

Alaska university students notified that millions in scholarships and grants currently in limbo

July 9, 2019 by Rashah McChesney, KTOO

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Students gather outside at the University of Alaska Southeast on Tuesday, Sept. 4, 2012. (Photo by Heather Bryant/KTOO)

Notice went out to 12,000 Alaska students on Tuesday afternoon that money for their grants and scholarships isn't currently available for the next school year.

But it's not because the funds were vetoed from the budget. The Alaska Commission on Postsecondary Education wrote [in the message](#) that funds for the Alaska Performance Scholarship and Alaska Education Grant aren't currently available and require legislative action to be restored.

The commission is a state corporation tasked with planning for higher education and administering financial aid programs.

Funding for a program that provides money for students from Alaska to attend the University of Washington School of Medicine is also unavailable.

At issue is nearly \$350 million in Alaska's Higher Education Investment Fund. Each year, funds from nearly every state program [get swept into a constitutionally-mandated savings account](#). Typically lawmakers vote to put the money back into the programs it was designated for. But that process requires a supermajority of the Legislature — three-quarters of them — to vote to put the money back. This year, that didn't happen.

It's also unusual for the Higher Education Fund to be included in the funding sweep — historically, that hasn't happened.

According to data from the University of Alaska, nearly 1 in 5 students gets a merit-based Alaska Performance Scholarship. Altogether, the performance scholarships and education funds support more than 5,000 students with more than \$15 million in financial aid each year.