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Executive Director

January 9, 2003

MEMORANDUM

To: Mr. Dalton B. Floyd, Jr., Chair, and Members
Commission on Higher Education

From: Ms. Susan Cole, Chair, and Members
Committee on Access & Equity and Student Services

LIFE Scholarship Program
Proposed Regulatory Amendments - 2003-04 Academic Year

Each year, the Commission on Higher Education receives several appeals applications from military personnel who earned credit hours while on active duty. In the majority of these cases, the service members do not qualify for the scholarship because they lack the required number of credit hours. According to the LIFE Scholarship guidelines, in order to be eligible for the LIFE Scholarship, students must be enrolled full-time and be degree-seeking. However, because of their military commitment, these students are unable to meet the above requirements. In addition, they are unable to meet the credit hour requirement to earn the LIFE Scholarship because enrollment in these courses begins their initial college enrollment.

Based on the number of appeals received in this category during the 2002 Appeals Session, it is our recommendation that credit hours earned by service members while on active duty be treated the same as AP, CLEP and Dual Credit Courses. As a result, any credit hours earned while on active duty will not count against the semester limits and may be used toward the credit hour requirement, if accepted by the institution.

In addition, the Commission staff is recommending that service members who are enrolled in college and are called to active duty during the academic year be allowed to receive the LIFE Scholarship during the succeeding summer or at the end of the maximum terms of eligibility based on their initial college enrollment date (provided they meet the continued eligibility requirements). They will be treated the same as students who participate in internships, cooperative work programs, travel study programs, and national and international student Exchange programs approved by the home institution.

The Commission staff recommends adding the following section to the LIFE Scholarship guidelines effective academic year 2003-04:

62-900.41 Active Duty Service Members

- A. Service members of the United States Armed Forces will not be penalized for any credit hours earned while on active duty. The credit hours earned will not count against the terms of eligibility, but may be used toward the credit hour requirement.
- B. Service members who are enrolled in college and are called to active duty for an entire academic year, may renew the scholarship for the next academic year, if they met the eligibility requirements at the end of the prior academic year. Service members who did not use the LIFE Scholarship funds and/or terms of eligibility during this period due to active duty, shall be allowed to receive LIFE Scholarship funds during the succeeding summer or at the end of the maximum terms of eligibility based on their initial college enrollment date (provided the member meets continued eligibility requirements).
- C. Service members who are enrolled in college and are called to active duty for one academic term during the academic year must complete fifteen credit hours and earn a 3.0 cumulative grade point average on a 4.0 scale consistent with the policies and procedures of the institution for graduation purposes at the end of the academic year to be eligible for scholarship renewal for the next academic year. Service members who did not use LIFE Scholarship funds and/or terms of eligibility during this period shall be allowed to receive the scholarship during the succeeding summer or at the end of the maximum terms of eligibility based on their initial college enrollment date (provided the student meets continued eligibility requirements).
- D. In order to receive LIFE Scholarship funds for summer school, active duty military service members must enroll in twelve credit hours during the summer. In order to maintain eligibility for the next academic year for service members who only attend summer school at the home institution, the member must earn twelve credit hours during the academic year. For service members who enroll in summer school and one other term of the academic year at the home institution, the service member must earn a total of twenty-seven credit hours (or its equivalent) for the academic year. The member must meet all eligibility requirements as specified in the "Continued Eligibility" Section, except for the completion of the thirty credit hour requirement for the academic year.
- E. The home institution will be responsible for securing verification of active duty status, cumulative grade point average, credit hours earned and terms of eligibility based on the service member's initial college enrollment date, and eligibility for scholarship renewal for the next academic year.

Recommendation

The Access & Equity and Student Services Committee recommend that the Commission on Higher Education approve the proposed amendments to the regulations for the LIFE Scholarship Program. If approved, the amended regulation will be effective for the 2003-04 academic year.