



**SCICU Public Policy Committee
Legislative Priorities vs. Results for 2016**

Legislative Priorities

1.0 South Carolina Higher Education Tuition Grants Program

- 1.1 Support the FY 2016-2017 budget request of the South Carolina Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission for an additional \$2.53 million for grants. If funded at the new level, the maximum student award will increase from \$3,100 to \$3,200.

The South Carolina Tuition Grant Commission received an additional \$2.53 million in recurring state funds and will increase the maximum award to \$3,200.

- 1.2 Resist efforts to reduce or cap appropriations allocated to higher education need-based grants and merit scholarships from the levels established in the previous year's budget.

Contingency 1.2 was not needed this year.

2.0 Merit-based Scholarships

- 2.1 Advocate for full funding of Palmetto Fellows, LIFE, HOPE, and Lottery Tuition Assistance scholarships to all eligible students to include both lottery and general fund appropriations.

Merit scholarships were fully-funded for FY 2016-2017 including a projected growth of approximately 2% in the number of scholarships awarded. The General Assembly appropriated more than \$300 million for these programs.

3.0 Need-based Scholarships

- 3.1 Support the budget request of the Commission on Higher Education for an increase of \$4.54 million in state general funds for need-based grants. The requested amount is a combination of an annualization of \$2.6 million in non-recurring funds appropriated in the previous year and an additional request of approximately \$1.94 million to compensate for average tuition and fee increases over the past two years.

The General Assembly added approximately \$4.54 million to the CHE budget for use in the need-based grant program. These funds were a combination of general appropriations and lottery funds.

Note: The Tuition Grants Commission receives approximately 17% of the need-based appropriation to CHE to be used for tuition grants. The 17% relates to the proportion of students attending independent colleges and universities compared to the number attending public higher education institutions. The Tuition Grants Commission will receive approximately \$4.7 million from the CHE need-based grant program next year.

4.0 PASCAL (Partnership Among South Carolina Academic Libraries)

4.1 Support CHE's budget request for \$1.5 million in additional recurring funds for PASCAL. PASCAL was funded at the \$2.0 million level prior to the FY 2008-2009 recession. Since that time, PASCAL has received inconsistent funding from surplus unclaimed lottery prize money.

The General Assembly appropriated only \$164,289 in recurring state appropriations for PASCAL. This amount has been static for the past 5 years.

4.2 If new state revenues are not sufficient to restore core funding to PASCAL, advocate for funding \$1.5 million as a first priority in excess unclaimed lottery prize funds.

The Conference Committee adopted the Senate's version of the lottery budget which included up to \$1.5 million for PASCAL as the #1 priority for unclaimed prize funds above \$18 million. Because of several large Powerball jackpots, there is a good chance that PASCAL will get some or all of the appropriation once the books are closed.

Note: PASCAL is a partnership among public and private higher education academic libraries that promotes and enables all the partners to exchange resources through a central electronic card catalogue and delivery system. PASCAL also operates a purchasing consortium that negotiates reduced costs for subscriptions to electronic journals. SCICU members benefit from the expanded resources and cost efficiencies of PASCAL, elements essential for maintaining accreditation.

5.0 SARA (State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement)

5.1 Work with public colleges and universities to amend the statutory authority of the Commission on Higher Education to allow CHE to serve as the portal agency for SARA, a national agreement that will allow qualified in-state higher education institutions to provide on-line courses in other states without applying and paying for individual out-of-state licenses.

H. 4936 was introduced on February 11, 2016 and signed by the Governor on May 26, 2016. The Commission on Higher Education has been approved to serve as the state's portal agency for in-state colleges and universities that want to participate in the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement. CHE will accept applications beginning on July 1.

6.0 Federal Higher Education Issues

6.1 Support the agenda of the National Association of Independent Colleges Universities in the broad areas of student aid funding, regulations, and higher education policy with a particular emphasis on the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act.

Work on the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act stalled when Sen. Lamar Alexander, chair of the Senate HELP Committee, announced that he was not seeking re-election. For many years, Sen. Alexander was the driving force for higher education reform. He championed the single page FASFA and one universal federal student aid program. HEA reform will begin again in earnest when the next Congress is seated in January.

The good news is that Congress increased Pell Grants to \$5,845 in the FY 2016 (October 1, 2015 to September 30, 2016) spending bill. Contrary to what many had expected, the lawmakers maintained funding for Supplemental Education Opportunity Grants and Work Study while generously increasing funding for TRIO and GEAR UP. And the IRA Charitable Rollover and the American Opportunity Tax Credit were made permanent in the tax code.

Other issues on the horizon include the impact of new DOL overtime rules, college completion rates, revision of federal financial responsibility standards, a proposed federal teacher education performance rating system, and the continued refinement of sexual assault and campus safety programs and initiatives.