



SCICU Public Policy Committee Legislative Action Plan 2023

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.

The priorities of the 2023 Legislative Action Plan will be influenced by the continuing challenges our SCICU member institutions face as they move forward in a rapidly changing higher education environment.

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 South Carolina Commission on Higher Education, and public colleges and universities to highlight the prominence and importance of higher education in South Carolina in order to advance our respective priorities.

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 with the staff at the National Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (NAICU), the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities (CCCU), and the South Carolina Congressional delegation on legislative 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, individual board members, or college and university presidents, as appropriate, to coordinate the resources of the independent college community to address the particular issue and secure a favorable outcome.

Legislative Priorities

1. South Carolina Higher Education Tuition Grants Program

Priority: Support the FY 2023-24 budget request of the South Carolina Higher Education Tuition Grants Commission to retain the \$10 million increase included in last year's budget, preferably funded as a recurring item. Last year this item was funded from lottery revenue.

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 FY 2023-2024 request of the South Carolina Commission on Higher Education to retain the \$50 million increase included in last year's budget, preferably funded as a recurring item. Last year this item was funded from lottery revenue.

Note: The Tuition Grants Commission receives approximately 16% of the needs-based appropriation to CHE to be used for tuition grants. The 16% reflects 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 recurring funds for PASCAL.

Note: In previous years PASCAL funding has come from lottery revenue, for which SCICU advocate should recurring funds not be available.

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 approaches to expand dual enrollment and provide state support to students enrolled at a high school and independent college or university.

6. Transfer and Articulation

Priority: “Transfer and Articulation” is the process by which students at one institution can move seamlessly to another, with the receiving institution accepting all or most of the credits earned from the sending institution. In particular, “transfer and articulation” refers to the conditions and standards under which a student who has earned a two-year degree may or must be accepted at a four-year institution.” SCICU has a Partnership Agreement with the Technical College System that SCICU signatories of the agreement will accept students with an A.A. or A.A.S degree with junior standing and as having fulfilled the general education requirement. SCICU will continue to participate in a CHE initiative to expand and standardize transfer and articulation across the state, so long as the autonomy of SCICU member institutions is recognized.

7. Other State Higher Education Issues

Priority: 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.

- Support including SCICU member institutions in state funding to encourage attendance in nursing graduate programs.
- Oppose legislation that endeavors to treat SCICU members as “public.” One basis for past attempts to do so was the receipt by students of aid through the Tuition Grants Program.
- Oppose legislation that imposes additional curricular burdens on high school students in order to qualify for state merit scholarships.

8. Federal Higher Education Issues

Priority: Support federal legislation and regulatory action in the areas of student aid funding, and higher education policy.

- “Double” the maximum Pell Grant to \$13,000.
- Increase other federal student aid programs, including SEOG and TRIO.

- Support regulatory language that secures the autonomy of independent colleges and universities generally, including maintaining protections for faith-based institutions.
- Oppose changes to the Department of Labor overtime rules that would increase the salary threshold and eliminate the teacher exemption.
- Monitor proposed regulations for Title IX.