

Blugold Commitment Grant Proposal to Better Support High Need Students

Submitted October 21, 2020

Current Situation

Students currently pay \$1,063 each year in differential tuition, \$163 in legacy differential tuition, and \$900 in Blugold Commitment. Per Bylaws, 40% of BCDT revenue is set aside to provide financial assistance through the financial aid office. Most of this (37%) funds **The Blugold Commitment grant**, which is to hold students with high need harmless from the Blugold Commitment increase. This grant is \$900/year. The remaining 3% funds **The Blugold Commitment Special Grant** used to help meet the needs of students who are experiencing unique or extenuating circumstances and the **Blugold Study Abroad Grant** to assist with study abroad experiences.

Per the awarding guidelines, our first priority is to award all students with an Expected Family Contribution (EFC) of \$7,500 or less, which we do systematically in student's initial award. If we have additional funds, we award students with an EFC of \$10,000 or less sometime later in the year. In the past several years, we have had enough funds to support all students with an EFC of \$10,000 or less.

Proposal

The financial aid office would like to be able to better support more high need students with Blugold Commitment funds in the following ways-

- Award students with an EFC up to \$10,000 the Blugold Commitment Grant systematically. This would increase the EFC to award systematically (i.e. early) from \$7,500 to \$10,000: and
- Increase the Expected Family Contribution for students to receive the Blugold Commitment grant, Blugold Study Abroad grant and Blugold Special from \$10,000 to \$12,000 as funds allow.

Awarding students with an EFC up to \$10,000 systematically would allow us to utilize these funds to better recruit and retain students with need. Very few UW schools have an Institutional grant like we have at Eau Claire in the Blugold Commitment Grant but it is an advantage only if we can let students know about this award before they make their final decision about where to attend. And since students will receive this grant as long as their family EFC falls within the range for the grant, this is a retention tool that, again, we want more students with need to know about as they receive their aid offer in the Spring for the following year. This can only happen if we award more of these funds systematically.

In addition, students with EFCs of up to \$12,000 are very similar to students with EFCs of close to \$10,000 in that they get very little, if any, grant support. The difference between a \$9,200 EFC and a \$10,001 EFC is approximately \$3,000 in family income. This means that a dependent student whose parents make \$45,000 each would get no grant support from UWEC but a student whose parents make \$43,000 each would receive grant support. We would like to have the ability to help both of these students when funds are available.

Blugold Study Abroad grants and Blugold Special funds (used to help students that submit financial aid appeals) use the same EFC guidelines as the Blugold Commitment grant. This means that we are restricted to only helping students with an EFC of \$10,000 or less when they encounter unanticipated circumstances and file an appeal or would like to participate in a High Impact Practice like study abroad. We believe that by allowing the financial aid office the flexibility to support students with EFCs up to \$12,000, we could make an impact on our ability to recruit and retain these students.

Financial Outlook

We believe there are sufficient funds to be able to award systematically up to a \$10,000 EFC and award those up to a \$12,000 EFC as funds are available. Below is historical information on the Blugold Commitment Grant allocation over

the last 10 years, including the amount that we have spent and what was remaining at the end of the year. The amount remaining once awarded to all the students we were able to has increased over the last few years.

Aid Yr	Budgeted	Spent	Remaining	Count
2011	920,000	808,236	111,764	3,013
2012	2,140,000	1,895,706	244,294	3,595
2013	3,025,000	2,871,054	153,946	3,661
2014	3,025,000	2,788,080	236,920	3,542
2015	3,025,000	2,646,076	378,924	3,353
2016	3,025,000	2,912,399	112,601	3,626
2017	3,124,480	2,725,309	399,171	3,428
2018	3,054,045	2,804,395	249,650	3,519
2019	3,060,816	2,651,475	409,341	3,316
2020	3,137,406	2,554,939	582,467	3,175

Sample Table of Awards by Family Income/EFC

WISCONSIN Student						
Family of four income	\$37,000	\$49,000	\$58,000	\$69,000	\$87,000	\$90,000
EFC	0	2,000	3,000	4,500	9,200	10,001+
Grants (Federal, State, Univ.)	\$11,795.00	\$9,005.00	\$7,584.00	\$5,450.00	\$900.00	\$0.00
Loans (Incoming Student)	\$5,500.00	\$5,500.00	\$5,500.00	\$5,500.00	\$5,500.00	\$5,500.00
Total Academic Year Aid	\$17,295.00	\$14,505.00	\$13,084.00	\$10,950.00	\$6,400.00	\$5,500.00
Tuition + Housing + Meal Plan	\$15,790.00	\$15,790.00	\$15,790.00	\$15,790.00	\$15,790.00	\$15,790.00
Out of Pocket Amount	\$0.00	\$1,285.00	\$2,706.00	\$4,840.00	\$9,390.00	\$10,290.00

Impact

Having the ability to award high need students earlier in the recruitment cycle and earlier in the Academic year for continuing students will allow us to ease student's minds since paying for college is often a top concern. This may help us both recruit and retain more of our high need students in a way that we have not been able to do before.

The ability to award up to a \$12,000 EFC would allow us to help the students that fall into a group that often receive no grant aid but have demonstrated a need for financial support. We anticipate being able to help up to an additional 350-400 students with an EFC of greater than \$10,000 but less than \$12,001 either through the Blugold Commitment grant, the Blugold Study Abroad grant or the Blugold Special funds for special circumstances.