

# **REVIEW OF THE 2016-2017 STATE BUDGET REQUEST FOR FUNDING OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA TUITION GRANTS PROGRAM**

At the June 2015 South Carolina Tuition Grants Commission Meeting, the Commission approved the budget request to be sent to the State Budget Office for funding of the South Carolina Tuition Grants Program for the 2016-2017 fiscal year. The Commission submitted documents in September 2015 requesting sufficient funds in 2016-2017 to increase the program-wide maximum grant by \$100 to \$3,200.

If current year lottery funds flowing to the South Carolina Tuition Grants Program are renewed in 2016-2017, an increase of \$2,534,474 was projected as needed to increase the maximum grant to \$3,200. This projection was based on conservative estimates of a one-half percent (0.5%) increase in eligible students for 2015-2016 and for 2016-2017. Additionally, the Commission's Budget Request included a request to fund the agency's increased annual expenses of \$16,000 to insure compliance with the State-mandated Information Security standards and requirements plus \$9,749 for a reclassification of the Deputy Director's position so that the position description matched the actual requirements of the position including the extra duties required by the Information Security standards.

The 2016 General Assembly convened on January 12 to begin the legislative year for the State of South Carolina. The South Carolina Tuition Grants Commission appeared before the Higher Education Subcommittee of the House Ways and Means Committee on **Thursday, December 17, 2015**, in Columbia, before the Legislative Session convened. The Higher Education Subcommittee is chaired by Representative James Merrill (Berkeley). He is joined on the subcommittee by Representative Gilda Cobb-Hunter (Orangeburg) and Representative Phillip Lowe (Florence). The full House Ways and Means Committee met in late February to consider budget recommendations to pass to the full House which will take up the State Budget next week. The Commission is scheduled to present its Budget Request to the Senate Finance Higher Education Subcommittee after adjournment on **Thursday, March 10**.

Governor Nikki Haley released her 2016-2017 Executive State Budget in January. The Governor's Budget recommended no funding increases for the Tuition Grants Commission. The House Ways & Means Committee has approved and submitted to the full House an increase of \$2,534,474 in general appropriations, which enables the Tuition Grants Program Maximum Grant to be increased. An increase was approved making permanent the funding for a staff reclassification but no increase was approved for additional expenses to meet State-mandated Information Security requirements.