



August 9, 2004

MEMORANDUM

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

From: Mr. Daniel Ravenel, Interim Chair and Members
Committee on Student Services and Access & Equity

Legislative Incentive for Future Excellence (LIFE) Scholarship Program
Proposed Regulatory Amendments - 2005-06 Academic Year

The Legislative Incentive for Future Excellence (LIFE) Scholarship Program, a merit-based scholarship, was implemented in Fall 1998. The purpose of the program is to increase access to higher education, improve the employability of South Carolina's students so as to attract business to the State, provide incentives for students to be better prepared for college, and encourage students to graduate from college on time.

During the 2002 Legislative Session, the General Assembly approved the South Carolina Education Lottery Act. The SC Education Lottery Act amended the initial eligibility requirements as well as increased the annual award amount for the LIFE Scholarship Program. The Commission staff is preparing to submit the proposed regulation to be considered by the 2005 General Assembly including the amendments that were made under the Life Sciences Act (Act 187) during the 2004 Legislative Session which amended the continued eligibility requirements for students to renew, earn, or regain the LIFE Scholarship.

Based on the amendments made under Act 187, the Commission on Higher Education proposes the following amendments to the LIFE Scholarship Program. The first amendment allows South University, a for-profit institution, to participate in the LIFE Scholarship Program by removing the 501(c)(3) tax status requirement under Section 62-900.5(P), Definition of "Independent institutions."

The second amendment changes the continued eligibility requirements to renew, earn or regain the LIFE Scholarship. Prior to the approval of Act 187, the 3.0 GPA requirement was based on the policies and procedures of the institution. However, with the passing of Act 187, the 3.0 GPA requirement is now based on all grades earned at any eligible SC institution.

For the 2004-05 academic year, a one year proviso has been implemented to allow students the option to qualify under the old or new LIFE guidelines. Effective Fall 2005, students must earn a 3.0 GPA based on all grades earned at any eligible SC institution. The proposed regulation has been updated to reflect the calculation of the new LIFE GPA as stipulated in Section 62-900.55 (“Institutional Policies and Procedures”).

Additionally, the following modifications are also being proposed for consideration:

- 62-900.5(D) – The definition of “Attempted credit hours” was added in order to define which credit hours should be used in calculating the new “LIFE GPA.” It excludes courses taken out-of-state, exempted credit hours, AP, CLEP, remedial/developmental courses, non-degree credit courses for an associate degree or higher, Pass/Fail, and non-penalty withdrawal credit hours.
- 62-900.5(L) – Language was added to exclude non-degree credit courses for an associate degree or higher.
- 62-900.5(O) – The definition for “Home institution” was added to define which institution students are eligible to receive scholarship funds.
- 62-900.5(P) – Deleted language from the definition of “Independent institutions” that allowed Johnson & Wales University to participate as an eligible institution. This is a result of the institution’s relocation to Charlotte, North Carolina. As of Fall 2003, the University is no longer accepting new students for enrollment into the Charleston campus. The Charleston campus will remain open until the continuing students who enrolled prior to Fall 2003 complete their programs. Until then, they may continue to award the LIFE Scholarship to these students if they meet the continued eligibility requirements and have not exceeded the maximum eight terms of eligibility.
- 62-900.5(Q) – Language was added to the definition of “Initial college enrollment” to clarify that the eight terms of eligibility are based on continuous enrollment (except summer).
- 62-900.5(R) – The definition for “LIFE grade point average” was added in order to define which courses are to be used to calculate the new “LIFE GPA.”
- 62-900.5(S) – The definition for “Non-degree credit courses” was added in order to clarify that these courses must not be used in calculating the “LIFE GPA” or credit hour requirements if the student is enrolled in an associate degree or higher.
- 62-900.10(A)(3)(b) – Added language that includes the new Writing subsection of the SAT I that will be implemented in Spring 2005 as another way to meet the minimum 1100 SAT score requirement for initial eligibility for the scholarship. In order for students to be eligible for the LIFE Scholarship upon high school graduation, they must meet two of three of the following criteria: score at least 1100 on the SAT (or 24 on the ACT); earn a cumulative 3.0 grade point ratio

based on the Uniform Grading Scale (UGS) upon high school graduation; rank in the top thirty percent of the graduating class based on the UGS.

Currently, SAT scores may be the best combined scores from the Math and Verbal subsections. The proposed amendment will allow students to use the highest Math score combined with the highest Critical Reading score (formerly known as the Verbal score) or the highest Math score combined with the highest Writing score. Students cannot use both Critical Reading and Writing subsection scores to meet the minimum 1100 SAT score.

- 62-900.10(A)(5) – Language was added to provide specific instructions for verification of the cumulative 3.0 GPR and top 30% class rank requirements based on the UGS for home school and out-of-state students to determine scholarship eligibility.
- 62-900.10(C) – Language was added to allow service members to earn credit hours while on active duty without penalty. The credit hours will not count against the maximum terms of eligibility.
- 62-900.10(H) – Language was added to allow non-degree credit courses to be used to meet the full-time eligibility criteria for students enrolled in a diploma or certificate program only. The student must sign an affidavit certifying that the non-degree credit hours will not be used in calculating the “LIFE GPA” or credit hour requirements if they are enrolled in an associate degree or higher.
- 62-900.10(N) – Language was added to clarify that the student must submit transcripts from all previous and current institutions in order to determine eligibility for the LIFE Scholarship. This includes courses taken at any time during the academic year at another institution.
- 62-900.20(C) – A table was added to determine the remaining terms of eligibility based on the student’s initial college enrollment date.
- 62-900.41 – This section was added for service members of the United States Armed Forces who are called to active duty to allow them to receive the maximum terms of eligibility. Due to the events that occurred on September 11, 2001, service members of the United States Armed Forces are being called to active duty and are required to withdraw from college due to deployment. The Commission on Higher Education does not want to penalize these students for events that are beyond their control. The term(s) the service member is called to active duty will not count against the eight terms of maximum eligibility. The institution must provide the student with a refund based on the institution’s policies and procedures, but are strongly encouraged to provide a full refund or credit in a comparable amount. Thus, the inclusion of Section 62-900.41 (“Military Mobilization”) in the proposed regulation will allow each institution the authority to reinstate the scholarship upon the service member’s re-enrollment.

Recommendation

The Committee on Student Services and Access and Equity recommends that the Commission on Higher Education approve the proposed amendments to the regulation for the South Carolina LIFE Scholarship Program. If approved, the amended regulation will be submitted to the General Assembly for approval under the Administrative Procedures Act.