# *Sitka Tribe of Alaska*

# *Higher Education Scholarship Program Policy*

## *Education and Employment Department*

**Rev. 2/9/2022**

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## I. PURPOSE

The purpose of the Sitka Tribe of Alaska's Higher Education program is as follows:

1. To financially assist qualified applicants who are enrolled in an accredited college or university program. The Sitka Tribe of Alaska scholarship program uses the Department of Education's database to verify that an individual's school meets these accreditation standards.

2. The purpose of these guidelines is to establish policies and procedures that govern the award of Higher Education Scholarship Funds. Funding through the Higher Education program is allowed up to five (5) years in a lifetime per student ($3,000 per academic school year) for undergraduate studies, in the maximum amount of $15,000. Graduate students are eligible to receive funding even if they were awarded five years as an undergrad, provided there is money available in the budget. Graduates are eligible for a lifetime maximum of $9,000 not to exceed the amount awarded for undergraduate students ($1500/semester or $1000/term).

3. Funding through the Sitka Tribe of Alaska is strictly supplemental. This means that the majority of funding must come from other sources, which should be included in the budget forecast section of the scholarship application. Any changes in financial aid throughout the academic school year should also be provided to the Education Department in a timely manner. The maximum amount awarded through our program in an academic year ( August 1—July 31) is $3,000* ($1,500/semester or $1,000/quarter). In order to be eligible for the full amount, the student must submit an application by the April 1 deadline. If the student misses this deadline, he or she may still apply for funding by the October 1 deadline. However, the maximum award decreases to $1500/semester or $750/quarter. Please keep in mind that funding may vary based on: scholarship budget, number of applicants, Tribal priority, etc. At the student's request, the Committee can decrease funding for fall and spring awards if the student plans on attending during the summer term. This does NOT make the student eligible for more funding, it simply allocates the scholarship award differently. For example, a student attending a semester school may receive payments of $1,000 over the three terms (fall, spring, summer) instead of $1,500 (fall, spring).

4. A student awarded a scholarship in the maximum award ($3,000) for the academic year (August 1—July 31) may apply for a part-time scholarship (see Section VIII) during the summer term provided he or she has not maxed out the

5 years of undergraduate funding in the maximum amount of $15,000.

## II. TRIBAL PRIORITIES

The Sitka Tribe of Alaska priority for Higher Education funding is:

1. Eligible *Seniors* who have met the minimum requirements defined in section IV and are enrolled citizens of Sitka Tribe of Alaska.
2. Eligible *Juniors* who have met the minimum requirements defined in section IV and are enrolled citizens of Sitka Tribe of Alaska.
3. Eligible *Sophomores* who have met the minimum requirements defined in section IV and are enrolled citizens of Sitka Tribe of Alaska.
4. Eligible *Freshmen* who have met the minimum requirements defined in section IV and are enrolled members of Sitka Tribe of Alaska.
5. Eligible *Graduates* who have met the minimum requirements defined in section IV and are enrolled members of Sitka Tribe of Alaska.
6. *Other* qualified applicants (American Indians or Alaska Natives residing in Sitka for at least (6) six months prior to the application deadline) who have met the minimum requirements (see section IV) will be considered provided that funds are available and the student is not receiving funding through another Federally Recognized Tribal Organization.

## III. EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The make-up and responsibilities of the Education Committee are outlined as follows:

1. The Sitka Tribe of Alaska's Education Committee shall consist of at least (2) two tribal council members and (2) two interested tribal citizens.

2. The responsibilities of the Education Committee are:

    a. Approve applicants who have met the minimum requirements of the Higher Education scholarship program.
    b. Review and determine funding award amounts for the term(s) or academic year.
    c. Review academic progress, probation, and suspension.

## IV. APPLICATION PROCESS

To qualify for the Higher Education program, applicants ***MUST*** meet the following criteria:

1. Be (1) an enrolled member of the **Sitka Tribe of Alaska OR** (2) an American Indian or Alaska Native (requires proof through either a certificate of degree of Indian blood or enrolled member of another federally recognized tribal government) residing in Sitka for at least (6) six months prior to the application deadline.

2. Have a (1) High School Diploma **OR** (2) General Education Diploma (GED).

3. Have a complete file. If you have any questions regarding what constitutes a completed application, please call prior to the submission deadline. Failure to submit all necessary documents by the posted deadline will result in the denial of your scholarship application, and such denials are not eligible for appeal. A complete file consists of the following:

    a. Sitka Tribe of Alaska Higher Education application complete and submitted by the deadline.

**The annual deadlines for the Higher Education scholarship program are:**

**Academic Year (Fall/Winter/Spring/Summer terms) –**
**First Time Applicants: April 1**
**Renewing Applicants: May 1**
**Winter/Spring/Summer funding only – October 1**

b. *New* scholarship applicants must provide OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPTS from all academic institutions attended (high school, college, vocation training, etc.), including the most recent academic term.
c. *Continuing* scholarship applicants must provide an OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPT, including the most recent academic term.
d. *New* Scholarship applicants must submit a LETTER OF ACCEPTANCE from the college/university the student will be attending.
e. *Continuing* scholarship applicants must submit a LETTER OF ACCEPTANCE from the college/university If the student is changing schools.

d. FINANCIAL NEED ANALYSIS form completed and signed by the Financial Aid Officer at the college/university the student is, or will be attending.

e. The applicant is required to apply for Federal Aid via FAFSA (**Free Application for Federal Student Aid).** To be considered for funding, the student must include verification that he or she has submitted a complete FAFSA application prior to the April 1/May 1/October 1 deadline.

f. A **STUDENT AID REPORT** (SAR) generated by FAFSA is required before the Committee will review the application.

4. A current/continuing student must re-apply each year to receive continued Higher Education funding**.** A separate application is available for those re-applying for funding through the scholarship program designated as *"Higher Education Scholarship Application Continuing Students ONLY."*

5. A student in default of any Federal or State loans (e.g. Perkins, Stafford, etc.) is not eligible for Sitka Tribe of Alaska's Higher Education scholarship funds until the loan(s) has been satisfied.

## V. TIMELINE FOR SCHOLARSHIPS

1. A scholarship applicant should plan on submitting his or her application prior to the deadline to ensure all the required information is received.

2. Academic School Year (maximum award $3,000)
   Winter/Spring/Summer Term (maximum award $1,500)

3. Application Deadline:

   **First Time Applicants: April 1st**
   **Renewing Applicants: May 1st (fall/winter/spring/summer term).**
   **Partial Academic Year Applicants: October 1 (winter/spring/summer term)**

4. Committee Decision: The Education Committee will meet and review submitted applications on the third Thursday in April, provided the student's school provides all the information needed to make an award decision (e.g. financial aid package, official transcript, etc.). A decision (award/denial) letter will be mailed to the applicant within 30 days of the meeting.
   a. The scholarship check for the fall term is mailed to the financial aid office prior to July 1.
   b. The scholarship check for the winter/spring term is mailed to the financial aid office after January 1. As long as the student shows he or she has met minimum academic requirements through submission of an official transcript and check receipt form for the fall term.

5. Committee Decision: The Education Committee will meet and review submitted

applications the second Thursday in November, provided the student's school provides all the information needed to make an award decision (e.g. financial aid package, official transcript, etc.). A decision letter (award/denial) will be mailed to the applicant within 30 days of the meeting.

a. A scholarship check for the winter/spring term will be mailed to the financial aid office after January 1 so long as the student shows he or she has met minimum academic requirements.
b. ALL students MUST re-apply annually on or by May 1.

## VI. STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY

In order to receive funding in a timely manner, the following conditions have been set:

1. At the beginning of each term, the student must sign and return a *check receipt* form. The receipt is stapled directly to the scholarship check. The check receipt is the verification that the student received funding from the Tribe and used the scholarship for educational purposes.

2. At the end of each term, the student must send *official transcripts* that verify the student has met academic minimums (see section XI).

3. The student must *re-apply for funding* for each academic year by the scholarship deadline. A completed scholarship must be received or postmarked by May 1 /October 1. If the deadline falls on a weekend, it must be postmarked the Friday before it is due.

4. If a student opts to fax/email a completed application, it is the student's responsibility to verify that the Education Department received it.

5. The student is responsible for submitting a completed application. *If you would like a parent(s) or spouse to assist in the application process, the student is required to submit a signed release of information (included in the scholarship application);* otherwise, information about the applicant and scholarship will not be shared with anyone, other than the applicant, without exception. This policy is similar to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA); it is in place to protect the student's right to privacy.

## VII. COURSE APPROVAL

For a course/program funded through the Higher Education scholarship program, it

must meet the following conditions:

1. The student must be attending school at full-time status (see section XI).
2. Students may attend an accredited 2-year junior college; credits must be transferable to a 4-year school.
3. The Committee may provide funding for the following academic degrees: Associate, Bachelor, Graduate, and Post-Graduate degree programs.
4. To receive continued funding, the student must show academic progress in his or her degree program (e.g., class standing, credits accrued). Also, the Committee does not fund student(s) pursuing similar degrees. For example, the completion of an Associate degree program should lead to a Bachelor's degree program and so on. If the student requests funding for a second Associate degree or a second Bachelor's degree, his or her request will be denied.

## VIII. PART-TIME SCHOLARSHIPS

There is limited part-time funding for scholarship applicants. In order to qualify for a part-time scholarship, a student must be within 11 credits of completion of his or her degree program as verified through a university degree audit.

This scholarship is only available for one academic term (semester/quarter). If a student was awarded a scholarship in the maximum award ($3,000) for the most recent/current academic year (August 1—July 31), he or she may apply for the part-time scholarship during the summer term provided he or she has not maxed out the 5 years of undergraduate funding in the maximum amount of $15,000.

**The award amount is prorated at $125 per credit hour (see table below):**

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1 credit | $125 | 7 credits | $875 |
| 2 credits | $250 | 8 credits | $1,000 |
| 3 credits | $375 | 9 credits | $1,125 |
| 4 credits | $500 | 10 credits | $1,250 |
| 5 credits | $625 | 11 credits | $1,375 |
| 6 credits | $750 | — | — |

## IX. NOTIFICATION OF GRANT AWARD

1. Students are notified in writing regarding their grant award.
2. An award notice will state the specific amount and length of the grant award.

## X. PAYMENT OF GRANT AWARDS

1. Payments will be made to the student at the beginning of each quarter/semester through the financial aid office at the college/university where the student is attending.

2. In the event that a student fails or drops out of their program, the school has been instructed to return any remaining STA funds. The school is also asked to contact our department if the student did maintain full-time status with a 2.0 term grade point average in the previous term.

## XI. ACADEMIC PROGRESS DURING TRAINING

The following are the minimum academic requirements:

1. All scholarship recipients are required to maintain a 2.0 grade point average (non-cumulative) at full-time status (minimum of 12 credits unless the college/university specifies a different system of calculating full-time status).

2. Graduate students must maintain the minimum standards and a full course load each quarter/semester (as determined by the school's graduate program).

## XII. COMPLETION OF PROGRAM/TRAINING

Once a student has completed a degree program, the student must submit an official transcript and a copy of the diploma to the STA Education Department. Each year, STA publishes an education edition newsletter that is sent to all tribal citizens. Graduating seniors are requested to provide information for the newsletter.

## XIII. TRANSFERS

A student may transfer to any accredited school of their choice providing:

1. Students **MUST** notify us in writing if they apply and are accepted to a new school.

2. Student is responsible for transferring his or her financial aid to the new school.

3. Upon transfer, a student must submit to the STA Education Department:
    a. A brief letter to the Education Committee explaining the reason for change, new school information, etc.
    b. A NEW budget forecast that reflects a budget from the school
    c. A Letter of Admission from the College/or University.

## XIV. ACADEMIC PROBATION

Terms and conditions of an academic probationary status are outlined as follows:

1. A student who does not meet the academic requirements outlined in Section XI will be placed on academic probation.
2. The student will be notified in writing of academic probation. He or she will have one term to meet the minimum standards.
3. Failure to meet the minimum standards by the end of the probationary term will result in an academic suspension.

## XV. ACADEMIC SUSPENSION

Terms and conditions of an academic suspension are outlined as follows:

1. If the student has not met the academic standards by the end of the probationary period, he or she will be placed on academic suspension. The student will be notified by mail.
2. All funding through the Sitka Tribe of Alaska will be suspended until the student has met the minimum standards as outlined in Section XI.
3. A student may be eligible for reinstatement of funding once he or she has met the minimum standards. Official transcripts from the college/university will be required to determine eligibility.

## XVI. APPEALS

Students wishing to appeal a denial of funding must:

1. Submit a letter within 30 days of receipt of the award/denial letter stating the reason(s) for the appeal to the Sitka Tribe of Alaska's General Manager.
2. Incomplete applications are not grounds for an appeal.
3. Late applications are not grounds for an appeal.

4. The General Manager will review the appeal to determine if it has been decided consistent with these policies and applicable regulations and law within thirty days of receipt of the appeal. The General Managers' decision is final. Students are notified by mail of the decision by the General Manager.

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