Teacher shortage loan forgiveness program now accepting applications

Bismarck, N.D. – The North Dakota University System began accepting applications for the 2016-17 teacher shortage loan forgiveness program today, Monday, April 3. The application process will close May 3.

This year, the university system has a streamlined online application for teachers to use and has this process in place to ensure that applications are reviewed in the timeliest manner possible. The link for the online application is available at https://webapps.ndus.edu/endpoint/ndus-tslf/. Also new this year is the inclusion of elementary education school teachers and school counselors who may also apply for the debt relief program.

“This program is a great incentive to both students and our workforce that is educating our young children. Those graduates who choose to stay in North Dakota after graduation will pave the way for our students to transition into successful careers,” NDUS Chancellor Mark Hagerott said. “It benefits our teachers and the students they teach, and we are grateful to the Legislative Assembly for providing the funding.”

In 2015, 425 applicants were awarded loan forgiveness through this program and, in 2016, that amount increased to 467 teachers. Over the past two years, teachers received nearly $890,000 to apply to their student loan debts.

The Department of Public Instruction determines teacher shortage areas in North Dakota, using calculations required by the National Center for Education Statistics. This year’s 14 shortage areas are economics and the free enterprise system; computer education; driver and traffic safety education; agriculture education; special education; family and consumer sciences; science; counselors; mathematics; English; music; physical education; social studies; and elementary teachers.

Applicants may be eligible if they held a full-time teaching contract in North Dakota for an entire academic year and are teaching in a teacher shortage area. The debt forgiveness program is available to teachers who teach at a public or private school in North Dakota in a grade level or content area identified as having a shortage by the Department of Public Instruction. In addition to teaching full-time, applicants must have a qualifying student loan, and be current on the payments to that loan. Teachers who qualify may obtain up to $1,000 in loan forgiveness each year, with an individual maximum lifetime benefit of $5,000.