

South Carolina Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission

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MINUTES

South Carolina Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission Meeting
Thursday, February 25, 2010
1706 Senate Street
Columbia, South Carolina

Commission Members Present

Dr. Charles Young, Vice Chairman, Allen University

Commission Members Participating via Conference Call

Dr. John Griffith, Chairman, Presbyterian College

Dr. David Spittal, Secretary, Southern Wesleyan University

Dr. Betsy Fleming, Converse College

Dr. Evans Whitaker, Anderson University

Dr. Garrison Walters, Commission on Higher Education

Commission Chairman, Dr. John Griffith, called the meeting to order at 10:30 AM. He welcomed all in attendance and those participating via conference call.

Dr. Griffith called for a motion to approve the Minutes of the June 8, 2009 Commission Meeting and the E-Mail Vote from December 7, 2009 pertaining to the mid-year reduction of South Carolina Tuition Grants. Dr. Spittal moved to approve the Minutes and E-Mail Vote. Dr. Charles Young seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved by the Commission.

Dr. Griffith called on Mr. Mayo to report on the status of the 2008-2009 Program Reviews. Mr. Mayo stated that the Program Reviews, due by December 31, 2009, were received from all colleges with the exception of one, for which an extension to February 28, 2010, was granted. All Program Reviews received have been closed and there were no major findings reported.

Dr. Griffith called on Mr. Mayo to present an update on the 2009-2010 and 2010-2011 award years. Mr. Mayo reported that the Commission received just over \$35 million total funding with an approved maximum grant of \$2800 for the 2009-2010 award year. He reported that all traditional spring enrollment reports have been received and colleges have been receiving their funds at the 85% rate until all reports are received. The total number of grants realized for the 2009-2010 award year was about 14,200 which represent an increase of 11.1% over the total grants realized during the previous award year. Mr. Mayo stated that the projected funding for 2010-2011 is just under \$34 million. This is slightly lower than the prior year based on a

projected reduction for the independent sector in the percentage of overall statewide enrollment. While the independent colleges have increased enrollment, the state's technical college enrollment increases have been greater, thus impacting the amount of need-based and lottery funds that the Tuition Grants Program is projected to receive.

Mr. Mayo shared with the Commission the letter written to students regarding the mid-year reduction of the South Carolina Tuition Grant which was made available to them on the Commission's website and which was subsequently shared by many colleges with their Tuition Grant recipients. Dr. Griffith commended Mr. Mayo for his handling of the situation regarding the reduction. Mr. Mayo informed the Commission of the results of a NASSGAP (National Association of State Student Grants and Aid Programs) survey which indicated that almost every state in the country had to deal with large and unexpected increases in enrollment during the current award year and that the Commission was not alone in being required to make a mid-year reduction in student grants.

Mr. Mayo reported on the 2010-2011 State Budget Request for funding of the Tuition Grants Program. At its June 2009 Meeting, the Commission approved a request for an increase of \$1,686,834 which was submitted as required to the General Assembly in August 2009. However, due to the current economic climate, the reality is that any type of increase is not likely. The House Ways and Means Committee began budget hearings in January 2010 and the South Carolina Tuition Grants Commission appeared before the House Ways and Means Higher Education Subcommittee on January 12, 2010. Governor Sanford recommended level funding for the Tuition Grants Program for 2010-2011 in his Executive State Budget submitted in January. The House Ways and Means Committee continues to meet this week to consider budget recommendations. Although nothing has been decided as of this Commission Meeting, based on information received through legislative contacts, it is expected that the Tuition Grants Program will essentially receive level funding for the 2010-2011 award year.

Mr. Mayo presented the Staff Recommendation regarding the initial 2010-2011 South Carolina Tuition Grants Maximum Award. If level funding is received, the Staff recommends setting the initial award for 2010-2011 at \$2600. This amount is based on an analysis of projected available funds and the projected number of student recipients, which includes a projected increase of 7% in eligible students for 2010-2011.

Dr. Griffith called for a motion to approve the Staff Recommendation. Dr. Young moved to approve the recommendation. Dr. Whitaker seconded the motion. The motion was unanimously approved by the Commission.

Mr. Mayo reported on the Electronic Award Letter notifications, advising that this process resulted in a savings of \$13,402.48 in postage costs. He recognized and thanked the South Carolina Student Loan Corporation for again providing this service at no cost to the Commission. He provided information to the Commission that the staff is now sending ineligibility letters electronically as well and that this has resulted in over \$2,100 in additional postage savings bringing the total savings for the 2009-2010 processing cycle to over \$15,500.

Mr. Mayo reminded the Commission members that the State Ethics Forms are due by April 15, 2010. He referred the members to the State Ethics Commission website to complete the form on-line and obtain additional information. The website is: <http://ethics.sc.gov>.

Mr. Mayo noted that the next Commission Meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, June 9, 2010 at 10:30 AM to be held at the office of South Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities, 1706 Senate Street, Columbia, SC. The next Commission Meeting will also be available via conference call for those wishing to save money and time by not attending in person.

At this time, Mr. Mayo thanked the Commission members for their service and support of the Commission staff. He further expressed his appreciation for the relationships that the South Carolina Tuition Grant Commission enjoys with the Financial Aid Offices of the independent colleges.

Dr. Griffith called for further business. There being none, the meeting was adjourned at 10:51 AM.

Respectfully submitted,

Toni Cave
Acting Secretary for
Dr. David Spittal, Secretary
South Carolina Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission