



SC Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission

Providing Opportunity. Promoting Choice.

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AGENCY UPDATES AND INITIATIVES

Personnel: Zachary Christian, Deputy Director, has recently completed the required training to obtain the Certified Information Privacy Professional designation through the International Association of Privacy Professionals (IAPP). Upon successful completion of the certification exam, he will become the second agency staff member to earn the certification. Executive Director Katie Harrison completed a three-day training course on updated National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) Cyber Security Framework protocol being rolled out at the State level. These training and development opportunities provide the agency with additional tools to continue mitigating risks associated with data privacy and security. Katie and Zachary recently presented a session on data privacy in higher education to the Southern Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators.

Executive Director Harrison now serves as President of the National Association of State Student Grant and Aid Programs (NASSGAP). During her Presidency, the organization has participated in multiple conversations with the Federal Student Aid Office (US Department of Education) concerning the nationwide decline in FAFSA filings and renewals, including technical and system-related issues being navigated by students, families, and college access professionals. NASSGAP is also collaborating with NCAN and NASFAA on discussions concerning the technical implementation of the upcoming FAFSA redesign and simplification as a result of the FAFSA Simplification Act. Currently, NASSGAP is providing input and leadership on a collaborative project with the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO) Association. This multi-year project will create and nurture a state learning community of state agency-level professionals charged with implementing elements of the FAFSA Simplification Act (including EFC to SAI transition, removal of certain FAFSA questions, and asset treatment) and will seek to further determine the impact of these changes on state aid programs throughout the country.

Agency staff continue to be actively involved with the SC Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators. Gena Miles, Financial Officer, led the association's efforts to raise nearly \$2,700 funds for the Parkinson's Association of the Carolinas; Monique Lemmon, Program Coordinator, is preparing to teach at SCASFAA's New Aid Officers Workshop for the first time, and Zachary Christian, Deputy Director, was recently elected as the Association's President-Elect.

Clinton College Update: Prior to the 2022-2023 FAFSA cycle beginning in October, Deputy Director Zachary Christian worked diligently prepare the Commission's internal awarding system to be able to receive and process ISIR records of Clinton College students. to As of March 8, 2022, the agency has processed tentative awards to 91 Clinton College students for the 2022-2023 academic year.

Agency staff held an extensive virtual training session with the Clinton College Financial Aid Director and other administrative personnel in November. This training provided an overview of program policies and procedures and assisted Clinton College in identifying institutional processes and changes required to begin administering Tuition Grants to their eligible students beginning with the Fall 2022 semester.

Student Information System: In the FY2022 State Budget, the General Assembly approved the agency's request for new funding to replace an aging database system currently used to administer the Tuition Grants Program. Agency staff has begun the process of procuring this new Student Information System, including the completion of an extensive Scope of Work and additional requirements of the State's central procurement office. The agency hopes to have the new system in place prior to the disbursement of Fall 2022 Tuition Grant funds. Staff will provide training to all college financial aid administrators who will access the system.

Legislative Advocacy: In December 2021, the Commission once again partnered with Crescerance to make the Engagifi (formerly Capitol Impact) platform available to legislative contacts at participating colleges. This web-based portal enables each college, should they decide to participate, the opportunity to be involved in the SCICU Letter Writing Campaign by providing them with a list of Tuition Grant recipients to include the corresponding SC House and Senate members for each recipient. The positive impact of the SCICU Letter Writing Campaign for the South Carolina Tuition Grants Program cannot be overstated.

The partnership with Crescerance also allows the Commission to provide a letter to each South Carolina State Legislator indicating the number of recipients from their legislative district with an estimated amount of total aggregate funds that those recipients receive in South Carolina Tuition Grants. Along with the letter, each legislator receives password-protected access to the Commission's web site where they may obtain a list of recipients from their district with the recipients' contact information and the name of the college each one attends. This information was provided to legislators in February. No confidential or restricted student information is provided during this process; only public directory information is provided. The use of this geocoding program provides an excellent tool ensuring that State Legislators are aware of the significant impact of the South Carolina Tuition Grants Program in their respective legislative districts.