

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: FIFTH YEAR TUITION GRANT ELIGIBILITY

Early in the 46 year history of the South Carolina Tuition Grants Program, the Commission decided to limit the receipt of a Tuition Grant to a maximum of four years. The Commission has held all applicants to this standard since then. For the South Carolina Tuition Grants Program, the four year limit is not in statute (SC Code of Laws, Title 59, Chapter 113), but is a Commission-approved policy.

The South Carolina Commission on Higher Education in administering the South Carolina LIFE Scholarship also limits scholarship eligibility to four years. However, CHE has approved the receipt of a LIFE Scholarship for five years for academic programs verified by CHE as five year bachelor degree programs.

Because some Tuition Grants eligible students are able to receive a State Scholarship for five years, but not a State Grant for five years, Commission staff has reviewed the impact it would have on the Program to enable students enrolled in CHE-approved five year degrees to receive Tuition Grants for five years.

A review of CHE-approved five year degrees indicates that there are currently only two approved programs at the 21 South Carolina Tuition Grant eligible institutions. Those two programs currently have a total of 23 Tuition Grant eligible fifth year students. If all 23 students qualified for the Maximum \$3200 Tuition Grant in 2016-2017, the cost would be \$73,600. One additional college is considering going through the CHE process of approval for a five year degree. That college has 18 students enrolled in a fifth year who do not receive a Tuition Grant but who would be eligible otherwise. The additional impact if all 18 students received the Maximum Grant would be \$57,600.

The staff recommends that the Commission consider the following change to the Commission policy on length of eligibility:

Effective with the 2016-2017 award cycle, students enrolled in CHE-approved Five-Year Undergraduate Academic Programs may receive a fifth year of South Carolina Tuition Grants if they meet all other eligibility criteria.

Adoption of this recommendation would enable the Commission to allow students eligible for a fifth year of State Scholarships to also be eligible for State Grants. Only students enrolled in CHE-approved academic programs would be eligible.

A vote by the South Carolina Tuition Grants Commission is required to change the currently approved policy of a four year limit on awarding and receipt of a South Carolina Tuition Grant.