



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. Stevens
Executive Director

AGENDA

Tuesday, June 17, 2025; 10:30 A.M.

Microsoft Teams Meeting: Meeting ID: 234 574 380 091 7
Passcode: BW6AK7Ty

If needed, attendees may dial in using the number below:
(803) 454-9963
Phone Conference ID: 353 954 774#

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|-----|--|----------------------|
| 1. | Welcome and Commission Roll Call..... | Katie Stevens |
| 2. | * Approval of Minutes of March 11, 2025 Commission Meeting..... | Boone Hopkins, Chair |
| 3. | Agency Updates.....
<i>Personnel and staffing updates, Government Efficiency & Legislative Oversight Review update, Annual State Audit, FAFSA Completion Portal</i> | Katie Stevens |
| 4. | * Adoption of Commission By-Laws | Zach Christian |
| 5. | Review of 2024-2025 Award Year and Update on the 2025-2026 Award Year | Zach Christian |
| 6. | Update on SC Tuition Grants Program Reviews.....
<i>Reminder of 6% minimum sample size</i> | Katie Stevens |
| 7. | Discussion of Requirement to Verify SC Residency | Zach Christian |
| 8. | Report on the Status of the 2025 Legislative Session..... | Robert Lloyd, SCICU |
| 9. | * Approval of the 2026-2027 Budget Request to the State Executive Budget Office for the South Carolina Tuition Grants Program..... | Katie Stevens |
| 10. | * Rotation of the Tuition Grants Commission and Election of Officers..... | Boone Hopkins, Chair |
| 11. | Reminder: State Ethics Commission SEI Filing Requirement | Katie Stevens |
| 12. | New Business..... | Boone Hopkins, Chair |
| 13. | Adjournment..... | Boone Hopkins, Chair |

***Next Scheduled Commission Meetings:
Tuesday; March 10, 2026; 10:30 AM
Tuesday; June 16, 2026; 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 4, 2025.



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MINUTES

South Carolina Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission Meeting
Tuesday, March 11, 2025
Virtual Meeting
Columbia, South Carolina

Commission Members Participating:

Dr. Boone Hopkins, Converse University, Chair
Dr. Gene Fant, North Greenville University, Vice Chair
Ms. Sara Vaughn as Proxy for Dr. Natalie Harder, Coker University, Secretary
Dr. Ernest McNealey, Allen University
Dr. John Dozier, Columbia College
Dr. Anita Gustafson, Presbyterian College
Ms. Hannah Craig as Proxy for Dr. William Barker, Southern Wesleyan University
Dr. L. Jeffrey Perez, SC Commission on Higher Education, Ex-officio

Non-Commission Member College Presidents Participating:

Mr. Keith Faulkner, Charleston Southern University
Dr. Steve Adamson, Erskine College
Dr. Nathan Copeland, Limestone University
Mr. Scott Cochran, Spartanburg Methodist College

Dr. Boone Hopkins, Commission Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:33AM. 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. She welcomed all in attendance and conducted a roll call of the Commission Members. Ms. Harrison confirmed the participating Commission Members in attendance and noted that Ms. Sara Vaughn is attending as Proxy for Dr. Natalie Harder, Coker University, and Ms. Hannah Craig is attending as Proxy for Dr. William Barker, Southern Wesleyan University. A quorum was established. Ms. Harrison recognized and welcomed the non-Commission members in attendance. Ms. Harrison also informed all participants of the special guests joining the meeting: Mr. Lewis Carter, Director, and Mr. Charlie LaRosa, Research Analyst, with the House Government Efficiency and Legislative Oversight Committee.

Dr. Hopkins announced that with Dr. Lester McCorn, former president of Clinton College, becoming president at Paine College (Augusta, Georgia), the Commission appointed Dr. Natalie Harder, president of Coker University, to serve as Commission Secretary. Ms. Archinya Ingram, interim president of Clinton College, was added as a Commission member for the remainder of Clinton College's position in the rotation of Commission members.

Dr. Hopkins called for a motion to approve the June 25, 2024, Commission Minutes. Dr. Ernest McNealy, Allen University, moved to approve the Minutes and Ms. Sara Vaughn seconded the motion. There was no discussion, and the motion was approved unanimously.

Dr. Hopkins called upon Ms. Harrison to report on 2023-2024 Program Reviews. Ms. Harrison reported on the twenty-two participating institutions that underwent Program Reviews for the 2023-2024 year, stating all reviews were submitted by the deadline, with two deadline extensions granted, and all have been closed. Ms.

Harrison reported there were seven colleges with findings program-wide, with three of those institutions having two findings. The most common finding pertained to the requirement to disburse grants within five business days of the receipt of funds. With the requirement that all Program Reviews have a minimum six percent sample size, it was reported that the average review percentage was 10.4%. Ms. Harrison thanked all participants for their work during the Programs Review process this year.

Dr. Hopkins called on Mr. Zachary Christian, Commission Deputy Director, to report on the 2024-2025 Award Year. Mr. Christian reported that the Agency has experienced a decrease of 8.42% in the total number of applications received and a decrease of 6.14% in the total commitments made for the 2024-2025 Award Year compared to the 2023-2024 Award Year. Mr. Christian noted that, while there were decreases in the total applications received and commitments made this year, the Agency has realized grants for 12,998 students as of March 1, which represents an increase of 4.21% over the previous year, with several Non-Traditional program certifications still pending. Mr. Christian continues to attribute the implementation of the Agency's new student information system, *myTG*, as streamlining the certification process and enabling the Agency to disburse grants much earlier than with the prior process. Additionally, Mr. Christian explained the initiatives taken by the Commission in recent years have continued to expand students' access to the Tuition Grant Program. Dr. Hopkins called for any questions or discussion. There being none, the meeting continued.

Dr. Hopkins called on Ms. Harrison to report on Agency Updates and Initiatives. Ms. Harrison reported that upon the August 2024 retirement of Ms. Gena Miles, Commission Financial Officer, Mrs. Kira Demery was promoted to the role of Fiscal Operations Coordinator after serving as the Tuition Grants Program Coordinator since January 2023. In April, Mrs. Demery will complete her participation 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, Mrs. Demery 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. Mrs. Demery 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 1.

Ms. Harrison announced the agency recently accepted the resignation of Ms. Shay Shealy West, Commission Program Operations Coordinator. Ms. Harrison expressed the Commission's thanks and appreciation during Ms. West's time with the Agency. It was reported that the Agency will open applications and begin the recruiting process for the Commission's next Program Operations Coordinator in the coming weeks.

Ms. Harrison highlighted Mr. Christian's achievement of earning the FAAC© designation through the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators' (NASFAA) accredited Certified Financial Aid Administrator® Program in September. Including Mr. Christian, there are only 20 aid administrators in South Carolina who currently hold this designation. Mr. Christian's higher education advocacy continued with his February participation in 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.

Ms. Harrison also described her leadership in planning and executing a successful annual conference of the National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs (NASSGAP) in October 2024 and is currently overseeing the planning for the upcoming NASSGAP Annual Conference, which will be held in Washington, D.C., in October. Ms. Harrison 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, Ms. Harrison is currently participating 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.

Ms. Harrison reported that the Tuition Grants Commission entered into a data sharing agreement with the South Carolina Department of Education (SCDE), allowing the Commission to receive the 45-day headcount master file of all high school seniors enrolled in public high schools located in South Carolina. The 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 may enter into a data sharing agreement with the agency 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 27, 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. Of those 30 schools, they are performing slightly better than the statewide average as reported by the National College Attainment Network (NCAN), showing a 30.25% FAFSA completion rate compared to the statewide average of 28.9%. Through a partnership with the S.C. Commission on Higher Education (CHE), the Commission is continuing to announce the availability of the FAFSA Completion Status Information portal and continue to enroll new districts/schools regularly.

Ms. Harrison shared that in 2023 the Commission was selected 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 submitted required reports to the Committee in March 2023. Due to unexpected delays in their review of another state agency, the Committee’s review of the Commission was delayed until this current legislative session. Agency leadership appeared before the Education and Cultural Affairs Subcommittee on February 27 and presented 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. Ms. Harrison thanked Mr. Carter and Mr. LaRosa for their support and guidance as the Commission works through this oversight process.

Dr. Hopkins called upon Ms. Harrison to report on the Review of the 2025-2026 State Budget Request for Funding of the South Carolina Tuition Grants Program. Ms. Harrison reported the FY2026 Budget Request process began in September, and Commission Staff appeared before the Executive Budget Office and Governor’s Office on October 16, 2024, the House Ways and Means Higher Education Subcommittee on January 23, 2025, and the Senate Finance Higher Education Subcommittee on March 5, 2025. The Commission requested a portion of the increased lottery allocations to be funded out of general, recurring funds, if possible, or to maintain the current \$20,000,000 in funding from lottery allocations. Ms. Harrison reported the Governor’s Executive Budget recommended maintaining the \$20,000,000 lottery allocation, but did not include the \$160,000 recurring funds request for operating expenses. The House Ways and Means Committee agreed with the Governor’s recommendations and submitted to the full House a budget which includes maintaining the \$20,000,000 funding from lottery allocations. Ms. Harrison indicated the House is scheduled to debate the Budget beginning this week, and the Senate Finance Committee is scheduled to meet during the week of April 8, with the full Senate tentatively scheduled to make its recommendation during the week of April 22, 2025. Based on the current recommendations, Ms. Harrison reported that she believes the Commission will maintain level funding for the upcoming fiscal year. Dr. Hopkins called for any questions, there being none, the meeting continued.

Dr. Hopkins called on Dr. Robert Lloyd, President and CEO of South Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities (SCICU), to report on the 2025 Legislative Outlook. Dr. Lloyd reported that one area that was affected was that the House Ways & Means Committee cut funding to the Higher Education Enhancement Program (HEEP), which has traditionally been cut by the House and added back in by the Senate. HEEP is crucial for enhancing educational opportunities for low-income and educationally disadvantaged students in South Carolina, focusing primarily on students attending Historically Black College and Universities and Women's Colleges. Dr. Lloyd reported that the Governor's Office and the Senate remain supportive of the Program and believes the funding will be restored in the Senate's version of the Budget. Dr. Lloyd also provided a brief federal legislative update and the potential impacts on Higher Education in South Carolina.

Dr. Lloyd also shared that SCICU is closely watching the evolvments happening with the U.S. Department of Education and the Trump Administration's desire to phase out the Department. Dr. Hopkins thanked Dr. Lloyd for his update and the advocacy SCICU does on behalf of the member institutions.

Dr. Hopkins called on Ms. Harrison to present the Staff Recommendation regarding Initial 2025-2026 South Carolina Tuition Grant Maximum Award Amount. 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 increased to \$5,000, representing a \$200 increase over the current year award amount. Dr. Hopkins called for discussion, and hearing none, called for a motion to increase the Maximum Grant for 2025-2026 Award Year to \$5,000 for the 2025-2026 Award Year. Dr. John Dozier, Columbia College, moved to set the initial Maximum Grant at \$5,000. Dr. McNealey seconded the motion. There was no further discussion, and the motion passed unanimously.

Dr. Hopkins called upon Mr. Christian to discuss the Staff Recommendation of the Revision to the Deadline Extension Date. Mr. Christian explained that at the June 25, 2024, Commission Meeting, the longstanding November 15 Eligibility and Appeal Deadline was extended to January 15 effective with the 2024-2025 Academic Year. After reviewing the data associated with this extension and realizing the unintended consequences and impacts to the administration of the Program, Commission Staff are recommending the Eligibility and Appeal deadline be revised to December 15. Mr. Christian reported that while the deadline extension allowed students additional time to satisfy all eligibility requirements, including completing the annual felony, drug, and alcohol affidavit, and to submit appeals, if necessary, the number of students that were made eligible between November 16, 2024, and January 15, 2025, is consistent with the same number of students reinstated in the month prior to the November 15, 2023, deadline during the 2023-2024 Academic Year. Mr. Christian also reported this lengthy deadline extension led several unintended impacts, including: the Commission's inability to close out fall semester disbursements prior to the close of the calendar year, which led to balancing issues with the State's Accounting System, SCEIS; the inability to accurately determine fall grant disbursements and run projections to ensure available cash on hand matches the need to disburse spring grants without using the allowable "two disbursement" policy for spring grants; impacted the Commission's ability to provide accurate and timely academic year updates to the House Ways and Means Higher Education Subcommittee as part of the annual budget hearing process, which of the members of the Subcommittee have come to expect; and, delayed the geocoding process used to support SCICU's letter writing campaign and the Commission's mailing of Tuition Grants recipients information to the General Assembly by over a month. Mr. Christian explained the combination of the same number of students being reinstated during the period leading up to the eligibility and appeal deadline between the 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 academic years, and the negative impacts felt by the Commission, it is the Staff's recommendation that the Commission consider revising the Eligibility and Appeal Deadline to December 15. This change would still provide students and financial aid staff at the participating colleges and universities additional time over the former November 15 Deadline date, while ensure Commission Staff can properly close out the fall semester without any additional delays, allowing for a smooth transition between semesters. Mr. Christian added that part of this request would be to pull back the February 15 deadline for school-initiated appeals for

new spring starts, to January 15. Dr. Hopkins called for any questions or discussion. Ms. Vaughn raised concerns with the February 15 to January 15 adjustment for school-initiated spring starts as it pertains to Coker University's academic calendar and asked for clarification regarding this adjustment. Mr. Christian explained that of the more than 60 spring-only appeals received by the Commission, fewer than 15 students met the February 15 deadline, specifically. With this proposed adjustment, so long as schools notified the Commission of their spring starts on or before January 15, Commission Staff would work with this specific subset of students to ensure all necessary items were requested. This change would also loosen some of the restrictions initially placed on the school-initiated appeals. Dr. Hopkins asked for any insight or additional comments from the financial aid administrators participating on the call. Ms. Carolyn Sparks, Associate Vice President of Enrollment and Director of Financial Aid, Wofford College, expressed support of December 15, whose remarks were echoed by Ms. Nancy Tate, Director of Financial Aid, Spartanburg Methodist College. Ms. Tate also expressed the challenges associated with the delay in eligibility statuses being updated in *myTG* ahead of their spring packaging, which she believed the earlier deadline date would solve. Dr. Hopkins thanked those for the insight and called for a motion to revise the deadlines to December 15 and January 15, respectfully. Dr. McNealey moved to revise the eligibility and appeals deadlines. Dr. Anita Gustafson, Presbyterian College, seconded the motion, which passed unanimously.

Dr. Hopkins reminded all Commission members to complete their Ethics filing by the March 30, 2025, 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 June 17, 2025, at 10:30 AM.

Dr. Hopkins adjourned the meeting at 11:42 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Mr. Zachary R. Christian, Deputy Director
Acting Secretary for
Dr. Natalie Harder, Secretary
South Carolina Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission



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AGENCY UPDATES AND INITIATIVES

Staff Updates:

The Tuition Grants Commission welcomed Mr. Ross Waddell to the staff on May 2, 2025, as the new Program Operations Coordinator. A South Carolina native, Ross grew up in Lexington and graduated from Winthrop University with a Bachelor of Arts in Economics. He has worked in the Higher Education field for over 5 years in various roles in Student Accounts and Financial Aid, most recently as the Senior Financial Aid Counselor at York Technical College where he managed the Federal Work-Study program. Ross is also an active member of the South Carolina Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators. He has quickly become a valuable asset to the agency.

Kira Demery's title was recently changed from Fiscal Operations Coordinator to Fiscal Operations Manager, to better reflect the ownership she has taken in handling all financial aspects of the agency. In April, Kira completed the year-long LeadSC Program for emerging leaders in state government. This program allowed her to meet with the Governor and state legislators, in addition to building a network of professionals at other agencies who specialize in various aspects of state government work. Kira continues to participate in training and professional development opportunities and recently earned her 14th NASFAA credential. She will begin her term as Treasurer-Elect of the SC Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (SCASFAA) in July.

Deputy Director Zachary Christian has been instrumental in the Legislative Oversight process on behalf of the agency, providing a wealth of knowledge on the history of the program and handling all additional data requests by the committee members. He coordinated the agency's participation in Higher Education Day at the State House, as well as College and Career Decision Day. He has participated in the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrator (NASFAA)'s State Advocacy Network this year and has been asked to participate in a panel of experts in this area at the upcoming national conference in Anaheim. In July, Zachary will continue his work with the SC Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators as the Chair of the Past Presidents Council task force and will represent South Carolina as a member of the conference committee for the Southern Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (SASFAA).

In addition to getting married and changing names in April, Executive Director Katie Stevens completed the South Carolina Executive Institute program, where she built relationships with other executive managers and agency heads throughout state government while gaining valuable knowledge related to leadership, strategy development, and contingency planning. Katie is now securing sessions and speakers for the annual conference of the National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs (NASSGAP), being held in Alexandria, Virginia, this October.

House Government Efficiency and Legislative Oversight Update:

Agency leadership began presenting testimony to the Education and Cultural Affairs Subcommittee of the House Government Efficiency and Legislative Oversight Committee on February 27, with a total of four agency-specific hearings held between February and May. In addition, Commission Chair Boone Hopkins and Executive Director Katie Stevens appeared before the full Committee as part of the Public Input Meeting on March 19. The agency has participated in follow-up discussions with H-GELOC staff as they prepare the draft report and executive summary, scheduled to be presented to the subcommittee, on August 12. The agency had a positive experience with the process and productive conversations with subcommittee members regarding the Tuition Grants Program and the operations of the agency. When approved, the report will be provided for review and further discussion as necessary.

Annual State Audit:

In March and April, agency staff worked with the Office of the State Auditor, who reviewed the agency’s compliance with statewide financial and procurement laws and regulations for FY 2024 and the period of July 1, 2024 through February 28, 2025. The auditors found no exceptions in any areas reviewed. In addition, they determined that the agency had taken adequate corrective action on one minor finding from the 2023 state audit. The final report was issued on April 24, 2025.

FAFSA Completion Status 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 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, 40 high schools have completed the process to sign up and currently have active users on the portal. This includes 33 traditional public high schools, 5 charter schools, and 2 private schools. The comparison below demonstrates the positive impact of making the portal available to school counselors, as their schools outperformed the overall cohort by 1.56% in submitted FAFSA forms and 1.92% in complete FAFSA forms with no rejects, through June 5th.

<i>As of June 5, 2025</i>	High Schools using FAFSA Completion Portal	Overall High School Cohort
Total Students Enrolled	9,530	55,070
# Submitted FAFSA	4,070	22,662
% Submitted FAFSA	42.71%	41.15%
# Complete FAFSA (no rejects)	3,960	21,824
% Complete FAFSA (no rejects)	41.55%	39.63%

The SC Department of Education has offered to host a live webinar on September 10th geared toward the statewide K-12 school counselor community that will allow the Tuition Grants Commission staff to provide information about the portal, the process for gaining access, and a demonstration of how the portal works. We hope this webinar will result in additional interest and more school counselors using the portal to assist in their FAFSA completion efforts.



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BYLAWS **SOUTH CAROLINA HIGHER EDUCATION TUITION GRANTS COMMISSION**

Article I **Name and Purpose**

Section 1. Name-

The composition and formation of the South Carolina Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission (hereinafter, "Commission") is generally prescribed by the Code of Laws of South Carolina 1976, as amended, Section 59-113-10, et seq.

NOW, THEREFORE, in order to effectively manage the affairs of the Commission, the following bylaws are adopted.

Section 2. Purpose-

The purpose of the Commission is to:

- Administer the South Carolina Tuition Grant provisions set forth in Chapter 113 of Title 59 of the South Carolina Code of Laws.
- Develop, adopt, and enforce policies necessary for the administration of the South Carolina Tuition Grants Program.
- Ensure transparency, fiscal responsibility, and accountability in the disbursement of funds.
- Report annually to the General Assembly on its activities, financial management, and progress in furthering its statutory mandate.

Article II **Membership**

Section 1. Composition-

The Commission shall consist of eight (8) representatives appointed from the independent institutions of higher learning within South Carolina that elect to participate under the provisions of Chapter 113. In addition, the Commission shall include one (1) ex officio member who is the chief executive officer of the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education or his/her designee.

Section 2. Term of Office-

Each institutional representative shall serve for a term of three (3) years, continuing until a duly selected and qualified successor assumes office. To ensure equitable representation, the membership shall be rotated among the participating institutions as recommended by Commission Staff and approved by the Commission.

Section 3. Appointment and Eligibility-

Membership is limited to duly authorized representatives of the independent institutions of higher learning in South Carolina participating in the Tuition Grants Program as defined by §59-113-50 of the South Carolina Code of Laws. For purposes of Commission appointment, the duly authorized representative shall be the President of the independent institution, or other official acting in such capacity. Procedures for appointment, resignation, or removal shall be established by the Commission in accordance with State law and these bylaws.

Pursuant to §8-13-1110 of the South Carolina Code of Laws, all Commission members are considered public officials and must file a Statement of Economic Interests with the State Ethics Commission prior to entering upon the official responsibilities of the position and annually thereafter during any calendar year in which they serve on the Commission. The Agency Executive Director shall provide notification and instructions for completing this requirement.

Section 4. Attendance and Assignment of Proxy-

State law (SC Code of Laws Ann. §1-3-245) requires that a member who has three consecutive unexcused absences from regularly scheduled meetings to be considered removed from the Commission, and a vacancy is created. An unexcused absence shall be defined as an absence that was not requested in advance and approved by the Agency Executive Director or Commission Chairperson. Excused absences may also be granted after the fact at the discretion of the Chairperson.

In the event a Commission member is unable to attend a called or special meeting of the Commission, a proxy may be designated in writing to the Agency Executive Director at least seventy-two (72) hours prior to the meeting. Any designee serving as Proxy shall be announced upon the commencement of the Meeting and notated in official Meeting Minutes.

Article III Meetings

Section 1. Regular Meetings-

The Commission shall hold two regular meetings annually. Generally, these meetings shall be held in March and June. Meetings may be held in person or virtually. The time, place, and agenda for each meeting shall be communicated in writing in advance, as required by the Freedom of Information Act.

Section 2. Special Meetings-

Special meetings may be convened:

1. At the call of the Chairperson, or
2. Upon written request by a majority of the members.

Section 3. Quorum and Voting-

A quorum shall consist of a majority of the full voting membership. All decisions shall be made by a majority vote of the members present. In any tied vote, the Chairperson's vote shall be decisive.

Section 4. Minutes and Records-

The Secretary of the Commission, or the Commission's Program Operations Coordinator as Acting Secretary, shall prepare and maintain accurate minutes of all meetings. Minutes shall be distributed to all members and made available to the public in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

Article IV Officers

Section 1. Designation of Officers-

The officers of the Commission shall include:

- Chairperson
- Vice-Chairperson
- Secretary

Section 2. Election and Term

Officers shall be elected by a majority vote of the Commission at the June Meeting annually. Officers shall serve concurrent with the term of membership (a period of up to, but no longer than, three years) unless removed earlier for cause by a two-thirds vote of the Commission.

Section 3. Duties

Chairperson: Presides over all meetings, approves the agenda, represents the Commission in official capacities, and conducts the annual performance review of the Agency Executive Director.

Vice-Chairperson: Assists the Chairperson as needed and presides over meetings in the Chair's absence.

Secretary: Prepares meeting minutes or reviews the prepared minutes prior to distribution to the Commission for a vote.

Article V Amendments

These bylaws may be amended by a two-thirds majority vote of the Commission members. Proposed amendments must be submitted in writing and circulated to all members at least ten (10) days prior to the vote. Any amendment must be consistent with the statutory framework under which the Commission is established.

Article VI Miscellaneous Provisions

Precedence: In the event any conflict between these bylaws and the South Carolina Code, the statutory provisions of Title 59, Chapter 113 shall prevail.

Effective Date: These bylaws shall become effective upon adoption by the Commission and shall govern the operations of the Commission until amended or repealed in accordance with Article V.

Severability: If any provision of these bylaws is declared invalid or unenforceable, the remaining provisions shall continue in full force and effect.

A vote of the Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission is required to adopt these bylaws.



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Review and Update on the 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 Award Years

2024-2025 Review:

During the 2024-2025 Award Year, there was a total of **\$62,825,984** in appropriated and allocated monies available to disburse South Carolina Tuition Grants: **\$27,558,624** in State Recurring Appropriations; **\$14,847,360** in Children's Education Endowment received from the Commission on Higher Education; **\$420,000*** 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 FY25, as of June 5, 2025, **13,000 (+4.18% change)** grants were realized out of the **24,590 (-6.14% change)** commitments made. This demonstrates a show-up rate of **52.87% (increase of 5.24%)**. The maximum grant was \$4,800 with an average grant of \$4,405. With an application deadline of August 1, 2024, **29,288 (-8.42% change)** applications were received.

While there were fewer applicants received and commitments made during the 2024-2025 award year over the 2023-2024 because of the challenges of the FAFSA rollout, the total number of grants realized and the increase to the longstanding show-up rate hovering around 47-48% is promising and represents the success of the actions taken by the Commission to expand access to the Program.

2025-2026 Updates:

For the 2025-2026 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 2024 Independent College Full-Time Enrollment for South Carolina residents on the state-wide total in August 2025. Another funding change is realized in the total State Funds Interest available. For the 2025-2026 Award Year, the authority to spend is set at \$250,000 regardless of the actual interest amount received. Agency staff can request an increase in this authority for the 2025-26 award year, if needed, through the Executive Budget Office.

As of June 5th, the Commission has received **25,024 (+21.20% change) Tuition Grants Applicants**, of which **20,823 (+16.41% change)** are currently tentatively eligible.

**The Commission's authority to spend Interest Funds was increased to \$420,000 for 2024-25 because of a one-time request to the Executive Budget Office. \$425,527 in Interest Funds were received in 2024-25.*



SC Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission

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Katherine H. Stevens
Executive Director

Overview of the 2025 SC General Assembly as Related to the SC Tuition Grants Program

The South Carolina Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission submitted its 2025-2026 State Budget Request last September, requesting continuation of funding of the \$10 million increase for the Tuition Grants Program first realized in FY22. 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 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 recommended the funding source for these funds continue to be allocations from the Lottery account.

On January 23, 2025, 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 March 5, 2025, 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 FY26 Budget recommended the continuation of an increase of \$10 million for Tuition Grants through Lottery appropriations.

The General Assembly ratified the FY26 State Budget on May 28, 2025. The budget maintains funding for the Tuition Grant at the same level as last year, with \$27.5 million appropriated in General Funds and \$20 million allocated in Lottery Funds.



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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 2026-2027 must be approved by the Commission at the June 2025 meeting.

At this time, Commission Staff project that the Program can sustain a maximum grant of \$5,000 for the 2025-2026 year. This maximum grant was approved by the Commission at the March 2025 meeting. Currently, no new funding for the Program is needed to maintain this award amount for 2026-2027. Requests related to the agency's operating expenses will be determined by Executive Management and added to any Program-related requests.

With the recent passage of the FY26 budget, the Tuition Grants Commission is once again allocated a total of \$20 million in lottery funds, in addition to \$27.5 million in recurring funds for the Program. As noted in prior years, there is no guarantee that the recent increase in lottery funds for the Tuition Grant and CHE's Need-Based Grant for public colleges will be sustained going forward.

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

- (1) Create a request for recurring general funds (State appropriations) in the requested amount. If approved, this would create a more stable source of funding; however, this request has not been approved during the three most recent budget cycles. If the requested amount is not available in recurring funds through general State appropriations, legislators 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 2026-2027 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.



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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.

2024-2025 COMMISSION MEMBERS

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

ROTATING OFF

Dr. Gene Fant, North Greenville University
Dr. Anita Gustafson, Presbyterian College
Dr. William Barker, Southern Wesleyan University

ROTATING ON

Dr. Bruce McAllister, Bob Jones University
Dr. Dwaun Warmack, Claflin University
Dr. Elizabeth Davis, Furman University

2025-2026 COMMISSION MEMBERS

Dr. Boone Hopkins, Converse University, Chair (Year 3 of 3)
Dr. Ernest McNealey, Allen University (Year 2 of 3)
Dr. Bruce McAllister, Bob Jones University (Year 1 of 3)
Dr. Dwaun Warmack, Claflin University (Year 1 of 3)
Dr. Pamela Richardson-Wilks, Clinton College (Year 3 of 3)
Dr. Natalie Harder, Coker University (Year 2 of 3)
Dr. John Dozier, Columbia College (Year 2 of 3)
Dr. Elizabeth Davis, Furman University (Year 1 of 3)
Dr. Jeff Perez, President and Executive Director, CHE, Ex-officio

REQUESTED ACTION: With Dr. Gene Fant rotating off the Commission, a new Vice Chair of the South Carolina Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission will need to be elected. The position of Secretary, previously filled by Dr. Lester McCorn, needs to be filled as the Commission begins a new fiscal year.



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SC TUITION GRANTS COMMISSION ROTATION SCHEDULE

Effective July 1, 2025

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: Voorhees, Newberry, Erskine

OFF: Furman, BJU, Claflin

2029-2030

ON: Wofford, Morris

OFF: SMC, CIU

2030-2031

ON: NGU, PC, SWU

OFF: Anderson, Benedict, CSU

2031-2032

ON: Clinton, Converse, Columbia

OFF: Voorhees, Newberry, Erskine

2032-2033

ON: Allen, Coker

OFF: Wofford, Morris

2033-2034

ON: Furman, BJU, Claflin

OFF: NGU, PC, SWU

2034-2035

ON: SMC, CIU, Anderson

OFF: Clinton, Converse, Columbia

2035-2036

ON: Benedict, CSU

OFF: Allen, Coker

2036-2037

ON: Voorhees, Newberry, Erskine

OFF: Furman, BJU, Claflin

2037-2038

ON: Wofford, Morris, NGU

OFF: SMC, CIU, Anderson

2038-2039

ON: PC, SWU

OFF: Benedict, CSU

2039-2040

ON: Clinton, Converse, Columbia

OFF: Voorhees, Newberry, Erskine