



SC Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission

Providing Opportunity. Promoting Choice.

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Katherine H. Harrison
Executive Director

MINUTES

South Carolina Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission Meeting
Tuesday, June 21, 2022
Teleconference Call
Columbia, South Carolina

Commission Members Participating via Conference Call:

Dr. Darrell Parker, Limestone University, Chair
Mr. Scott Cochran, Spartanburg Methodist College, Vice Chair
Dr. Leroy Staggers, Morris College, Secretary
Dr. Ronnie Hopkins, Voorhees University
Dr. Rusty Monhollon, CHE President and Executive Director, Ex-officio

Commission Members Absent:

Dr. Dondi Costin, Charleston Southern University
Dr. Steven Adamson, Erskine College
Dr. Maurice Scherrens, Newberry College
Dr. Nayef Samhat, Wofford College

Non-Commission Member College Presidents Participating:

Dr. Tom Bogart, Columbia College
Dr. Elizabeth Davis, Furman University
Dr. Lester Agyei McCorn, Clinton College

Dr. Darrell Parker, Commission Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:30 AM. Ms. Katie Harrison, Commission Executive Director, informed participants the meeting is being recorded in compliance with the Freedom of Information Act, welcomed all in attendance and conducted a roll call of the Commission Members participating via conference call. Ms. Harrison confirmed all participating Commission Members and Non-Commission Member College Presidents in attendance. A quorum was established.

Dr. Parker called for a motion to approve the March 15, 2022, Commission Minutes. Dr. Ronnie Hopkins moved to approve the Minutes and Mr. Scott Cochran seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Dr. Parker called on Ms. Harrison to report on Agency Updates. Ms. Harrison indicated Commission Staff have noticed positive outcomes from the decisions of the March 2022 Commission Meeting, specifically the allowance of 5th Year Grant Appeals. It was noted that the handful of 5th Year Grant Appeals submitted, most of these students are working toward degrees in intensive majors, such as Nursing. Ms. Harrison stated the full impact of the changes made at the March meeting will be realized at the conclusion of the 2022-2023 Award Year, when a full comparison can be made over the previous Award Year.

Ms. Harrison reported Ms. Monique Lemmon, Commission Program Coordinator, and Ms. Gena Miles, Commission Financial Officer, recently attended the State's personnel training for 7-Habits of Highly Effective People. Ms. Lemmon & Ms. Miles will also be completing Data Privacy training, offered by the Department of

Administration's (Admin) Division of Technology Operations (DTO), online in the coming weeks. Ms. Harrison thanked the Commission for its support in the Agency's initiatives to attend professional development opportunities provided by the State. Ms. Harrison also announced that Mr. Zachary Christian, Commission Deputy Director, is serving as an instructor at the Southern Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators' (SASFAA) 2022 New Aid Officer Workshop, which is being hosted at Wofford College.

Dr. Parker and Ms. Harrison honored Ms. Miles with a certificate in recognition of 45 years of dedication to the Agency. Ms. Miles started working with the Agency as an intern in high school and was offered full-time employment after graduation. Since then, Ms. Miles has played a vital role in ensuring students' funds are disbursed accurately and efficiently.

The Agency successfully completed the required state audit with the Office of the State Auditor. The audit reviews the Agency's internal processes over agency operations, such as accounting and the maintenance of personnel files. The Agency received a clean audit with no exceptions or findings for the 2021 Fiscal Year. Ms. Harrison thanked the Commission Staff for their assistance in preparing for the audit.

The Agency received notification from the State Division of Information Security and Enterprise Privacy Office for a 6-week Audit & Assessment Program to audit the Agency's information security procedures. The review was successfully completed. An official report is currently unavailable; however, the Agency received positive feedback regarding the work that has been done with such limited resources. Ms. Harrison will notify the Commission once an official report is received and if assistance is needed in making any information security decisions.

As President of the National Association for State Grant Aid Programs (NASSGAP), Ms. Harrison has the privilege to work alongside the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association (SHEEO) to implement a two-year plan to help State Agencies discuss and implement changes regarding the FAFSA Simplification Act. The kick-off for a Statewide Learning Community starts tomorrow. Nine states including South Carolina will participate in the learning community to determine impacts of the FAFSA Simplification Act and how states can best serve their students. Dr. Karen Woodfaulk, Commission on Higher Education (CHE) Director of Student Affairs Division, and her staff, along with Ms. Harrison and Mr. Christian will be in attendance to represent South Carolina.

The Agency has received a draft Request for Proposal (RFP) from the State Procurement Office. Ms. Harrison and Mr. Christian will make final updates to have the RFP submitted to the State Fiscal Accountability Authority for approval and begin the procurement process for the Agency's new student information system. Ms. Harrison anticipates a new system will be available for all Financial Aid Offices to use by Fall 2023.

Dr. Parker called on Mr. Christian to report on the 2021-2022 Award Year and provide an update on the 2022-2023 Award Year. The Agency has a current funding amount of \$53,600,000 for the 2021-2022 Award Year. As of today, the Agency has awarded and disbursed to over 11,200 students which is down 7% from the previous year. Mr. Christian reported that the Agency has noticed a 3.45% increase in 2022-2023 applications received in comparison to this time last year. Mr. Christian attributes this increase to the efforts of the Agency and the participating colleges and universities to strategically remind returning students to complete their applications prior to the June 30 deadline. With the 2022-2023 Maximum Tuition Grant amount being \$4,500 and the elimination of Non-Traditional program's Maximum Grant pro-rations, as approved at the March 2022 Commission meeting, the anticipated average grant for 2022-2023 is \$4,290. There were no questions.

Dr. Parker called on Dr. Jeffrey Perez, President and CEO of the South Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities (SCICU), to report on the Status on the 2022 Legislative Session. Dr. Perez looks forward to sharing with the General Assembly the Commission's efforts in being proactive in serving our students regarding the FAFSA Simplification Act. The General Assembly approved the preservation of the increased \$10,000,000 in Lottery funding for the Tuition Grants Commission, with a total budget appropriation of

\$54,400,000. Dr. Perez praised the 2022 Higher Education Day for creating a spirit of collaboration with the General Assembly. The General Assembly will return June 28, 2022, to address any Executive vetoes. No vetoes are expected to affect Higher Education. Dr. Perez provided additional observations in Legislative leadership changes. Representative Murrell Smith, Jr. was unanimously elected Speaker of the House. Representative Gary Simrill, former Chair of the House Education Committee, and a strong supporter of higher education, has retired. A replacement for Representative Simrill has not been announced at this time. Senator Ronnie Cromer is the Senate Higher Education Chair. Dr. Parker thanked Dr. Perez for his thorough review.

Dr. Parker called on Ms. Harrison to report on the 2023-2024 Budget Request to the Executive Budget Office. The Commission will request a continuation of \$10,000,000 in additional Lottery funding. No additional money is needed beyond that at this time. Given new funding received from Lottery is non-recurring, there are two different approaches the Commission can take when asking the General Assembly to maintain the increase in funding for the Program:

(1) Create a request for recurring general funds (State appropriations) in the requested amount. Using this approach, the Legislature will view the request as a monetary need to sustain the increased grant amount moving forward. If approved, this would create a more stable source of funding; however, if the amount is not available in recurring funds through general State appropriations, they could opt to provide the funding once again through Lottery allocations.

(2) Create an annual request for non-recurring funds in the requested amount as Lottery appropriations. According to Jake Scoggins, Senior Budget Analyst for Senate Finance, programs relying on Lottery appropriations should technically be asking for funds in this manner each year since they are considered non-recurring annual allocations. Some agencies currently take this approach while others do not. Since the Tuition Grants Commission began receiving a portion of its Program funding through Lottery allocations, it has always been considered a "given" that the Program would continue to receive a base amount in Lottery funding, although theoretically this pot of money is supposed to be treated with zero-based budget principles in mind.

Dr. Parker recommends the Commission request the amount of funding remains the same and that to the extent they are able, a portion of the funds be moved to recurring general funds. There were no suggestions or comments. Dr. Parker called for a motion to request that funding amounts for 2023-2024 be retained with a request to have a portion of Lottery moved to recurring funding. Dr. Ronnie Hopkins moved to accept the recommendation; the motion was seconded. Dr. Parker asked if there were any questions. There were none. The motion was approved unanimously.

Dr. Parker called on Mr. Christian to report on the Crescerance Contract for 2022-2023. The Tuition Grants Commission has contracted with Capitol Impact, a sole source legacy system by Crescerance, annually to provide geocoded listings of all South Carolina Tuition Grants recipients. This information is used in two ways. First, it is used to provide to each participating college a list of South Carolina Tuition Grants recipients attending their college with the corresponding South Carolina House member and South Carolina Senate member for each recipient that enables their participation in the SCICU Letter Writing Campaign (now exceeding 35 years). Second, it gives the Commission the ability to provide each state legislator information and a spreadsheet (via secure internet download) indicating the names of recipients from their legislative district with an estimated amount of total funds that those recipients receive in South Carolina Tuition Grants. The use of Capitol Impact to provide the geocoded listings has significantly helped the Commission to accurately communicate the impact of the South Carolina Tuition Grants Program to the State Legislature. The pricing upon contract renewal in November 2022 is \$2,500 for the annual license and the geocoding is \$650 for up to 43,000 records. The total cost will be \$3,150. Dr. Parker called for a motion to renew the Crescerance Contract for 2022-2023. Mr. Scott Cochran moved to approve the contract; Dr. Ronnie Hopkins seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Dr. Parker called on Mr. Christian to review South Carolina Tuition Grants Program Reviews. All Program Reviews for the 2021-2022 Award Year are due to the Commission by December 31, 2022. Each college received a Preliminary version of the Auditor's Copy of the 2021-2022 Applicants Report in May; a report used by auditors when choosing the random selection of recipients at each college for the purposes of the review. Ms. Lemmon contacted each College and respective President to confirm their third-party audit firm in April. Mr. Christian thanked those in attendance for their swift response. All audit firms have received a copy of the 2021-2022 Program Review Guide. A final copy of the Applicants Report will be made available to each college on July 5th. Program Review reminder notices will be sent to colleges and their respective audit firm starting in October.

Dr. Parker reported on the 2021-2022 Agency Director Performance Evaluation. Dr. Parker congratulated Ms. Harrison for another productive year with the Commission. Ms. Harrison's overall performance score increased from 4.79 to 4.89. The Commission can expect an emphasis from Katie regarding training and development for Agency Staff and simplification of Agency awarding processes in the upcoming year.

Dr. Parker presented the Rotation of the Tuition Grants Commission and Election of Officers. It was noted that the rotation was adjusted such that Dr. Lester McCorn, President, Clinton College, will roll on to the Commission beginning in the 2023-2024 Award Year. Dr. Darrell Parker, Limestone University, Dr. Steven Adamson, Erskine College, and Dr. Ronnie Hopkins, Voorhees College are rotating off the Commission, while Dr. Gene Fant, North Greenville University, Dr. Matthew vandenBerg, Presbyterian College, and Dr. William Barker, Southern Wesleyan University are rotating on to the Commission. Mr. Scott Cochran, Spartanburg Methodist College, has agreed to serve as Chair. Dr. Leroy Staggers, Morris College, has agreed to continue serving as Secretary. Dr. Dondi Costin, Charleston Southern University, has agreed to serve as Vice-Chair. Dr. Parker called for a motion to accept the rotation and nominations of officers. Dr. Ronnie Hopkins moved to approve. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Dr. Parker asked if there was any new business. There was none. Ms. Harrison thanked Dr. Parker, Dr. Adamson, and Dr. Hopkins for their dedication while serving as Commission Members.

Dr. Parker reminded all that the next meeting is scheduled for March 14, 2023.

Dr. Parker adjourned the meeting at 11:10 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Ms. Monique Lemmon
Acting Secretary for
Dr. Leroy Staggers, Secretary
South Carolina Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission