



SC Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission

Providing Opportunity. Promoting Choice.

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DISCUSSION ON POSSIBLE EXTENSION TO THE TUITION GRANTS PROGRAM APPLICATION DEADLINE

In the Fall of 1992, the SC Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission changed the first-come, first-served awarding philosophy to one that uses available program dollars to fund all eligible applicants who applied by June 30th of each year. At the time, this change in awarding philosophy lowered the dollar amount of each student's tuition grant at every participating independent institution while increasing the total number of recipients funded for the whole program. This strict application deadline has remained in place with an appeal process for students who experienced extenuating circumstances preventing them from completing their application during the entire application period, which, except for this year's FAFSA delay, has been October 1 – June 30 since the availability of the 2017-2018 FAFSA on October 1, 2016 (Prior to that, it was January 1 – June 30).

Upon examination of existing data in the Commission's student information system over the last five years, an extension to the deadline from June 30 to August 1 could fund up to an additional 1,300 – 1,550 students to the cost of \$5.8 million - \$7.5 million. As a result of this large "cost" in funding, Commission Staff have previously not considered submitting recommendations regarding an extension to the Program's application deadline to the Commission. As the Commission has worked to make great strides in expanding access to more South Carolina residents, and with the current projected carryforward funds, Commission Staff feel this is the time to discuss the possible options regarding the application deadline:

Option 1: Maintain the June 30 deadline as has been in place since the application cycle for the 1993-1994 Award Year; or,

Option 2: Extend the application deadline from June 30 to August 1 for the 2024-2025 Award Year only, returning to June 30, 2025, effective with the 2025-2026 Award Year deadline; or,

Option 3: Extend the application deadline from June 30 to August 1, effective with the 2024-2025 Award Year and beyond.

Based on current projections, a deadline extension without reducing the Maximum Grant could be sustainable for the next few years; however, budgetary shortfalls could arise in future years requiring the need for the Commission to request new money in future budget requests to sustain the current award amount or to make future increases to the Maximum Grant.

As of this meeting, applications (FAFSA Data) have not yet begun to be transmitted to any college, university, or State Grant agency. This discussion could also be tabled until the April 16, 2024 Commission Meeting, although making the decision today will allow Commission Staff to consider any increased application numbers when making recommendations about any increases or changes to the Maximum Grant Amount.

Should the Commission wish to act today, a vote by the South Carolina Tuition Grants Commission would be required to make changes to the current June 30 Application Deadline.