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COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION
Chapter 62
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62-450 South Carolina Need-based Grants Program

Synopsis:

Text:

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Pursuant to Act 458, South Carolina Children First: Resources for Scholarships and Tuition Act of 1996, of the 1995-1996 Appropriations Bill, the Commission on Higher Education shall promulgate regulation and establish procedures to administer the South Carolina Need-based Grants Program. The purpose of the South Carolina Need-based Grants Program is to provide additional financial aid assistance to South Carolina's neediest students. The program will assist students who wish to attend public or independent colleges or universities in the State.

62-455 Allocation of Need-based Grant Funds to Public and Independent Institutions

A. Funds made available for higher education grants and scholarships under Chapter 143 of Title 59 of the 1976 Code, as amended under Act 458, South Carolina Children First: Resources for Scholarship and Tuition Act of 1996, shall be included in the annual appropriation to the Commission on Higher Education. Fifty percent of the appropriation shall be designated for the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship Program and the remaining fifty percent shall be for the Need-based Grants Program. However, in instances where the equal division of the appropriated funds between

the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship and Need-based Grants Programs exceeds the capacity to make awards in either program, the Commission on Higher Education has the authority to re-allocate the remaining funds between the two programs. The Commission on Higher Education shall award to eligible students who are attending public or independent eligible institutions as State Need-based Grant recipients as follows:

1. Of the funds allocated to public institutions, the percentage shall be equivalent to the percentage of the public institution's share of the total South Carolina resident undergraduate full-time headcount enrollment in the preceding year.

2. Of the funds allocated to independent institutions, the percentage shall be equivalent to the percentage of the independent institutions' share of the total South Carolina resident undergraduate full-time headcount enrollment in the preceding year and will be determined annually by the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education and the Tuition Grants Commission. The funds allocated for Need-based Grants shall be included in the annual appropriation to the Commission on Higher Education and transferred annually into the budget of the South Carolina Tuition Grants Commission, which will distribute these funds as Tuition Grants.

62-460 Program Definitions for Administering South Carolina Need-based Grants at Public Institutions

A. "Academic year" is defined as the fall, spring **and summer** semesters during which a part-time student would be expected to earn a minimum of **six credit hours per semester** ~~twelve credit hours~~ or a full-time student would be expected to earn a minimum of 24 credit hours.

B. "Associate degree program" is defined as a two-year technical or occupational program or an associate's degree program (Associate of Arts or Associate of Science) which leads to the first two years of a baccalaureate degree at a location approved by the U.S. Department of Education for participation in Federally funded financial aid programs and authorized by the Commission on Higher Education.

C. "Baccalaureate degree program" is defined as an undergraduate program of study leading to the first bachelor's degree at a location approved by the U.S. Department of Education for participation in Federally funded financial aid programs and authorized by the Commission on Higher Education.

D. "Degree-seeking student" is defined as any part-time or full-time student enrolled in an eligible program of study at an eligible institution.

E. "Eligible program" is defined as a program of study leading to: 1) the first baccalaureate degree 2) a program of study that is structured so as not to require a baccalaureate degree and leads to a graduate degree; 3) first associate's degree or two-year program that is acceptable for full credit towards a bachelor's degree; or 4) one-year program that leads to other recognized credentials (e.g., first diploma or first certificate). Study toward the first diploma or certificate may be followed by study toward the first associate's degree, which may be followed by transfer to the first baccalaureate degree or a program of study that is structured so as not to require a baccalaureate

degree and leads to a graduate degree. Students who have already obtained a baccalaureate degree are not eligible for subsequent grant funds.

F. "Full-time student" shall mean a student who has matriculated into an eligible program of study, and who enrolls in a minimum of twelve credit hours during the regular academic semester.

G. "Independent institutions" are those institutions eligible to participate in the South Carolina Tuition Grants Program as defined in Chapter 113 of Title 59 of the 1976 Code, which stipulates that "an independent institution of higher learning means any independent eleemosynary junior or senior college in South Carolina whose major campus and headquarters are located within South Carolina and which is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools."

H. "Need analysis" shall mean the process of analyzing the household and financial information on the student's financial aid application and calculating the amount the family can be expected to contribute to the educational costs. For Federal Student Aid Programs, the need analysis system is defined under Title IV of the Higher Education Act of 1965.

I. "Needy student" shall mean a post-secondary student enrolled in or accepted for enrollment in a public institution who demonstrates to the institution the financial inability, either parental, familial, or personal, to bear the total cost-of-attendance for any regular academic semester. The determination of need shall be made in accordance with Federal need analysis formulae and provisions.

J. An "offense" shall mean a violation of any law or rule in any state or Federal criminal justice system.

K. "One-year program" is defined as an undergraduate program of study leading to other recognized educational credentials (e.g., certificates or diplomas that prepare students for gainful employment in a recognized occupation) at a location approved by the U.S. Department of Education for participation in Federally funded financial aid programs and is authorized by either the Commission on Higher Education or the State Board for Technical and Comprehensive Education.

L. "Part-time student" shall mean a student who has matriculated into an eligible program of study, and who enrolls in a minimum of six credit hours and a maximum of eleven credit hours during the regular academic semester.

M. "Program of study that is structured so as not to require a baccalaureate degree" is a program of study that is structured so as not to require a baccalaureate degree for acceptance into the program and leads to a graduate degree, which will be the student's first academic degree awarded, at a location approved by the U.S. Department of Education for participation in Federally funded financial aid programs. Students are eligible to receive the grant for a maximum of eight full-time equivalent semesters as long as all other eligibility criteria are met. Students who have been awarded a baccalaureate or graduate degree are not eligible for grant funding.

N. "Public institutions" are those institutions as defined in Chapter 103 of Title 59 of the 1976 Code, which stipulates that: "1) 'public higher education' shall mean state-supported education in the

post-secondary field, including comprehensive and technical education; 2) 'public institution of higher learning' shall mean any state-supported post-secondary educational institution and shall include technical and comprehensive educational institutions."

O. "Remedial coursework" shall mean sub-collegiate level preparatory courses in English, mathematics, and reading offered at the State's technical colleges.

P. "Satisfactory academic progress" shall mean the minimum academic standard for academic progress established by the public institution for the purpose of complying with Title IV regulations for Federal Student Aid Programs.

Q. "South Carolina resident" shall be defined as an individual who satisfies the requirements of residency in accordance with the State of South Carolina Statute for Tuition and Fees, Statute 59-112-10.

62-465 Student Eligibility

A. To be eligible for a Need-based Grant each academic year, the student must:

1. Be a "needy student" following the financial need analysis as established under Title IV Regulations for determining eligibility for Federal Student Aid. The student must file the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) Form;

2. Be a U.S. citizen or a permanent resident that meets the definition of an eligible non-citizen under State Residency Statute;

3. Be a resident of the state of South Carolina for twelve consecutive months as defined in Chapter 112 of Title 59 of the 1976 Code of Laws governing the determination of residency for tuition and fee purposes;

4. Be enrolled or accepted for enrollment as a part-time or full-time degree-seeking student in an eligible program of study at an eligible public institution in South Carolina. A student enrolled in less than six credit hours during one semester may not receive a Need-based Grant for the semester in question but is eligible for reapplication for a grant upon return to part-time or full-time status;

5. Be enrolled and attending or have completed at the time of the grant disbursement in a minimum of six credit hours if part-time for the semester or twelve credit hours if full-time for the semester;

6. Certify that he/she has not been adjudicated delinquent or been convicted or pled guilty or nolo contendere to any felonies or any second or subsequent alcohol or drug-related offenses under the laws of this or any other state or under the laws of the United States in order to be eligible for a South Carolina Need-based Grant, except that a high school or college student otherwise qualified who has been adjudicated delinquent or has been convicted or pled guilty or nolo contendere to a second or subsequent alcohol or drug-related misdemeanor offense nevertheless shall be eligible or continue to be eligible for such grants after the expiration of one academic year from the date of the

adjudication, conviction, or plea; and be eligible for the need-based grants for a maximum of four academic years of two semesters by submitting a signed affidavit each academic year to the institution. However, a high school or college student who has been adjudicated delinquent, convicted, or pled guilty or nolo contendere of a second or subsequent alcohol/drug related misdemeanor offense is ineligible for the next academic year of enrollment at an eligible institution after the date of the adjudication, conviction or plea. If the adjudication, conviction, or plea occurs during the academic year after the student has already submitted a signed affidavit to the institution, the student will be eligible to receive the Need-based Grant the remainder of the academic year. However, the student will be ineligible for the Need-based Grant the following entire academic year of enrollment. If a student completes a pretrial intervention program and has his/her record expunged the conviction will not affect grant eligibility; and

7. Verify that he/she does not owe a refund or repayment on a State Grant, a Pell Grant, or a Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant and is not in default on a loan under the Federal Perkins Loan or Federal Stafford Loan Programs; and

8. Must reapply for the Need-based Grant each academic year and meet all eligibility requirements annually.

B. Students enrolled part-time or full-time may not receive a Need-based Grant for more than a maximum of eight full-time equivalent semesters. Students who have already been awarded their first baccalaureate degree are not eligible to receive a Need-based Grant.

C. Students enrolled in an eligible program of study as stated in the “Program Definitions” Section may include remedial courses as part of the minimum number of required credit hours for part-time or full-time status, as long as such courses carry credit hours and meet Title IV limitations on remedial coursework.

D. Any false information provided by the student or any attempt to obtain or expend any Need-based Grant for unlawful purposes or any purpose other than in payment or reimbursement for the cost-of-attendance at the institution authorized to award the grant will be cause for immediate cancellation of the Need-based Grant. Any student who has obtained a Need-based Grant through means of a willfully false statement or failure to reveal any material fact, condition, or circumstances affecting eligibility will be subject to applicable civil or criminal penalties, including loss of the Need-based Grant.

62-470 Policies and Procedures for Awarding Need-based Grants

A. The Need-based Grants Program for the public institutions will be campus-administered. Grant funds will supplement the student financial aid awards administered by the participating public colleges and universities.

B. The participating institution will make awards in amounts to be defined in accordance with the Need-based Grants Program regulation and criteria, but not to exceed \$1,250 per eligible part-time student and \$2,500 per eligible full-time student per academic year, based on the institution's allocated funds for Need-based Grants and other financial aid awarded to individual applicants.

However, the Commission, due to inflation increases or other relevant factors, may periodically adjust the maximum award for the Need-based Grants Program. ~~Half of the grant shall be disbursed during the fall semester and half disbursed during the spring semester~~ A maximum of fifty percent of the grant shall be disbursed during each fall, spring, and/or summer term, assuming continued eligibility.

C. Need-based Grants are to be used only towards payment for the cost-of-attendance as defined by Title IV Regulations as modified by D below for the academic year for which the award is made at the designated institution. The maximum amount awarded shall not exceed the cost-of-attendance as defined in Title IV Regulations for any year.

D. Charges for room and board are to be limited as follows:

1. Room charges shall not exceed the average cost of on-campus residential housing; and
2. Board charges shall not exceed the cost of the least expensive on-campus meal plan, which includes 21 meals per week.

E. In determining the amount awarded for the Need-based Grant, all other sources of gift aid, including Federal, State, private and institutional funds, must be applied to the total cost-of-attendance in accordance with Title IV Regulations before calculating the unmet need and awarding the grant. The Need-based Grant shall be awarded only after all other sources of gift aid have been exhausted. Adjustments to the financial aid package will be made to the Need-based Grant in accordance with prescribed Title IV Regulations in order to prevent an over-award.

F. Institutions must give first priority and award the maximum allowable Need-based Grant (\$2,500 if full-time or \$1,250 if part-time) to students who are in the custody of the South Carolina Department of Social Services (DSS). However, institutions should not award the maximum amount if, by doing so, this causes the student to exceed the unmet need according to Title IV Regulations. Students who may be eligible under this provision are responsible for contacting the institution and providing official verification to the institution that he/she is in custody of DSS. Acceptable verification shall include a letter from DSS.

G. Participating institutions will notify students of their Need-based Grant along with the terms and conditions of the award.

H. Annual allocations of funds to the public institutions will be based on each institution's percentage of the State's total enrollment of South Carolina resident undergraduate full-time degree-seeking headcount enrollment. The percentage will be based on the previous year's total as determined by the Commission on Higher Education. Unused funds, which cannot be awarded by an institution, must be returned to the Commission on Higher Education, which may redirect the funds to institutions where unmet need exists.

I. The institution must retain annual paper or electronic documentation for each award to include at a minimum:

1. Need analysis

2. Affidavit documenting that the student has never been convicted of any felonies or any second or subsequent alcohol or drug related misdemeanor offenses as stated under “Student Eligibility” and “Duration of Award and Continued Eligibility” Sections
3. Award notification
4. Institutional disbursement to student
5. Refund or repayment (if appropriate)
6. Satisfactory academic progress
7. Student’s residency status
8. Enrollment and curriculum requirements
9. Student’s disability (if appropriate)
10. Student is in custody of DSS (if appropriate)
11. Student award based upon approval of institutional appeal (if appropriate)

J. It is the institution's responsibility to ensure that only eligible students receive a Need-based Grant.

62-475 Duration of Award and Continued Eligibility

A. Need-based Grants shall be awarded each academic year. The institution shall adjust the amount of the grant award during the academic year in the event of a change in the student's eligibility.

B. Need-based Grants may be awarded annually for no more than a total of eight full-time equivalent semesters of part-time or full-time study. Award decisions will be made annually and are not automatically guaranteed. Students who have already been awarded their first baccalaureate degree are not eligible to receive a Need-based Grant.

C. Students must reapply each academic year for a Need-based Grant in accord with these guidelines and other pertinent statutes and regulations and with application timeliness and procedures stipulated by the participating institution. Students applying for a Need-based Grant must complete a FAFSA Form and be a needy student. The student must also complete any supplemental forms that may be required by the institution.

D. The institution shall be responsible for securing institutional certification of each recipient's cumulative grade point average, credit hours attempted and earned, and satisfactory academic progress for purposes of determining eligibility for award renewal.

E. For continued eligibility, the student is required to:

1. For graduation purposes, earn at least 24 credit hours each regular academic year if awarded a Need-based Grant as a full-time student or earn at least ~~twelve credit hours~~ **six credit hours per term** ~~each regular academic year~~ if awarded a Need-based Grant as a part-time student. If a student is awarded a Need-based Grant for one semester of the academic year as a part-time student and the other semester as a full-time student, the student must earn at least eighteen credit hours each regular academic year. If a student is awarded a Need-based Grant for only one semester of the academic

year, the student must earn at least twelve credit hours each regular academic year if a full-time student or earn at least six credit hours each regular academic year if a part-time student. Credits earned during any additional semesters (i.e., interim, winterim, maymester, ~~summer~~ or other non-regular semester) cannot be used to replace or reduce the minimum credit hour requirement for the regular academic year; and

2. Earn at least a cumulative 2.0 grade point average on a 4.0 scale for graduation purposes by the end of each regular academic year.

F. Students wishing to appeal any grant award decision must submit a written request to the institution's Director of Financial Aid. This request will be handled in accordance with the institution's financial aid appeal procedures. The institution's decision on appeals shall be final.

62-480 Students with Disabilities

A. Students who qualify under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 must meet all eligibility requirements as defined in "Student Eligibility" Section except for a student who is approved by the Disability Services Provider to be enrolled in less than part-time status is eligible to receive grant funding. Students must comply with all institutional policies and procedures in accordance with ADA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

B. For renewal, students who qualify under ADA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 must meet all renewal requirements as defined in "Duration of Award and Continued Eligibility" Section except for a student not meeting the annual credit hour requirement who is approved by the Disability Services Provider to be enrolled in less than part-time status for that academic year. Students must earn the required number of hours approved by the institutional Disability Services Provider each academic year for grant renewal and earn a minimum 2.0 cumulative grade point average on a 4.0 scale by the end of the academic year. Students must comply with all institutional policies and procedures in accordance with ADA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973.

C. The institutional Disability Services Provider must provide written documentation to the Office of Financial Aid each academic year verifying that the student is approved to be enrolled in less than part-time status.

D. Students who qualify under ADA and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 are eligible to receive up to the maximum number of available semesters and available funds.

62-485 Enrollment in Internships, Cooperative Work Programs, Travel Study Programs, or National or International Student Exchange Programs

A. Students enrolled in an internship, cooperative work program, travel study program, or National or International Student Exchange Program approved by the student's home institution, and

enrolled in fewer than six credit hours, shall not be eligible to receive a Need-based Grant during the period in which the student is enrolled in such programs or courses. Students enrolled in such programs may receive a Need-based Grant during a subsequent fall, spring or summer semester if determined to be eligible.

B. Students enrolled in internships, cooperative work programs, travel study programs, or National or International Student Exchange Programs that are approved by the home institution and that the home institution accepts as at least part-time transfer credit (minimum of six credit hours) are eligible to receive Need-based Grant funds during the period in which the student is enrolled in such programs. Students will be required to meet the continued eligibility requirements.

C. Eligible students may use the appropriated portion of the Need-based Grant funds for internships, cooperative work programs, travel study programs, or National or International Student Exchange Programs that are approved by the home institution and that the home institution accepts as at least part-time transfer credit (minimum of six credit hours). Need-based Grant funds must be paid directly to the student's account at the home institution. The amount awarded cannot exceed the cost-of-attendance at the home institution or the cost-of-attendance at the host institution, whichever is less. The Commission on Higher Education will not transfer grant funds to the institutions where students will participate in internships, cooperative work programs, travel study programs, or National or International Student Exchange Programs. The institution is responsible for grant funds according to the "Program Administration and Audits" Section.

D. The home institution will be responsible for securing official certification of the student's cumulative grade point average, credit hours earned, and satisfactory academic progress for the purposes of determining eligibility for grant renewal for the next academic year.

62-490 Institutional Disbursement of Need-based Grants

A. The participating institution will identify award amounts, which cannot exceed \$1,250 per eligible part-time student and \$2,500 per eligible full-time student per academic year. ~~Half of the grant shall be disbursed during the fall semester and half disbursed during the spring semester, assuming continued eligibility.~~ **A maximum of fifty percent of the grant shall be disbursed during each fall, spring, and/or summer term.** The maximum amount, which may be received by a recipient for eight full-time equivalent semesters, shall be \$10,000 for students seeking their first baccalaureate degree or a program of study that is structured so as not to require a baccalaureate degree and leads to a graduate degree, \$5,000 for students seeking their first associate's degree, and \$2,500 for students seeking their first one-year certificate or diploma. Students who have obtained an associate's degree initially are eligible to apply for a Need-based Grant upon enrollment in their first baccalaureate degree or a program of study that is structured so as not to require a baccalaureate degree. Students who have obtained a recognized educational credential in a one-year program initially are eligible for application for a Need-based Grant upon enrollment in their first associate's degree, first baccalaureate degree, or a program of study that is structured so as not to require a baccalaureate degree and leads to a graduate degree.

B. A Need-based Grant may not be applied to a second baccalaureate degree or to graduate coursework, unless the graduate coursework is required as part of a program of study that is

structured so as not to require a baccalaureate degree as defined in the “Program Definitions” Section.

C. The institution shall provide an award notification each academic year to Need-based Grant recipients, which will contain the terms and conditions of the grant and other financial aid awarded. Students will be notified of adjustments in financial aid due to changes in eligibility and/or over-award issues. The Commission on Higher Education, for documentation purposes, requires that each institution obtain verification of acceptance of the Need-based Grant and terms for the award.

D. After the last day to register for each semester of the academic year, the institution will verify enrollment of each recipient as a South Carolina resident that is a part-time or full-time degree-seeking student. According to the Scholarship and Grant Programs Policies and Procedures Manual, a listing of eligible recipients by social security number with the award amounts for the semester will be sent to the Commission on Higher Education with the institution's request for funds. A year-end reconciliation report will be submitted to the Commission on Higher Education prior to June 30th. Any unused funds shall be refunded to the Commission on Higher Education no later than June 30th of each fiscal year.

62-495 Refunds and Repayments

A. In the event a student who has been awarded a Need-based Grant withdraws, is suspended from the institution, or drops below part-time (six credit hours) or full-time (twelve credit hours) status during any regular semester of the academic year, institutions must reimburse the Need-based Grants Program for the amount of the grant for the semester in question pursuant to refund policies of the institution. Collection is the responsibility of the institution.

B. The institution may redistribute such funds to other eligible students in accordance with the guidelines, or if such funds cannot be redistributed within the academic year, the institution shall return the refund amount to the Commission on Higher Education for redistribution to other institutions.

C. In the event a student withdraws or drops below part-time or full-time status after the institution's refund period and therefore must pay tuition and fees for part-time or full-time enrollment, the award may be retained by the student pursuant to the refund policies of the institution.

62-500 Program Administration and Audits

A. The South Carolina Commission on Higher Education will coordinate the oversight of functions (e.g., guidelines, policies, rules, regulations) relative to this program with eligible institutions. The Commission on Higher Education shall be responsible for the allocation of funds, promulgation of the regulation and rules, any audits, or other statewide oversight of the Need-based Grants Program as deemed necessary to monitor the expenditure of grant funds.

B. According to the Audit Policies and Procedures for Scholarship and Grant Programs Manual, all eligible institutions that participate in the program must abide by program policies, rules or

regulations. Institutions also agree to maintain and provide all pertinent information, records, reports, or any information as may be required or requested by the Commission on Higher Education or the General Assembly to ensure proper administration of the program.

~~C. Where the initial allocation exceeds the need of students at an institution, the Commission shall have the authority to redistribute the excess funds to other institutions:~~

~~— 1. All funds not awarded by the institution 45 days after the last day to register for the spring semester of the academic year shall be returned to the Commission for redistribution.~~

~~— 2. Institutions in need of additional Need-based Grant funds for eligible students must provide documentation to this effect and must request additional funds from the Commission on Higher Education in writing by not later than 45 days after the last day to register for the spring semester of the academic year.~~

D. Participating institutions are authorized to establish additional guidelines, rules, and regulations for awarding the grants consistent with the South Carolina Need-based Grants Program Regulation contained herein.

E. The Chief Executive Officer at each participating institution shall identify to the Commission on Higher Education a Need-based Grant institutional representative who is responsible for the operation of the program on the campus and will serve as the contact person for the program. The institutional representative will act as the student fiscal agent to receive and deliver funds for use under the program.

62-505 Suspension or Termination of Institutional Participation

A. The Commission may review institutional administrative practices to determine institutional compliance with pertinent statutes, guidelines, rules or regulations. If such a review determines that an institution has failed to comply with program statutes, guidelines, rules or regulations, the Commission may suspend, terminate, or place certain conditions upon the institution's continued participation in the program and require reimbursement to the State Need-based Grants Program for any funds lost or improperly awarded.

B. Upon receipt of evidence that an institution has failed to comply, the Commission on Higher Education shall notify the institution in writing of the nature of such allegations and conduct an audit.

C. If an audit indicates that a violation or violations may have occurred or are occurring at any public or independent college or university, the Commission on Higher Education shall secure immediate reimbursement from the institution in the event that any funds were expended out of compliance with the provisions of the Act, any relevant statutes, guidelines, rules, and regulations.

Fiscal Impact Statement: There will be no increased costs to the State or its political subdivisions.

Statement of Rationale:

Revisions to the S.C. Need-based Grant regulation were necessary to be consistent with legislation approved during the 2007 legislative session.