



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 11, 2025; 10:30 A.M.

Microsoft Teams Meeting: Meeting ID: 230 147 392 41; Passcode: CA92WE3H

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

(803) 454-9963

Phone Conference ID: 884 907 104#

1. Welcome and Commission Roll Call..... Katie Harrison
2. Announcement of Commission Secretary Appointment Boone Hopkins, Chair
3. * Approval of Minutes of June 25, 2024 Commission Meeting..... Boone Hopkins, Chair
4. Final Report on 2023-2024 Program Reviews..... Katie Harrison
5. Update on the 2024-2025 Award Year..... Zach Christian
6. Agency Updates and Initiatives..... Katie Harrison
Staff Updates, FAFSA Completion Portal, House Legislative Oversight
7. Review of 2025-2026 Budget Request..... Katie Harrison
8. SCICU Update and Legislative Outlook..... Robert Lloyd
9. * Staff Recommendation: Initial 2025-2026 Award Amounts..... Katie Harrison
10. * Staff Recommendation: Revision to Deadline Extension Date..... Zach Christian
11. Reminder: State Ethics Forms for SCTG Commission Members..... Boone Hopkins, Chair
Due March 30

Brief training session to be provided by SC Ethics Commission
at June 17 Commission Meeting
12. New Business..... Boone Hopkins, Chair
13. Adjournment..... Boone Hopkins, Chair

Next Scheduled Commission Meeting:

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 March 4, 2025.



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MINUTES

South Carolina Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission Meeting
Tuesday, June 25, 2024
Teleconference Call
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
Ms. April Baur as Proxy for Dr. Anita Gustafson, Presbyterian College
Dr. Chad Stutz as Proxy for Dr. William Barker, Southern Wesleyan University
Ms. Julie Sturgill as Proxy for Dr. Nayef Samhat, Wofford College
Dr. Maurice Scherrens, Newberry College
Mr. Keith Faulkner, Charleston Southern University

Commission Members Absent:

Dr. Gregory Little, SC Commission on Higher Education, Ex-officio

Non-Commission Member College Presidents Participating:

Dr. Nathan Copeland, Limestone University

Dr. Boone Hopkins, Commission Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:32 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 participating. Ms. Harrison confirmed all participating Commission Members in attendance. A quorum was established. Ms. Harrison recognized and welcomed the non-Commission members in attendance.

Dr. Hopkins called for a motion to approve the March 12, 2024, Commission Meeting and April 16, 2024, Special Commission Meeting Minutes. Dr. Lester McCorn, Commission Secretary, moved to approve the Minutes and Dr. Gene Fant, Commission Vice Chair, seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Dr. Hopkins called on Ms. Harrison to report on the Agency Updates. Ms. Harrison reported the Agency 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. Ms. Harrison announced that Mrs. Kira Demery, Commission Program Coordinator, has been accepted by the South Carolina Department of Administration into the LeadSC Program, a year-long training program for emerging leaders in state government that will begin in September.

Ms. Harrison noted Ms. Gena Miles, Commission 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 Ms. Miles has pioneered 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.

Ms. Harrison stated Mr. Zachary Christian, Commission Deputy Director, is wrapping up his term as President of the South Carolina Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (SCASFAA) at the end of June 2024 and has had a very successful year. Ms. Harrison revealed Mr. Christian presided over his final Executive Board Meeting on June 11, 2024, and the Association is hosting a Virtual Training Summit under his leadership during the final week in June 2024. Ms. Harrison indicated that many of the training and professional development events held during Mr. Christian's year as President have broken recent attendance records. Mr. Christian 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.

Ms. Harrison announced she 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 in October 2024. Ms. Harrison announced 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. Ms. Harrison declared she continues to serve as part of the leadership planning team for the combined NASSGAP and SHEEO collaboration project to assist state agencies with their Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) Simplification efforts.

Ms. Harrison detailed the Agency's progress with the new Student Information System, myTG, stating that additional updates and enhancements are continuing to be made as the awarding cycle moves forward. Ms. Harrison reported the Agency began sending eligibility notification emails beginning May 8, 2024. The notification emails direct students to create and login to a myTG Student Portal Account to view their tentative eligibility status and award amount, if applicable. Ms. Harrison explained that the myTG Student Portal and myTG Financial Aid Administrators Portal both enable direct messaging with Agency Staff. If needed, a secure upload mailbox for documentation for appeal requests is available to Financial Aid Administrators and students in their Portals, rather than emailing those documents to the Commission, further strengthening the Agency's data privacy and information security posture. Ms. Harrison noted Mr. Christian and Mrs. Demery continue to meet with the Agency's representatives at Nelnet weekly to review projects nearing completion and request new functionality and features as needed.

Ms. Harrison reported upon the status of the House Legislative Oversight Committee's formal review as an ongoing effort among Agency staff, with all initial requests completed in March 2023. The Committee is currently holding its hearing with the Commission on Higher Education and is planning to begin their full review of the Tuition Grants Commission during next year's legislative cycle.

Dr. Hopkins recognized Ms. Harrison and Mr. Christian for reaching State service milestones during the 2024 calendar year. Mr. Christian is celebrating ten years as an employee of the State of South Carolina, and Ms. Harrison is celebrating twenty years as an employee of the State of South Carolina. Ms. Harrison presented the framed certificate she and Mr. Christian received from the Agency, and described the service pins they each received as a gift from the State of South Carolina.

Dr. Hopkins called on Mr. Christian to report on the 2023-2024 Award Year and provide an update on the 2024-2025 Award Year. Mr. Christian reported the Agency is seeing consistent upward trends in the number of total South Carolina Tuition Grants disbursed, and student commitments made between the 2022-2023 and the 2023-2024 Award Years. Mr. Christian disclosed the number of applications received as of the date of the meeting for the 2024-2025 academic year was 17 percent below the number of applications received at the same time in 2023 for the 2023-2024 academic year. Mr. Christian detailed possible reasons for the decrease in applications received, including the delay in the FAFSA form being released to students. Mr. Christian described the efforts the Agency is undertaking to attempt to communicate with students regarding the importance of completing an application, including expanding the Agency's social media efforts.

Dr. Hopkins called upon Ms. Harrison to review the Federal Methodology calculation for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and South Carolina Tuition Grant Eligibility. Ms. Harrison explained the Commission began utilizing the FAFSA as its application for the Tuition Grants Program in 1994, for the 1994-1995 Academic Year, which alleviated the burden on the Agency staff's need to complete manual calculations of a separate application. In using the FAFSA, Ms. Harrison explained the grant's definition of financial need is based on the federal methodology and the calculation of the information given on the form. Ms. Harrison noted the U.S. Department of Education changed the formula for the federal methodology calculation effective with the 2024-2025 award year, which also had unintended consequences for the Tuition Grants Program. Ms. Harrison announced as of June 5, 2024, 239 students were newly eligible for the Tuition Grant using the new methodology for the 2024-2025 award year, while 327 students who were previously eligible will now be ineligible using the new formula. Ms. Harrison reminded the financial aid office staff members in attendance that the Agency is continuing to work directly with their offices to make sure completed professional judgments will continue to be accepted to grant students eligibility for the Tuition Grants Program.

Dr. Hopkins called upon Mr. Christian to present the proposed changes to the Annual Eligibility Deadline Policy. Mr. Christian detailed the importance of the November 15 Eligibility Deadline Policy, which was established effective with the 1998-1999 Award Year as a safety net to prevent future reduction in student awards in the spring semester. He stressed that an eligibility deadline is necessary, however moving the deadline to January 15 would further expand access to students. Mr. Christian explained moving the eligibility deadline to January 15 would allow the colleges offering online degree programs through the Commission's Non-Traditional Program Calendar Policy additional time to ensure fall-semester eligibility for those students, as their certification deadlines often fall after the November 15 eligibility deadline. Dr. Hopkins opened the floor for discussion, and upon hearing none called for a motion to adopt the proposed change of moving the eligibility deadline from November 15 to January 15. Dr. McCorn moved to adopt the proposed changes, and Mr. Keith Faulkner, Charleston Southern University seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Dr. Hopkins called upon Mr. Christian to present the proposed recommendation from the staff for additional allowance for Spring-Only Grant Appeal Requests. Mr. Christian presented the eligibility requirement for students of enrolling at an eligible independent institution full-time during the fall semester to be eligible for the Tuition Grant for the spring semester. Mr. Christian explained the Spring-Only Grant Appeal process has historically been reserved for students who have extenuating circumstances beyond their control, which are preventing them from enrolling in an eligible independent institution in the fall semester. In an effort to continue expanding the reach of the Program to more students, Mr. Christian stated the Agency 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, for specific cases only. Mr. Christian detailed the recommendation 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.

Dr. Hopkins opened the floor for discussion, and upon hearing none called for a motion to adopt the proposed change to the verbiage of the Spring-Only Grant Appeal Policy. Dr. Maurice Scherrens, Newberry College, moved to adopt the proposed changes, and Dr. McCorn seconded the motion. Prior to the Commission voting

on the motion, Mr. Christian detailed the financial aid office's submission process with the proposed changes after questions arose. Dr. Hopkins then put the motion to a vote of the Commission, which was approved unanimously.

Dr. Hopkins called upon Ms. Harrison to report upon the 2024 Legislative Session. Ms. Harrison presented information regarding a request for a continuation of the \$10,000,000 increase in Tuition Grants funding provided through the Lottery, which was approved by the House Ways and Means Committee and recommended by the Senate Finance Higher Education Subcommittee in the full Senate's version of the Fiscal Year 2025 Budget. Ms. Harrison remarked the Conference Committee had concluded their deliberations and delivered a State Budget to the Governor at the time of the meeting.

Dr. Hopkins called on Ms. Harrison to present the 2025-2026 Budget Request to the State Budget Division for the South Carolina Tuition Grants Program. Ms. Harrison stated 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 2025-2026 must be approved by the Commission at the June 2024 meeting. Ms. Harrison presented the projection that the Program can sustain the maximum grant of \$4,800 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 included with the FY25 budget request, 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.

Dr. Hopkins called for a motion to approve the 2025-2026 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. McCorn moved to approve the Budget Request and Dr. Fant seconded the motion. The motion was approved unanimously.

Dr. Hopkins 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 2023-2024 Program Review Guide, as well as the 2023-2024 Policies and Procedures Manual. Mr. Christian reported an email with specific instructions on how to access the various reports in myTG for the auditors had been sent on May 22, 2024.

Dr. Hopkins announced the Rotation of the Tuition Grants Commission members for the 2024-2025 Commission. As scheduled, Mr. Keith Faulkner, Dr. Nayef Samhat, Wofford College, and Dr. Maurice Scherrens, are rotating off the Commission. Presidents rotating on to the Commission according to the Rotation Schedule are Dr. John Dozier, Columbia College, Dr. Ernest McNealey, Allen University, and Dr. Natalie Harder, Coker University. Due to the elected officers remaining on the Commission, there was not a change in leadership of the Commission.

Dr. Hopkins called upon Ms. Harrison to present an update on the State Ethics Commission Report filing. Ms. Harrison reminded all Commission members, as well as the Presidents rotating on to the Commission, the Statement of Economic Interest Report with the State Ethics Commission is required to be completed annually. Ms. Harrison noted that in the case of the incoming members of the Commission, the report must now be filed prior to the date on which they are appointed, which is July 1.

Dr. Hopkins asked if there was any new business, and upon hearing none, called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Dr. Scherrens moved to adjourn the meeting. Dr. McCorn seconded the motion, which passed unanimously. Dr. Hopkins adjourned the meeting at 11:33 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

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



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2023-2024 College Program Reviews (Submission of Program Reviews is required by December 31, 2024)

<u>College</u>	<u>Received</u>	<u>Status</u>
Allen	1/24/2025 (Ext. Granted)	CLOSED
Anderson	10/18/2024	CLOSED
Benedict	12/13/2024	CLOSED
Bob Jones	10/9/2024	CLOSED
Charleston Southern	10/31/2024	CLOSED
Clafin	1/9/2025 (Ext. Granted)	CLOSED
Clinton	12/31/2024	CLOSED
Coker	11/7/2024	CLOSED
Columbia	12/30/2024	CLOSED
Columbia International	11/21/2024	CLOSED
Converse	12/18/2024	CLOSED
Erskine	11/15/2024	CLOSED
Furman	12/30/2024	CLOSED
Limestone	12/17/2024	CLOSED
Morris	12/11/2024	CLOSED
Newberry	12/13/2024	CLOSED
North Greenville	11/15/2024	CLOSED
Presbyterian	12/6/2024	CLOSED
Southern Wesleyan	12/6/2024	CLOSED
Spartanburg Methodist	12/17/2024	CLOSED
Voorhees	12/5/2024	CLOSED
Wofford	12/19/2024	CLOSED

Updated 3/4/2025



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UPDATE ON THE 2023-2024 AND 2024-2025 AWARD YEARS

<u>MAXIMUM GRANT FUNDING SOURCES:</u>	<u>AVAILABLE FUNDS 2023-2024</u>	<u>AVAILABLE FUNDS 2024-2025</u>
State Recurring:	\$27,558,624	\$27,558,624
Children’s Ed. Endowment:	\$14,765,740 *	\$14,847,360 **
State Funds Interest:	\$242,055	\$420,000 ***
State Lottery Funds:	\$20,000,000	\$20,000,000
<u>Total Funding</u>	<u>\$62,566,419</u>	<u>\$62,825,984</u>
Approved Maximum Grant:	<u>\$4,800</u>	<u>\$4,800</u>
Funding Cutoff Date:	June 30, 2023	August 1, 2024
Applications Received:	31,981 (+1.31%)	29,288 (-8.42%)
Commitments Made:	26,198 (+1.91%)	24,590 (-6.14%)
Grants Realized:	12,473 (+3.63%)	12,998 (+4.21%) ****
Show-up Rate:	47.61%	52.86% (Estimate)
Average Grant:	\$4,391	\$4,263 (Estimate)

* Independent College Full-time Enrollment for South Carolina Residents for Fall 2023 generated CEE funds of 19.02% of the state-wide total. For 2023-2024, annual CEE spending authority increased to \$16,000,000 (up from \$6,000,000) regardless of the amount received.

** Independent College Full-time Enrollment for South Carolina Residents for Fall 2023 calculated at 16.28% of the state-wide total. For 2024-25, annual CEE spending authority is \$16,000,000 regardless of the amount received.

*** Total amount available in Interest Earnings is \$425,552; authority to spend is set at \$250,000 regardless of the total amount received. In 2024-25, a special request to temporarily increase spending authority was approved, allowing authority to spend up to \$420,000 for the award year.

**** 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.



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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.

Upon the retirement of Commission Financial Officer Gena Miles in August, Kira Demery was promoted to the role of Fiscal Operations Coordinator. In April, Kira will complete her time in the LeadSC Program, a training program offered by the SC Department of Administration (Admin) for emerging leaders in state government. As part of this program, Kira has worked closely with individuals from other state agencies, shadowed Government Relations personnel through their workings at the State House, met with state legislators and the Governor, and has learned the inner workings of State government. Kira was also recently elected as the Treasurer-Elect for the South Carolina Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (SCASFAA) and will begin the first of her two-year service on the SCASFAA Board as an elected officer on July 1st.

Shay Shealy West joined the Commission Staff as Program Operations Coordinator in October. Shay brings her experience working with the South Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities (SCICU) to the Commission, while strengthening relationships with the colleges and universities participating in the Tuition Grants Program. Shay is currently serving as a committee member on the SCASFAA Communications Committee.

Deputy Director Zachary Christian earned the FAAC® designation from the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators' accredited Certified Financial Aid Administrator® Program in September. Including Zachary, there are only 20 aid administrators in the State who currently hold this designation. In February, Zachary traveled to Washington, D.C., to attend the annual NASFAA Leadership & Legislative Conference & Expo, where he organized Capitol Hill visits for a group of aid administrators from South Carolina. The group, which included aid administrators from the University of South Carolina, Clemson University, Coastal Carolina University, and Trident Technical College, met with the Deputy Legislative Assistant to Senator Tim Scott, and the Senior Policy Advisor to Senator Lindsey Graham to advocate for federal student aid programs on behalf of South Carolina students.

Executive Director Katie Harrison planned and executed a successful annual conference of the National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs (NASSGAP) in October and is currently overseeing the planning for the upcoming NASSGAP Annual Conference, which will be held in Washington, D.C., this upcoming October. Katie also 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. Additionally, Katie is a current participant in the South Carolina Executive Institute, a program offered by Admin allowing participants to work closely with executive leaders from around the state and build trusting relationships, address complex problems, and gain insight into successfully moving their organizations into the future.

The Tuition Grants Commission was recently recognized as the “Champion of Learning” during the January LinkedIn Learning Sub-administrators meeting for creatively promoting LinkedIn Learning. As the agency’s sub-admin, Zachary created a Cyber Security Awareness challenge and requested all staff participate in honor of Cyber Security Awareness Month, continuing to place emphasis on the importance of data privacy and information security best practices. Admin continues to promote the use of LinkedIn Learning for all state employees.

FAFSA Completion Status Information Portal:

The Tuition Grants Commission entered into a data sharing agreement with the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE), allowing our office to receive the 45-day headcount master file of all publicly enrolled high school seniors. This data, which was uploaded to the Commission’s student information system, myTG, allows the Commission to provide student-level FAFSA Completion Status Information to approved high school counselors and personnel at other designated education-related entities. Individual high schools, school districts, or approved non-profit education-related entities must enter into a data sharing agreement with the agency in order to participate in the FAFSA matching process. Private high schools are also able to enter into an agreement and provide their list of seniors to review completion status information. Since rollout the week of January 27th, 13 high schools, districts, and education-related entities have signed MOUs, allowing staff at a total of 30 high schools to access FAFSA Completion Status Information for their senior students. Through a partnership with the S.C. Commission on Higher Education (CHE), we are continuing to announce the availability of the FAFSA Completion Status Information portal and continue to enroll new districts/schools regularly.

House Legislative Oversight Committee Process Update:

As previously disclosed to all college presidents and other interested parties, the Tuition Grants Commission was selected in 2023 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 review was delayed until this current legislative session. Agency leadership appeared before the Education and Cultural Affairs Subcommittee on February 27, to present information regarding the agency and Program at the first of several meetings. While the Agency has already participated in the Public Input hearing in 2023, the agency is being requested to appear before the full Committee on March 19. Agency leadership will appear before the Subcommittee to continue presentations in late April.



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REVIEW OF THE 2025-2026 STATE BUDGET REQUEST FOR FUNDING OF THE SOUTH CAROLINA TUITION GRANTS PROGRAM

At the June 2024 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 2025-2026 fiscal year. The agency submitted documents in September 2024 asking for continued funding of the \$10 million increase for the Tuition Grants Program realized beginning in FY22. 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 \$160,000 General Fund increase to support the agency's Student Information System (myTG) annual hosting, licensing, and maintenance fees.

Executive Director Katie Harrison met with representatives from the Governor's office and the Executive Budget Office on **October 16, 2024**, to review the request and to discuss the budget request, the impact of the program, and to answer questions.

Governor Henry McMaster released his 2025-2026 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 Executive Budget did not include the \$160,000 recurring funds request for the Student Information System.

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 23, 2025**, 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/Dorchester) 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 Budget during the week of **March 10, 2025**.

The Commission appeared appear before the Senate Finance Higher Education Subcommittee on **March 5, 2025**. The Senate Finance Higher Education Subcommittee is chaired by Senator Ronnie Cromer (Newberry/Lexington/Richland). He is joined on the subcommittee by Senators Darrell Jackson (Richland), Tom Young (Aiken), Ross Turner (Greenville), and Tom Corbin (Greenville/Spartanburg). The full Senate Finance Committee is scheduled to meet during the week of **April 8, 2025**, while the full Senate is tentatively scheduled to make its recommendations during the week of **April 22, 2025**.



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STAFF RECOMMENDATION REGARDING INITIAL 2025-2026
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 2025-2026 be approved as follows:

The Maximum Grant should be increased by \$200 over the current award amount, to \$5,000 for the 2025-2026 Award Year.

A vote by the South Carolina Tuition Grants Commission is required to approve the initial Maximum Tuition Grant for the 2025-2026 academic year.



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STAFF RECOMMENDATION ON ELIGIBILITY/APEAL DEADLINE

At the June 2024 Commission Meeting, Commission Staff brought forth the recommendation to extend the longstanding November 15 Eligibility and Appeal Deadline to January 15, giving students and financial aid office staff additional time to make students eligible for Tuition Grants for the academic year. Additionally, this decision allowed Commission Staff to introduce a specific "School-Initiated Spring-only Request for Spring Starts," allowing financial aid office staff to identify and provide documentation for a certain subset of students through February 15, as long as there were no other eligibility issues that fell within the January 15 Eligibility and Appeal Deadline.

While this deadline extension has provided students and schools additional time to complete all necessary items to confirm eligibility for the academic year, Commission Staff have noted several unintended consequences, impacting agency operations and the ability to communicate to the Legislature in a timely manner. Such unintended consequences identified are:

- Inability to close out the fall semester disbursements prior to close of the calendar year; this has led to balancing issues with the State's Accounting System, SCEIS;
- Inability to accurately determine fall grant disbursements and run projections to ensure cash on hand matches the need to disburse spring grants without needing to utilize the former "two disbursements" policy, which impacted cash flow at most institutions;
- Impacted the agency's ability to provide accurate academic year updates to the House Ways and Means Higher Education Subcommittee as part of the annual budget hearing process;
- Delayed the geocoding process used for the SCICU Letter Writing Campaign and the agency providing recipient lists to all members of the General Assembly
 - Members of the General Assembly have typically received these files in early January. With the January 15 deadline, and fall grants not being fully disbursed until after January 27 as a result, several legislators contacted the office requesting their files prior to the agency being able to provide them on February 7 – several weeks later than ever provided in prior years.

In reviewing data in *myTG*, 222 students were reinstated and made eligible between November 16 and January 15 for the 2024-25 Academic Year; this is consistent with the 224 students that were reinstated in the month leading up to the November 15 deadline for the previous Academic Year. While Commission Staff believe an extended eligibility deadline *is* beneficial to students and our colleges, the current deadline of January 15 creates more disruptions to internal operations than anticipated. With the number of students reinstated leading up to the deadline being consistent, it is evident that such a lengthy extension may not be necessary, as it has simply shifted when eligibility requirements were completed.

Commission Staff would like to request the Commission consider adjusting the Eligibility and Appeal Deadline to December 15, which still provides students and college staff additional time compared to the former November 15 deadline, while providing Commission Staff the necessary time to thoroughly close out the Fall Semester in preparation for the Spring. This request would also move the February 15 special subset of Spring-only Students deadline back by one month to January 15, while loosening some of the restrictions currently put in place (e.g., unable to process if the student also needed to appeal for Late Application, etc.).

A vote by the South Carolina Tuition Grants Commission would be required to change the deadlines to December 15 and January 15, respectively.



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Katherine H. Harrison
Executive Director

MEMORANDUM

TO: South Carolina Tuition Grants Commission Members
FROM: Katie Harrison, Executive Director
DATE: February 18, 2025
**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 2025 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, 2025**, 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>

**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 2025 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.