



Agenda Item 3.03.C.  
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**SOUTH CAROLINA COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION**

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**MEMORANDUM**

TO: Mr. Austin Gilbert, Chairman, and Members,  
Commission on Higher Education

FROM: Mr. Frank Gilbert, Chairman,  
Committee on Access & Equity and Student Services

**Consideration of Regulations for the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship Program**

As required under the Administrative Procedures Act, attached are the regulations for the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship Program. These regulations are consistent with existing legislation and, upon approval by the Committee on Access & Equity and Student Services, the Commission, and the General Assembly, will govern the administration of the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship Program.

During the 1998 legislative session, the House Ways and Means Committee and the Senate Education Committee requested that the Commission withdraw the 1999-2000 Palmetto Fellows Scholarship regulations and resubmit the regulations with changes. The changes proposed by both Committees are as follows:

1. The minimum requirements necessary in order to apply for a Palmetto Fellows Scholarship for 1999-2000 shall be the following three criteria: an SAT score of 1200 or an equivalent ACT score, a GPA of 3.5 on a 4.0 scale by the end of the junior year, and rank in the top five percent of the class at the end of either the sophomore or the junior year. **This is consistent with the criteria necessary to apply for 1998-99. The original regulations for 1999-2000 contained the recommendation to change the eligibility criteria to require two of the three criteria.**

2. SAT and ACT qualifying test scores must be certified by the high school on the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship application by no later than the scholarship application deadline. For 1998-99, the SAT qualifying score must have been earned by not later than the October administration and the ACT qualifying test score must have been earned by not later than the September administration. Since the scholarship application deadline is usually in December, this would lengthen the time a student could make a qualifying test score in order to apply for the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship.

3. A Palmetto Fellows Scholarship may be renewed annually for no more than a total of eight semesters (or the equivalent) of full-time study toward the first baccalaureate degree or Pharm.D. degree. Previously, Palmetto Fellows Scholarship funds could not be used toward the cost of attendance for the Pharm.D. degree. However, the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship funds may only be used for undergraduate coursework.

4. For those high schools that have fewer than forty students but greater than twenty students in the class at the end of either the sophomore or the junior year, the high school can submit applications for the two students who are number one in the class and number two in the class, providing that the students meet all other eligibility criteria. Additionally, in the selection process, 15 ranking points shall be awarded to those students who are eligible based on the fact that they rank #1 or #2 in the class at the end of either the sophomore or the junior year. Previously, high schools that had fewer than forty students would have only been able to submit an application for the student who ranked #1 in the class. The designation of 15 points for class ranks of #1 and #2 in small schools would ensure that the applicants would be awarded a consistent number of points.

Also, the House Ways and Means Committee and the Senate Education Committee requested that the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship Program be consistent with other State scholarship and grant programs. The remaining changes in the regulations were made to streamline the administration of the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship Program with all other financial aid programs. The changes proposed in the regulations are as follows:

5. The PSAT has been removed as a qualifying test for the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship. The student will be allowed to use either the SAT or the ACT test score.

6. In order to retain eligibility for the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship after the initial year, the student must complete a minimum of 30 semester credit hours (or the equivalent) by the end of the regular academic year. This requirement would only pertain to those students who will be awarded the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship for 1999-2000. Students who have been awarded the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship in previous years would be allowed to remain under the prior requirement of completing a minimum of 24 semester credit hours (or the equivalent) by the end of the regular academic year. Students would need to take at least 30 credit hours each regular academic year to graduate within the normal time (four years).

7. Palmetto Fellows who have not completed the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form must have an affidavit on file to certify that he/she is not in default and/or does not owe a refund on Federal or State financial aid, including the State Grant, Pell Grant, Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant, Perkins Loan or Federal Stafford Loan. Previously, all Palmetto Fellows were required to complete the FAFSA form. **The purpose of the FAFSA was to verify default status and/or refunds owed which can also be accomplished through the signing of an affidavit. Since this is not a need-based program, many Palmetto Fellows would not normally complete the FAFSA form.**

8. Palmetto Fellows who enroll in National and International Student Exchange Programs are included in the section that was previously designated for students who participate in internships, cooperative work programs, travel study programs. **These programs were included because they can be a required part of an academic degree program.**

9. Palmetto Fellows who enroll in one term at the home institution during the academic year and also enroll in an internship, cooperative work program, travel study program, or National or International Student Exchange Program during the same academic year must complete 15 credit hours and earn a 3.0 cumulative grade point average on a 4.0 scale within the academic year to be eligible for scholarship renewal for the next academic year. **Previously, students would need to request a deferral in order to participate in these programs to ensure their Palmetto Fellows Scholarship would be renewed for the next academic year. This will aid in simplifying the process of renewing a scholarship for a student who participates in an internship, cooperative work program, travel study program, or National or International Student Exchange Program.**

10. Students who participate in internships, cooperative work programs, travel study programs, or National or International Student Exchange Programs during one term of the academic year may use the funds not used for that term to attend summer school. In order to receive Palmetto Fellows Scholarship funds for summer school, students must enroll in 12 credit hours during the summer. In order to maintain eligibility for the next academic year, the student must earn a total of 27 credit hours for the academic year. **Palmetto Fellows who participate in these types of programs during one term of the academic year and did not use Palmetto Fellows Scholarship funds for that term have previously been able to use the funds for summer school attendance. However, the Palmetto Fellow was not required to complete a certain number of credit hours for summer school. Again, this will aid in simplifying the process of renewing a scholarship for a student who participates in an internship, cooperative work program, travel study program, or National or International Student Exchange Program.**

11. Palmetto Fellows whose scholarship has been suspended or placed under probation cannot receive a LIFE Scholarship. However, if the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship is discontinued or withdrawn, the student may be eligible to receive the LIFE Scholarship. **This section has been inserted in light of the newly approved LIFE Scholarship Program. Previously, this language was not needed.**

**Recommendation**

The Committee on Access & Equity and Student Services recommends that the Commission on Higher Education approve the proposed regulations for the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship Program.