

Free tuition law rules done; P51-B budget set this year

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Education officials have finished crafting the implementing rules and regulations (IRR) for the free tuition law that will take effect this coming school year.

Commission on Higher Education (CHED) Chair Patricia Licuanan said that starting school year 2018-2019, tuition and other school fees of students in state universities and colleges (SUCs), as well as technical-vocational institutes (TVIs) would already be shouldered by the government.

She explained, however, that

the IRR does not guarantee that anyone could now be automatically admitted to any SUC. Students, she said, should still pass the admission requirements of their preferred university.

"We respect the admission and retention policies of the institutions—that is part of their academic freedom," Licuanan said.

Under Republic Act No. 10931, or the "Universal Access to Quality Tertiary Education Act," students with bachelor's degree or comparable undergraduate degree from any higher education institution, and those who fail the SUC's admission and retention policy

cannot avail themselves of the free tuition.

Not covered by the law as well are students who fail to complete their degree within a year after the program's prescribed period.

For 2018, Licuanan said that a total of P51.4 billion had been set aside for the program. SUCs and the tertiary education subsidy got the huge chunk of the budget, at P22.6 billion and P21.6 billion, respectively.

TVIs were allocated P7 billion, while the national student loan program received P54 million. Another P108 million was set aside for administrative costs. INQ

* SUCS - STATE UNIVERSITIES & COLLEGES

* CHED - COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION