**Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah)**

**Education Department**

**Higher Education Scholarship Policies**

**AUTHORITY:** Snyder Act of November 2, 1921 (25 U.S.C., Sec. 13). 25 CFR Part 40 and Section 271.12 of P.L. 93-638. The Indian Self-Determination and Education Assistance Act of 1973 as amended: and the Constitution of the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah) and associated ordinances.

**PURPOSE:** The purpose of the Wampanoag Higher Education Scholarship Program is to provide equal educational opportunities for Tribal members who desire a college education and have the greatest financial need. The Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah) also desires that student’s sponsored under this program return to the reservation lands and assist the Wampanoag Tribe. The WTGH(A) desires to further the educational advancement of the Wampanoag Tribal members.

**POLICIES:** It is important to point out that the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah) desires that all applicants consider that assistance under this program is not to be considered a right. Students sponsored under this program must demonstrate the ability and the willingness to abide by the conditions and the criteria as set forth below. Further assistance under this program is a privilege granted by the Tribal Council to those student Tribal Members who have the greatest financial need and demonstrate the highest commitment to the ideals of the Wampanoag Tribe and the furtherance of the Wampanoag Tribe. The Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah) therefore sets forth the following policies to govern the administration of the Wampanoag Tribal Higher Education Scholarship Program:

**Section 1: Scholarship Committee:** The Tribal Education Committee shall serve as the Scholarship Committee to oversee and monitor the operation of the Wampanoag Tribal Higher Education Scholarship Program. The Education Committee shall consist of five (5) enrolled members of the Tribe. These members will be appointed by the Tribal Council and shall oversee the process and make recommendations on all scholarship awards and donations.

**Section 2:Financial Need:** The Wampanoag Tribal Higher Education Scholarships are supplemental scholarship awards. They are not to be considered a program that provides a full scholarship, or all costs incurred in enrolling full-time in an accredited college or university degree program. Financial need is based upon examination of the financial analysis report signed and certified by the Financial Aid Officer at the college or university which the applicant will be attending.

**Section 3: Degree program:** Higher Education Scholarship Assistance under this program will apply to students who are pursuing an associate or bachelor’s degree at a two-year or four-year accredited college or university. These accredited schools include state-operated or private institutions.

**Section 4: Application for Financial Aid:** All applicants are required to apply for aid at the college or university in which the applicant plans to enroll. Applicants who plan to enroll in a full-time online degree program will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. Applicants who fail to apply for financial aid will not be considered for the award. Students who are Massachusetts residents and attend Massachusetts State colleges or universities must apply for the Native American Tuition Waiver on the WTGH(A) website. Students who are attending colleges and universities in states where there is a Native America Tuition Waiver are required to apply. If declined, include the letter of declination in the application packet.

**Section 5: Admission:** Applicants must demonstrate evidence of admission or acceptance to an accredited two-year or four-year college or university. A copy of the letter of admission or permit to register must be placed on file in the Tribal Education Department as evidence in fulfillment of this requirement.

**Section 6: Grades/Standing:** All students who are sponsored under the Tribal Higher Education Scholarship Program are required to successfully complete or pass twelve (12) credit hours per term (quarter, semester, or trimester). If a student fails to meet this requirement, he/she will be given another term (quarter, semester, or trimester) during which the student must successfully pass the 12-credit hour requirement - this is considered a grace period or probationary period. If the student fails to meet this requirement by the end of the probationary period, then the student will be discontinued or declared ineligible to continue receiving assistance under the program. Students sponsored under the Tribal Higher Education Scholarship Program will be considered in good academic standing unless they are placed under probation. Students who are placed on academic suspension or prohibited from enrollment in school will likewise be discontinued from the Tribal Higher Education Scholarship Program.

**Section 7: Suspension:** Students who are placed on academic suspension or discontinued from the program due to academic deficiencies, will be eligible to apply for higher education scholarship assistance after a (12) month period following termination from the program. The student must provide documentation that he/she has been readmitted to the same college or university or to another accredited college or university.

**Section 8: Time Limitations:** Students pursuing an undergraduate degree will be required to complete their degree program by the end of six (6) years. All exceptions to this requirement must be authorized by the Tribal Education Committee. The student requesting an exception must provide an academic plan which will set forth the number of years, courses needed, reasons for the delay, and other rationales to be considered in requesting the exception.

**Section 9: Records:** A file must be kept on all students receiving scholarship assistance under this program. This file will be confidential and available only to authorized personnel in accordance with the Privacy Act of 1974 as amended. Authorized personnel shall constitute: Student, Tribal Chairperson, Tribal Council, Education Committee, Chief of Staff, Education Manager, and other personnel as designated by the Tribal Council and others as authorized by the student.

**Section 10: Authorized Costs:** Only College related costs are authorized to be funded under this scholarship program. These costs include: tuition, books, fees, room and board, supplies, incidental living costs, and other college related costs as deemed appropriate by the financial aid officer at the college to be attended by the student. Students are not allowed to obligate scholarship assistance toward debt retirement or expenses incurred during a period before the time for which the student is receiving assistance. Students are also prohibited from obligating scholarship assistance for any capital investments such as: homes, cars, and other major personal investments. Any unauthorized purchases by a student must be paid back within a reasonable period of time or be deducted from the student's next scholarship award, in instances when the award is very minimal. Student actions will accordingly affect future requests by the student for scholarship assistance.

**Section 11: Required Documents:** Students applying for scholarship assistance are required to provide the following documents to the Education Department to receive consideration for assistance:1) Letter of Acceptance (first-time applicants or transfers), 2) Financial Aid Analysis Report, 3) High School Transcript (if applicable), 4) Official College transcript.

5) Completed WTGH(A) scholarship application form and 6) Essay (first-time applicants only.)

**Section 12: Notification of Changes:** Students receiving scholarship assistance are required to notify the Education Department within forty-eight (48) hours of the following instances: 1) Student withdraws or drops from school. 2) Student is suspended from school, 3) Student is placed on academic probation, 4) Other circumstances which might affect their status under the scholarship program. Students who have been awarded scholarship assistance and decide not to go to school will forfeit their award and they must reapply should they go back to school.

**Section 13: Use/Misuse of Scholarship Funds:** It shall be a long-standing policy of the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah) that such funds may legitimately be used only for the purposes directly relating to the education of the recipient. Eligibility for such funds shall exist only so long as the scholarship recipient is enrolled in an approved college and the scholarship funds are used for the purpose intended. The use of scholarship funds not relating to the direct education of the recipient or received under false pretenses while the recipient is not enrolled in a college approved by the Tribal Council shall be immediately repayable to the Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah) and/or may be recovered in any court of competent jurisdiction.

**Section 14: Continuing Students:** Continuing students must reapply for scholarship assistance each academic year. They are not automatic.

**Section 15: Graduate Students:** Requests for scholarship assistance for graduate students will

be considered after all undergraduate student requests have been awarded funding consideration. Graduate students will receive assistance for no more than four years or for terms equivalent to four years, except for summer terms.

Graduate students may separately apply for funding to prepare for graduate school admission tests. This is a one-time award of up to $500.The applications for such funding will be due on July 15th of each year, the same as all other higher education applications. Graduate students must be enrolled members of the Tribe and academically eligible for graduate school admission tests. Students must submit course description, show proof of state or federal accreditation of the institution offering the courses and include a brief essay describing why this training is needed and how it will benefit the student. The Education Committee will review the application and make a recommendation to Tribal Council regarding approval or denial.

**Section 16: Amount of Awards:** All Applicants must complete the required documentation by **July 15th** each year. Those not completing the application process by **July 15th** will not be considered. Awards will be based on financial need and funding availability.

**Section 17: Disbursement of Scholarship Funds:** Payment of scholarship awards shall be paid by check to the applicant in the care of the Financial Aid Officer of the institution in which he/she is enrolled. Payment may be made directly to the student when the student submits to the Education Department an invoice from the school that shows a zero balance.

**Section 18: Hearing and Appeals:** Any Tribal member applying for or receiving financial assistance and/or services provided under the Program who is adversely affected by any decision or action may appeal and request reconsideration. Upon receiving a written request for reconsideration, the Chief of Staff will convene a meeting of the Education Advisory Committee to review the action being appealed and to render a decision. If the said Tribal member remains aggrieved by the Advisory Committee's decision, upon receiving a written request and written report of action being appealed the Chief of Staff will convene a meeting of the Tribal Council to review the action being appealed and to render a decision based on the written reports. The Tribal Council may sustain, reverse, or selectively alter the initial decision, and the decision of the Council is final.