

OUTCOME OF THE 2016 SC GENERAL ASSEMBLY AS RELATED TO THE SC TUITION GRANTS PROGRAM

The South Carolina Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission submitted its 2016-2017 State Budget Request last September requesting an increase of \$2,534,474 necessary to increase the Tuition Grant by \$100 per student for the new award year.

The Governor's Office did not hold a Budget Hearing with the South Carolina Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission and did not contact the Commission concerning the Commission's Budget Request. In January 2016, Governor Haley released her 2016-2017 Executive Budget in which she recommended no new funds for the South Carolina Tuition Grants Program for either Grants or necessary information security expenses.

On December 17, 2015, the Commission appeared before the House Ways and Means Higher Education Subcommittee to present its Budget Request. The Commission thanked the legislature for the increased funding provided last year enabling the Commission to raise the Maximum Grant. The Commission asked that the Ways and Means Committee increase Program funding by \$2,534,474 to enable the Maximum Grant to be increased to the new Maximum Grant amount. The House Ways and Means Committee approved the Commission's request and increased recurring General Appropriations funding for the Tuition Grants Program by the requested amount which was then passed by the full House. As supported by the Commission, the House approved an increase of \$4.5 million for the Need-Based Grants Program, which would also add funding to the Tuition Grants Program of about \$700,000. No new funds were approved by the House for necessary administrative information security expenses but an increase was approved to reclassify the deputy director's position as requested due to the increased work load associated with information security.

On March 10, 2016, the Commission appeared before the Senate Finance Higher Education Subcommittee to present its Budget Request asking that the increases approved thus far in the State Budget process continue to be approved. In its budgetary deliberations, the Senate Finance Committee and full Senate concurred with the budget recommendation of the House increasing funds for the South Carolina Tuition Grants Program by \$2,534,474. The Senate also approved the requested increase of \$4.5 million for the Need-Based Grants Program. The Senate approved no new funds for necessary administrative information security expenses but agreed with the House to increase funds for a reclassification of the deputy director's position.

Final passage has taken place in the General Assembly and the Governor has issued her vetoes, none of which involve the Tuition Grants Commission. The State Legislature will consider the Governor's vetoes this week concluding the 2016-2017 State Budget process. The approval of additional student grant funds enabling the Commission to increase the 2016-2017 Maximum Grants to \$3,200 should be considered an extremely successful outcome for the South Carolina Tuition Grants Program.