

South Carolina Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission

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MINUTES

South Carolina Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission Meeting
Wednesday June 10, 2015
1706 Senate Street
Columbia, South Carolina

Commission Members Participating via Conference Call

Dr. Walt Griffin, Limestone College, Chair
Dr. Luns Richardson, Morris College, Vice Chair
Dr. Randall Pannell, North Greenville University
Dr. Nayef Samhat, Wofford College
Dr. Maurice Scherrens, Newberry College
Mr. Eric McDonald, Spartanburg Methodist College

Commission Members Present On-Site

Dr. Cleveland Sellers, Voorhees College

Commission Members Absent

Dr. Jairy Hunter, Charleston Southern University
Ms. Julie Carullo, Commission on Higher Education

Dr. Walt Griffin, Commission Chairman, called the meeting to order at 10:32 AM. He welcomed all in attendance and requested that a roll call be taken of those participating on-site and via conference call.

Dr. Griffin called for a motion to approve the Minutes of the March 11, 2015, Commission Meeting. Dr. Samhat moved to approve the Minutes. Dr. Richardson seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved by the Commission.

Dr. Griffin called on Mr. Earl Mayo, Commission Director, to report on the review of the 2014-2015 Award Year ending June 30 and also an update on the 2015-2016 Award Year. First, Mr. Mayo stated that there was a handout available via the agenda for review. Mr. Mayo stated that for the 2014-2015 school year, the Commission had \$36,095,796 in funds available. He stated that the number of applications received for the 2014-2015 school year was 34,301 with 13,358 grants realized. This is a 1.10% decrease from the past year, but he noted that this is the lowest decrease South Carolina Tuition Grants has had in four years. He stated that the 2015-2016 projected funds are \$35,804,908. The reason for the slight decrease is because of the decrease in the Children's Education Endowment Funds. For 2015-2016, Mr. Mayo stated that an estimated 34,130 of applications will be received. However, he projects no change in the number of grants realized at 13,358. Dr. Griffin asked if there were any questions. None were asked.

Dr. Griffin moved to the next agenda item for the report on the 2015 Legislative Session. Mr. Mayo stated that the outcome of the General Assembly is not concluded yet; the House and the Senate are still working on the final Budget. He then called on Mr. Mike LeFever, President of the South Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities (SCICU) organization, to discuss the activities at the State House. Mr. LeFever stated there would be a Continuing Resolution that would allow the State government to continue to operate, based on the 2014-2015 fiscal year Budget, until the new budget is signed by the Governor. He stated that there are a few different pockets of money that the House and the Senate cannot agree on how to spend. In addition to the Appropriations Bill, the Capitol Reserve Fund Joint Resolution is being considered in the State Senate at this time. The Supplemental Appropriations Bill is in the State House of Representatives where the Representatives are working to come to a resolution. Once the House and the Senate reach a resolution on them, all three bills will be sent to the Governor to approve. Mr. LeFever stated it will possibly be July before we see the final agreements on the Budget. He stated that SCICU will post updates on its website when the final agreements have been reached. Mr. Mayo stated that the new money for the South Carolina Tuition Grants Commission to increase the Maximum Grants by \$100 for the 2015-2016 school year is in both Senate and House Budget proposals and he does not see an issue of it passing.

Dr. Griffin called on Mrs. Katie Harrison, Commission Deputy Director, to discuss the update on Commission Information Security Measures and Technology. Mrs. Harrison stated that since the March Commission Meeting, the agency had successfully implemented the encryption protocol used for transferring weekly eligibility files to South Carolina Student Loan Corporation. She stated that the agency was working on the plans for the thirteen policies provided by the State, with which the Commission must be in compliance by July 1, 2016. Mrs. Harrison remarked that, though the agency is compliant with most of the policies in practice, she is working on written procedures for all of the policies. The agency has set an internal deadline of June 1, 2016, to have all policies and all associated procedures in place for review by the Commission at the June 2016 meeting. Dr. Griffin asked if there were any questions. There were none.

Dr. Griffin then called on Mr. Mayo to speak on the South Carolina Inspector General Investigation. Mr. Mayo stated that on April 9, 2015, Mr. Patrick Maley, the State Inspector General, and Ms. Caroline Overcash, the Counsel to the Inspector General, met with Mr. Mayo and Mrs. Harrison to investigate a complaint that was filed against the South Carolina Tuition Grants Program. It was stated, by the complainant, that the Program was a "waste of taxpayers'

money.” Mr. Mayo stated that, after supplying Mr. Maley and Ms. Overcash all of the requested information about the South Carolina Tuition Grants Program, on April 20, 2015, the case was closed. The State Inspector General’s Office stated that the complaint did not have merit and they thanked the Commission for being clear with the Program’s mission, operations and history.

Dr. Griffin called on Mr. Mayo to discuss the 2016-2017 Budget Request to the State Budget Division for the Tuition Grants Commission. Mr. Mayo started with a recap of the 2015-2016 Fiscal year. The Commission requested an increase in Grant funding of \$1,250,172, in 2015-2016. The House and Senate have so far approved \$136,772 in funding increases for Tuition Grants. For the 2016-2017 year, the Commission has three options for consideration. Option One would be to increase the Maximum Grant from \$3100 to \$3200. For this option, the Commission would request \$2,534,474 for the budget next year. Mr. Mayo stated that this large amount is needed because there will be almost no carry-forward money from the 2015-2016 year. Option Two would be to increase the Maximum Grant from \$3100 to \$3150. The Commission would request \$1,905,089 for the budget next year. Option Three would be to maintain the Maximum Grant award of \$3100. The Commission would request \$1,296,984 for the budget next year. Mr. Mayo also indicated the Commission would again request \$24,000 that is not approved in the current Budget to fund increased mandated Information Security expenses. Dr. Griffin opened the floor for questions. Dr. Samhat asked if there would be any reason not to go with Option One. Mr. LeFever stated that he thought the Commission should choose Option One. Mr. LeFever stated that the Commission and SCICU would need to get out early and talk to supporters and make this Budget Request the number one priority. Dr. Griffin asked for a motion to approve Option One for the Budget Request for 2016-2017. Dr. Richardson moved to approve. Dr. Sellers seconded. The motion was unanimously approved by the Commission.

Dr. Griffin discussed the approval of the Capitol Impact Contract for 2015. Mrs. Harrison reported that the Capitol Impact contract is made in order for the Commission to be able to provide student information and have it geocoded to their appropriate State Representatives. This information is used by the institutions for the letter writing campaign or other grassroots Legislative Advocacy. It is also used by the Legislators should they decide to contact the students from their districts. Some Legislators use this information to send the students letters or emails to inform them that they support the Tuition Grants Program. Mrs. Harrison stated that the invoice in the agenda is from last year; however, there will be an increase of \$500 for the Master file geocoding license renewal fee. Dr. Griffin opened the floor to questions. Dr. Samhat asked if we are able to do a multi-year contract with Capitol Impact. Mrs. Harrison stated that the agency only had the authority to do a one-year contract with Capitol Impact, and further that this was the first time in nine years that there has been an increase in the amount charged by Capitol Impact. Mr. LeFever stated that this year students wrote over 8,000 letters to the House and Senate members. He stated that this is a way for South Carolina Tuition Grants recipients to personalize the Tuition Grants to State legislators making the Tuition Grants Program stand out as an excellent use of State funds. Dr. Griffin asked for a motion to approve the funding for Capitol Impact. Dr. Sellers moved to approve the contract. Dr. Samhat seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved by the Commission.

Dr. Griffin asked for the report on South Carolina Tuition Grants Program Reviews. Mr. Mayo reminded everyone that the collection of auditors' information is now in process. The 2014-2015 Program Reviews are due to the Commission from each college's audit firms by December 31, 2015. A Program Review Guide has been posted to the website and the official Auditor's Report will be available to auditors and colleges on July 1, 2015.

Dr. Griffin discussed the 2014-2015 Agency Director Performance Evaluation. He stated that Mr. Mayo received 4.80 out of 5 on the evaluation and that he has given him an overall rating of "Exceeds Performance Expectations." He complimented Mr. Mayo on his outstanding leadership at the Commission. Dr. Griffin asked for a motion to approve the performance review results. Dr. Richardson moved to approve the motion. Dr. Sellers seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved by the Commission.

Dr. Griffin asked Mr. Mayo to discuss the rotation of Commission members and election of officers. Mr. Mayo stated that Dr. Walt Griffin, Limestone College, Dr. Luns Richardson, Morris College, and Dr. Cleveland Sellers, Voorhees College, will be rotating off of the Commission and that Dr. Claude Lilly, Presbyterian College, President Beth Dinndorf, Columbia College, and Dr. Todd Voss, Southern Wesleyan University, will be rotating on. Mr. Mayo thanked the Commission members who were rotating off for their excellent service. He stated that all of the current officers will be rotating off, or, in the Secretary's case, leaving for a new Presidency, so the positions of Chair, Vice Chair, and Secretary would need to be filled for 2015-2016. The nominations for these positions are President Beth Dinndorf, Columbia College as Chair, Dr. Nayef Samhat, Wofford College, as Vice Chair, and Dr. Maurice Scherrens, Newberry College, as Secretary. Dr. Griffin asked for a motion to approve the nominations. Dr. Pannell moved to approve the nominations. Dr. Sellers seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved by the Commission.

Dr. Griffin reminded all attendees of the tentative dates of the next South Carolina Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission Meetings, which would be in 2016. The first meeting is tentatively scheduled for March 9, 2016, and the second one is tentatively scheduled for June 8, 2016. The meeting was adjourned at 11:13 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Mrs. Jessica Bagwell
Acting Secretary
South Carolina Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission