



Katherine H. Harrison  
Executive Director

## **AGENDA**

Tuesday, June 25, 2024; 10:30 A.M.

**Microsoft Teams Meeting: Meeting ID: 229 607 120 29; Passcode: HFZagu**

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

(803) 454-9963

Phone Conference ID: 253 868 829#

- |     |   |                      |
|-----|---|----------------------|
| 1.  | Welcome and Commission Roll Call.....   | Katie Harrison       |
| 2.  | * Approval of Minutes of March 12, 2024 and April 16, 2024.....<br>Commission Meetings  | Boone Hopkins, Chair |
| 3.  | Agency Updates.....   | Katie Harrison       |
| 4.  | Recognition of Agency Employee Milestones .....   | Boone Hopkins, Chair |
| 5.  | Review of 2023-2024 Award Year and Update on the 2024-2025<br>Award Year (Including Update on FAFSA Filings) .....                    | Zach Christian       |
| 6.  | Review of Federal Methodology and SCTG Eligibility .....  | Katie Harrison       |
| 7.  | * Discussion (Possible Vote) of the Expansion of Eligibility Deadline<br>and Allowable Spring-Only Appeals.....                       | Zach Christian       |
| 8.  | Report on the Status of the 2024 Legislative Session.....   | Jeff Perez, SCICU    |
| 9.  | * Approval of the 2025-2026 Budget Request to the State Executive<br>Budget Office for the South Carolina Tuition Grants Program..... | Katie Harrison       |
| 10. | Update on SC Tuition Grants Program Reviews.....  | Zach Christian       |
| 11. | Rotation of the Tuition Grants Commission and Confirmation<br>of Officers.....  | Boone Hopkins, Chair |
| 12. | Update on State Ethics Commission SEI Filing Requirement .....  | Katie Harrison       |
| 13. | New Business.....   | Boone Hopkins, Chair |
| 14. | Adjournment.....  | Boone Hopkins, Chair |

***Next Scheduled Commission Meetings:  
Tuesday; March 11, 2025; 10:30 AM  
Tuesday; June 17, 2025; 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 June 18, 2024.*



# SC Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission

*Providing Opportunity. Promoting Choice.*

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

Katherine H. Harrison  
Executive Director

## **MINUTES**

South Carolina Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission Meeting  
Tuesday, March 12, 2024  
Virtual Meeting  
Columbia, South Carolina

### Commission Members Participating:

Dr. Boone Hopkins, Converse University, Chair  
Dr. Gene Fant, North Greenville University, Vice Chair  
Dr. Lester McCorn, Clinton College, Secretary  
Mr. Keith Faulkner, Charleston Southern University  
Dr. Maurice Scherrens, Newberry College  
Dr. Anita Gustafson, Presbyterian College  
Dr. Chad Stutz as Proxy for Dr. William Barker, Southern Wesleyan University  
Dr. Nayef Samhat, Wofford College  
Dr. Gregory Little, SC Commission on Higher Education, Ex-officio

### Non-Commission Member College Presidents Participating:

Dr. John Dozier, Columbia College  
Mr. Jeremy Whitaker, Limestone University  
Mr. Scott Cochran, Spartanburg Methodist College  
Dr. Ronnie Hopkins, Voorhees University

Dr. Boone Hopkins, Commission Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:30 AM. Ms. Katie Harrison, Commission Executive Director, informed participants the meeting is being transcribed 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. Ms. Harrison confirmed all participating Commission Members in attendance and noted that Dr. Chad Stutz is serving as proxy for Dr. William Barker, Southern Wesleyan University. A quorum was established. Ms. Harrison recognized and welcomed the non-Commission members in attendance.

Dr. Hopkins called for a motion to approve the June 20, 2023, and July 31, 2023, Commission Minutes. Dr. Lester McCorn, Commission Secretary, moved to approve the Minutes and Dr. Nayef Samhat, Wofford College, seconded the motion. There was no discussion. Dr. Hopkins put the motion to a vote which passed unanimously.

Dr. Hopkins called upon Ms. Harrison to report on 2022-2023 Program Reviews. Ms. Harrison reported on the twenty-two colleges who underwent Program Reviews for the 2022-2023 year, stating all reviews were submitted by the deadline, with two deadline extensions granted, and all have been closed. Ms. Harrison reported there were five colleges with findings program-wide with most of the findings pertaining to the requirement of returning funds to the Commission within 30 working days of the institution being notified of student ineligibility. A singular finding at an institution regarding internal reconciliation discrepancies was rectified after the program review process. Ms. Harrison thanked all participants for their work during the Programs Reviews this year.

Dr. Hopkins called on Mr. Zachary Christian, Commission Deputy Director, to report on the 2023-2024 Award Year. Mr. Christian reported that the Agency has seen an increase in the total number of applications received, total commitments made, and total grants realized in the 2022-2023 Award Year over the previous year, with a more than six percent increase in grants realized. Mr. Christian noted that for the current award year, 2023-2024, the Agency has realized grants for 12,517 students as of March 1, a four-percent increase so far over the previous year, with several Non-Traditional program certifications still pending. Mr. Christian attributes the implementation of the Agency's new student information system, *myTG*, as streamlining the certification process and enabling the Agency to send funds to students much earlier than with the prior process.

Dr. Hopkins called on Ms. Harrison to report on Agency Updates and Initiative. Ms. Harrison noted Ms. Kira Demery, Commission Program Coordinator, the Agency's newest staff member, has taken the initiative to participate in many trainings and professional development opportunities. These opportunities include attending the annual conference of the Southern Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (SASF AA) in February, where she obtained a professional certification credential through the National Association of Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA). Ms. Demery is also scheduled to attend the South Carolina Association of Financial Aid Administrators (SCASF AA) New Aid Officers Workshop in April and has applied to participate in a year-long training program for emerging leaders in state government, LeadSC, through the South Carolina Department of Administration.

Ms. Harrison reported that Ms. Gena Miles, Commission Financial Officer, has been researching and implementing more efficient ways of processing and requesting grant disbursements as part of the implementation of *myTG*. Ms. Miles has discovered ways to ensure eligible students receive their grants funding as quickly as possible after certification is complete.

Ms. Harrison acknowledged Mr. Christian's role as current President of SCASF AA, presiding over the annual conference of the Association in October, which boasted one of the highest number of attendees in recent history. Mr. Christian continues to serve on the SASF AA Executive Board as a voting member, and recently presented at the annual conference for the National Association of the State Student Grant and Aid Programs (NASSGAP).

Ms. Harrison described recently concluding her term as Past President of NASSGAP in October and being immediately appointed to a two-year term as Conference Co-Chair. As Conference Co-Chair, Ms. Harrison will plan and execute the Association's 2024 and 2025 conferences. Ms. Harrison continues to serve as part of the leadership planning team for the combined NASSGAP and State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) collaboration project to assist state agencies with their FAFSA Simplification efforts.

The Agency has been recognized by the South Carolina Department of Administration for one hundred percent of staff successfully completing professional development courses on the LinkedIn Learning platform within a 90-day period.

Ms. Harrison noted the Agency, as well as every institution of higher education in the nation, has been following FAFSA Simplification developments closely and completed all necessary steps to receive the Institutional Student Information Records (ISIR) prior to the Department of Education sending the first file on March 11. Ms. Harrison announced that through the Agency's collaboration with their student information system vendor, Nelnet Diversified Services, the first real ISIR file of 2024-2025 has been successfully received.

Ms. Harrison reported that the Agency worked diligently under the leadership of Mr. Christian, with the development team at Nelnet Diversified Services to help design, build, test, and deploy *myTG* and have the system operational for the Fall 2023 semester. Ms. Harrison noted the Agency has begun receiving student inquiries through the student portal of *myTG* and will continue to work toward utilizing all student-facing aspects of the web-based application soon.

Ms. Harrison presented upon the status of the Agency's House Legislative Oversight Committee process as still in progress. Due to unexpected delays in their review of another state agency, the House Legislative Oversight Committee has not yet begun their review of the Agency, however they are expected to begin soon. Ms. Harrison assured the Commission that all initial requests have been completed at this time.

Dr. Hopkins called upon Ms. Harrison to report on the Review of the 2024-2025 State Budget Request for Funding of the South Carolina Tuition Grants Program. Ms. Harrison stated the budget process is underway, with the House scheduled to meet during the week of March 11, and the Finance Committee of the Senate scheduled to meet during the week of April 9, 2024 to discuss the budget. Ms. Harrison reported the Agency asked for continued funding of the \$10,000,000 increase from lottery appropriations for the Tuition Grants Program realized in the past three fiscal years and requested an additional \$10,000 in funding to support the Agency's obligation to pay employee benefits.

Dr. Hopkins called upon Dr. Jeffrey Perez, President and CEO of South Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities (SCICU), to report on the 2024 Legislative Outlook. Dr. Perez began by describing Ms. Harrison's presentation of the State Budget Request to the Higher Education Subcommittee of the House Ways and Means Committee in January as very well received. Dr. Perez reported the House is deliberating upon the budget currently, with \$80,000,000 being discussed for need-based grants, a percentage of which is allotted toward the Tuition Grants Program. The House is also discussing how to use the CHE scholarship surplus of \$152,000,000, with ideas to support higher education initiatives throughout the State.

Dr. Perez thanked the Agency for all the work that they have done to process the student geocoding information internally and called upon Mr. Christian to further explain the process which the Agency has undertaken to complete the legislative district match for each student. Mr. Christian explained the process the Agency is using to anonymize student data to upload to the United States Census Bureau's website to retrieve most of the student geocoding data, with 1,300 students, or 8 percent of the student dataset which remained to be manually coded by Ms. Demery after automated processing completed due to a data mismatch with student addresses. Dr. Perez stated there were over 7,000 student letters sent to legislators last year, which was recently noted by Representative Nathan Ballentine at a Higher Education Ways and Means Subcommittee meeting as being impactful across the legislature.

Dr. Perez announced Higher Education Day for 2024 at the State House will be on Tuesday, April 9. He stressed the importance of the collaboration between SCICU, the South Carolina Technical College System, and the CHE to continue to make this event possible.

Dr. Hopkins called upon Ms. Harrison to present the Staff Recommendation for an Office Furniture Purchase of a desk for the Deputy Director's office. Ms. Harrison explained State Statute requires a vote of the governing board of the Agency to approve purchases exceeding \$1,000 for office furniture to be used in the Agency's Executive Director's or Deputy Director's offices. Ms. Harrison described the current state of the Deputy Director's desk set as partially damaged and not able to be locked for data security, as some pieces were obtained in the 1980's. Dr. Maurice Scherrens, Newberry College, moved to approve the purchase of a desk for the Deputy Director's office; Dr. McCorn seconded the motion. There was no discussion. Dr. Hopkins put the motion to a vote which passed unanimously.

Dr. Hopkins called upon Ms. Harrison to present upon a Staff Recommendation for a change to the Agency's Program Review Requirements. The Commission's current Program Review Requirements include verbiage stating, "the auditor will review computations associated with either a 20 percent 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." Ms. Harrison explained throughout the years, the random sample student award percentage has varied substantially, ranging from 1.45 percent to 42.86 percent. Ms. Harrison proposed for the Commission to create a minimum threshold for the percentage auditors choose as the appropriate statistical random sample, if the suggested 20 percent is not utilized. Dr. Hopkins requested Ms. Harrison give a recommendation for a percentage which

would be discussed by the Commission. After discussion, it was determined additional information regarding the potential impact this change would have, and Ms. Harrison agreed to collect data to present to the Commission at the next meeting, so discussion may continue. Dr. Hopkins proposed the Commission table the discussion of the proposed changes to the Agency's Program Review Requirements until the next scheduled meeting, to which there were no objections.

Dr. Hopkins called upon Ms. Harrison to present upon a Staff Recommendation regarding Initial 2024-2025 South Carolina Tuition Grant award amount. Based on the support of the initial \$20,000,000 in Lottery Funding continuing for the 2024-2025 year, the agency recommended the Maximum Grant should remain at \$4,800 for the 2024-2025 Award Year. Dr. Hopkins called for a motion to carry the Maximum Grant for 2023-2024 Award Year of \$4,800 forward to the 2024-2025 Award Year. Dr. McCorn moved to set the initial Maximum Grant at \$4,800. Dr. Anita Gustafson, Presbyterian College, seconded the motion. There was no discussion. Dr. Hopkins put the motion to a vote which passed unanimously.

Dr. Hopkins called upon Mr. Christian to present upon the discussion topic of a South Carolina Tuition Grant application submission deadline extension. Mr. Christian explained the history of the June 30 deadline policy as being initiated in the fall of 1992 by the Commission. To begin the discussion among the Commission members, Mr. Christian presented data including the number of students who submitted their Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), which is used as the application for the Tuition Grants Program, after June 30, but before September, ranging between 1,300 and 1,550 over the last five years. Mr. Christian reported the estimated cost to extend the deadline from June 30 to August 1 would be between \$5,800,000 and \$7,500,000 annually. Mr. Christian presented three options for the Commission to discuss:

1. Maintain the June 30 deadline as has been in place since the application cycle for the 1993-1994 Award Year; or,
2. Extend the application deadline from June 30 to August 1 for the 2024-2025 Award Year only, returning to June 30 effective with the 2025-2026 Award Year; or,
3. Extend the application deadline from June 30 to August 1, effective with the 2024-2025 Award Year and beyond.

After discussion among Commission members, and comments from a number of the Financial Aid Directors in attendance, Dr. Hopkins called for a motion. Dr. Keith Faulkner, Charleston Southern University moved to approve option three: to extend the application deadline to August 1, effective with the 2024-2025 Award Year and beyond. Dr. McCorn seconded the motion. No other discussion was had. Dr. Hopkins put the motion to a vote which passed unanimously. Ms. Harrison thanked the Commission for all the work they have accomplished to enact changes over the last several years which have largely impacted students and their families.

Dr. Hopkins reminded all Commission members to complete their Ethics filing by the March 30, 2024, deadline.

Dr. Hopkins asked if there was any new business. There was none.

Dr. Hopkins reminded all participants that the next meeting is scheduled for April 16, 2024, at 10:30 AM.

Dr. Hopkins adjourned the meeting at 11:38 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

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



# SC Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission

*Providing Opportunity. Promoting Choice.*

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

Katherine H. Harrison  
Executive Director

## **MINUTES**

South Carolina Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission Meeting  
Tuesday, April 16, 2024  
Special Commission Virtual Meeting  
Columbia, South Carolina

### Commission Members Participating:

Dr. Boone Hopkins, Converse University, Chair  
Dr. Gene Fant, North Greenville University, Vice Chair  
Dr. Anita Gustafson, Presbyterian College  
Dr. Chad Stutz as Proxy for Dr. William Barker, Southern Wesleyan University  
Dr. Nayef Samhat, Wofford College

### Commission Members Absent:

Dr. Maurice Scherrens, Newberry College  
Dr. Lester McCorn, Clinton College, Secretary  
Mr. Keith Faulkner, Charleston Southern University  
Dr. Gregory Little, SC Commission on Higher Education, Ex-officio

### Non-Commission Member College Presidents Participating:

Mr. Jeremy Whitaker, Limestone University  
Dr. Roslyn Artis, Benedict College

Dr. Boone Hopkins, Commission Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:32 AM. Dr. Hopkins welcomed all in attendance and announced a delay in conducting a roll call of the Commission Members participating until before the action items, due to not having a quorum. Ms. Katie Harrison, Commission Executive Director, informed participants the meeting is being held in compliance with the Freedom of Information Act, and welcomed all in attendance.

Dr. Hopkins called upon Mr. Zachary Christian, Commission Deputy Director, to present the update on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) Processing. Mr. Christian noted on March 11, 2024, the Agency received its first 2024-2025 Institutional Student Identification Record (ISIR) file, containing FAFSA data for 11 South Carolina Residents. Mr. Christian gave an overview of the numerous delays and errors by the U.S. Department of Education as part of the rollout of the new FAFSA. While the Commission has begun receiving student FAFSA records (ISIRs) on a daily basis, filings are still down significantly over last year due to continuing issues and problems with the form. Mr. Christian also reported that Commission Staff recently identified an issue with the order in which a student lists their college choices on the FAFSA not being delivered to state agencies correctly, which is impacting multiple states. Mr. Christian explained the U.S. Department of Education stated this issue was addressed quickly with a fix put in place prior to the meeting of the Commission. Mr. Christian announced the Agency is waiting to hear whether it will receive updated files for the students who filed prior to the implementation of the fix.

Dr. Hopkins called upon Ms. Harrison to present the Review of Available and Anticipated Funds for the South Carolina Tuition Grants Program. Ms. Harrison provided an overview of how the Commission receives funding for the Program through both General/Recurring State dollars and Lottery allocations throughout the fiscal

year, and explained that due to the pattern of receiving over half of the Program's lottery-related funding after all annual grants have been disbursed to students, the Commission estimates it will carry forward nearly \$39,000,000 in available funding from fiscal year 2024 into fiscal year 2025. However, Ms. Harrison explained these funds will be used during the Fall 2024 semester to allow the Commission to fully disburse Tuition Grants to eligible students without delay.

Dr. Hopkins requested the roll call be conducted prior to commencing the discussion of the Staff Recommendation for 2024-2025 Award Amounts. Ms. Harrison conducted a roll call of the Commission Members participating via conference call. Ms. Harrison confirmed all participating Commission Members in attendance and noted that Dr. Chad Stutz is serving as proxy for Dr. William Barker, Southern Wesleyan University. A quorum was established. Ms. Harrison recognized and welcomed the non-Commission members in attendance.

Dr. Hopkins called upon Ms. Harrison to present the staff recommendation of maintaining the initial 2024-2025 award amounts. Ms. Harrison described the continuing problems with the FAFSA rollout and the unknown impact the problems will have upon eligibility and enrollment. Due to these ongoing concerns, the staff recommendation for the 2024-2025 Award Amounts is to retain the previously approved Maximum Grant for 2024-2025 at \$4,800 at all institutions and across all programs. A vote of the Commission was not required for this item, since there was no recommended change to the award amount for the upcoming year.

Dr. Hopkins requested Ms. Harrison review the Program Review Requirements discussion, which was had at the March 12, 2024, Commission Meeting and tabled for further discussion when additional data could be presented. After reviewing the discussion points from the March meeting, Ms. Harrison presented data concerning the colleges which would have an impact if the suggested change of requiring a range of between six and twenty percent of student records be selected by the audit firms for the Program Review annual process was enacted. Following discussion amongst the Commission members and other participating college presidents, Dr. Hopkins called for a motion to approve a change in the Program Review Requirements. Dr. Gene Fant, Commission Vice Chair moved to change the verbiage in the Program Review Guide regarding the statistical random sampling size to state a required range of between six and twenty percent, with six percent being the required minimum percentage of awardees selected for review. Dr. Anita Gustafson, Presbyterian College, seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. Dr. Hopkins put the motion to a vote which passed unanimously.

Dr. Hopkins asked if there was other old business to discuss, and with there being none, moved on to new business, of which there was none.

Dr. Hopkins reminded everyone that the next scheduled Commission Meeting is June 25, 2024 at 10:30 AM.

Dr. Hopkins adjourned the meeting at 11:16 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

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



# SC Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission

*Providing Opportunity. Promoting Choice.*

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

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. The agency is excited to announce that Kira Demery, Program Coordinator, has been accepted by the SC Department of Administration into the LeadSC Program, a year-long training program for emerging leaders in state government that will begin in September.

Gena Miles, Financial Officer, has continued to research and implement efficiencies in the financial aspects of Tuition Grants disbursements and other financial transactions. The latest process improvement is the ability for institutions to submit Tuition Grant refunds, when required, back to the agency electronically, eliminating the need for a paper check to be generated and sent in the mail. Gena sent information to each institution about this option on June 5<sup>th</sup>.

Deputy Director Zachary Christian is wrapping up his term as President of the SC Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (SCASFAA) later this week and has had a very successful year. He presided over his final Executive Board Meeting on June 11th, and the Association is hosting a Virtual Training Summit under his leadership this week. Many of the training and professional development events held during Zach's year as President have broken recent attendance records. Zach is planning to prepare for the Financial Aid Administrator Certification (FAAC) designation through the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA) later this year.

Executive Director Katie Harrison is serving as Conference Co-Chair for the National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs (NASSGAP) and has been busy planning for the Association's annual conference this October. She has secured session presenters from numerous state aid agencies in addition to notable organizations such as SHEEO, NCAN, and the Hope Center at Temple University. 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.

### **Updates and Enhancements to myTG:**

Additional updates and enhancements are continuing to be made to the Commission's Student Information System, "myTG," as the 2024-2025 awarding cycle moves forward. The Commission began sending eligibility notification emails, which direct students to create and login to a myTG Student Portal Account to view their tentative eligibility status and award amount, if applicable, beginning May 8<sup>th</sup>. Over 3000 students have created a myTG Student Portal Account. In addition to viewing their eligibility status, the myTG Student Portal enables students to directly message Commission Staff, and, if needed, securely upload documentation for eligible appeal requests, rather than emailing those documents in. College users also can

securely upload documentation for specific students, further strengthening the Commission's data privacy and information security posture.

Zach and Kira continue to meet with our Nelnet representatives, weekly, to review projects nearing completion and request new functionality and features as needed. Recently, a "Student Transfers" report was made available to all college users, and additional ways to improve existing reports are being reviewed carefully.

**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 initial requests and reports to the HLOC in March 2023. According to HLOC staff, the full review of the Tuition Grants Commission will occur during next year's legislative cycle since the Committee was unable to begin the process before the end of this year's session. Agency management will provide a presentation and updates to the requested information to HLOC staff in December, at which time they will review and work on scheduling the agency's first hearing before the Committee.



Katherine H. Harrison  
Executive Director

## **Review of the 2023-24 and Update on the 2024-25 Award Years**

### **2023-24 Updates:**

During the 2023-2024 Award Year, there was a total of **\$62,566,419** in appropriated and allocated monies available to disburse South Carolina Tuition Grants: **\$27,558,624** in State Recurring Appropriations; **\$14,765,740** in Children's Education Endowment received from the Commission on Higher Education; **\$242,055** in State Funds Interest earned; and **\$20,000,000** in State Lottery Allocations.

While final figures will not be made available until after the close of FY24, as of June 14, 2024, **12,479 (+3.68%)** grants were realized out of the **26,198 (+1.91%)** commitments made. This demonstrates a show-up rate of **47.63%**. The maximum grant was \$4,800 with an average grant of \$4,391. With an application deadline of June 30, 2023, **31,981 (+1.31%)** applications were received.

### **2024-25 Updates:**

For the 2024-2025 academic year, the agency is projected to receive a total of **\$62,574,364** in appropriated and allocated monies to be made available to disburse South Carolina Tuition Grants. The two main differences in available funds will come in the form of received allocated Children's Education Endowment funds received from the CHE, to be determined based on the percentage of fall 2023 Independent College Full-Time Enrollment for South Carolina residents on the state-wide total in August 2024. Another funding increase is realized in the total State Funds Interest available. For the 2024-25 Award Year, the authority to spend is set at \$250,000 regardless of the actual interest amount received.

At the March 11, 2024, Commission Meeting, the application deadline was extended to August 1 effective with the 2024-25 Award Year application cycle. As reported at the April 16, 2024, Special Commission Meeting, the Commission began receiving its first Institution Student Identification Record (ISIR) file on March 11<sup>th</sup>. As of June 14<sup>th</sup>, the Commission has received **25,732 total applications\***, of which **21,738 (-17.10%)** are being considered Tuition Grants Applicants; **18,794 (-18.95%)** are currently tentatively eligible.

*\*This figure includes Invalid FAFSAs and students who have indicated they have a bachelor's degree and/or are pursuing a graduate/professional degree.*

### **FAFSA Processing Updates:**

As of June 20<sup>th</sup>, School-initiated corrections, professional judgment, and verification updates are still not available for the 2024-2025 Academic Year. In an [Electronic Announcement \(GENERAL-24-56\)](#) posted on May 10, 2024, with a "blue note" update on May 22<sup>nd</sup>, Federal Student Aid provided an update on the processing of Paper FAFSA forms, and the timeline of the availability for school-initiated corrections. It was announced that "institutions will be able to submit corrections via the FAFSA Partner Portal (FPP) by the end of June. The FPP will allow institutions to submit corrections electronically by entering the data manually in the FAFSA Partner Portal. Batch institutional corrections via the Electronic Data Exchanged (EDE) will be

available in the weeks following FPP corrections.” This directly impacts all institutions of higher learning from assisting students with corrections to their forms, prevents schools from performing professional adjustments, and performing required reporting of V4/V5 Verification outcomes.

On June 17<sup>th</sup>, an Electronic Announcement ([GENERAL-24-72](#)) was published, explaining that batch corrections, as well as paper corrections, “will be available in the first half of August.” This announcement was published ahead of an open forum at the annual conference of the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA). Additional clarification was provided during this forum that FSA is on-track to meet the “end of June” timeframe for individual corrections via the FPP, but that the batch correction functionality via the EDE is still undergoing testing. It was also expressed that the Department is working toward the goal of having the 2025-2026 FAFSA Form available on October 1; however, confirmation that all functionality, such as ISIR processing, corrections, etc., being made available alongside the release of the form was not provided.

Paper FAFSA forms submitted by students unable to complete the process online have not yet been processed; processing of these forms will begin “by the end of June” as well. In a June 7 FAFSA Fast News post, it was announced that more than 10.8 million FAFSA forms have been submitted for the 2024-2025 academic year, which represents 9.4% fewer forms compared to 2023-2024 FAFSA form submissions. This same post also estimated that around 60% of the paper forms received are duplicates, meaning that an initial form was completed online by the time FSA Staff began the preparations to process these forms.

There are still several known issues preventing students and their families from successfully completing and submitting their forms, as well as additional reprocessing efforts underway to address issues impacting certain applications from processing with a correct and valid Student Aid Index (SAI).

### **ISIR Comparison Figures:**

As of June 18<sup>th</sup>, **235,369** total South Carolina ISIRs for the 2024-2025 academic year have been received for **169,308** distinct filers; **161,275** of those have a valid, non-rejected Student Aid Index.

Through June 18, 2023, **281,146** total South Carolina ISIRs were received for the 2023-2024 academic year for **188,279** distinct filers; **184,002** of those had a valid, non-rejected Expected Family Contribution (EFC).

While progress is being made in South Carolina and across the country in closing the FAFSA completion gap, SC is currently experiencing a **-12.35%** change in completed, valid FAFSA forms for the 2024-2025 academic year.



# SC Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission

*Providing Opportunity. Promoting Choice.*

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

Katherine H. Harrison  
Executive Director

## **Proposed Changes to Annual Eligibility Deadline and Spring-only Grant Appeal Requests**

### **Eligibility Deadline Policy:**

Per the November 15 Eligibility Deadline Policy: "No increases in existing awards, no additions of new awards, no appeals of eligibility, and no corrections of error to eligibility increasing or reinstating an award are allowed after November 15. Colleges must provide any corrections to eligibility or information that would change the student from ineligible to eligible, **no later than November 15**. If, on November 15, a student is in *myTG* as ineligible or eligible for less than a full award, and a determination is made by the college after November 15 that this is an error, this Commission-approved policy prohibits a correction of the error. However, a reduction in a South Carolina Tuition Grant for any reason must be made at any time during the award year, including after November 15."

This Commission-approved policy was established effective with the 1998-1999 Award Year to ensure all eligible students' awards were made and disbursed in advance of the mid-year budget review, to determine if enough funds would be available to fully fund the spring portion of grants, of if adjustments would be necessary based on available funding levels. Prior to the establishment of this policy, there was a case when an institution submitted a check request well into the spring semester for students who were eligible in the fall, requiring a reduction of all students' spring grants.

Several colleges currently offer online degree programs, which are approved through the Commission's Non-Traditional Program Calendar Policy, with enrollment patterns of block-module terms, many colleges' fall Non-Traditional certifications are not due until after the November 15 eligibility deadline; because of this, there are already certain exceptions to the November 15 Eligibility Deadline that extend the deadline to mid-December for these populations of students.

While the intent of the deadline is considered necessary, it is the Staff's recommendation that the November 15 Eligibility Deadline be extended by an additional two months, to **January 15**, annually, to provide students and financial aid staff additional time to ensure fall-semester eligibility. This extension would also hopefully provide all colleges with additional time at the end of the Fall semester to identify and correct any possible errors which would prevent a student's eligibility for the entire academic year. It should be noted, however, that Staff are not recommending adjustments to the 25-business day deadline for completing the certification process once made available. Colleges should still work to confirm and request funding as quickly as possible to avoid delaying students' grants disbursement.

**Should the Commission wish to make this change, replacing reference to November 15<sup>th</sup> with January 15<sup>th</sup>, a vote would be required.**

### **Spring-only Appeal Request Allowances:**

In general, students who fail to enroll full-time during the Fall semester forfeit their South Carolina Tuition Grant eligibility for the entire academic year. In the case of an extenuating circumstance, a student may submit an appeal by the Eligibility Deadline, requesting consideration of a Spring-only

grant. A student must have been otherwise eligible (e.g., met the application deadline, meeting SAP, have demonstrated financial need, etc.) in the fall in order for the request to be considered. Additionally, Commission policy also permits a student who withdrew during the fall semester, receiving a 100% refund, to submit an appeal for a spring-only grant by the eligibility deadline.

In an effort to continue expanding the reach of the Program to more students, Commission Staff recommend discussing the availability of allowing additional spring-only appeals to be accepted from the financial aid office on a student's behalf through February 15<sup>th</sup> for specific cases only. Such recommendation would be to add the following verbiage to the existing Spring-only Appeal policy:

A student who is beginning their initial enrollment at the college effective with the Spring semester, either as a first-time freshman or as a transfer student from a non-participating college or university, may have the college submit an appeal on their behalf, for consideration of a Spring-only grant no later than **February 15**. The college must provide the appropriate documentation showing that the student was not enrolled during the fall semester at an eligible participating college or university, as these students would either have the ability to potentially qualify as a mid-year transfer or, in the case of not receiving Tuition Grants during the fall, have the opportunity to submit a Spring-only Appeal Request by the Eligibility Deadline. The college must ensure all eligibility requirements are satisfied (e.g., Signed Affidavit on-file, Verification completed, etc.) prior to submitting this type of request to the Commission.

**Should the Commission wish to make this change, adding additional allowances for school-initiated spring-only appeal requests, a vote would be required.**



# 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

## **Review of Federal Methodology and SCTG Eligibility**

In 1994, the Tuition Grants Commission opted to begin using the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) as the application for the South Carolina Tuition Grant for state residents attending eligible independent colleges in the state. Prior to the 1994-1995 academic year, there was a standalone paper application required of all students who wanted to be considered for the Tuition Grant. This application used a formula for financial need that was tied to the federal poverty guidelines, considering family income and household size.

Moving to the FAFSA application platform reduced burden on students by allowing for one application for all federal and state aid programs, and on agency staff by freeing up resources and time used to manually calculate each Tuition Grant application. The use of federal methodology also allowed the Commission to define financial need, which is a Statutory requirement of the Tuition Grant, with a simple formula of "Cost of Attendance minus Estimated Financial Contribution (COA – EFC)." The need formula for the Tuition Grant does not take other financial assistance into consideration, allowing the Program to be used as a "first dollar" source of funding and allowing the grant to be awarded to Pell-eligible and non-Pell-eligible students alike, as long as the calculation results in positive financial need.

With the recent change to the Student Aid Index in the federal methodology formula beginning with the 2024-2025 FAFSA and academic year, the Commission updated its financial need calculation to "Cost of Attendance minus Student Aid Index (COA-SAI)," with the SAI being capped at zero if it is a negative number. This follows all applicable guidance for determining eligibility for need-based aid programs and continues to exclude other aid, allowing Pell recipients and non-Pell-eligible students to receive the Tuition Grant. Of note, the Student Aid Index formula, unlike the prior Estimated Family Contribution formula, is tied to federal poverty tables to determine if a student qualifies for certain Pell Grant levels.

As of June 5, 2024, the Commission had awarded 239 Tuition Grant applicants for the 2024-2025 award year who were ineligible based on financial need in the previous year and now qualify based on the changes to the formula. Conversely, the Commission's records indicate 327 students who qualified for partial or full Tuition Grant in the 2023-2024 no longer demonstrate financial need for the 2024-2025 award year and are therefore ineligible for the Tuition Grant. These changes, as expected, are largely related to the federal methodology changes removing the number in college from consideration and, to a lesser extent, the inclusion of certain assets related to small business and investment farm owners.

The Tuition Grants Commission is a member of both the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA) and the National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs (NASSGAP). Both associations have been advocating, and continue to advocate, for technical amendments to the FAFSA Simplification Act that would address concerns related to the unintended consequences of students losing eligibility for need-based aid under the new FAFSA calculation. Commission Executive Director Katie Harrison has been involved with these efforts and has had direct communication with the Federal Student Aid team about these issues. Our efforts will now shift to focus on possible changes beginning with the 2026-2027 FAFSA, as it has already been announced that there will be no FAFSA form changes for 2025-2026.

As always, the agency will work with the Financial Aid Offices at our participating institutions to update eligibility for students who are granted a Professional Judgment for allowable circumstances. These changes will be made under the existing administrative policies and procedures of the Program.



# 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

## **Overview of the 2024 SC General Assembly as Related to the SC Tuition Grants Program**

The South Carolina Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission submitted its 2024-2025 State Budget Request last September, requesting continuation of funding of the \$10 million increase for the Tuition Grants Program realized in FY24. The Commission's Budget Request asked for consideration of these funds being moved from Lottery (non-recurring) to General Fund (recurring).

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 recommended the funding source for these funds continue to be allocations from the Lottery account.

On January 11, 2024, the Commission appeared before the House Ways and Means Higher Education Subcommittee to present its Budget Request. The Commission thanked the legislature for the funding provided in previous years and expressed support not only for the Governor's continued support of Tuition Grants funding, but also for the increase in funding for the State Need-Based Grant Program supporting needy students attending the state's public institutions of higher education. In its final deliberations, the House Ways and Means Committee recommended and approved the continuation of the \$10 million increase in Tuition Grants funding provided through the Lottery.

On February 13, 2024, the Commission presented its Budget Request to the Senate Finance Higher Education Subcommittee, once again expressing support for the Need-Based Grant Program in addition to advocating for the Tuition Grant. The Subcommittee reported favorably, and the full Senate's version of the FY25 Budget recommended the continuation of an increase of \$10 million for Tuition Grants through Lottery appropriations.

As of the writing of this report, the Conference Committee is still meeting to address differences in the House and Senate versions of the FY25 State Budget.



# 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

## **State Budget Request for Funding of the South Carolina Tuition Grants Program**

Each Fall, the South Carolina Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission must submit its Budget Request to the Executive Budget Office to be used by the Governor's Office, the House, and the Senate for funding in the next fiscal year. Because the Commission will not meet again before this request is submitted, the Budget Request for funding for the South Carolina Tuition Grants Program for 2025-2026 must be approved by the Commission at the June 2024 meeting.

At this time, Commission Staff project that the Program can sustain a maximum grant of \$4,800 while also potentially increasing eligibility to additional students once again for the 2024-2025 year. This maximum grant was approved by the Commission at the March 2024 meeting.

With the impending passage of the FY25 budget, the \$10 million in additional funds for the Tuition Grants Program (\$20 million total in lottery funds) appears to be available again in the new year; however, there is once again no guarantee that this increase in lottery funds for the Tuition Grant and the recent increases to the Need-Based Grant for public colleges will be sustained going forward.

To maintain the momentum of increased funding for need-based programs for both public and private college students, it has been recommended that the Commission continue to ask for these funds as part of the budget process. No additional new funding for the Program is needed at this time.

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.
- (2) Create an annual request for non-recurring funds in the requested amount as Lottery appropriations. According to Jake Scoggins, Senior Budget Analyst for Senate Finance, programs relying on Lottery appropriations should technically be asking for funds in this manner each year since they are considered non-recurring annual allocations. Some agencies currently take this approach while others do not. Since the Tuition Grants Commission began receiving a portion of its Program funding through Lottery allocations, it has always been considered a "given" that the Program would continue to receive a base amount in Lottery funding, although theoretically this pot of money is supposed to be treated with zero-based budget principles in mind.

*The South Carolina Tuition Grants Commission needs to approve a Budget Request for 2025-2026 for Tuition Grants Program funding, determining both the amount and the source (recurring or non-recurring) of the request. A vote of the Commission is required.*



# 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

## **Rotation of the South Carolina Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission**

The rotation of the South Carolina Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission occurs each year after the summer meeting and is effective July 1.

### **2023-2024 COMMISSION MEMBERS**

Dr. Boone Hopkins, Converse University, Chair  
Dr. Gene Fant, North Greenville University, Vice Chair  
Dr. Lester McCorn, Clinton College, Secretary  
Mr. Keith Faulkner, Charleston Southern University  
Dr. Maurice Scherrens, Newberry College  
Dr. Anita Gustafson, Presbyterian College  
Dr. William Barker, Southern Wesleyan University  
Dr. Nayef Samhat, Wofford College  
Dr. Gregory Little, Interim President and Executive Director, CHE, Ex-officio

### **ROTATING OFF**

Mr. Keith Faulkner, Charleston Southern University  
Dr. Nayef Samhat, Wofford College  
Dr. Maurice Scherrens, Newberry College

### **ROTATING ON**

Dr. John Dozier, Columbia College  
Dr. Ernest McNealey, Allen University  
Dr. Natalie Harder, Coker University

### **2024-2025 COMMISSION MEMBERS**

Dr. Boone Hopkins, Converse University, Chair  
Dr. Gene Fant, North Greenville University, Vice Chair  
Dr. Lester McCorn, Clinton College, Secretary  
Dr. Ernest McNealey, Allen University  
Dr. John Dozier, Columbia College  
Dr. Natalie Harder, Coker University  
Dr. Anita Gustafson, Presbyterian College  
Dr. William Barker, Southern Wesleyan University  
Dr. Jeff Perez, President and Executive Director, CHE, Ex-officio

**REQUESTED ACTION:** With Dr. Boone Hopkins, Dr. Gene Fant, and Dr. Lester McCorn remaining on the Commission for the 2024-2025 year, there is no requirement for new or replacement officers of the South Carolina Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission to be elected this year.



# 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

## **SC Tuition Grants Commission Rotation Schedule** *2022-2023 through 2042-2043*

### **2022-2023**

**ON:** NGU, PC, SWU

**OFF:** Erskine, Voorhees, Limestone

### **2023-2024**

**ON:** Clinton, Converse

**OFF:** Morris, SMC

### **2024-2025**

**ON:** Columbia, Allen, Coker

**OFF:** CSU, Wofford, Newberry

### **2025-2026**

**ON:** Furman, BJU, Claflin

**OFF:** NGU, PC, SWU

### **2026-2027**

**ON:** SMC, CIU

**OFF:** Clinton, Converse

### **2027-2028**

**ON:** Anderson, Benedict, CSU

**OFF:** Columbia, Allen, Coker

### **2028-2029**

**ON:** Limestone, Voorhees, Newberry

**OFF:** Furman, BJU, Claflin

### **2029-2030**

**ON:** Erskine, Wofford

**OFF:** SMC, CIU

### **2030-2031**

**ON:** Morris, NGU, PC

**OFF:** Anderson, Benedict, CSU

### **2031-2032**

**ON:** SWU, Clinton, Converse

**OFF:** Limestone, Voorhees, Newberry

### **2032-2033**

**ON:** Columbia, Allen

**OFF:** Erskine, Wofford

### **2033-2034**

**ON:** Coker, Furman, BJU

**OFF:** Morris, NGU, PC

### **2034-2035**

**ON:** Claflin, SMC, CIU

**OFF:** SWU, Clinton, Converse

### **2035-2036**

**ON:** Anderson, Benedict

**OFF:** Columbia, Allen

### **2036-2037**

**ON:** CSU, Limestone, Voorhees

**OFF:** Coker, Furman, BJU

### **2037-2038**

**ON:** Newberry, Erskine, Wofford

**OFF:** Claflin, SMC, CIU

### **2038-2039**

**ON:** Morris, NGU

**OFF:** Anderson, Benedict

### **2039-2040**

**ON:** PC, SWU, Clinton

**OFF:** CSU, Limestone, Voorhees

### **2040-2041**

**ON:** Converse, Columbia, Allen

**OFF:** Newberry, Erskine, Wofford

### **2041-2042**

**ON:** Coker, Furman

**OFF:** Morris, NGU

### **2042-2043**

**ON:** BJU, Claflin, SMC

**OFF:** PC, SWU, Clinton



# SC Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission

*Providing Opportunity. Promoting Choice.*

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

Katherine H. Harrison  
Executive Director

## **STATE ETHICS COMMISSION SEI FILING REQUIREMENT**

South Carolina Code of Laws Section 8-13-1110(A) states, "No public official, regardless of compensation, and no public member or public employee as designated in subsection (B) may take the oath of office **or enter upon his official responsibilities** unless he has filed a statement of economic interests in accordance with the provisions of this chapter with the appropriate supervisory office. If a public official, public member, or public employee referred to in this section has no economic interests to disclose, he shall nevertheless file a statement of inactivity to that effect with the appropriate supervisory office. All disclosure statements are matters of public record open to inspection upon request."

As a result of recently enhanced oversight and compliance reviews at the State Ethics Commission, Tuition Grants Commission staff were contacted in May with information concerning the timing of the Statement of Economic Interests report for persons appointed to the agency's governing board (i.e., our Commission Members). The agency's previous practice, based on guidance available in prior years, was to notify new Commission Members, based on the Commission's approved rotation schedule, on their appointment date and allow them a 45-day period in which to complete the required SEI report with the State Ethics Commission.

After receiving communication from the State Ethics Commission in May, the agency has revised its internal procedure for appointing voting members of the Commission so that new Commission Members are notified approximately one month prior to the beginning date of their term of service with instructions to complete the SEI report on or before June 30 in the event of regularly scheduled annual Commission rotation. In the event a college President leaves his or her employment during a scheduled three-year term of service, his or her replacement will be notified to complete the required SEI report as soon as possible so they can be officially appointed to fulfill the remainder of the original President's term of service.

The three incoming Commission Members announced earlier in today's meeting were notified on June 3, 2024, via email and hard-copy letter, of the requirement to file on or before June 30, 2024.

It is vitally important for the President's Office at each institution to inform the Executive Director of the Tuition Grants Commission any time there is a change in Presidential leadership to ensure the Commission continues to remain compliant with these requirements.