



## HIGH SCHOOL TUITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

Last updated September 2018

Families in the Diocese who desire to send their children to a Catholic high school may be eligible for one of the following opportunities for *Upon This Rock* related tuition assistance, in addition to those offered by the high schools themselves:

1. The BISON Fund collaboration
2. *Upon This Rock* High School Tuition Assistance Fund

As the Foundation of the Roman Catholic Diocese of Buffalo is prohibited by its by-laws from making any awards directly to an individual, there is currently no application process in place for an individual to apply for tuition assistance from the Foundation. As a result, funds are disbursed either to the schools directly or through the BISON fund. In addition, it is important that families contribute at some level to the school's tuition so Foundation funds will not be made available to provide for a "full ride."

### The BISON Fund Collaboration



Through collaboration and generous funding from the Oishei Foundation and a select number of private donors, as well as *Upon This Rock*, The BISON fund will award 43 scholarships for the first time ever for 8<sup>th</sup> grade BISON scholars entering a Catholic high school in the Fall of 2018. These awards range between \$3500-5000 a year. Like the Elementary School awards, these awards were made on a lottery basis to current BISON scholars who indicated an interest in attending and were accepted into a Catholic high school. The scholarship is awarded to scholars who continue to qualify for each of their four years of high school.

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A letter was sent in June to all the Catholic high school principals and presidents regarding the disbursement of the *UTR* High School Tuition Assistance endowment proceeds for the 2018-2019 school year.

For the reasons discussed below, the Catholic high schools were told that they would each receive a modest grant to be used for emergency assistance for the 2018-2019 school year. The Foundation plans to recommend to its Board of Trustees at its October meeting that a grant disbursement of about \$6,375 be made in February 2019 to each of the 12 Catholic high schools for use during the remainder of the year to provide emergency tuition assistance to practicing Catholic students. As this is expressly intended for use as emergency aid, other potential funding sources should be exhausted first. Schools will be asked to disclose how and to whom the aid was applied. Details on the reporting parameters will be disclosed at the time the funds are disbursed.

It is important to note that the tuition assistance component of *Upon This Rock* was designed to provide financial assistance (needs based awards and scholarships) thereby allowing more families the opportunity of a Catholic education.

It was never intended nor was it ever communicated to be an operational subsidy for our schools.

The *UTR* High School Tuition Assistance endowment has been established from the funds raised throughout the eight counties of the Diocese as part of the Foundation's *Upon This Rock* Capital Campaign. As the funds were raised primarily through parish based initiatives, donors repeatedly echoed the desire that tuition assistance be made available on a priority basis to families with students who are actively practicing their Catholic faith, receiving the sacraments, and are involved in the vitality of their parishes so we could strengthen the Catholicity of our schools and enhance the pipeline of future Catholic leaders for our Church and broader community.

The Grants Committee of the Foundation has been charged with determining the optimal way to use this fund for meaningful tuition assistance. In addition to the aforementioned donor and parishioner feedback, the committee also met with representatives from a sampling of our Catholic high schools who strongly voiced the need for emergency funding for currently enrolled students whose families faced challenging economic circumstances due to death, illness, disability, loss of a job, etc.

To date, the *UTR* High School Tuition Assistance endowment has been allocated \$1,779,642 of collected *Upon This Rock* proceeds. At the estimated 5% spend rate, the endowment will yield about \$7,000 for each of the 12 high schools for the 2018-19 academic year.

When fully funded (NOTE: we are still in the pledge redemption phase) the *UTR* High School Tuition Assistance endowment is anticipated to be \$6 million which, at an estimated 5% distribution rate, will provide \$300,000 in annual tuition assistance. How might this impact the Catholic high schools? If tuition assistance grants were set at \$3,500 each, even when fully funded, then each academic year the endowment would help 85 students, or to put in perspective, it would effectively be able to assist less than 2 students per grade per high school, assuming the funds were allocated equitably in that way. As a result, the Foundation Grants Committee will be working with the high schools each year to determine the most meaningful way to provide impactful tuition assistance based upon the funds available at the time.

The *UTR* High School Tuition Assistance grant distribution process will be reviewed by the Foundation Grants Committee annually based upon the distribution reports received from the high schools in order to determine what method of distribution is the most effective means of providing aid to practicing Catholics within our Catholic high schools. It is the Foundation's intent that as the *UTR* High School Tuition Assistance fund grows, the grant distribution process will evolve to reach beyond emergency assistance.

It is the Foundation's desire to be an active partner with our Catholic high schools and to assist in providing meaningful tuition assistance. Each year, as the *UTR* High School Tuition Assistance endowment grows, we will continue to communicate regarding the expected dollar amount of assistance available and the plan for distribution, until such time as there is enough money in the endowment to set forth a multi-year plan for distribution from the fund. We hope this assists in explaining the state of the *UTR* High School Tuition Assistance endowment. We will provide you with additional details as they are developed. Your patience and confidence is appreciated.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you should have any questions regarding these programs or wish me to return a phone call to someone who has made an inquiry.

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