



State of Wisconsin  
Higher Educational Aids Board

P.O. Box 7885  
Madison, WI 53707-7885  
HEABmail@wisconsin.gov

Telephone: (608) 267-2206  
Fax: (608) 267-2808  
<https://heab.state.wi.us>

Scott Walker  
Governor

John Reinemann  
Executive Secretary

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**TO: School District Administrators, High School Principals, High School Counselors –  
High School Students, and all other parties interested in the Academic Excellence Scholarship**

The Higher Educational Aids Board (HEAB) has received inquiries from parents and administrators of school districts using the laude system to determine the recipients of the Wisconsin Academic Excellence Scholarship. The Academic Excellence Scholarship is governed by Wis. Stat. § 39.41 and Wis. Admin. Code Ch. HEA 9.

Wisconsin Stat. § 39.41(1m)(a) requires that the senior or seniors with the highest “grade point average(s)” are to be designated scholars under the Academic Excellence Scholarship program. The statute does not allow for scholarship funds to be awarded to the student with the highest laude score, which, based on the information we have, does not appear to be synonymous with grade point average.

“Grade point average” is not defined in the statute. However, Wis. Admin. Code Ch. HEA 9 defines the various aspects of the Academic Excellence Scholarship program. Under Wis. Admin. Code HEA § 9.02(1), “GPA” means “the cumulative grade point average, as it is normally determined by each high school.” Under HEA § 9.04(3), “[t]he scholar shall be selected based on the scholar’s GPA as it is normally determined by each high school and as shown on the official transcript . . .” We conclude that Wis. Admin. Code Ch. HEA 9 does not allow the scholar to be determined based on the student’s laude score.

Neither the relevant statute nor the agency rules explicitly allow HEAB to award a student the Academic Excellence Scholarship based on anything other than the student’s **grade point average**. To be consistent with the statute and the rules, grade point average must be used to award the scholarship, and we recognize that some schools will need to change their practice going forward.

We reached this conclusion after consultation with attorney staff at the Wisconsin Department of Justice. We (and they) feel strongly that this conclusion is the only conclusion we can make regarding laude scores under current law.

We understand that this conclusion will result in changes for some districts. We regret any inconvenience but wanted to provide clarity on this issue. Thank you for understanding. Please contact us with your questions or concerns.

Sincerely

John Reinemann,  
Executive Secretary