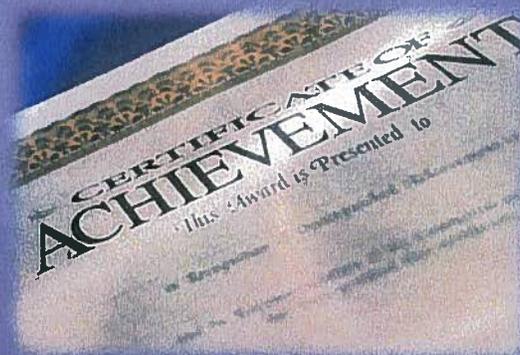
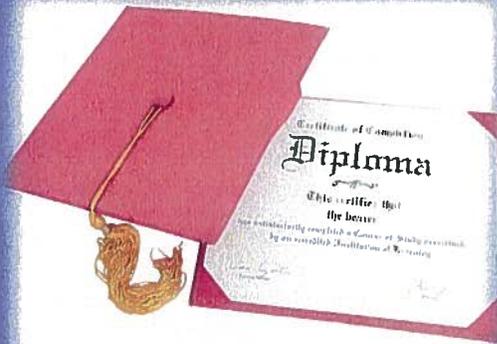
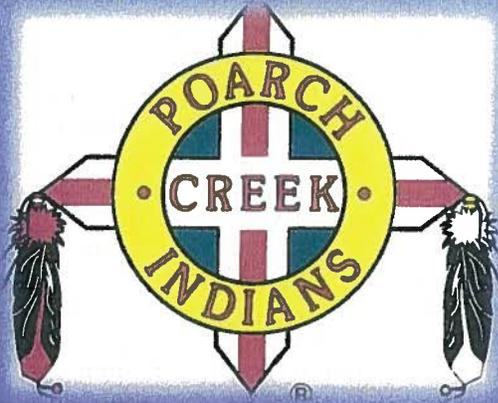


POARCH BAND OF CREEK INDIANS EDUCATION DEPARTMENT



G
R
A
D
U
A
T
I
O
N

EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS

MCGHEE – TULLIS TUITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

REVISED AUGUST 1, 2013

"Education is the most powerful weapon you can use to change the world." Nelson Mandela

The McGhee-Tullis Tuition Assistance Program provides opportunities to tribal members, young and old, to strive for a quality high school education, post-secondary degrees, and specialty certificates through the Tribe's financial assistance with tuitions, books, and other necessary expenses. This includes assistance for special-need students. This Program offers encouragement for educational success by reducing historical and financial barriers to a higher education. The Program is a true investment in the Tribe's future as it challenges tribal members to learn new skills sets, develop a deeper level of critical thinking, and increase their awareness of social and tribal responsibilities; thus inspiring engagement and participation in Tribal activities.

History of the Education Department Scholarship Programs

February 22, 1987

The original Education Department Scholarship Trust Fund was created by Tribal Ordinance #87:0001. This trust was set up to provide small, competitive scholarships to tribal members. A scholarship committee was formed to review applications and award funds. The average award under this Program was about \$500.00

March 1, 2005

Tribal Council Resolution 05-015 approved creation of the Program:
The Tribal Council Resolution was passed approving the McGhee-Tullis Tuition Assistance Program Policy and was implemented by the Education Department to become effective for the 2005-2006 school year. This policy only applied to students under the age of 25.

June 17, 2006

The Fred L. McGhee Memorial Scholarship program was implemented with \$25,000.00 in seed money contributed to the Education Department by PCI Gaming. These awards were made to Tribal members who were over the age of 25 and therefore did not qualify for the McGhee – Tullis Tuition Assistance Program. These were competitive awards.

July 7, 2007

The McGhee - Tullis Tuition Assistance Program was expanded to include student loan repayment and the age cap of 25 was removed, allowing Tribal members of all ages to access higher education. For the first time, program participants were able to purchase a computer with funds from the Program.

July 28, 2008

The Fred L. McGhee Memorial Scholarship program was revised and began awarding funds to first generation Indian descent students on a competitive basis. \$25,000.00 was awarded this during this year.

2009

The First Generation Indian Descent Scholarship Program was awarded \$85,500 for competitive distribution.

2010

The FGID Scholarship Program was awarded \$97,500 for competitive distribution.

2011

The FGID Scholarship Program began to accept applications year round, and became the first non-competitive tribal scholarship for Indian descent students.

May 17, 2012

Tribal Council Resolution 2012-044 approved revisions:
Limits on Post- Secondary Education for Tribal Members:
\$30,000.00 for Associates degree or certification program
\$50,000.00 for Bachelor's degree
\$75,000.00 for Master's degree
\$100,000.00 for Professional degree

August 16, 2012

Tribal Council Resolution 2012-079 approved revisions:
The McGhee-Tullis Tuition Assistance Program was revised to remove cap for monthly and yearly disbursement for Elementary and Secondary Education and Special Needs Students categories; and revise the Academic Achievement Bonus policy to award bonus upon graduation rather than end of semester, required GPA of 3.5 or higher and bonus amount for degree levels.

August 1, 2013

Proposed revisions to Tribal Council.

**POARCH BAND OF CREEK INDIANS
EDUCATION DEPARTMENT**

**McGhee – Tullis
Tuition Assistance Program**

Revised: August 1, 2013

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section I.	Definitions	Page 4
Section II.	Eligibility	Page 4
	A. Student Eligibility	
	B. Application	
Section III.	Eligible Amounts and Distributions	Page 6
	A. Total Eligible Amount	
	B. Limitations	
	C. Eligible Expenses	
	D. Distribution	
	E. Refunds	
Section IV.	Continuing Obligations of Participating Students	Page 9
	A. Submission of Grades	
	B. Grade Point Average (GPA) Requirements	
	C. Tutoring Requirement for Elementary and Secondary Students	
	D. School Withdrawals for Post Secondary Students	
	E. Reinstatements	
	F. Updated Information	
Section V.	Academic Achievement Bonus for Post Secondary Students	Page 11
	A. Eligible Amounts	
Section VI.	Termination	Page 11
	A. Terminating Participation in the Program	
	B. Terminating the Program	
Section VII.	Policy Interpretations and Revisions	Page 12
	A. Interpretations	
	B. Revisions	
Section VIII.	Appeals	Page 12
Section IX.	Tax Consequences	Page 12

McGhee - Tullis Tuition Assistance Policy

Section I. Definitions

- A. Accredited means an institution whose standards met the essential requirements for academic excellence according to a recognized governing body for the state in which the educational institution is located, such as the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). There are many dubious institutions offering a variety of online or certification programs. If there is any doubt as to the legitimacy of a program or its accreditation, the Education Department will research it and render an opinion as to the validity and acceptance of the Program under this policy. If it is determined that the Program is not valid, no funds will be expended on program.
- B. Certificate program means programs, such as Certified Nursing Assistant, Real Estate Agent or other programs, which do not culminate in a degree but allow the holder to practice jobs in certain fields. This does not include continuing education programs, conferences, workshops, or similar types of activities.
- C. Living expense means general expenses encountered by everyone, such as gas expenses, electric bills, etc. These expenses are not covered by this Program.
- D. Mandatory fee means those costs deemed not optional by the individual school. These may vary from school to school.
- E. Special Needs Student means students who have been diagnosed with medical, physical, mental, or developmental condition or disability on or after the age of 3 and whose diagnosis adversely impacts his or her learning needs in a standard school curriculum.
- F. Specialized tool means mandatory items, such as netbooks, iPods, iPads, and special software, which are required according to the course syllabus for the class or program for which the student is registered.
- G. Tribal Member means an enrolled member of the Poarch Band of Creek Indians.

Section II. Eligibility

A. Student Eligibility

The following students are eligible for this Program:

1. Tribal Members ages 4-18 who are enrolled in an accredited private school or are homeschooled under the auspices of a recognized umbrella organization.
2. Tribal Members attending a public high school for the gifted.

3. Tribal Members ages 3-21 who have special needs and are enrolled in an accredited education institution.
4. Tribal Members ages 16 and older who are enrolled in an accredited college (including dual enrollment of high school students), vocational/technical school, or a certificate program and pursuing a certificate, associate's degree, bachelor's degree, master's degree, or professional degree.
5. Tribal Members with outstanding student loan balances.

B. Application

1. For each Tribal Member wishing to take part in this Program, an application for assistance must be filed with the Tribal Education Department. Applications are available at the Education Department and may be printed from the Tribe's website, www.pci-nsn.gov. Upon request applications may be faxed or mailed.
2. This program will operate on a continuous cycle. Applications will be accepted at any time during the year.
3. A new application must be filed annually if there have been any changes of address or other pertinent information. If there has been no change to the student's information, the student may send an email or letter stating that so that the application may remain active.
4. *Waiver.* Along with each application filed for assistance, the parent/guardian of the student or the student must sign a waiver allowing the Tribe to obtain information regarding:
 - a. The student's progress, including all grades received;
 - b. The student's financial account; and/or
 - c. Behavior and/or disciplinary problems.
5. *Proof of Enrollment.* Students shall submit the acceptance letter or other proof of enrollment in an educational institution.
6. *Special Needs.* If the student is applying for assistance with expenses based on special needs, written documentation must be provided with the nature of the student's disability and the expected duration of the disability. This documentation must be obtained from a licensed practitioner specializing in psychiatry, psychology, or from another qualified individual, working in private practice or under the direction of the local board of education.

Section III. Eligible Amounts and Distributions

A. Total Eligible Amount

Tribal Members who participate in this Program will have access to a total of \$100,000.00 for eligible expenses as identified herein, subject to the limitations contained in this Section.

B. Limitations

1. *Allotment Based Upon Educational Level.*

There shall be limits to the total funds that may be accessed based on the educational level and type of degree that the Tribal Member is working towards or has earned. Thus, the following sub-limits shall apply:

- a. \$20,000.00 limit for Elementary and Secondary Education or for residential placement of a special needs student;
- b. \$30,000.00 limit for an Associate's degree or certificate program;
- c. \$50,000.00 limit for a Bachelor's degree;
- d. \$75,000.00 limit for a Master's degree; and
- e. \$100,000.00 limit for a professional degree.

These limits are cumulative, meaning that if a Tribal Member spent \$40,000.00 in pursuit of a Bachelor's degree, he or she would have \$35,000.00 to use for his or her Master's degree.

2. If the Tribal Member has not spent all of his or her limit for a degree level and has earned the degree at that level, the Tribal Member may petition the Education Department to use the remainder of his or her limit for the degree level to pursue an equal or lesser degree. For example, if a Tribal Member earns a Master's degree and has spent \$50,000.00 of his or her allotment, then the Tribal Member may use the remaining \$25,000.00 to earn a certification or Associate's degree, another Bachelor's degree, or another Master's degree. In approving this second degree, the Education Department shall take into consideration the Tribal Member's prior academic performance and the likelihood that the Tribal Member will be able to complete the second degree.
3. If the Tribal Member has earned an Associate's degree, degree from a vocational school, or a certificate from an educational program and the Tribal Member desires to earn a second Associate's degree, degree from a vocational school, or a certificate from an educational program, then the Tribal Member may petition the

Education Department to increase his or her limit to \$50,000.00. In approving this second degree, the Education Department shall take into consideration the Tribal Member's prior academic performance and the likelihood that the Tribal Member will be able to complete the second degree.

4. For a loan to be repaid, the Tribal Member must complete the degree that the loan was used to finance, or if a Tribal Member did not complete a degree but completed an equivalent or higher educational level after the date of the loan, then the Tribal Member's loans may be repaid.

C. Eligible Expenses

The following expenses are eligible for payment:

1. Tuition, books, or other mandatory fees for elementary and secondary students enrolled in an accredited private school or as part of a homeschool program under the auspices of a recognized umbrella organization.
2. Assistive learning devices or other educational materials for special needs students as recommended by the student's teacher or the practitioner making the special needs diagnosis.
3. Residential care for special needs students if the student has been committed by Court Order to such a facility.
4. Mandatory fees and on-campus housing for students attending a public high school for the gifted (either academically or artistically).
5. Tuition, books, mandatory fees, and on-campus housing (including meal tickets) for students enrolled in an accredited post-secondary institution.
6. Specialized tools for post-secondary classes.
7. Up to \$1,000 for a computer, printer, and word processing software for students enrolled in an accredited post-secondary institution. Students may receive one replacement computer four (4) years after receiving the initial computer, but only if they are still enrolled in school.
8. Loans for tuition, books, and mandatory fees while enrolled in an accredited post-secondary institution once the student has graduated. There shall be no repayment of loans for living expenses.

D. Distribution

1. All funds are paid directly to the accredited educational institution with the exception of reimbursements meeting all requirements of the Education Department.
2. All loans shall be repaid to the lending institution. Individuals shall not be repaid. Loan repayment will be made at one time up to a student's total limit.
3. Reimbursements are allowed for eligible expenses paid by the student or parent/guardian through a reputable source as long as appropriate receipts and other necessary documentation can be provided to the Education Department. Students may not be reimbursed for any expenses paid prior to their entering the Program or purchased from an individual or a business that cannot be verified as legitimate. Receipts for reimbursement may only be submitted when they total more than \$150.00. Receipts for lesser amounts should be held by the student until they reach the \$150.00 mark or until the end of the semester for which the item was purchased.
4. Any student who qualifies for a computer as a specialized tool or for a computer as an eligible expense may opt to have the Education Department purchase the computer or may be reimbursed. If the Education Department purchases the computer, the student shall determine whether he/she prefers a laptop or a desktop, but all other specifications shall be determined by the Education Department.
5. Prior to distributions for post-secondary students, the student must:
 - a. Meet, either in person or by a teleconference, with the Education Department staff prior to the beginning of each academic year in order to identify scholarships, grants, or other sources that may be available to provide educational assistance;
 - b. Work with the Education Department to apply for scholarships, grants, etc. that have been identified as possible sources of funding the Tribal Member's education; and
 - c. Submit his or her grades from the previous semester if this is not the Tribal Member's first semester in the Program.

E. Refunds

If there is a refund of money to the student following the withdrawal of the student from a class or school, then it is the responsibility of the student to ensure that the refunded money is returned to the Education Department immediately. Failure to adhere to this

policy will result in the denial of future tuition payments until such time as the account issues are cleared up by the student.

Section IV. Continuing Obligations of Participating Students

A. Submission of Grades

Students in this Program shall submit grades from the previous semester prior to the beginning of the next semester. This submission of grades does not have to be an official transcript. Failure to do so shall result in the student being placed on probation by the Education Department. If the student should fail a second time to submit his/her grades, then he/she shall be ineligible for this Program for a semester. Failure to submit his/her grades a third time shall result in the student being ineligible for this Program for a period of one (1) year and shall require the Tribal Member to petition the Education Department for reinstatement in the Program.

B. Grade Point Average (GPA) Requirements

Students in the Program must also maintain at least a 2.0 (or its equivalent) GPA each semester in academics. If a student should fail to meet this requirement, he or she will be placed on academic probation by Education Department for one semester. If the student should fail a second time to achieve at least a 2.0 GPA a second time during a semester, the student will be ineligible for the Program for a period of one (1) year. Failure to maintain at least a 2.0 cumulative GPA for a third time shall result in the student being ineligible for the Program for a period of two (2) years and shall require that the student petition the Education Department for reinstatement into the Program.

C. Tutoring Requirement for Elementary and Secondary Students

Elementary and secondary students who are placed on academic probation by the Education Department will be required to attend tutoring sessions (1) in person at the Education Department, (2) via computer on the Education Department's PLATO program, or (3) through a school or center-based (e.g. Sylvan Learning Center) program during the period for which they are placed on probation. Departmental staff will arrange the appropriate number of tutoring sessions and will schedule them for the student if the tutoring is to occur at the Education Department. If a student selects participation in tutoring through the on-line tutoring program known as PLATO, Departmental staff will arrange these sessions and will monitor the student's progress to ensure they are following up as instructed. If a student is participating in a school or center-based tutoring program, proof of enrollment and attendance will be required. If the student fails to participate in the tutoring program as directed, they may be terminated from the Program for a period of one year.

D. School Withdrawals for Post-Secondary Students

1. *Notification.* Students in this Program who withdraw from a class must notify the Education Department in writing immediately. (This notice does not have to be given if all that the student is doing is dropping or adding classes.) The notification must include the reason(s) why they are withdrawing. An email to the Department is sufficient notification. Copies of all paperwork submitted to the school or given to the student by the school must be sent to the Education Department within ten (10) business days of notifying the Education Department.
2. Withdrawing from two (2) classes shall result in the student being placed on probation by the Education Department. (Again, this does not include dropping or adding classes.) If the student should withdraw from a third class, then he/she shall be ineligible for this program for a semester/quarter unless the student can demonstrate to the Education Department that withdrawal was based on exceptional circumstances. Withdrawing from a fourth class shall result in the student being ineligible for this program for a period of two (2) years unless the student can demonstrate to the Education Department that withdrawal was based on exceptional circumstances. Exceptional circumstances shall include, but not be limited to, serious, debilitating illness; a serious, debilitating illness of an immediate family member, and death of an immediate family member. Once ineligible for the program, the student must petition the Education Department for reinstatement to the Program.

E. Reinstatements

In making the decision about reinstatements required under this Section, the Education Department shall take into consideration whether the Tribal Member is likely to fail to follow program requirements in the future, whether the Tribal Member will be able to complete the degree within the allotted amount, and whether the Tribal Member continued to pursue his or her educational and career goals even though ineligible for the Program.

F. Updated Information

The Tribal Member is responsible for keeping the Education Department apprised of changes to his or her information.

Section V. Academic Achievement Bonus for Post-Secondary Students

Depending upon the Tribe's finances, which will vary from year to year, post-secondary students are eligible to receive an academic achievement bonus upon graduation if the student maintains a 3.5 or higher (on a 4.0 scale) cumulative GPA for coursework complete while enrolled in the McGhee-Tullis Tuition Assistance Program.

A. Eligible Amount

1. *Associate's Degree.* A student graduating with an associate's degree and a cumulative GPA of 3.5 or higher will be awarded an academic achievement bonus of \$2,000.00.
 2. *Bachelor's Degree.* A student graduating with a bachelor's degree and a cumulative GPA of 3.5 or higher will be awarded an academic achievement bonus of \$4,000.00, unless the student received an academic achievement bonus for receiving his or her associate's degree. If the student received an academic achievement bonus for receiving his or her associate's degree, the student will be awarded an academic achievement bonus of \$2,000.00.
 3. *Master's Degree.* A student graduating with a master's degree and a cumulative GPA of 3.5 or higher will be awarded an academic achievement bonus of \$2,000.00.
 4. *Professional Degrees.* Due to the variations in the duration of the professional degree programs, the academic achievement bonus will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.
- B. The student shall submit a written request for his or her academic achievement bonus and a final transcript within six (6) months of graduation.
- C. Cash awards shall be paid only upon graduation.
- D. The academic achievement bonus cannot be guaranteed due to possible changes in the Tribe's finances.

Section VI. Termination

A. Terminating Participation in the Program

A Tribal Member may be terminated from this Program by a majority vote of the Tribal Council. Cases which might be considered for a declaration of ineligibility include, but are not limited to the following: extreme violence against students or faculty, bringing weapons or illegal substances onto campus, or repeated academic failure. Once terminated from the Program, only the Tribal Council may restore your eligibility.

B. Terminating the Program

This Program is designed to be self-perpetuating. In the event, however, that the funding source should end and no replacement funding source(s) can be located, this Program may be terminated by a vote of the Poarch Creek Indians Tribal Council.

Section VII. Policy Interpretations and Revisions

A. Interpretations

When processing an application under this Program, the Education Director may encounter ambiguities in the language of the policy. If so, the Education Director shall present the question and his/her proposed interpretation to the Education Advisory Committee within two (2) working days of the question being raised. The Education Advisory Committee shall then issue its concurrence or non-concurrence with the Education Director's interpretation no later than three (3) working days after receiving the question. If the Education Advisory Committee issues a non-concurrence, then the Education Director shall immediately submit the question, the Education Director's proposed response, and the Education Advisory Committee's non-concurrence to the Tribal Administrator, who shall no later than two (2) working days after submission, issue the final interpretation.

B. Revisions

This policy shall be reviewed at least annually to determine effectiveness and the need for corrections, additions, etc. Requests for changes to this policy must come through the Education Department, Education Advisory Committee, and the Education Legislative Committee. No changes may be implemented without the approval of the Tribal Council.

Section VIII. Appeals

Any Tribal Member who disagrees with any decision made by the Education Department under this Program shall file a written request for reconsideration with the Tribal Administrator. If the Tribal Administrator was involved in the final decision under subsection A. above, then the Tribal Administrator shall forward the appeal to the Executive Employees. The Tribal Administrator or Executive Employees shall issue a final decision no later than five (5) working days after the Tribal Administrator received the request.

Section IX. Tax Consequences

Payments made under this policy may be considered taxable by the IRS. Tribal Members are strongly advised to seek the advice of an attorney and/or accountant regarding these payments. The Tribe is in no way responsible for any decisions regarding the reporting of these payments to the IRS and does not bear any responsibility for any fines, penalties, court costs, or attorney's fees that you may ultimately bear.

NOTES

CONTACT INFORMATION

If you have questions about this McGhee - Tullis Tuition Assistance Program, please contact the Education Department at the address, phone number, or email address listed below.

POARCH BAND OF CREEK INDIANS

Education Department

5811 Jack Springs Road

Atmore, AL 36502

(251) 368-9136 Ext. 2241

sfisher@pci-nsn.gov

