



Excellence in Teaching Act Attracting Excellence to Teaching Program

Information for recipients who apply for the first time after April 2009

Purpose

The purpose of the *Attracting Excellence to Teaching Program* is to:

- Attract outstanding students to major in teacher shortage areas at the teacher education programs at Nebraska colleges and universities;
- Retain resident students and graduates as teachers in Nebraska schools; and
- Establish a loan contract that requires a borrower to obtain employment as a Nebraska teacher upon graduation from a college or university.

Eligibility

An eligible student:

- Is a full-time student enrolled in 24 semester undergraduate credit hours or 18 semester graduate credit hours of classroom, laboratory, clinical, practicum, or independent study coursework in a 12-month period;
- Is enrolled in an undergraduate or graduate teacher education program at an eligible Nebraska institution that is accredited by a regional accrediting agency recognized by the United States Department of Education as determined to be acceptable by the Board, has a teacher education program accredited by the State Department of Education, and, if a privately funded college or university, has not opted out of the program pursuant to rules and regulations;
- Is majoring in a teacher shortage area, as determined annually by the Commissioner of Education;
- Is working toward his/her initial certificate to teach in Nebraska;
- Is a resident student, as defined in Section 85-502 R.R.S. or, if enrolled in a privately funded eligible institution, would be deemed a resident student if enrolled in a state-funded eligible institution;
- Has a minimum cumulative GPA of 3.0 or has graduated in the top quarter of his or her high school class;
- Agrees to complete the teacher education program that he or she is enrolled in and to complete the major on which his or her eligibility is based within five years of the initial AETP award; and
- Commits to become certified with an endorsement in a teacher shortage area and teach in an accredited or approved public or private Nebraska school at least a portion of the time in said teacher shortage area.

Amount of Loan

Eligible students can apply for loans in an amount of not more than \$3,000 per year. Students can apply for, and receive, loans annually for up to five (5) years. Students must complete and submit a new application annually.

Application Deadline

Completed applications must be submitted, to the administrator of the teacher education program that has admitted the student, by a date determined by the institution.

Loan Forgiveness Obligation*

If the loan recipient successfully completes the teacher education program and major for which the AETP loan was awarded, becomes certified, is employed as a full-time teacher in a Nebraska school within six months of graduation, and otherwise meets the requirements of the signed contract between the student applicant and the State Department of Education, AETP loans will be forgiven in the following manner, beginning **after the first two years** of teaching full-time:

- Each year of full-time teaching would forgive up to \$3,000 of AETP funds received, or
- Each year of full-time teaching in a school district that is at least partially in a local system classified in the very sparse cost grouping, as determined by the State Department of Education, would forgive up to \$6,000 of AETP funds received, or
- Each year of full-time teaching in a school building in which at least 40% of students are free lunch qualified as determined by the State Department of Education, would forgive up to \$6,000 of AETP funds received.

Repayment

If the recipient does not meet the loan forgiveness obligations described above, then the loan must be repaid, with interest accruing as of the date the borrower signed the contract.

For more information about the Attracting Excellence to Teaching Program, please contact the financial aid office of the institution in which you are currently enrolled or Mia Sharpnack, NDE, at 402-471-4837 or mia.sharpnack@nebraska.gov.

*For purposes of this loan program, the definition of teacher means, “any certified employee who is regularly employed for the instruction of pupils pursuant to Section 79-101 R.R.S.” This definition **does not include** administrative or special services certificate holders who function exclusively in positions requiring these endorsements. Those individuals who enter into these fields of education will not be eligible for loan forgiveness.

This guidance document is advisory in nature but is binding on an agency until amended by such agency. A guidance document does not include internal procedural documents that only affect the internal operations of the agency and does not impose additional requirements or penalties on regulated parties or include confidential information or rules and regulations made in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act. If you believe that this guidance document imposes additional requirements or penalties on regulated parties, you may request a review of the document. For comments regarding this document contact nde.guidance@nebraska.gov.