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To: Wes Hayes, Chair and Members
Commission on Higher Education

From: Ms. Jenni Bryson, Chair
Committee on Student Services

Palmetto Fellows Scholarship Program 2023-2024 Summary

Palmetto Fellows Scholarship History

The South Carolina General Assembly established the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship Program in 1988 to recognize the most academically talented high school seniors and encourage these students to attend college in the state. From 1988 until 1995, the SC Commission on Higher Education awarded an average of 42 new Palmetto Fellows Scholarships each year. The state awarded \$2,500 per academic year to each recipient, and the institution in which the recipient was enrolled was required to match that amount.

In 1996, the SC General Assembly increased the funding for the program thereby increasing the average number of new Palmetto Fellows Scholarships awarded each year as well as the average award amount. Institutions were no longer required to provide matching funds. With the implementation of the SC Education Lottery in 2002, the General Assembly approved an increase in the maximum Palmetto Fellows Scholarship award amount. Palmetto Fellows may receive up to \$6,700 their first academic year and up to \$7,500 for their second, third, and fourth years for a maximum of eight terms towards their first bachelor's degree at an eligible higher education institution in South Carolina.

2023-24 Palmetto Fellows Funding Summary

In 2023-24, the Palmetto Fellows Program was appropriated \$79,328,890 (\$67,328,890 Lottery Funding, \$12,000,000 General Funds/Children's Endowment).

Initial Eligibility Requirements

- Rank in the top 6% at the end of the 10th, the 11th, or the 12th grade academic year; *and*
- Earn 1200 on the SAT or a 25 on the ACT; *and*
- Earn a 3.5 cumulative GPA (based on SC UGP)

OR qualify by meeting the Alternative Criteria eligibility requirements without regard to rank

- Earn 1400 on the SAT or 31 on the ACT; *and*
- Earn a 4.0 cumulative GPA (based on SC UGP)



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2023-2024 High School Student Profile (Fall 2024 College Cohort)

- 3,462 students met the academic eligibility to be a Palmetto Fellow
 - 1,443 used the Alternative Criteria to qualify (*About 42%*)
- Average SC UGP GPA: 4.96
- Average SAT: 1305
- Average ACT: 29

Demographic Breakdown

- American Indian/Alaskan Native: .20%
- Asian or Pacific Islander: 4.48%
- Black/African American: 5.21%
- Hispanic: 6.35%
- White/Non-Hispanic: 77.82%
- Two or More Races: 3.94%
- Unknown: 1.94%
- Gender:
 - Male: 42.28%
 - Female: 57.72%

Palmetto Fellows Scholarship Enhancements

During the 2007 legislative session, the General Assembly created the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship Enhancement. The Scholarship Enhancement increases the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship maximum award from \$7,500 to \$10,000. The enhancement is available to students majoring in mathematics, science, and health fields at eligible South Carolina four-year institutions. Eligible students can be awarded a Palmetto Fellows Scholarship Enhancement to meet their cost of attendance for up to six consecutive terms starting the second year of college enrollment.

To be eligible for the Scholarship Enhancement a student must:

- Be a recipient of the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship; *and*
- Earn at least 14 credit hours of instruction in approved mathematics or life and physical sciences or a combination of both by the end of the first academic year of college enrollment; *and*
- Declare an approved major in science, mathematics, or a health-related field at the institution.

Table 1.

Fall Palmetto Fellows Scholarship Enhancements

	Palmetto Fellows Total Scholarship Recipients	Palmetto Fellows Receiving Enhanced Awards Recipients
Fall 2007	5,148	1,480
Fall 2008	5,516	1,837
Fall 2009	5,894	1,979
Fall 2010	6,125	2,151
Fall 2011	6,415	2,355
Fall 2012	6,672	2,509
Fall 2013	6,823	2,680
Fall 2014	6,993	2,849
Fall 2015	7,192	2,992
Fall 2016	7,507	3,164
Fall 2017	8,165	3,316
Fall 2018	8,741	3,646
Fall 2019	9,177	3,894
Fall 2020	9,352	4,099
Fall 2021	9,114	4,033
Fall 2022	8,775	3,846
Fall 2023	8,714	3,718
Fall 2024	8,828	3,849

Note: Fall data reported by all institutions in the fall term

**As of 4/14/2025, Fall 2024 data may be incomplete and will not be finalized until Fall 2025.*

Continued Eligibility

In order to maintain the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship each academic year, a student must earn 30 credit hours and maintain a 3.0 cumulative institutional GPA. Students cannot use credit hours earned in AP, IB, CLEP, or Dual enrollment towards their annual 30 credit hour requirement.

Table 2.

Retention Rate from Year 1 to Year 2

Fall 2005	89.0%
Fall 2006	88.5%
Fall 2007	89.7%
Fall 2008	90.7%
Fall 2009	88.5%
Fall 2010	90.2%
Fall 2011	91.3%
Fall 2012	91.1%
Fall 2013	91.8%
Fall 2014	89.4%
Fall 2015	90.7%
Fall 2016	90.6%
Fall 2017	90.5%
Fall 2018	89.1%
Fall 2019	89.4%
Fall 2020	89.8%
Fall 2021	88.6%
Fall 2022	88.9%
Fall 2023	89.6%
Fall 2024	88.8%
Average Retention from Year 1 to Year 2	89.81%

2023-24 High School Cohort Attendance at in-state and out-of-state institutions

In 2023-24, during the open award periods, high school counselors from public, independent, charter virtual, and home school associations submitted a total of 3,611 Palmetto Fellow applications. Of the 3,611 applicants, 3,462 students met the academic criteria to be considered a Palmetto Fellow.

When students are determined to be eligible for Palmetto Fellows, they receive an e-mail with a link to the Designation Form. Eligible students are responsible for submitting the Designation Form to notify CHE where they will be attending during the Fall term. In May 2024, CHE implemented a CRM (Customer Relationship Management) platform that enabled an entirely electronic application and submission process beginning with the Late Application period. As of August 2024, all students now submit their Designation Form directly from their Palmetto Fellows dashboard, streamlining the submission process and improving efficiency. As of April 1, 2025:

- o 2,951 students have completed the Designation Form
 - 2,582 have selected in-state colleges and universities
 - 284 have elected to attend an out-of-state institution
 - 79 students elected to attend a two-year institution*
 - 6 students took a GAP year
- o 511 students did not complete the Designation form

**On May 6, 2021, H. 3017 was signed into law (Act 36), allowing students to receive the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship at two-year institutions and technical colleges beginning with the graduating Class of 2021,*

effective for the Fall 2021. For Fall 2021, 34 students designated a two-year institution; in Fall 2022, 63 students; and in Fall 2023, 82 students.

As seen in Table 3, Clemson University has the highest number of new Palmetto Fellows with USC in second place. Almost every institution in South Carolina received at least one Palmetto Fellow except for Allen University, Benedict College, Morris College, and Voorhees College. We also had Palmetto Fellows designated for seventeen different two-year or technical college institutions.

Table 4 illustrates the out-of-state college or university selection for the 284 students who have elected not to attend a South Carolina institution. The top ten colleges and universities included: University of North Carolina (22 students), Duke University (18 students), University of Georgia (10 students), University of Tennessee (10 students), North Carolina State University (9 students), University of Alabama (8 students), Massachusetts Institute of Technology (7 students), Georgetown University (6 students), Penn State University (6 students), and Georgia Institute of Technology (5 students).

In 2024-25, the Palmetto Fellows Program was appropriated \$75,259,863 (\$63,259,863 Lottery Funds, \$12,000,000 General Funds/Children’s Endowment). The annual data and invoices for the FY2024-25 academic year will not be final until the end of 2025 summer term.

Table 3.

Fall 2024 Palmetto Fellows Recipients Electing to Attend In-State Colleges & Universities

**Student reported on Designation Form*

Anderson University	94
Bob Jones University	37
Charleston Southern University	43
Clafin University	1
Clemson University	1,056
Coastal Carolina University	50
Coker University	2
College of Charleston	125
Columbia College	2
Columbia International University	9
Converse College	18
Erskine College	4
Francis Marion University	14
Furman University	60
Lander University	26
Limestone University	6
Newberry College	3
North Greenville University	32
Presbyterian College	20
South Carolina State University	2
Southern Wesleyan University	6
The Citadel	16
USC – Aiken	45
USC – Beaufort	9

USC – Columbia	774
USC – Upstate	31
Winthrop University	48
Wofford College	49
Central Carolina Technical College	1
Florence-Darlington Technical College	1
Greenville Technical College	13
Horry-Georgetown Technical College	7
Midlands Technical College	6
Orangeburg Calhoun Technical College	1
Piedmont Technical College	2
Spartanburg Community College	1
Spartanburg Methodist College	1
Technical College of the Lowcountry	3
Tri-County Technical College	10
Trident Technical College	12
USC – Lancaster	5
USC – Salkehatchie	3
USC - Sumter	2
USC – Union	2
York Technical College	8
Total Palmetto Fellows Recipients attending in-state	2,660

Table 4.

Fall 2024 Eligible Palmetto Fellows Electing to Attend Out-of-State Colleges & Universities

**Student reported on Designation Form*

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	22	Purdue University	4
Duke University	18	University of Pennsylvania	4
University of Georgia	10	Auburn University	3
University of Tennessee	10	Carnegie Mellon University	3
North Carolina State University	9	Davidson College	3
University of Alabama	8	East Tennessee State University	3
Massachusetts Institute of Technology	7	Embry Riddle Aeronautical University	3
Georgetown University	6	Florida State University	3
Penn State University	6	Mercer University	3
Georgia Institute of Technology	5	Mississippi State University	3
Northeastern University	5	The College of William & Mary	3
Savannah College of Art and Design	5	University of Central Florida	3
University of Florida	5	University of Michigan	3

University of Virginia	3	Brevard College	1
Western Carolina University	3	Brigham Young University	1
Boston College	2	Concordia University	1
Case Western Reserve University	2	Cornell University	1
Columbia University	2	Dakota State University	1
Elon University	2	East Carolina University	1
Florida Institute of Technology	2	Emmanuel College	1
Georgia Military College	2	Fisher College	1
Howard University	2	Florida Gulf Coast University	1
Liberty University	2	Freed-Hardeman University	1
Middle Tennessee State University	2	Gardner-Webb University	1
New York University	2	George Washington University	1
Rochester Institute of Technology	2	Georgia State University	1
Swarthmore College	2	Hampton University	1
US Military Academy at West Point	2	Harvard University	1
University of Kentucky	2	Hillsdale College	1
University of Notre Dame	2	Houghton University	1
University of Richmond	2	Indiana University	1
University of South Florida	2	Johns Hopkins University	1
University of Southern California	2	Johnson and Wales	1
University of Wisconsin	2	Lee University	1
Vanderbilt University	2	Lehigh University	1
Wake Forest University	2	Miami University of Ohio	1
Washington and Lee University	2	North Central College	1
Wellesley College	2	Pensacola Christian College	1
Yale University	2	Princeton University	1
Agnes Scott College	1	Rhodes College	1
Amherst College	1	Rice University	1
Appalachian State University	1	Samford University	1
Baylor University	1	Seton Hall University	1
Bellarmine University	1	Smith College	1
Belmont University	1	Spelman College	1
Bowling Green State University	1	Stanford University	1
Brandeis University	1	Stony Brook University	1

Taylor University	1	University of North Florida	1
Texas Christian University	1	University of Tampa	1
The Julliard School	1	University of Toledo	1
Tufts University	1	University of Vermont	1
Tulane University	1	University of Washington	1
Tuskegee University	1	US Air Force Academy	1
United States Naval Academy	1	Valdosta State University	1
University of Arizona	1	Villanova University	1
University of California San Diego	1	Virginia Polytechnic Institute & State University	1
University of Chicago	1	Washington University in St. Louis	1
University of Denver	1	Wesleyan College	1
University of Mary Washington	1	Western Kentucky University	1
University of Massachusetts	1	Wheaton College of Massachusetts	1
University of Miami	1	Worcester Polytechnic Institute	1
University of Mississippi	1	Total Palmetto Fellows Recipients	284
University of New England	1	attending out-of-state	
University of North Carolina at Asheville	1		