



HIGHMARK SCHOLAR-TO-PRACTICE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA AND FUNDING PREFERENCES

To be eligible for a scholarship, all applicants must:

- 1. Academic performance.** Demonstrates the ability to excel and maintain good academic standing while in school.
 - a. The student must be accepted into an entering class at the Lake Erie College of Osteopathic medicine or be a currently enrolled student.
 - b. The entering student must meet minimal overall grade point average of 3.3 on a 4.0 scale from an accredited undergraduate college or university; Currently enrolled student applicants must have a 3.0 overall GPA at LECOM and have a recorded MCAT score of 24 or higher with a 7 or better in each subtest, OR, a New MCAT score greater than or equal to 495 or an Academic Index Score (AIS) greater than or equal to 110.
 - c. The student must take the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) and achieve a composite score of 24 or better with a minimum of 7 or better in each subtest, OR, a New MCAT score greater than or equal to 495 or an Academic Index Score (AIS) greater than or equal to 110.
 - d. The student must maintain a grade point average of 3.0 for each year of the scholarship.
 - e. The student must be of high moral character and comply with all college policies, regulations and core competencies.
 - f. The student cannot be a recipient of any full tuition scholarship.
 - g. The student must be a citizen of the United States or a permanent resident.
 - h. The scholarship award may only be applied to tuition at the Lake Erie College of Osteopathic Medicine.
 - i. The student must have the required letters of recommendation.
 - j. Affiliate applicants are highly encouraged, as are students who are from one of the designated Highmark Physician Shortage Areas.

- 2. Commitment to a Career in Primary Care**

Demonstrates a strong commitment to the fields of primary care; interest/motivation to provide care to Highmark designated areas of physician need; and relevant work experience and/or activities (i.e., community service, research, and internships) that have prepared the applicant to work with underserved populations. This factor is reviewed through the following:

- a. **Essay Question.** An applicant's responses to the essay question aids in the review process and help gauge an applicant's interest in primary and commitment to working in underserved communities.
- b. **Recommendation Letters.** Provides a detailed description of the applicant's performance in school; education/work achievements; community/civic or other non-academic achievements; ability to work and communicate constructively with others from diverse backgrounds; and interest and motivation to serve populations through work experience, course work, special projects, research, etc.

3. Funding Priorities

- a. First Priority – **Matriculating students** who are seeking support for full tuition for four years or three years in the Primary Scholars or Accelerated Physician Assistants Pathways through their date of graduation.
- b. Second Priority - **Characteristics Likely to Remain in Highmark Physician Shortage Area (HPSA).** Applicants who display characteristics that indicate a willingness to continue to serve in a HPSA once the service obligation is completed and/or are from one of the designated underserved communities.

4. Continuation of Scholarship Award

To request continued scholarship support for any subsequent school years, the scholar must submit a report verifying that he/she is still in good academic standing and a signed contract for that school year. The LECOM Scholarship Program Office will notify the scholar when this submission is due. The granting of continuation awards depends upon the availability of funds and is contingent upon the following. The scholar must:

- a. Be enrolled **full-time** in academic courses leading to D.O. degree for which he/she was funded and must not be repeating course work;
- b. Be in academic good standing as describe in section;
 - i. The student must be accepted into an entering class at the Lake Erie College of Osteopathic medicine.
 - ii. The student must meet minimal overall grade point average of 3.3 on a 4.0 scale from an accredited undergraduate college or university.
 - iii. The student must take the Medical College Admission Test (MCAT) and achieve a composite score of 24 or better with a minimum of 7 or better in each subtest, OR, a New MCAT score greater than or equal to 495 or an Academic Index Score (AIS) greater than or equal to 110.
 - iv. The student must maintain a grade point average of 3.0 for each year of the scholarship.
- c. The student must be of high moral character and have demonstrated compliance with all college policies, regulations and core competencies.

When does the service obligation begin?

Scholars are required to begin service as soon as possible upon graduation from school LECOM.

Physicians must complete a primary care residency and are expected to begin service within 3 months of the completion of that residency (generally within 3 months of June 30).

All scholars will be invited to a conference with representatives from Highmark at the beginning of their last year of school. Scholars will be given information about the HPSA placement process, which will refer the scholars to the list of job vacancies for which scholars can compete to fulfill their service obligation. The HPSA also provides dedicated staff to assist scholars in successfully finding a practice site.

The HPSA reserves the right to make final decisions on all placements in order to comply with statutory requirements for the placement of scholars. There is no guarantee that HPSAs or sites which are currently approved for HPSA scholar placements will still be available/approved at the time scholars are available to serve. If a scholar does not obtain a placement in an approved practice by the deadline, the scholar will be assigned to a service site identified by the HPSA.

1. Passes required licensing or national certification exams;
2. Obtains a full, permanent, unencumbered, unrestricted health professional license to practice in the State where the HPSA service site is located (unless he/she has a license in another State and will work for a Federal entity);
3. Begins to provide clinical services at the HPSA service site; AND
4. Has an appropriate practice agreement (discussed below) completed and signed by the scholar and Highmark or his/her designee.

Delaying the Start of Service

Only scholars with documented extreme circumstances that jeopardize the start of service may make a request to suspend their service obligation for up to 1 year. Requests must be submitted to Highmark and include a detailed written explanation and supporting documentation.

When does the service obligation end?

The last day of the service obligation is determined in whole years from the start date. Adjustments in the end date will be made by the HPSA if the scholar is away from the site for more than 7 weeks per service years.

What if I breach my Highmark contract?

While Highmark will work with scholars to assist them, to the extent possible, to avoid a breach and fulfill the service obligation, scholars are reminded that the failure to complete service for any reason is a breach of the HPSA service obligation. Scholars should immediately contact Highmark if a situation arises in which a scholar is potentially unable to fulfill his/her service obligation.

The following applies to scholars who breach their HPSA contract:

1. **Failure to complete academic training:** Scholars who are dismissed from school for academic or disciplinary reasons or who voluntarily terminate academic training before graduation from the educational program for which the scholarship was awarded will be declared in breach of their scholarship obligation and held liable to Highmark for repayment of **all HPSA funds paid to them and to the school on their behalf**. The

amount owed must be paid in full within 3 years of the date of default. No interest will be charged on any part of this debt during the 3-year repayment period. However, if payment in full is not made within the 3-year period, interest will be assessed thereafter.

2. **Failure to begin or complete the service obligation or failure to meet the terms and conditions of postponing the service obligation for postgraduate training:** Scholars who for any reason fail to comply with the terms and conditions of postponing the service obligation for postgraduate training (including physicians who fail to complete an approved residency in an HPSA) or who for any reason fail to begin or complete their service obligations after completion of training, will be in breach of their scholarship obligations. When scholars default on their contracts for these reasons, Highmark shall be entitled to receive the amount of scholarship money received by the student proportional to the breach as liquidated damages and not as a penalty. The damages which Highmark is entitled to recover shall be paid within 1 year of the date of default.

Delinquent debt if the default debt is not repaid within 1 year or 3 years, as applicable and subsequent collection efforts are unsuccessful, the case may be referred for enforced collection. The scholar will be liable for the debt incurred plus administrative and court costs associated with the collection.