



# SC Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission

*Providing Opportunity. Promoting Choice.*

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## **STAFF RECOMMENDATION FOR CHANGE TO SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS POLICY**

The Commission's current Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) Policy of the South Carolina Tuition Grants Program for continuing college students (Section V of the South Carolina Tuition Grants Policies and Procedures Manual) spans 7 pages and includes several calculations and possible scenarios. This policy exceeds the requirements of federal mandated SAP policies, which work to ensure students complete coursework and graduate in a reasonable timeframe. While put into place to ensure a student was making progress to graduate in a 4-year timeframe, the Commission's more restrictive SAP policy often creates additional barriers to students, which can have unintended negative consequences for those that lose eligibility. The current Policy also differs between Traditional programs and Non-Traditional programs, being more restrictive for students enrolled in Non-Traditional programs.

Commission staff have reviewed the number of students marked ineligible for not meeting the Commission's SAP policy for several years. On average, around 1000 students are coded ineligible annually for not meeting the Commission's SAP policy. Commission staff have estimated most of these students would otherwise be eligible for the South Carolina Tuition Grant, if the SAP policy simply required students to meet the institution's federally required SAP policy. By removing this extra barrier to access, more students would benefit from the South Carolina Tuition Grant, providing them the opportunity to achieve their dreams of a higher education at the institution of their choice without relying on additional student loans.

It is of the Staff's opinion that the combination of a student meeting his/her institutional SAP policy for Title IV aid, along with the Statutory requirement of full-time enrollment (defined as 12 or more semester hours), still meets the Commission's intended goal to encourage students to obtain his/her degree within a 4-year timeframe. In addition to providing more access for students, the change to only requiring a student be meeting the Institution's SAP policy would reduce burden on financial aid staff when reviewing eligibility for South Carolina Tuition Grants awardees.

**The staff recommends that the Commission consider the following change to the Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy in determining Tuition Grant eligibility:**

**Effective with the 2022-2023 Academic Year, the South Carolina Tuition Grants Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy for continuing college students, including transfer students, should be the federally accepted Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy used at each institution to determine eligibility for Title IV Student Aid. This change would result in the Commission no longer requiring additional calculations of SAP outside of the institution's written SAP policy for full-time students receiving Title IV student aid. Students must still enroll on a full-time basis and meet all other eligibility requirements of the Tuition Grants Program.**

A vote by the South Carolina Tuition Grants Commission is required to change the currently approved Satisfactory Academic Progress Policy.