

**R. Wes Hayes, Jr.**

*Chairman*

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*President and Executive Director*



## MEMORANDUM

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**To:** Financial Aid Directors, Public and Independent Colleges and Universities

**From:** Dr. Karen Woodfaulk, Director, Office of Student Affairs

**Date:** July 18, 2024

**Subject:** Act 156: New Scholarship Enhancements Guidance

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We are pleased to announce the recent enactment of Act 156, which introduces additional scholarship enhancement opportunities for eligible sophomore, junior, and senior Palmetto Fellows and LIFE recipients who are education and accounting majors enrolled in approved programs at eligible four-year institutions. Students in these programs may be eligible to receive an additional scholarship enhancement of up to \$2,500 starting Fall 2024.

To ensure eligibility for the new scholarship enhancement, students must major in Accounting or Education programs approved by CHE. This program approval process will be different for Education and Accounting programs. Please check with your provost's office for more information.

### Accounting

Pursuant to Act 156, Accounting majors who are current sophomores, juniors, and seniors need to have earned 14-credit hours in math/science during their first academic year in order to receive the enhancement. We recognize that not all programs have the 14-credit hour requirement and that students in those programs will not qualify for this new benefit. Prior to awarding the enhancement, please check with your provost's office regarding eligible majors in approved accounting programs.

### Education

Regarding Education majors, beginning in Fall 2024, an eligible student must be considered an education major and sign a contractual agreement to receive the education enhancement. Education majors who accept the enhancement will have a contractual agreement to work in a South Carolina public school for each year they receive the enhancement or repay the enhancement funds if they do not fulfill the work requirement after graduation or discontinue enrollment in an approved program.



Again, if a student accepts an education enhancement, they will have to repay the funds either with their time (service agreement) or money (becomes a loan). It is important to involve the teacher education preparation offices in verifying eligible students majoring in education at your institution.

Only current sophomores, juniors, and seniors who are STEM Education majors already receiving enhancement funds from the STEM enhancement, are permanently exempt from the contractual agreement. STEM education enhancement students, starting Fall 2024 and beyond, will be considered Education enhancement students and will need to sign the contractual agreement. Please inform education majors they are not obligated to accept this additional enhancement should they decide they do not want to agree to the contractual agreement.

Please ensure that all relevant information is communicated to your students and staff to facilitate the smooth implementation of these enhancements. The official list of eligible education majors is published on the [CHE website on the Institutions and Educators Page under Scholarship Administration](#). Contractual agreement information is forthcoming.

We appreciate your cooperation and dedication to supporting our students' educational endeavors. Should you have any questions or require further clarification please contact Dr. Karen Woodfaulk, Director of Students Affairs at [kwoodfaulk@che.sc.gov](mailto:kwoodfaulk@che.sc.gov) 803-856-0578 or Ms. Tanya Weigold, Scholarships and Grants Coordinator at [tweigold@che.sc.gov](mailto:tweigold@che.sc.gov) 803-856-0672 for questions regarding scholarship enhancement awards to eligible students. Please contact Dr. Jessica Berry, Acting Director of Academic Affairs and Licensing at [jberry@che.sc.gov](mailto:jberry@che.sc.gov) 803-869-0460 for questions regarding eligible major programs and courses.

**Addition of Accounting and Education as eligible majors for Palmetto Fellows and LIFE Scholarship Enhancements**

**Policy Guidelines for FY 2024-25**

**Background**

During the 2023-24 legislative session, the SC General Assembly passed Act No. 156 of 2024, which expands the current LIFE and Palmetto Fellows Scholarship enhancement program, which awards an additional \$2,500 to qualified math/science majors, to include students majoring in accounting, and education related disciplines.

**Purpose**

South Carolina's state-funded undergraduate scholarship programs recognize academically talented students who are enrolled at an eligible South Carolina institution. The Scholarship Enhancements provide additional funding for eligible students majoring in CHE-approved academic programs that are STEM and education-related. The availability of enhancement funding for identified majors provides an additional incentive for students to pursue these majors.

The following working guidelines are in place effective July 18, 2024 for FY 2024-25 with implementation initiated for the 2024 Fall Term. Because the scholarship enhancement is directed by a statute and regulations, emergency regulations will be put in place to support the changes to the program, temporarily. The necessary regulatory changes may occur during the upcoming 2025-26 Session of the General Assembly.

**I. General Requirements for Determination of Enhancement Eligibility**

A. The scholarship enhancement applies to students in their second year of enrollment, beginning with their date of initial college enrollment, and who are attending an eligible four-year institution. The student must also be a recipient of the Palmetto Fellows or LIFE Scholarship.

B. Pursuant to Act No. 156, the program is implemented as of July 1, 2024. Eligible students in majoring in CHE-approved programs and enrolled in traditional terms beginning after July 1 may begin receiving the terms after that point.

C. A student who has been verified as meeting all general and continued eligibility requirements at the end of their first year of enrollment, and who is declared through the established policies of their individual institution in an eligible CHE-approved math/science, or education major may be eligible to receive scholarship enhancement disbursements.

1. Each institution may identify, at their discretion, the academic procedures, policies, applications, etc. that designate official enrollment in a declared major at their individual institution. Students are responsible for familiarizing themselves with the process for declaring a math/science/education major at their institution.
2. An eligible student may elect not to participate in a scholarship enhancement disbursement.

E. A student can only receive a scholarship enhancement disbursement at their home institution. The PFS or LIFE Scholarship recipient must be verified for enrollment at an eligible South Carolina institution.

1. A student who is considered a transient student is not eligible to participate.

F. PFS and LIFE Scholarship Enhancements: A student who has been determined to have met continued eligibility for the PFS and LIFE Scholarship and have met the scholarship Enhancement eligibility requirements, is eligible to receive Enhancement funds if they are enrolled full-time.

1. A student shall be verified for enrollment in an eligible major after the last day to drop/add a course of the term of their enrollment.

## **II. Student Scholarship Enhancement Eligibility Requirements**

A. To participate, a LIFE or PFS scholarship recipient must meet the following requirements by the end of the academic year in addition to meeting all general scholarship eligibility requirements as set forth by the established program statutes and regulations.

1. **Education Enhancement**: For participation in scholarship enhancement disbursement as an eligible education major, a recipient must:
  - a. Be eligible for the LIFE or PFS scholarship; and
  - b. Be verified by the provost's or designated office as enrolled full-time (minimum 12 credit hours) and declared an eligible education major through the policies of their institution in a CHE-approved education program that leads to teaching certification; the provost's or designated office shall provide this verified list of eligible students to the office of financial aid (and other entities as necessary); and
  - c. Sign a contractual agreement to receive the enhancement. The agreement includes a service agreement to work in a South Carolina public school for each year the enhancement is received, or the recipient will have to repay the enhancement funding to the state;
  - d. Students who were already receiving the STEM Enhancement on the basis of being a **math/science education major PRIOR TO FALL 2024** will be exempt from signing a contractual agreement. These students will not be held to the work requirement mentioned above.
2. **Accounting Enhancement (being considered a math enhancement major for now)**: For participation in scholarship enhancement disbursement as an eligible accounting major, a recipient must:
  - a. Be eligible for the LIFE or PFS scholarship; and
  - b. Be enrolled and declared as an accounting major through the policies of their institution in a CHE-approved accounting program that corresponds to an eligible CIP code; and
  - c. Earn at least 14 credit hours in eligible math, science, or accounting coursework by the end of their first year of enrollment.

## **III. Procedures for Awarding and Disbursement of Enhancement Funds**

A. The student must be enrolled at an eligible four-year South Carolina institution for the Enhancement.

1. A student must be verified as a full-time enrolled student, in a major that corresponds to an approved CIP Code in math (including accounting)/science or education. The list of eligible majors and corresponding CIP codes will be determined by the CHE and placed on the CHE Website.
2. Enrollment verification in an approved major shall be determined by the policies of the institution at which the student is a degree-seeking student and seeking the funding.
3. Enrollment verification shall be determined no later than the last day to drop/add a course in for the fall or spring term in which the student is enrolled at the home institution.

B. The institution will identify award amounts. The enhancement is considered a last-dollar award, after all other gift aid is awarded, and may not exceed the cost of attendance for the student.

C. The institution must retain a signed Affidavit/Certification Form indicating that the student is not in default of any student loans and has not been convicted of any felonies or any second or subsequent alcohol/drug-related offenses. The Affidavit/Certification form shall be amended to include the following additional educational enhancement certification:

1. The student provides authorization to have their contractual agreement information made available to institutions for determination of eligibility.

#### **IV. Student Awareness**

A. Institutions will be responsible for establishing a means of certification from the student that acknowledges the following stipulations:

1. Students awarded education enhancements shall acknowledge through an established process that acceptance of an education enhancement award disbursement will acknowledge understanding of the teaching or repayment requirement after graduation or discontinuation of enrollment.
2. The student has been notified of the continued eligibility requirements for scholarship renewal.