

The S.C. Commission on Higher Education
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S.C. Commission on Higher Education Celebrates National Scholarship Month

A press conference will be held on Wednesday, May 2, 2007, at 9:30 am on the South Steps of the State House to proclaim May as National Scholarship Month and to recognize the many South Carolina students who benefit from earning one of the state's merit scholarships.

Students will be joined by their parents, principals, guidance counselors, Senators and House Members for this special press event as we celebrate scholarship support which assists students in achieving their postsecondary educational goals and higher education's value in preparing South Carolina's future workforce and increasing educational levels of our citizens.

The South Carolina General Assembly established the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship program in 1988 to retain outstanding high school graduates in the state through awards based on scholarship and achievement. Palmetto Fellows may receive up to \$6,700 per academic year towards the cost-of-attendance for the first baccalaureate degree at a participating higher education institution in the state. Students earning this award have a minimum 1200 SAT or ACT equivalent, rank in the top six percent of their high school class and have at least 3.5 high school grade point average on the state's uniform grading scale, or alternatively score a minimum of 1400 SAT or ACT equivalent and earn a 4.0 grade point average on the uniform grading scale. Last year, the state provided \$28.4 million for 4,401 awards.

Ariana Tinker, a 2007 Orangeburg Wilkinson High school senior and Palmetto Fellow recipient, states "this scholarship is one way that our state shows its love, support, and encouragement to the individuals that have met the criteria for this scholarship. It is truly an honor."

The LIFE Scholarship, established in 1998, is a merit-based student award that helps increase access to higher education, improve the employability of South Carolina students, provide incentives for students to be better prepared for college, and encourage students to graduate from college on time. LIFE Scholarship recipients may receive up to \$5,000 per academic year towards the cost-of-attendance at a S.C. four-year institution and up to the cost of tuition plus a \$300 book allowance at a S.C. two-year institution. Students earning LIFE awards have met two of three criteria including a minimum 1100 SAT or ACT equivalent, a rank in the top thirty percent of their high school class, at least a 3.0 grade point average on the uniform grading scale. A total of 29,231 LIFE awards totaling almost \$131 million were provided last year.

Anna Dilworth, a 2007 Dutch Fork High School graduate and future LIFE recipient, would like to thank the S.C. General Assembly "for putting the best interest of the students of South Carolina first when considering state granted financial aid and realizing that you truly are helping our state's students to succeed in their career goals."

The S.C. HOPE Scholarship was established as a lottery program in 2001 and implemented in fall 2002. It is a merit-based award for first-time entering freshmen who attend four-year institutions, do not qualify for another merit award and earn at least a 3.0 high school grade point average on the state's uniform grading scale. HOPE recipients earn up to \$2,650 per year (not to exceed the cost of attendance) including a \$150 book allowance. 2,631 HOPE awards totaling \$6.3 million were provided in 2005-06.

Rachel Gibbs, a current senior at Ridgeview High School senior and future S.C. HOPE recipient, states she is "very excited to be able to achieve many goals and continue to pursue my education with the help of the S.C. Hope Scholarship."

Also, at the press conference, the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education will highlight its recent scholarship report, "*Summary Report on South Carolina Scholarships and Grants, 1988-2005.*" The report provides a history and detailed data for each of the state's scholarship programs including the merit programs (Palmetto Fellows, LIFE, and HOPE), Lottery Tuition Assistance for students attending two-year institutions, and Need-based Grants. To read the full report, please visit the Commission's website at www.che.sc.gov. The report will be accessible directly from the Commission's home page.