

The Vermont Statutes Online

The statutes were updated in November, 2018, and contain all actions of the 2018 legislative session.

Title 16 : Education

Chapter 090 : Funding Of Postsecondary Education

(Cite as: 16 V.S.A. § 2888)

§ 2888. Vermont Strong Scholars Initiative

(a) Creation.

(1) There is created a postsecondary loan forgiveness initiative designed to forgive a portion of Vermont Student Assistance Corporation loans of students employed in occupations identified as important to Vermont's economy and to build opportunities for students to gain work experience with Vermont employers.

(2) The initiative shall be known as the Vermont Strong Scholars Initiative and is designed to:

(A) encourage students to:

(i) consider occupations that are critical to the Vermont economy;

(ii) enroll and remain enrolled in a Vermont postsecondary institution; and

(iii) live and work in Vermont upon graduation;

(B) reduce student loan debt for postsecondary degrees involving a course of study related to, and resulting in, employment in target occupations; and

(C) support a steady stream of qualified talent for Vermont's employers.

(b) Vermont Strong Loan Forgiveness Program.

(1) Occupations; projections.

(A) Annually, on or before November 15, the Secretary of Commerce and Community Development and the Commissioner of Labor, in consultation with the Vermont State Colleges, the University of Vermont, the Association of Vermont Independent Colleges, the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation, the Secretary of Human Services, and the Secretary of Education, shall identify occupations, projecting at least four years into the future, that are or will be critical to the Vermont economy.

(B) [Repealed.]

(2) Eligibility. A graduate of a public or private Vermont postsecondary institution shall be eligible for forgiveness of a portion of his or her Vermont Student Assistance Corporation postsecondary education loans under this section if he or she:

(A) was a Vermont resident, as defined in subdivision 2822(7) of this title, at the time he or she was graduated;

(B) enrolled in his or her first year of study at a postsecondary institution on or after July 1, 2015 and completed an associate's degree within three years, or a bachelor's degree within six years of his or her enrollment date;

(C) becomes employed on a full-time basis in Vermont within 12 months of graduation in an occupation identified by the Secretary and Commissioner under subdivision (1) of this subsection;

(D) remains employed on a full-time basis in Vermont throughout the period of loan forgiveness in an occupation identified by the Secretary and Commissioner under subdivision (1) of this subsection; and

(E) remains a Vermont resident throughout the period of loan forgiveness.

(3) Loan forgiveness. An eligible individual shall have a portion of his or her Vermont Student Assistance Corporation loan forgiven as follows:

(A) for an individual awarded an associate's degree, in an amount equal to the comprehensive in-state tuition rate for 15 credits at the Vermont State Colleges during the individual's final semester of enrollment, to be prorated over the three years following graduation;

(B) for an individual awarded a bachelor's degree, in an amount equal to the comprehensive in-state tuition rate for 30 credits at the Vermont State Colleges during the individual's final year of enrollment, to be prorated over the five years following graduation;

(C) loan forgiveness may be awarded on a prorated basis to an otherwise eligible Vermont resident who transfers to a Vermont postsecondary institution and graduates after July 1, 2017, with an associate's degree or after July 1, 2019, with a bachelor's degree.

(4) Management.

(A) The Secretary of Commerce and Community Development shall develop all organizational details of the Loan Forgiveness Program consistent with the purposes and requirements of this section.

(B) The Secretary shall enter into a memorandum of understanding with the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation for management of the Loan Forgiveness Program.

(C) The Secretary may adopt rules pursuant to 3 V.S.A. chapter 25 necessary to implement the Program.

(c) [Repealed.]

(d) Funding.

(1) Loan forgiveness; State funding.

(A) There is created a special fund to be known as the Vermont Strong Scholars Fund pursuant to 32 V.S.A. chapter 7, subchapter 5, which shall be used and administered by the Secretary of Commerce and Community Development solely for the purposes of loan forgiveness pursuant to this section.

(B) The Fund shall consist of sums to be identified by the Secretary from any source accepted for the benefit of the Fund and interest earned from the investment of Fund balances.

(C) Any interest earned and any remaining balance at the end of the fiscal year shall be carried forward in the Fund.

(D) The availability and payment of loan forgiveness awards under this chapter is subject to State funding available for the awards.

(2) Loan forgiveness; Vermont Student Assistance Corporation. The Vermont Student Assistance Corporation shall have the authority to grant loan forgiveness pursuant to this section by using the private loan forgiveness capacity associated with bonds issued by the Corporation to raise funds for private loans that are eligible for forgiveness under this section, if available. (Added 2013, No. 199 (Adj. Sess.), § 47; amended 2015, No. 51, § C.2, eff. June 3, 2015; 2017, No. 154 (Adj. Sess.), § 2, eff. May 21, 2018.)

