

Changes to Merit Based Awards

Office of the Provost - May 2019

Context: The provost office is implementing a reduction in dollar value to the entrance and in-program awards of recognition.

All 21 universities in Ontario have an entrance scholarship program designed to influence the decision-making process of students selecting universities, but there is no strong evidence this has any effect on student recruitment. In the 2018 University College Application Survey, Ontario Tech applicants rated merit-based scholarships as the lowest financial decision-making factor when applying to university.

Background: Ontario Tech offers guaranteed *Awards of Recognition* to high school applicants with a high school grade point average > 85% based on their six best “U” or “M” courses. In 2012 we stopped providing awards of recognition under 85% with no impact on the number of applications or registrations.

In addition to the *Awards of Recognition*, we offer “in-program” scholarships to returning students based on their previous year’s GPA (\$1500 for 80-90% and \$2000 for >90%).

Both the *Awards of Recognition* and in-program scholarships are funded by the operating budget. In 2018-2019, we budgeted \$1.9M but spent ~\$2.2M due to higher than expected numbers of eligible students.

Moving Forward: With constrained resources Ontario Tech will maintain its focus on financial accessibility. The focus will move from merit based awards to needs based. The needs based funding is also supported from operating but it includes a large portion that is based on MTCU mandated tuition set aside (TSA) program. A simple definition of TSA is 10% of domestic tuition is set aside to support student needs.

Currently, the university has the highest dollar values among universities in the region for students with 85% and higher (see Table 1). We will reduce entrance scholarship amounts by \$1000 in both the 85% (from \$2000 to \$1000) and 90% (from \$3000 to \$2000) categories effective September 2020 resulting in an estimated savings above \$400K. Additionally, the operating expenditure for in-program scholarships will be reduced by \$500 effective September 2020 resulting in an estimated savings above \$250K annually.

Table 1: Scholarship Comparison by University for 2018 Admissions Year

	80%	85%	88%	90%	92%	95%
Toronto (UTSC)	N/A	\$500	\$1,000	\$1,500	\$2,000	\$3000*
York	\$500	\$1,000		\$2,000		\$3500*
Ryerson	\$500*	\$1000*		\$2000*		\$4000*
Ontario Tech		\$2,000		\$3,000		\$4,000
McMaster	\$500	\$750		\$1,000		\$2,500
Waterloo		\$1,000		\$2,000		\$3500**

*Indicates Renewable Award

We will closely monitor the resulting application and registration rates for new students, as well as the performance of in-program students, to assess the effects (if any) of these changes.

Our Commitment to Student Aid: Although the university would reduce entrance and in-program amounts our commitment to student financial aid will still be increasing due to the overall expenditure in TSA initiatives as shown in Figure 1:

Figure 1: Total student assistance through needs- and merit-based programs.

