



SCICU Public Policy Committee Legislative Priorities for 2021

The primary objective of the South Carolina Independent Colleges and Universities Legislative Action Plan is to advance the missions of the member institutions by establishing an agenda and courses of action for a program of education and advocacy before the Governor's Office, General Assembly, state agencies, and the federal government.

As in recent months, the priorities of the 2021 Legislative Action Plan will be influenced by the challenges that will arise for our SCICU member institutions as a result of COVID-19.

Relevant state matters under review include: 1) general and special appropriations for student grants and scholarships, 2) legislation related to higher education, postsecondary students, and non-profit organizations, and 3) higher education-related public policy issues before state agencies and commissions. SCICU will collaborate with its member institutions, the Commission on Higher Education and public institutions to highlight the prominence and importance of higher education in South Carolina in order to advance our respective priorities.

This upcoming legislative session will be unique in that there may be two state budgets under consideration. The FY 2021 state budget was never approved during the last legislative session; instead, the General Assembly approved a continuing resolution whereby the state continued to operate at FY 2020 funding levels. This January, as the General Assembly begins consideration of the FY 2022 state budget, aspects of the continuing resolution for FY 2021 may be revisited.

Relevant federal matters include: 1) student financial aid programs, 2) legislation impacting independent higher education, and 3) higher education-related public policy issues before federal agencies. SCICU will work closely with the staff at the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (NAICU) and the South Carolina Congressional delegation on funding and policy matters that affect independent higher education.

The Public Policy Committee and the SCICU Board of Trustees will be kept informed of all relevant budget and legislative issues through the Advocacy Section of the SCICU website (www.scicu.org/advocacy), newsletters, special e-mail alerts, and regular meetings. Pursuant to the SCICU by-laws, the Public Policy Committee is authorized to approve the Legislative Action Plan. Should particular circumstances arise not anticipated in the Legislative Action Plan, the SCICU President will work with the Public Policy Committee, ad hoc committees, the SCICU Executive Committee, or individual board members and college and university presidents, as

appropriate, to coordinate the resources of the independent college community to address the particular issue.

Legislative Priorities

1. South Carolina Higher Education Tuition Grants Program

Priority: Support the FY 2020-2021 budget request of the South Carolina Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission for an additional \$1.1 million in recurring state funds for grants. If funded at the new level, the maximum student award will increase from \$3,600 to \$3,700.

2. Merit-based Scholarships

Priority: 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.

3. Need-based Scholarships

Priority: Support the request of the Commission on Higher Education for \$8 million of lottery funds to support Need-based grants.

Note: The Tuition Grants Commission receives approximately 16% of the need-based appropriation to CHE to be used for tuition grants. The 16% relates to the proportion of students attending independent colleges and universities compared to the number of students attending public higher education institutions.

4. PASCAL (Partnership Among South Carolina Academic Libraries)

Priority: Support CHE's budget request for \$1.5 million in lottery funds for PASCAL.

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 and publications. SCICU members benefit from the expanded resources and cost efficiencies of PASCAL, elements essential for maintaining accreditation.

5. Dual Enrollment

Priority: "Dual Enrollment" refers to programs allowing high school students to attend a class for which they receive both high school and college credit. Dual enrollment was made possible in South Carolina by the 2005 Education and Economic Development Act. Currently only students enrolled in a high school and technical college can receive state support,

through the Lottery Tuition Assistance Program, which provides aid for technical college students. SCICU will advocate on behalf of initiatives that explore or provide state support to students enrolled at a high school and independent college or university.

6. Work for passage of specific bills that would benefit SC independent colleges and protect the interests of independent colleges by opposing bills that would be harmful.

7. Federal Higher Education Issues

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

- Advocate on behalf of:
 - COVID-19 liability limitation.
 - COVID-19 stimulus package.
 - Increasing Pell Grants, SEOG, and other federal student aid programs.
 - Regulatory language that secures the autonomy of independent colleges and universities generally, including maintaining protections for faith-based institutions.
- Pursue alternatives to free public college.