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Agenda Item 7.03 A(1-3)

Memorandum

TO: Dr. Layton R. McCurdy, Chairman, and Members
S.C. Commission on Higher Education

FROM: Ms. Cynthia Mosteller, Chairperson
Members of the Access & Equity and Student Services Committee

DATE: October 30, 2008

Approval of Regulations Regarding the SC Need-based Grant, LIFE & Palmetto Fellows Scholarship and Scholarship Enhancements

The Commission on Higher Education staff proposes amendments to the regulations for the LIFE & Palmetto Fellows Scholarships and Scholarship Enhancements, as well as the regulation for the SC Need-based Grant. Act 103 was approved during the 2007 legislative session and Acts 178 and 235 were approved during the 2008 legislative session. These Acts affect a student's eligibility for the LIFE & Palmetto Fellows Scholarship and/or the Scholarship Enhancements effective the 2008-09 Academic Year.

The South Carolina Association of Financial Aid Administrators' CHE Advisory Committee met on September 18, 2008, and provided their suggestions and comments about the proposed regulations. The proposed regulations were also e-mailed to the financial aid officers at all public and independent institutions via their listserv to request their input. Their recommendations were incorporated into the proposed regulations.

The Committee on Access & Equity and Student Services met on October 2, 2008, and considered the proposed regulations. The Committee unanimously approved the proposed regulations for the LIFE and Palmetto Fellows Scholarships, as well as regulation for the SC Need-based Grant.

The regulations propose three major amendments to the administration of the LIFE and Palmetto Fellows Scholarships and Scholarship Enhancements:

1. Act 103 changes the alcohol or drug-related misdemeanor offense from the first to the second or subsequent alcohol or drug-related misdemeanor offense. In either case, students lose their eligibility for one academic year after the date of the conviction.
2. Act 178 allows students who attend out-of-state preparatory high schools to submit their high school's grading system to the Commission on Higher Education. Upon review, the Commission will determine if the out-of-state grading system is at least as strict as the 2007 Uniform Grading Policy in order for the out-of-state class rank to be used.
3. Act 235 changes the minimum level of instruction required to meet the fourteen credit hours at the end of the first year for the purposes of the LIFE and Palmetto Fellows Scholarship Enhancements.

The regulations propose one major amendment to the administration of the SC Need-based Grant:

1. Sections R. 62-475 (E) (1) & (2) and R. 62-460 (A) of the South Carolina Need-based Grant Program. The proposed amendment deleted "regular" academic year. A proposed definition to change "Academic year" was made to promote consistency in the grant program regulation.

The proposed regulations also include minor changes for clarification purposes and to promote consistency among State scholarship and grant programs. All proposed changes are highlighted in red in the attached regulation.

Recommendation

The Committee on Access & Equity and Student Services recommends that the S.C. Commission on Higher Education approve the proposed amendments to the regulations for the LIFE and Palmetto Fellows Scholarships and Scholarship Enhancements, as well as the SC Need-based Grant. If approved by the Commission on Higher Education, the proposed regulations will be submitted to the General Assembly during the 2009 legislative session for approval under the Administrative Procedures Act.