

**Consideration of College Transition Need-based Grant Program Policy Guidelines
For the 2015-16 Academic Year**

October 1, 2015

Background

The General Assembly included Proviso 11.19 in the FY 2013-14 Appropriations Act to enable funds appropriated to the College Transition Connection be redirected through the need-based grant program to be available as need-based grants for student enrolled in recognized College Transition Programs (CTP) at South Carolina institutions as of spring 2015 includes: Clemson University, Coastal Carolina University, College of Charleston, University of South Carolina, and effective spring 2015 Winthrop University.

Analysis

The U.S. Department of Education offers financial aid to those students enrolled or accepted for enrollment in a comprehensive transition and postsecondary program for students with intellectual disabilities at post-secondary institution that participates in the *federal student aid programs. Institutions must participate in a federal approval process in order to provide federal funds to students enrolled in these programs. As of July 1, 2014 there were 34 approved programs with South Carolina being home to four of those programs. A fifth program had been initiated and in spring 2015 was recognized by the U.S. Department of Education.*

Initial efforts to assist intellectually disabled students were directed by the College Transition Connection (CTC). During the FY 2013-14, CTC works with select colleges and universities in South Carolina to design, create and fund transition and post-secondary opportunities for young adults with intellectual disabilities. The CTC worked with the South Carolina General Assembly and the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education (CHE) in an effort to redirect funds for the purposes of creating a state based program to provide additional financial assistance to students who enroll in these programs in South Carolina.

In working with CHE, CTC helped to identify the eligible South Carolina CTP's. The CTP serves students with intellectual disabilities who demonstrate financial need. These programs allow for students to attend a four-year institution and engage in academics, independent living environments, employment/career opportunities, and socialization. These programs are non-degree seeking and successful completion of these programs allows for students to receive a non-degree certificate of post-secondary education.

Proviso 11.16 in the FY 2013-2014 Appropriations Act went into effect July 1, 2013.

11.16 College Transition Connection Need-Based Grants: Funds appropriated for the College Transition Connection shall be transferred to the Commission on Higher Education Need-Based Grant program. These funds shall be used to provide need-based grants to South Carolina resident students enrolled at a public institution of higher education in an established college transition program that serves students with intellectual disabilities. The Commission on Higher Education, in consultation with College Transition Connection, shall develop guidelines for awarding these need-based grants and shall allocate the available funds to eligible institutions on the basis of student need and enrollment in the established college transition programs. All other grants and gift aid for which these students are eligible must be applied first to the cost of attendance prior to using the need-based grant funding. If the cost of attendance for an eligible student is met with all other grants and gift aid, the need-based

grant shall not be used. The participating institutions, in cooperation with the Commission on Higher Education and College Transition Connection, shall track the number of grant recipients and other information determined necessary to evaluate the effectiveness of these grants in assisting students with intellectual disabilities in college transition programs. No more than the amount transferred in Fiscal Year 2013-2014 for College Transition Connection may be expended from currently appropriated Commission on Higher Education Need-Based Grant funding for grants for students in college transition programs.

The Proviso transfers and dedicates recurring funds provided to CTP for the purpose of need-based student grants. The guidelines developed provide for eligibility consistent with eligibility with the financial assistance programs authorized under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965. Participants of this program are required to complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and demonstrate financial “need” as well as meet the established South Carolina residency requirements in order to receive funding. The redirected funds totaled \$179,178 FY 2013-14. Funding is limited to the level of FY 2013-14, FY 2014-15, and FY 2015-16 appropriations remain at \$179,178. All eligible students who demonstrated financial need were awarded during the 2013-14 academic year. CHE staff met with key personnel from each of the five eligible institutions to engage in discussions as to how to best move forward in identifying and awarding eligible students. As tasked, CHE staff in collaboration with CTP personnel, provide the attached guidelines that have been developed as a result of discussions, suggestions, and insight from CTP personnel and CHE staff. **(Attachment I)**

Below is a brief overview of the South Carolina CTP programs and disbursements.

Institution	Length of Program (All programs offer on and off campus housing)	Certification Awarded	Total Participants 2013-14	Total Participants Fall 2014-15	Total Participants Fall 2015
Clemson University	2 Years An optional 3 rd year is available for select students	Certificate of Postsecondary Education upon completion of 2-year program	1	2	3
Coastal Carolina University	4 Years	University Certificate of Completion	8	9	9
College of Charleston	4 Years	Certificate of Completion	3	0	0
University of South Carolina	Students have the option to enroll in a 2, 3, or 4 Year program	Certificate of Completion	8	7	8
Winthrop University*	2 Years	Letter of Completion	N/A	8	11

Institution	Award Disbursement 2013-14 Academic Year	Award Disbursement 2014-15 Academic Year	Projected Award Disbursement Fall 2015 Only
Clemson University	\$6,300	\$13,340	\$5,304
Coastal Carolina University	\$55,736	\$55,713	\$26,865
College of Charleston	\$21,000	\$0	\$0
University of South Carolina	\$56,000	\$45,500	\$23,880
Winthrop University*	N/A	\$28,000	\$32,835

**Effective Spring 2015 Winthrop University's CTP program received final federal approval required for their program implementation. Winthrop University is currently operational with enrollment for this Spring 2015 term and moving forward.*

Collaboration and development of the CTP programs have resulted in the following outcomes:

1. Guidelines for determining eligibility for a student enrolled in an eligible CTP program.
2. Process for grant award disbursement and requesting funds from CHE.

Because the CTP is directed by a temporary one-year budget proviso, considerations for the program in subsequent and future years will be subject to any statutory or regulatory changes that may occur during the upcoming 2016 Session of the General Assembly or renewal of the budget proviso for FY 2016-17. Due to the increase in the number of CTP participants, a request for an increase in funding was presented at the September 9, 2015 Committee on Access & Equity and Student Services meeting. **(Attachment II)**

Recommendation

The Committee on Access & Equity and Student Services commends favorably to the Commission approval of the proposed College Transition Need-based Grant Program Policy Guidelines for dissemination to the eligible College Transition Programs in the State. In addition, the Committee recommends to the Commission an increase in funding for the College Transition Need-based Grant Program from its current funding level of \$179,178 to \$350,000 for FY 2016-17.

College Transition Need-based Grant Program

Policy Guideline

Purpose

The South Carolina General Assembly included a provision in the FY 2013-14 Appropriations Act to initiate need-based grants for students in College Transition Programs (CTP). The proviso¹ directed funds totaling \$179,178 that had appropriated in the prior year for the College Transition Connection Program, a non-profit organization, to the Commission on Higher Education (CHE) Need-based Grant Program. The budget proviso dedicated the transferred funds to provide need-based grants to South Carolina resident students enrolled at a public institution of higher education in an established CTP that serves students with intellectual disabilities.

As of FY 2013-14 proviso and subject to annual continuation of the budget proviso and program funding, eligible students have an opportunity to enroll in an eligible CTP at a South Carolina post-secondary institution as a non-degree seeking student and receive need-based grant funds. The eligible CTPs that participate are as follows: Clemson University, Coastal Carolina University, College of Charleston, University of South Carolina, and effective spring 2015 Winthrop University. CTP institutional personnel are responsible for identifying and verifying program participants' eligibility and administering the grants per the outlined guidelines established by CHE in coordination with the College Transition Connection and institutions with the CTPs.

I. General Eligibility Requirements

A. CTP students will need to be verified for U.S. Citizenship or legal permanent residency and South Carolina residency (SC Code § 59-101-430)

B. A Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) will need to be completed and submitted by each eligible student and determined "needy" as defined under Title IV Regulations for determining Federal Student Aid.

C. The FAFSA application is to be completed and submitted each academic year in which the CTP student plans to enroll. The financial aid office at the institution will review the FAFSA results, determine eligibility, and conduct any essential follow up with the student(s) for additional required documentation requests.

D. A student must be verified as an enrolled student in an eligible CTP during a fall or spring term.

¹FY 2013-14 Appropriation Act Part IB Proviso 11.19 initiated this program. The provision is continued in FY 2014-15 per Proviso 11.16 (CHE: College Transition Need-based Grants). A copy is accessible at http://www.scstatehouse.gov/sess120_2013-2014/appropriations2014/ta14ndx.php.

II. Continued Eligibility Requirements

A. The CTP student must be an enrolled student in an eligible CTP at an eligible institution during a fall or spring term.

B. The CTP student must be in compliance with Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) as defined by Title IV Regulation, as well as demonstrate that they are in good standing with the eligible CTP and the eligible CTP home institution.

III. Procedures for Awarding and Disbursement of Funds

A. Each year CHE will determine an annual award amount per student. ~~based on the continuation of the program as directed by the South Carolina General Assembly the total funds made available, and anticipated number of eligible students.~~

~~B. The maximum established award amount for the 2013-14 academic year is \$7,000.~~

B ~~C~~. A student's CTP Need-based Grant award may not exceed the student's cost of attendance as established by Title IV Regulation.

C ~~D~~. All other grants and gift aid for which these students are eligible, including Federal, State, private and institutional funds must be applied first to the cost of attendance prior to using the CTP Need-based Grant funding. If the cost of attendance for an eligible student is met with all other grants and gift aid, the CTP Need-based Grant shall not be used.

D ~~E~~. Half of the CTP Need-based Grant shall be awarded during the fall term and half shall be awarded during the spring term. There are no summer disbursements. The CTP Need-based Grant may be renewed for up to a maximum of eight terms.

E ~~F~~. Each CTP will provide to CHE by October 15th each fall term and March 15th each spring term an invoice to include eligible CTP student identifiers ~~and an Inter-Departmental Transfer (IDT)~~. Invoices provided on eligible CTP students to CHE after the aforementioned dates will still be eligible to receive an award, but will be disbursed in accordance with CHE policies. Spring invoices that include both the spring and fall terms must designate the requested amount for each eligible student for the fall and spring terms.

1. Invoices ~~and IDTs~~ will be provided to Student ~~Services Financial Support~~ at CHE by the established date for each fall and spring term. Included on the submitted invoice will be a signature from CTP personnel certifying verification of eligibility in the CTP program and a signature from financial aid personnel at the eligible institution verifying the determination of "needy."

IV. Appeals Procedure

A. Students who are in good standing as defined by the eligible institution, but are not meeting SAP standards have an option to appeal the loss of CTP funds. Should the student need to file an appeal for loss of CTP funds, the student will follow the established institutional and/or CTP program appeals process.



Mr. Gary Glenn

Dr. Karen Woodfault

RE: Budget request 2016-2017

In consultation with Senator Joel Lurie, we have determined that additional funding is needed for FY2016-17 to support the College Transition Need-Based Grant program in order to meet the anticipated growth of eligible South Carolina students with financial need.

As you are aware, College Transition Programs are need-based grant programs at South Carolina colleges and universities that serve South Carolina residents with intellectual disabilities. These programs offer academic and a structured curriculum to support students who want to continue their academic career and independent living instruction to prepare for gainful employment. At present USC, Clemson, College of Charleston, Coastal Carolina and Winthrop University offer College Transition Programs in South Carolina.

We are requesting the amount of funding for the College Transition programs be increased from its current funding level of \$179,178 to \$350,000 for FY2016-17.

I would like to place this request for additional funding before the Committee on Access & Equity and Student Services for consideration at their September 9, 2015 meeting at the Commission. I will be happy to present additional information regarding this request.

Regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Donald Bailey'.

Donald Bailey, Executive Director