



SC Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission

Providing Opportunity. Promoting Choice.

111 Executive Center Drive
Suite 242
Columbia, SC 29210
(803) 896-1120
info@sctuitiongrants.org

Katherine H. Harrison
Executive Director

AGENDA

Tuesday, March 12, 2024; 10:30 A.M.

Microsoft Teams Meeting: Meeting ID: 277 562 394 588; Passcode: x8wYBd

If needed, attendees may dial in using the number below:

(803) 454-9963

Phone Conference ID: 463 947 981#

1. Welcome and Commission Roll Call..... Katie Harrison
2. * Approval of Minutes of June 20, 2023, and July 31, 2023
Commission Meetings..... Boone Hopkins, Chair
3. Final Report on 2022-2023 Program Reviews..... Katie Harrison
4. Update on the 2023-2024 Award Year..... Zach Christian
5. Agency Updates and Initiatives..... Katie Harrison
Staff Updates, Launch of myTG, FAFSA Updates, House Legislative Oversight
6. Review of 2024-2025 Budget Request..... Katie Harrison
7. SCICU Update and Legislative Outlook..... Jeff Perez
8. * Staff Recommendation: Office Furniture Purchase Katie Harrison
9. * Staff Recommendation: Program Review Requirements Katie Harrison
10. * Staff Recommendation: Initial 2024-2025 Award Amounts..... Katie Harrison
11. * Discussion: Possibility of Deadline Extension Zach Christian
12. Reminder: State Ethics Forms for SCTG Commission Members..... Boone Hopkins, Chair
Due March 30
13. New Business..... Boone Hopkins, Chair
14. Adjournment..... Boone Hopkins, Chair

Next Scheduled Commission Meetings:

Tuesday; April 16, 2024; 10:30 AM

Tuesday; June 25, 2024; 10:30 AM

*** Commission Vote or Action Needed**

In compliance with the Freedom of Information Act, the Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission notified media outlets of the time and location of this meeting on March 7, 2024.



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Executive Director

MINUTES

South Carolina Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission Meeting
Tuesday, June 20, 2023
Teleconference Call
Columbia, South Carolina

Commission Members Participating via Conference Call:

Mr. Scott Cochran, Spartanburg Methodist College, Chair
Dr. Dondi Costin, Charleston Southern University, Vice Chair
Dr. Leroy Staggers, Morris College, Secretary
Dr. Maurice Scherrens, Newberry College
Dr. Gene Fant, North Greenville University
Mr. Buz Wilcoxin, Acting President, Presbyterian College
Dr. William Barker, Southern Wesleyan University
Dr. Rusty Monhollon, CHE President and Executive Director, Ex-officio

Commission Members Absent:

Dr. Nayef Samhat, Wofford College

Non-Commission Member College Presidents Participating:

Dr. Tom Bogart, Columbia College
Dr. Lester McCorn, Clinton College
Dr. Monica Baloga, Limestone University
Dr. Boone Hopkins, Converse University
Dr. Alan Benson, Acting President, Bob Jones University
Dr. Natalie Harder, Coker University

Mr. Scott Cochran, Commission Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:30 AM. Ms. Katie Harrison, Commission Executive Director, informed participants the meeting is being recorded and is being held in compliance with the Freedom of Information Act, welcomed all in attendance and conducted a roll call of the Commission Members participating via conference call. Ms. Harrison confirmed all participating Commission Members in attendance. A quorum was established. Ms. Harrison recognized and welcomed the non-Commission members in attendance.

Mr. Cochran announced the meeting will be conducted in an order differing from the posted Agenda due to the need for Commission Members to leave the call prematurely for other obligations, leading to action items being addressed first.

Mr. Cochran called for a motion to approve the March 14, 2023 Commission Meeting Minutes. Dr. Dondi Costin, Vice Chair, moved to approve the Minutes and Dr. Maurice Scherrens, Newberry College, seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Mr. Cochran called on Ms. Harrison to present the 2024-2025 Budget Request to the State Budget Division for the South Carolina Tuition Grants Program. Ms. Harrison stated that the Tuition Grants Commission is required to submit its Budget Request to the Executive Budget Office each fall for funding in the next fiscal

year. Because the Commission will not meet again before this request is to be submitted, the Budget Request for funding for the South Carolina Tuition Grants Program for 2024-2025 must be approved by the Commission at the June 2023 meeting. Ms. Harrison presented the projection that the Program can sustain the maximum grant of \$4,700 while also potentially increasing eligibility to additional students. The current funding of \$10,000,000 in lottery allocation the Commission has received each year for several years, plus \$10,000,000 in additional lottery funds passed with the FY24 budget, on top of the current recurring amounts in general funds is sufficient to fund the Tuition Grants Program at this time. Ms. Harrison noted the increase in lottery funds is not guaranteed going forward, and would like to maintain the momentum of increased funding for need-based programs in asking for these funds as part of the budget process.

There are two different approaches the Commission can take when asking the General Assembly to maintain the increase in funding for the Program:

- (1) Create a request for recurring general funds (State appropriations) in the requested amount. Using this approach, the Legislature will view the request as a monetary need to sustain the increased grant amount moving forward. If approved, this would create a more stable source of funding; however, if the amount is not available in recurring funds through general State appropriations, they could opt to provide the funding once again through Lottery allocations. This option has been utilized in the past, however the request was denied.
- (2) Create an annual request for non-recurring funds at the current amount as Lottery allocations. According to Mr. Jake Scoggins, Senior Budget Analyst for Senate Finance, some agencies currently take this approach while others do not.

A discussion took place with Dr. Jeffrey Perez, President and CEO of South Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities (SCICU), commenting that it does not hurt to continue to request the additional lottery funds be converted to recurring general funds. Dr. Rusty Monhollon, President and Executive Director of the Commission on Higher Education, agreed with Dr. Perez's assessment of continuing to make a request for conversion, noting it does not influence current funding amounts if denied.

Mr. Cochran called for a motion to approve the 2024-2025 Budget Request to the State Budget Division with a request for \$10,000,000 in lottery funds to be converted to recurring general funds. Dr. Costin moved to approve the Budget Request and Dr. Monhollon seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Mr. Cochran announced the Rotation of the Tuition Grants Commission members for the 2023-2024 Commission. As scheduled, Mr. Cochran, Spartanburg Methodist College, and Dr. Leroy Staggers, Morris College, are rotating off the Commission. Presidents rotating on to the Commission according to the Rotation Schedule are Dr. Lester McCorn, Clinton College, and Dr. Boone Hopkins, Converse University. Dr. Hopkins has agreed to serve as Chair; Dr. Gene Fant, North Greenville University, has agreed to serve as Vice Chair; Dr. McCorn has agreed to serve as Secretary. Dr. Costin moved to approve the election of the new Commission Officers and Dr. Scherrens seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Mr. Cochran called on Ms. Harrison to report on the Agency Updates and Initiatives. Ms. Harrison reported Ms. Kira Demery, Commission Program Coordinator, attended a Leadership Symposium hosted by the South Carolina Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (SCASFAA) on April 25, 2023. Ms. Demery also recently earned the Consumer Information Professional credential through the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA). Ms. Harrison stated Ms. Gena Miles, Commission Financial Officer, and Ms. Demery attended an in-person training offered by the Statewide Training Team on the 5 Choices to Extraordinary Productivity, a Franklin Covey course, in April.

Ms. Harrison noted Mr. Zachary Christian, Commission Deputy Director, successfully presided over his first Executive Board Meeting as President of SCASFAA on June 8 and June 9, 2023 and will represent the State of South Carolina on the Executive Board of the Southern Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators

(SASF AA) once again this year. Ms. Harrison reported Mr. Christian also plans to attend the annual NASFAA conference in San Diego, California beginning June 29, 2023 as SCASF AA President.

Ms. Harrison described her continued work as Immediate Past President of the National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs (NASSGAP), including in-depth work with the U.S. Department of Education on the upcoming changes to the FAFSA form. Ms. Harrison announced that she is one of four individuals who will represent the State of South Carolina at a workshop hosted by the National College Attainment Network (NCAN) and Federal Student Aid (FSA) in Washington, D.C., in July. Ms. Harrison remarked she will represent the South Carolina Tuition Grants Commission at the State Higher Education Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) Policy Conference in August and their State Learning Community FAFSA Convening Event in September.

Ms. Harrison reported upon the status of the Office of the State Auditor's review of the Agency's FY22 and FY23 accounting records as currently in progress, with a final report to be made available to all Commission Members once the review is complete. Ms. Harrison presented upon the status of the material preparation for the House Legislative Oversight Committee as an ongoing effort among Agency staff. The Committee is currently holding its hearing with the Commission on Higher Education.

Ms. Harrison detailed the Agency's progress with the new Student Information System's procurement process as currently under contract with Nelnet Diversified Solutions beginning April 1, 2023. The purpose of the new student information system, which the Agency is branding as "myTG," is to streamline the process for aid administrators, as well as to include a student portal to allow students to register and view the status of their grant award and disbursements, request a grant transfer between eligible colleges, upload required documents, and more. The team is making progress in development of the new system, with an anticipated go-live date of "myTG" of September 1, 2023. Ms. Harrison announced demonstrations and training for the new system slated for later this summer with the college financial aid offices with recent upgrades to the Agency's conference room, allowing for enhanced training opportunities. Ms. Harrison thanked Mr. Christian and Ms. Demery for their work through the development process of the new system. Mr. Christian commented upon the branding origination of "myTG" as being geared toward upcoming generations of students, as well as the revamping of our social media presence to meet students at their level. Mr. Christian thanked Ms. Demery for her dedication to the new social media presence for the Agency.

Mr. Cochran called on Mr. Christian, to report on the 2022-2023 Award Year and provide an update on the 2023-2024 Award Year. Mr. Christian pointed out the authority to spend of the Children's Education Endowment was capped at \$6,000,000 for 2022-2023, regardless of the amount of funds received. This authority amount has been increased to \$16,000,000 for the 2023-2024 fiscal year. Mr. Christian reported the Agency as seeing consistent upward trends in the number of applications received for the South Carolina Tuition Grants Program, due in part to our colleges reaching out to increasing numbers of adult learners in the non-traditional programs. The projected number of applications received this year will expectedly follow this trend, with the estimated show-up rate remaining at around 46 percent from the 2022-2023 academic year. Mr. Christian remarked the hope of the Agency is to continue to see the number of applicants and grants realized, as well as the available funding, continue to rise in coming years.

Mr. Cochran called upon Dr. Perez to report on the 2023 Legislative Session. Dr. Perez reported the Senate unanimously confirmed Dr. Fant's nomination for the Commission on Higher Education, replacing Dr. Mark Smith as the Independent Colleges representative on the Commission. Regarding the State Budget, Dr. Perez remarked the General Assembly approved the preservation of the \$10,000,000 increase in Lottery funds being allocated to the Tuition Grants Program. Dr. Perez stated the General Assembly also approved an additional \$10,000,000 in Lottery funds to the Need-Based Program for Public Colleges, of which a portion is allocated to the Tuition Grant Program.

Mr Cochran called upon Ms. Harrison to describe the treatment of a negative Student Aid Index (SAI) regarding the South Carolina Tuition Grants Program. Ms. Harrison stated the Estimated Family Contribution (EFC) calculation from the current FAFSA will be replaced by the SAI beginning with the 2024-2025 FAFSA being released later this year. While the new formula will allow an individual's SAI to be as low as negative \$1,500, the U.S. Department of Education has issued guidance stating the following:

"A student's SAI may be a negative number (down to -1,500). A negative SAI should be treated as a zero in determining a student's eligibility for need-based financial aid. In other words, treat a negative SAI as a zero when subtracting the SAI value from cost of attendance to determine a student's unmet need." *

The current formula for determining eligibility for a South Carolina Tuition Grant is Cost of Attendance (COA) minus Estimated Family Contribution (EFC) equating to Financial Need. With the change from SAI to EFC, and based on the guidance provided by the U.S. Department of Education, the new formula for determining eligibility for a South Carolina Tuition Grant effective with the 2024-2025 FAFSA cycle will be Cost of Attendance (COA) minus Student Aid Index (SAI – NOT TO FALL BELOW ZERO) equating to Financial Need. Ms. Harrison noted this change will take effect beginning with the 2024-2025 award year, with processing of South Carolina Tuition Grants Program applications to begin in December 2023 upon release of the new FAFSA form by the U.S. Department of Education.

Mr. Cochran called upon Mr. Christian to lead the discussion of the Crescerance Contract and the Legislative Geocoding Action Plan for 2023-2024. Mr. Christian reviewed several errors and issues that occurred this past legislative cycle with the Legislative Geo-Coding match services contracted with Crescerance which significantly delayed the availability of data, as well as leaving much of the data erroneous. As a result of the obstacles faced with the delays and having to spend multiple weeks in-house manually processing the data, Mr. Christian reported the Commission staff have discovered alternative methods for properly geo-coding students for the upcoming legislative cycle, allowing for the partnership with Crescerance to come to an end. With this decision, the Commission is saving contract monies, as well as reducing delays and errors throughout the process. There were no questions to discuss, however Ms. Harrison thanked Mr. Christian for his dedication to discovering a new process in correctly geo-coding over 12,000 students.

Mr. Cochran called upon Mr. Christian to report upon the upcoming due date of the South Carolina Tuition Grants Program Reviews. Mr. Christian stated all the third-party auditors that have been confirmed by the colleges have been contacted and sent the current copy of the 2022-2023 Program Review Guide, as well as the 2022-2023 Policies and Procedures Manual. Mr. Christian reported the Final Auditor's Copy of the Applicants Report will be posted to the Commission website on July 3, 2023 for retrieval by the colleges for the Auditors' use.

Mr. Cochran presented upon the 2022-2023 Agency Director Performance Evaluation. Mr. Cochran reported all college presidents were given the opportunity to provide an evaluation of Ms. Harrison's work, stating her overall composite score was a 4.88 out of 5.0, which is classified as an "Exceeds" scoring. Ms. Harrison was evaluated on Leadership, Strategic Planning, Customer Focus, Workforce Focus/Human Resources, Process Management, Continued Improvement upon Financial Management of the Agency. Ms. Harrison was scored as "Exceeds" in each of these categories, with comments from the evaluations including: "continued improvement she puts upon herself, and her team is recognized and appreciated," "incredibly knowledgeable," and "her team exudes customer service to us." Mr. Cochran stated it was a pleasure to conduct Ms. Harrison's evaluation, as it is an accurate appraisal of her performance.

Mr. Cochran asked if there was any new business. Ms. Harrison announced the retirement of Eddie Shannon, Executive Vice President, SCICU at the end of August 2023, and thanked him for his support of the South Carolina Tuition Grants Commission, and his service as the Agency's Executive Director in the past. Dr. McCorn announced the retirement of Dr. Staggers from Morris College at the end of June 2024, and thanked him for his service to the State of South Carolina and Morris College. Mr. Cochran thanked Dr. Staggers and

Dr. Costin for their service to the Commission as Secretary and Vice Chair, respectively, as well as the incoming slate of officers, Dr. Hopkins, Dr. Fant and Dr. McCorn for their upcoming work as elected officials of the Commission. Mr. Cochran also thanked Dr. Tom Bogart, Columbia College, and Dr. Costin for all their work for the Commission, as they are leaving their colleges for other endeavors.

Mr. Cochran reminded all participants that the next meeting is scheduled for March 12, 2024 at 10:30 am.

Mr. Cochran called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Dr. Costin moved to adjourn the meeting. Dr. Stagers seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. Mr. Cochran adjourned the meeting at 11:32 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Ms. Kira Demery
Acting Secretary for
Dr. Leroy Stagers, Secretary
South Carolina Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission

DRAFT



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MINUTES

South Carolina Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission Meeting
Monday, July 31, 2023
Special Commission Meeting Teleconference Call
Columbia, South Carolina

Commission Members Participating via Conference Call:

Dr. Boone Hopkins, Converse University, Chair
Dr. Gene Fant, North Greenville University, Vice Chair
Dr. Lester McCorn, Clinton College, Secretary
Dr. Michael Bryant, Interim President, Charleston Southern University
Dr. Buz Wilcoxon, Acting President, Presbyterian College
Dr. Nayef Samhat, Wofford College
Ms. Hannah Craig, proxy for Dr. William Barker, Southern Wesleyan University
Ms. Laura Belcher, proxy for Dr. Rusty Monhollon, SC Commission on Higher Education, Ex-officio

Commission Members Absent:

Dr. Maurice Scherrens, Newberry College

Non-Commission Member College Presidents Participating:

Dr. John Dozier, Columbia College
Dr. Ronnie Hopkins, Voorhees University

Dr. Boone Hopkins, Commission Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:03 AM. Dr. Hopkins welcomed all in attendance and requested a roll call of the Commission Members participating via conference call. Ms. Katie Harrison, Commission Executive Director, informed participants the meeting is being held in compliance with the Freedom of Information Act, welcomed all in attendance and conducted a roll call of the Commission Members participating via conference call. Ms. Harrison confirmed all participating Commission Members in attendance and noted that Ms. Hannah Craig is serving as proxy for Dr. William Barker, Southern Wesleyan University, and Ms. Laura Belcher is serving as proxy for Dr. Rusty Monhollon, SC Commission on Higher Education. A quorum was established. Ms. Harrison recognized and welcomed the non-Commission members in attendance.

Dr. Hopkins explained the reason for this special-called Commission Meeting is to discuss the freshman academic requirements, as well as an increase to the Maximum Award Amount. Dr. Hopkins called upon Mr. Zachary Christian, Commission Deputy Director, to present the staff recommendation regarding Freshman Academic Requirements. Mr. Christian explained the current Freshman Academic Requirements as needing to meet one of four academic markers to qualify. State statute requires that all students must show "academic merit," but does not specify how that must be met. The staff recommendation for the change to the Freshman Academic Requirements would benefit an average of over 75 students annually, while also meeting the requirements of State statute. Mr. Christian presented the recommendation to change the Freshman Academic Requirement to read as follows:

Incoming freshman who are admitted as degree-seeking students based on the college's academic requirements for admission, and who have obtained a high school diploma or its equivalent (GED or Adult Education Diploma) shall be considered academically eligible for South Carolina Tuition Grants.

Dr. Hopkins called for a motion to vote to accept the changes to the Freshman Academic Requirements. Dr. Lester McCorn, Commission Secretary moved to approve the changes. Dr. Buz Wilcoxon, Presbyterian College seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Dr. Hopkins called upon Ms. Harrison to present the staff recommendation regarding the Maximum South Carolina Tuition Grants Amount for 2023-2024. Ms. Harrison announced, based on carry-forward funds currently available, and following the established awarding philosophy of equalized grant values, the staff recommends an increase of the Maximum Grant from \$4,700 to \$4,800 for the 2023-2024 Award Year. Dr. Hopkins pointed out that an increase in the Maximum Grant amount would have a greater impact for the students, and does not overspend current funding predictions. Dr. Hopkins called for a motion to vote on the increase of the Maximum Grant amount. Dr. Nayef Samhat, Wofford College, moved to approve the change, and Dr. Wilcoxon seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

Dr. Hopkins asked if there was any old business to discuss, and with there being none, moved on to new business. Ms. Harrison announced an in-person meeting and training for financial aid administrators is to be held Wednesday, August 2, 2023, at Presbyterian College. The meeting's purpose is to give a brief update and training with a demonstration of the upcoming student information system "myTG" given by Ms. Becca Graham, IT Manager for Nelnet Diversified Services/GrantPro.

Dr. Hopkins reminded everyone that the scheduled Commission Meetings for 2024 are March 12, 2024, and June 18, 2024.

Dr. Hopkins called for any other new business. There being none, Dr. Hopkins adjourned the meeting at 10:23 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Mrs. Kira Demery
Acting Secretary for
Dr. Lester McCorn, Secretary
South Carolina Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission



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2022-2023 College Program Reviews *(Submission of Program Reviews is required by December 31, 2023)*

<u>College</u>	<u>Received</u>	<u>Status</u>
Allen	1/31/2024 (Ext. Granted)	Closed
Anderson	10/20/2023	Closed
Benedict	12/28/2023	Closed
Bob Jones	11/16/2023	Closed
Charleston Southern	12/18/2023	Closed
Clafin	12/29/2023	Closed
Clinton	12/31/2023	Closed
Coker	12/12/2023	Closed
Columbia	1/31/2024 (Ext. Granted)	Closed
Columbia International	11/28/2023	Closed
Converse	12/5/2023	Closed
Erskine	11/8/2023	Closed
Furman	12/28/2023	Closed
Limestone	12/27/2023	Closed
Morris	12/18/2023	Closed
Newberry	12/5/2023	Closed
North Greenville	10/18/2023	Closed
Presbyterian	12/20/2023	Closed
Southern Wesleyan	11/29/2023	Closed
Spartanburg Methodist	12/20/2023	Closed
Voorhees	12/22/2023	Closed
Wofford	12/20/2023	Closed

Updated 1/31/2024



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UPDATE ON THE 2022-2023 AND 2023-2024 AWARD YEARS

<u>MAXIMUM GRANT FUNDING SOURCES:</u>	<u>AVAILABLE FUNDS 2022-2023</u>	<u>AVAILABLE FUNDS 2023-2024</u>
State Recurring:	\$27,558,624	\$27,558,624
Children’s Ed. Endowment:	\$6,000,000 *	\$14,765,740 **
State Funds Interest:	\$242,055	\$242,055
State Lottery Funds:	\$20,000,000	\$20,000,000
<u>Total Funding</u>	<u>\$53,800,679</u>	<u>\$62,566,419</u>
Approved Maximum Grant:	<u>\$4,500</u>	<u>\$4,800</u>
Funding Cutoff Date:	June 30, 2022	June 30, 2023
Applications Received:	31,569 (+2.88%)	31,981 (+1.31%)
Commitments Made:	25,706 (+3.79%)	26,198 (+1.91%)
Grants Realized:	12,036 (+6.43%)	12,517 (+4.00%) ***
Show-up Rate:	46.82%	48.69% (Estimate)
Average Grant:	\$4,142	\$4,450 (Estimate)

* Independent College Full-time Enrollment for South Carolina Residents for Fall 2022 generated CEE funds of 18.84% of the state-wide total. For 2022-23, annual CEE spending authority was \$6,000,000.

** Independent College Full-time Enrollment for South Carolina Residents for Fall 2022 calculated at 19.02% of the state-wide total. For 2023-24, annual CEE spending authority increased to \$16,000,000 (up from \$6,000,000) regardless of the amount received.

*** With Certification for several Non-Traditional Programs still pending based on structure of Program, this number will not be final until the end of the Award Year.



Katherine H. Harrison
Executive Director

AGENCY UPDATES AND INITIATIVES

Staff Updates:

The Tuition Grants Commission staff continues to participate in state, regional, and national trainings, and professional development opportunities to ensure our agency has updated and relative knowledge and skills required to successfully administer the Program. Kira Demery, Program Coordinator, has obtained additional certifications through the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA) and is scheduled to attend the SC Association of Financial Aid Administrators (SCASFAA) New Aid Administrators Workshop in April. In addition, she has applied to participate in the LeadSC Program, a year-long training program for emerging leaders in state government offered by the SC Department of Administration.

Gena Miles, Financial Officer, researched and implemented more efficient ways of processing and requesting disbursements of grants as part of the implementation of *myTG*. The updated process allows Tuition Grants disbursements to be made with up to all four sources of funds (State, Interest, Lottery, Endowment) on a single disbursement roster. Further efficiencies have allowed the Commission to disburse grants as frequently as on a weekly basis at the request of colleges' business offices. This change has helped ensure eligible students receive their grants funding as quickly as possible after certification is complete.

Deputy Director Zachary Christian began his term as President of the SC Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (SCASFAA) in July 2023, and has had a very successful year thus far. He presided over the annual conference in October, boasting one of the highest numbers of attendees in recent history. Zachary continues to be active on the Executive Board of the regional association, SASFAA, as a voting member, and recently presented at the annual conference for the National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs (NASSGAP).

Executive Director Katie Harrison concluded her term as Past President of the National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs (NASSGAP) in October and was immediately appointed to a two-year term as Conference Co-Chair for the Association. In this role, she will plan and executive NASSGAP's 2024 and 2025 conferences, to be held in Portland, Maine, and Washington, DC, respectively. Katie continues to serve as part of the leadership planning team for the combined NASSGAP and SHEEO collaboration project to assist state agencies with their FAFSA Simplification efforts.

The Tuition Grants Commission was recently recognized during the quarterly LinkedIn Learning Sub-administrators meeting for 100% of staff successfully completing professional development courses within a 90-day period. Each meeting, agencies are recognized through various metrics on a leaderboard. The next highest percentage of an agency's staff completing training was recorded at 33%. The South Carolina Department of Administration (Admin) has renewed the State's license with LinkedIn Learning and continues to promote the use of this online training platform at no cost to the individual employees or their respective agencies.

FAFSA Updates:

The Tuition Grants Commission, along with every other state higher education agency and every institution of higher education, has been grappling with the unintended consequences and processing slowdowns resulting from FAFSA Simplification, as the Federal Department of Education's rollout of the new 2024-2025 FAFSA has been significantly delayed and wrought with troubles, frustrations, and inconsistencies.

At this time, the Commission is waiting for ED to begin releasing ISIRs (electronic FAFSA application records), which is scheduled to begin this week. Until that time, the agency has no way to compare application numbers to prior years or to determine how many new and returning students have been able to successfully complete their 2024-2025 FAFSAs. This inhibits our ability to make projections on Tuition Grant awards with any level of accuracy. In the meantime, the agency has completed all the steps necessary to receive the ISIRs when they are released, including the submission of the new participation agreement, setup of the new transmission mailbox, and the sharing of vital test file information with the system vendor to ensure our ability to receive and process applications without further unnecessary delays.

Launch of myTG:

Under the leadership of Deputy Director Zachary Christian, agency staff worked diligently and efficiently with the development team at Nelnet Diversified Solutions to help design, build, test, and deploy the new Student Information System, branded as *myTG*, to much success. In order to have the system operational for the Fall 2023 semester, this work was completed in an impressive 6-month period. The new web-based system has enhanced the administration of the Tuition Grants Program in numerous ways, both from the agency and the college financial aid office perspective. Thanks to increased efficiencies, the Commission disbursed 100% of its fall awards, including to non-traditional students in block programs and to students whose eligibility was determined after the November 15th eligibility deadline, prior to December 1st, a 2-3 week improvement over prior years.

Thanks to the financial aid offices for their quick adaptation to the new system and their willingness to learn and embrace a new way to administer the Program alongside our staff!

House Legislative Oversight Committee Process Update:

As previously disclosed to all college presidents and other interested parties, the Tuition Grants Commission was selected last year as one of eight state agencies to undergo an extensive and formal review by the House Legislative Oversight Committee. Public input was gathered regarding the agencies involved in 2023, and the Tuition Grants Commission completed all applicable requests and reports to the HLOC in March 2023. Due to unexpected delays in their review of another state agency, the HLOC has not yet begun their review of the Tuition Grants Commission, but has been in communication with agency leadership and will inform the agency when additional actions, including legislative hearings, are required.



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REVIEW OF THE 2024-2025 STATE BUDGET REQUEST FOR FUNDING OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA TUITION GRANTS PROGRAM

At the June 2023 South Carolina Tuition Grants Commission Meeting, the Commission approved the budget request to be sent to the State Executive Budget Office for funding of the South Carolina Tuition Grants Program for the 2024-2025 fiscal year. The agency submitted documents in September 2023 asking for continued funding of the \$10 million increase for the Tuition Grants Program realized beginning in FY21. The Commission's Budget Request asked for consideration of these funds being moved from Lottery (non-recurring) to General Fund (recurring). In addition, the Budget Request included a \$10,000 increase to support the agency's obligation to pay employee benefits.

Executive Director Katie Harrison met with representatives from the Governor's office and the Executive Budget Office on **October 12, 2023**, to review the request and to discuss the budget request, the impact of the program, and to answer questions.

Governor Henry McMaster released his 2024-2025 Executive Budget in January. The Executive Budget recommended continued funding of the recent increases for both the Tuition Grants Program and CHE's Need-Based Grant Program. The Governor's Executive Budget recommends the funding source for these funds continue to be allocations from the Lottery account.

The General Assembly convened in January 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 **January 11, 2024**, in Columbia. The Higher Education Subcommittee is chaired by Representative Nathan Ballentine (Richland/Lexington). He is joined on the subcommittee by Representatives Gilda Cobb-Hunter (Orangeburg) and Bill Taylor (Aiken/Lexington).

The House Ways & Means Committee has approved the recommendations of the Governor and has submitted to the full House a budget which includes the \$10 million increase in Lottery appropriation. The House is scheduled to debate the FY25 Budget during the week of **March 11, 2024**.

The Commission appeared appear before the Senate Finance Higher Education Subcommittee on **February 13, 2024**. The Senate Finance Higher Education Subcommittee is chaired by Senator Ronnie Cromer (Newberry/Lexington/Union). He is joined on the subcommittee by Senators Thomas McElveen (Richland/Kershaw/Lee/Sumter), Darrell Jackson (Richland), Ross Turner (Greenville), and Tom Corbin (Greenville/Spartanburg). The full Senate Finance Committee is scheduled to meet during the week of **April 9, 2024**, while the full Senate is tentatively scheduled to make its recommendations during the week of **April 23, 2024**.



SC Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission

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Katherine H. Harrison
Executive Director

STAFF RECOMMENDATION REGARDING DEPUTY DIRECTOR OFFICE FURNITURE PURCHASE

S.C. Code of Laws, Section 11-35-450, requires governing boards/commissions to approve the purchase of office furniture exceeding \$1,000 if it is to be used in the agency's executive director's or assistant/deputy director's office. When the Tuition Grants Commission moved to the current office suite in 2019, the Commission approved the purchase of new furniture for the Executive Director's office, with the old furniture being repurposed for the Deputy Director's office.

That furniture, which is a mixture of individual pieces purchased in 2014 and in the 1980s has more than served its purpose and should be replaced. Current issues leading to the request for new furniture include the "computer" desk being slightly damaged during the move; while functional for the past five years, the impacts of the damage are becoming more noticeable through normal wear and tear. Additionally, the credenza and lateral file, both obtained in the 1980s, do not have appropriate locking mechanisms to allow for the storage of sensitive or restrictive paperwork, limiting their use.

Commission Staff have worked with Lorick Office Products, which is an approved vendor on State Contract for office furniture, to obtain a quote for a new desk and two matching lateral files with proper locking mechanisms. Lorick Office Products is also a registered minority business and purchases through this furniture contract would support the agency's Minority Business Expenditure goal plan for FY2024, which is required of all State agencies.

Commission Staff recommend that the Commission consider approving the purchase of a new desk and matching lateral file cabinets for use in the Deputy Director's office in the amount of \$3,785.40, which includes applicable taxes and fees. If approved, the current furniture would be sent to the state's surplus supply, and if subsequently sold, the agency would recoup a percent of the sale.

A vote by the South Carolina Tuition Grants Commission is required to approve this purchase.

Bill To:

111 Executive Center Dr.
 Suite 242
 Columbia SC 29210
 Kira Demery

Project: PRIVATE OFFICE
 Designer: Taricka Taylor-Lorick
 Account Rep: Taricka Taylor-Lorick

Ship To:

111 Executive Center Dr.
 Suite 242
 Columbia SC 29210
 Kira Demery

Quote: Q1-030724
 Date: 3/7/2024

Sold To:

111 Executive Center Dr.
 Suite 242
 Columbia SC 29210
 Kira Demery


Contract #: SC State Contract

QUOTATION





Grand Total: \$3,785.40

Line#	0		List:	\$0.00	\$0.00
1		Lorick Contract 4400023060	Sell:	\$0.00	\$0.00
			Disc:		0.00
Line#	0		List:	\$0.00	\$0.00
2		4400022782 Office Source Furniture Contract Number	Sell:	\$0.00	\$0.00
			Disc:		0.00
			Subtotal:		\$0.00

LATERAL FILE

Line#		2	COE PL112	List:	\$1,248.00	\$2,496.00
3			2 drw lateral filing cabinet w/ removable top 36"W x 22"D x 29" H	Sell:	\$624.00	\$1,248.00
				Disc:		50.00
			Laminate Color Selection	MH	LAM: Mahogany	
			Pull Selection	STD	Standard Black Pull	
				Subtotal:		\$1,248.00


U-SHAPE DESK WITH HUTCH


Line#		1	COE PL189	List:	\$946.00	\$946.00
4			Bow Front Desk Shell, 71"W x 36/41"D	Sell:	\$473.00	\$473.00
				Disc:		50.00
			Laminate Color Selection	MH	LAM: Mahogany	
Line#		1	COE PL193	List:	\$344.00	\$344.00
5			Bridge, 36"W x 24"D	Sell:	\$172.00	\$172.00
				Disc:		50.00
			Laminate Color Selection	MH	LAM: Mahogany	
Line#		1	COE PL182R	List:	\$859.00	\$859.00
6			Credenza w/corner extension, 71"W x 24/36"D Right	Sell:	\$429.50	\$429.50
				Disc:		50.00
			Laminate Color Selection	MH	LAM: Mahogany	
Line#		1	COE PL166	List:	\$696.00	\$696.00
7			Full pedestal, Box/box/file	Sell:	\$348.00	\$348.00
				Disc:		50.00

Laminate Color Selection MH LAM: Mahogany
 Pull Selection STD Standard Black Pull

Line#		1	COE PL144OH		List:	\$851.00	\$851.00
8			Open Hutch, 71"W x 36"H		Sell:	\$425.50	\$425.50
					Disc:		50.00

Laminate Color Selection MH LAM: Mahogany

Line#		1	COE PL44SGD_OD		List:	\$373.00	\$373.00
9			Silver Glass Door Set for New PL144, Outside Doors (2 per set)		Sell:	\$186.50	\$186.50
					Disc:		50.00

Line#		1	COE GBM1769		List:	\$445.00	\$445.00
10			17x69 Magnetic White Glassboard		Sell:	\$222.50	\$222.50
					Disc:		50.00

Subtotal: \$2,257.00

Line#		LOP	SC Sales Tax		List:	\$0.00	\$0.00
			SC Sales Tax (8.0%)		Sell:	\$280.40	\$280.40
					Disc:		

Grand Total: \$3,785.40

Grand Total: \$3,785.40

Lorick Office Product

CUSTOMER ACCEPTANCE OF TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Accepted By: _____

Title: _____

Date: _____



Katherine H. Harrison
Executive Director

STAFF RECOMMENDATION FOR REVIEW OF PROGRAM REVIEW REQUIREMENTS

Each year, all institutions participating in the Tuition Grants Program are required to undergo a third-party Tuition Grants Program Review. The institution retains the full authority to choose its own third-party auditor to complete the Program Review. According to the Program Review Guide, the primary objectives identified for the auditor performing Program Reviews are:

1. To determine that the college has utilized reasonable administrative procedures and internal controls for effectively discharging its management responsibilities;
2. To review the college's operations and report on areas of non-compliance with the legislation, program guidelines, and program instructions; and, based upon the review, to provide a program manager's constructive recommendations for improvements.

The Program Review Guide, provided to each audit firm by Commission Staff annually, also specifies, "the auditor will review computations associated with either a 20% random sample of student awards, or the appropriate statistical random sample, either of which should be derived from the Payment Roster Report that is available at the college via the *myTG* student information system." There is no additional guidance in the Program Review Guide stating how to derive an appropriate statistical random sample.

Throughout the years, the random sample student award percentage has varied substantially from institution to institution, ranging from only 1.45% to 42.86% in the most recent year. For the recently concluded 2022-2023 program review cycle, the average percentage of student awards reviewed was 11.11%.

Commission Staff believes this disparity in percentages, especially with some audit firms regularly reviewing less than 3-5% of Tuition Grant awards, may not lend itself to a thorough review of administrative procedures and institutional responsibilities at some institutions. The agency recommends that the Commission discuss whether a minimum percentage threshold should be implemented beginning with the 2023-2024 program review cycle.

If the Commission agrees that a minimum percentage should be reflected in the Program Review Guide, it should also discuss and vote on what that percentage should be. For reference, in the most recent academic year, Tuition Grant awards at the participating colleges (not including Clinton College, for whom 2022-2023 was the first year students were eligible for Tuition Grants, resulting in an artificially low number of grant awards) ranged from 140 students to 1,549 students.

A vote by the South Carolina Tuition Grants Commission is required to change the current Program Review Requirements and to set a minimum percentage threshold.



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Katherine H. Harrison
Executive Director

**STAFF RECOMMENDATION REGARDING INITIAL 2024-2025
SOUTH CAROLINA TUITION GRANTS**

Based on the continued recommended support of \$20,000,000 in Lottery Funding by the House Ways & Means Committee, and with the expectation that the Senate will concur, along with evaluation of funds available to carry-forward, following the established awarding philosophy of equalized grant values, the Commission staff recommends to the Commission that initial grants for 2024-2025 be approved as follows:

The Maximum Grant should be retained at the current award amount of \$4,800 for the 2024-2025 Award Year. When the agency receives and begins processing the 2024-2025 FAFSA records, which have been delayed by the US Department of Education, further discussions may occur that would allow the Commission to consider other recommendations. Commission Staff does not anticipate the award amount would drop below \$4,800 under any circumstances.

A vote by the South Carolina Tuition Grants Commission is required to approve the initial Maximum Tuition Grant for the 2024-2025 academic year.



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Executive Director

DISCUSSION ON POSSIBLE EXTENSION TO THE TUITION GRANTS PROGRAM APPLICATION DEADLINE

In the Fall of 1992, the SC Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission changed the first-come, first-served awarding philosophy to one that uses available program dollars to fund all eligible applicants who applied by June 30th of each year. At the time, this change in awarding philosophy lowered the dollar amount of each student's tuition grant at every participating independent institution while increasing the total number of recipients funded for the whole program. This strict application deadline has remained in place with an appeal process for students who experienced extenuating circumstances preventing them from completing their application during the entire application period, which, except for this year's FAFSA delay, has been October 1 – June 30 since the availability of the 2017-2018 FAFSA on October 1, 2016 (Prior to that, it was January 1 – June 30).

Upon examination of existing data in the Commission's student information system over the last five years, an extension to the deadline from June 30 to August 1 could fund up to an additional 1,300 – 1,550 students to the cost of \$5.8 million - \$7.5 million. As a result of this large "cost" in funding, Commission Staff have previously not considered submitting recommendations regarding an extension to the Program's application deadline to the Commission. As the Commission has worked to make great strides in expanding access to more South Carolina residents, and with the current projected carryforward funds, Commission Staff feel this is the time to discuss the possible options regarding the application deadline:

Option 1: Maintain the June 30 deadline as has been in place since the application cycle for the 1993-1994 Award Year; or,

Option 2: Extend the application deadline from June 30 to August 1 for the 2024-2025 Award Year only, returning to June 30, 2025, effective with the 2025-2026 Award Year deadline; or,

Option 3: Extend the application deadline from June 30 to August 1, effective with the 2024-2025 Award Year and beyond.

Based on current projections, a deadline extension without reducing the Maximum Grant could be sustainable for the next few years; however, budgetary shortfalls could arise in future years requiring the need for the Commission to request new money in future budget requests to sustain the current award amount or to make future increases to the Maximum Grant.

As of this meeting, applications (FAFSA Data) have not yet begun to be transmitted to any college, university, or State Grant agency. This discussion could also be tabled until the April 16, 2024 Commission Meeting, although making the decision today will allow Commission Staff to consider any increased application numbers when making recommendations about any increases or changes to the Maximum Grant Amount.

Should the Commission wish to act today, a vote by the South Carolina Tuition Grants Commission would be required to make changes to the current June 30 Application Deadline.



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info@sctuitiongrants.org

Katherine H. Harrison
Executive Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: South Carolina Tuition Grants Commission Members
FROM: Katie Harrison, Executive Director
DATE: January 23, 2024
**SUBJECT: Required Completion of State Ethics Commission's
Statement of Economic Interests Form**

As a current member of the South Carolina Tuition Grants Commission, you are required by South Carolina State Law and by the State Ethics Commission to complete the Statement of Economic Interests (SEI) report for the 2024 calendar year. The filing requirement for the Statement of Economic Interests report includes, regardless of compensation, the members of all state boards, commissions or agencies.

A completed report **must be filed** with the State Ethics Commission by each individual Commission member no later than **March 30, 2024**, so that you are not penalized \$100 or more per day for failure to do so.

Each filer is required to complete their report electronically. After going to the State Ethics Commission's web site, you may review the User Guides section or go directly to the Electronic Filing link to proceed. If you do not already have an online account with the State Ethics Commission, you must create a user account after clicking the Electronic Filing link. The main web site is:

<https://ethics.sc.gov>

PLEASE NOTE: The Ethics Commission website, including the SEI filing system, was completely redesigned recently. If you have filed the SEI form in previous years and have an existing online account, you may need to **migrate your existing account** before proceeding.

For detailed instructions, including how to migrate an existing account, please visit <https://ethicsfiling.sc.gov/filing/help>.

REMINDER: Per State Ethics Commission requirements, all filers must disclose (1) the source and (2) the type of any private income received in the previous year by the filer or a member of the filer's immediate family under the Income & Benefits section of the 2024 SEI. The dollar amount is required ONLY for government income. The dollar amount box will close when you click on "private" if the source of the income is a non-governmental employer.

If you have any questions about the required completion of the SEI form, please contact the State Ethics Commission directly at (803) 253-4192.

Please be sure that your completed report is completed online with the State Ethics Commission by the **March 30 deadline**.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter.