, to the next highest ranking student.

Method A: Regents test scores

A high school which, prior to its students' senior year, has offered to all such students seeking Regents credit at the school either a Regents examination or a single approved alternative assessment (see <http://www.p12.nysed.gov/>), but not both, in each of the following subjects: comprehensive English, global studies, United States history/government, algebra I, algebra II, and in two or more of the following four sciences: earth science, living environment/biology, chemistry, and physics, shall select scholarship nominees on the basis of the following criteria:

The high school shall select their winner(s) by computing a weighted average of the scores on the Regents examinations and/or approved alternative assessments taken by its students prior to their senior year, in all the following subjects:

The weighing of the scores shall be:

English Language Arts weight of three

Algebra II weight of three

Global studies and Geography weight of one

United State History & Government weight of one

Science: At least two, but up to four courses may be included weight of one for each course

Individual schools must decide, in the science area, how many sciences to use in the calculation. They must use the same number of science courses for all students in the competition though they do not need to use the same courses.

If the approved alternative assessment is not scored on a one-hundred-point scale, the high school must convert the scores on the approved alternative assessment to a one-hundred-point scale. If a student elected not to take the Regents examinations listed, or an approved alternative assessment, then that student cannot compete or be selected as a scholarship winner.

****Note:** The high school should use selection criteria described above for "Method A: Regents test scores," whenever possible; if "Method A: Regents test scores" is not possible, the school should then select between Method B or C, described below.

Method B: Rank in class

For high schools that can determine class rank because of their grading system, class rank of students at the end of their junior year.

In the case of a tie, the high school may determine rank order by lottery among individuals having the same class rank.

OR

Method C: Locally developed examination of English and mathematics

For high schools that cannot determine class rank because of their grading system, a locally developed and administered assessment of academic performance which shall test the subjects of English and mathematics and shall be conducted prior to the end of the junior year.

In the case of a tie in the weighted average score that is used for the selection of a junior year to determine the priority ranking of tied scholarship nominees. If the high school cannot determine class rank because of the grading system of the high school or in case of a tie in class rank, the high school shall determine priority order by lottery among tied individuals.

In the case of a tie in class rank or in the score on the local developed and administered assessment of academic performance that is used for selection of a scholarship nominee, the high school shall determine priority order by lottery among individuals having the same class rank.

How are the scholarships allocated to each High School?

A. Each registered high school in the State, as defined in the Regulations of the Commissioner, will be allocated a single scholarship of one thousand five hundred dollars (\$1,500.)

B. The remaining \$1,500 scholarships will be allocated to the high schools in the same ratio that the number of students enrolled in the twelfth grade at each high school in the prior school year (2024-2025) bears to the total number of students who were enrolled in the twelfth grade in the State during that year. The ratio will be multiplied by the number of scholarships available, and the result, rounded to the nearest whole number, will be the number of scholarships allocated to the school.

Six thousand scholarships valued at \$500 each will be allocated in the same manner as described above.

C. If the number of scholarships allocated to a high school is larger than the number of students who meet the requirements for selection as scholarship nominees, the excess number of scholarships will lapse.

When must the nomination survey for the Scholarship for Academic Excellence be submitted to the New York State Education Department (NYSED)?

The deadline for submitting nominees for the Scholarships for Academic Excellence is **February 27, 2026**.

When are the scholarships awarded?

When funds are appropriated by the New York State Governor during the 2026 Legislative Session, all students correctly nominated by your school will be scholarship winners. Award notices are sent to high school principals for distribution directly to students as soon as possible after funds are made available. Award notices are **NOT** sent from SED to individual recipients. Nomination questions should be directed to the high school principal.

What happens after a Scholarship for Academic Excellence is awarded?

The high school official will submit the nominations to NYSED for processing then NYSED will send the list of scholarship award winners to the Higher Education Services Corporation (HESC). HESC administers all state scholarship awards in addition to the FAFSA and TAP Application process. HESC may contact students directly to assist with this award process. NYSED encourages all students, whether they are awarded this scholarship or not, to complete the FAFSA and TAP Application to avoid any delays in processing the award with the university or college the awardee is attending.

Scholarship for Academic Excellence Survey Questions

Who completes the SAE survey and what information is needed to submit?

The appropriate school building leader must complete this survey. Please keep a copy of the submitted Nominations for your records. This is the list of your scholarship winners. Selecting “Add Another Group” at the bottom of the survey is how you add another nominee. Do not submit extra names. If your school received twelve awards, submit only twelve groups / nominee (or less). The number of scholarships that your high school is allocated is listed on the top of the survey (for example: two @ \$1,500, three @ \$500).

- a. Check the method used at your school to select your nominees (A, B, or C).
- b. List the names and complete addresses of your winners, including apartment numbers.
- c. Rank order on the Nomination Summary Form should be the same as the Nomination Rank (#5) on the application form.

IMPORTANT: If you are not nominating students, please go to Question #20 at the bottom of the survey, indicating "NO NOMINEES" with an explanation for the lack of nominees.

DIRECTIONS FOR COMPLETING THE STUDENT APPLICATION FORM

This survey must be completed for each winner of the 2026 competition for the Scholarships for Academic Excellence. This application must be certified by the School Building Leader who is making the nomination. The number of applications which have been sent to a high school is the maximum number it is eligible to receive. Selecting “Add Another Group” at the bottom of the

survey is how you add another nominee. Do not submit extra names. If your school received twelve awards, submit only twelve groups / nominee (or less).

1. **Student First Name (Required):** Type in the student's First Name.
2. **Student Middle Initial (Optional):** Type in the student's Middle Initial. If the Student does not have a middle initial, please enter N/A.
3. **Student Last Name (Required):** Type in the student's Last Name.
4. **Student Nomination Rank (Required):** The number entered must equal the rank of the nominee. For example, if two nominees were submitted on the survey, the one ranked first (or highest ranking), should be ranked "01" on the survey; the second should be ranked "02", and so on.
5. **Student Award Amount (Required):** Select the award amount associated with the rank and number of \$1,500 or \$500 awards allocated to your high school. For example, if your survey states, "Your high school is allocated one (1) \$1,500 Award and one (1) \$500 award," then the nominee ranked first (or highest ranking) would be the \$1,500 awardee and your second nominee would be the \$500, and so on.
6. **Student's Address of Residence*:** Type in the student's Address of Residence.
*** Applicants without lawful immigration status will not be asked for their home address and the nominee does not need to complete this section.**
7. **Student City or Post Office of Residence*:** Follow the same steps as for Address of Residence.
*** Applicants without lawful immigration status will not be asked for their home address and the nominee does not need to complete this section.**
8. **Student State of Residence:** You must enter and fill in the letters in the state column.
*** Applicants without lawful immigration status will not be asked for their home address and the nominee does not need to complete this section.**
9. **ZIP Code (Required):** Enter the digits of the student's ZIP code in the boxes provided.
10. **Date of Birth (Required):** Enter the student's date of birth in the following format: MM/DD/YYYY.
11. **Student Ethnicity (Optional):** Select the appropriate box.
12. **Student Race (Optional):** Select the appropriate box(es).

13. **Student Gender (Optional):** Select the appropriate box.
14. **Student NYSSIS ID # (Required for Public Schools Outside of New York City; Public High Schools within New York City may enter N/A. Optional for Nonpublic Schools):** Enter the student's NYSSIS ID.
15. **Student Local High School ID (Required for Public High Schools within New York City and for Non-public High Schools. Optional for Public High Schools outside of New York City):** Enter the student's local high school ID.
16. **Student Cell Phone Number (Required):** Enter the student's cell phone number. This is required so that HESC can identify and confirm student recipients without collecting the Social Security Number (SSN) and provides HESC a method of communication with the student, if needed
17. **Student Email Address (Required):** Enter the student's PERSONAL email address. The PERSONAL email address is required so that HESC can identify and confirm student recipients without collecting the Social Security Number (SSN) and provides HESC a method of communication with the student, if needed.
18. **High School Principal / Counselor (Required):** Enter the high school Principal or Counselor's name and title responsible for submitting the student information.
19. **High School Scholarship Contact Phone Number (Required):** Enter the high school liaison's phone number so SED or HESC can contact them if needed.
20. **No Student Nomination (If applicable):** If your high school is not nominating students, select "No Student Nominations" with an explanation for the lack of nominees.