



Minutes of the Meeting
Virtual Meeting
June 3, 2021
2:40 p.m.

Committee Members Present

Commissioner Paul Batson, Chair
Commissioner Bettie Rose Horne, Assistant Chair
Commissioner Hugh Mobley

Committee Members Absent

Commissioner Devron Edwards
Commissioner Mark A. Smith

Commission Members Present

Commissioner Ben Satcher

Guests Present

Dr. Jesulon Gibbs-Brown, SC State University
Ms. Reinell Thomas-Myers, SC State University

Staff Members Present

Dr. Rusty Monhollon
Dr. Karen Woodfaulk
Ms. Antonia Adams
Ms. Lorinda Copeland
Mr. Kevin Glears
Dr. Gerrick Hampton
Ms. Kathryn Harris
Mr. Frank Myers
Mr. Andrew Roof
Ms. Laverne Sanders

1. Introductions and Approval of Minutes

Commissioner Paul Batson called the meeting to order.

Dr. Karen Woodfaulk introduced the presenters on the agenda. Ms. Laverne Sanders introduced the guests in attendance, and she confirmed that the meeting was held in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

A **motion** was made (Horne), **seconded** (Mobley), and **carried** to approve the minutes of May 6, 2021.

2. SC Program for the Recruitment and Retention of Minority Teachers

Dr. Woodfaulk provided an overview of the SC Program for the Recruitment and Retention of Minority Teachers. She explained that the General Assembly appropriated funds through EIA to South Carolina State University for the administration of the SC-PRRMT.

a) **Quarterly Report (Quarter 3) (For Approval)**

Dr. Woodfaulk provided information on SC-PRRMT Quarter III Report from Spring and Summer 2021. She stated seven SC-PRRMT graduated at the end of 2020 Fall, and two graduates in 2021 Spring. Dr. Woodfaulk stated that all nine graduates are teaching in critical-needs subject areas in S.C., and eight of the nine are teaching in critical-geographical areas. Dr. Woodfaulk explained that SC-PRRMT continues to carry out its mission to increase their pool of teachers as was reported in Quarter III. She stated SC-PRRMT continues to expand and establish sites across the state.

b) **SC Program for the Recruitment and Retention of Minority Teachers (SC-PRRMT) FY2020-21 Annual Report and FY 2022-23 EIA Allocation Request (For Approval)**

Dr. Woodfaulk presented SC-PRRMT's provided budget request for FY2022-2023 in the amount of \$339,482. She stated \$15,000 will be used for personnel services, and \$324,482 will be used for forgivable loans for SC-PRRMT.

Commissioner Batson asked Ms. Reinell Thomas-Myers to provide highlights of the SC-PRRMT program for the third quarter. Ms. Thomas-Myers replied that one of the highlights for Quarter III was the recruitment fair. She stated that the COVID-19 pandemic prevented SC-PRRMT from having in-person recruitment visits. Ms. Thomas-Myers explained that a virtual recruitment fair was held, and approximately 30-40 students participated in the virtual recruitment event in April. She said various school districts throughout the state participated in the virtual recruitment. Ms. Thomas-Myers stated all the school districts in South Carolina were contacted regarding the virtual recruitment fair.

Commissioner Horne **motioned** approval of the South Carolina Program for the Recruitment and Retention of Minority Teachers FY2020-21 Quarter III Report and FY2022-223 budget request in the amount of \$339,482 for minority teacher recruitment. Commissioner Mobley **seconded**, and the motion **carried**.

3. **Proposed Statutory/Changes:**

a) **Determination of Rates of Tuition and Fees (South Carolina Residency) (For Approval)**

Dr. Gerrick Hampton provided background information on Act No. 11 of 2015 in response to changes in the federal law that allows for certain individuals, veteran or a dependent of a veteran, using Post 9/11 GI Bill benefits at institutions located in S.C. to receive in-state rate on tuition and fees.

Dr. Hampton explained that CHE staff proposes updating the regulation to remove the three-year rule for individuals using educational benefits at public institutions in S.C. and make the regulation consistent with Act No. 29 of 2021.

Commissioner Horne motioned approval of the proposed regulation for the Determination of Rates of Tuition and Fees. Commissioner Mobley **seconded**, and the motion **carried**.

b) **Palmetto Fellows Scholarship Program** *(For Approval)*

Ms. Kathryn Harris reported that on May 6, 2021 Governor Henry McMaster signed into law Act No. 36 of 2021 (Formerly H. 3017). She explained that this Act inserted language into state law that allows the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship to include two-year institutions of higher learning and technical colleges among institutions of higher learning whose students may be eligible for scholarships. She stated CHE staff is proposing changes to the Palmetto Fellows regulations to adhere to the change in the law. Ms. Harris reported that CHE staff reached out to staff at USC Regional institutions, Palmetto College, and the State Technical Colleges to inform them of this change. She said CHE staff is planning workshops during the summer with the institutions' staff to assist them with implementing the changes.

Ms. Harris explained that additional changes were being proposed to clarify that high school coursework completed during the summer term after the high school's graduation date cannot be included in the final calculation of the high school GPA.

Commissioner Mobley **motioned** approval of the proposed regulatory changes to the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship Program. Commissioner Horne **seconded** and the motion **carried**.

c) **LIFE Scholarship Program** *(For Approval)*

Dr. Hampton reported that on April 20, 2021 H.3017 was amended to allow the LIFE Scholarship to be used for six semesters for a three-year degree program. He said staff worked with the two-year institutions to determine the associate degree programs that required a minimum of 68

credit hours to be completed. Dr. Hampton explained that it was determined that there were not any three-year programs that are approved as designated three-year programs. He said there are a series of programs that require a minimum of 68 credit hours to complete a degree. Mr. Hampton stated after working with the SC Technical College System, they provided to CHE staff the programs that were the intent of the legislation or the amendment to that legislation. He explained now that the programs are in place, and CHE staff can identify the programs, staff has started to change the regulation to allow for the LIFE Scholarship for three years to be used at a two-year institution in specific programs. Dr. Hampton stated both USC and Spartanburg Methodist have indicated that they do not have three-year programs or associate degree programs that exceed 68 credit hours. He said the SC Technical College System has provided CHE staff with a list of programs that do, including nursing programs. Dr. Hampton explained that language is also added to ensure that students are allowed the same amount of time in high school to earn the LIFE Scholarship but allows for certain exceptions.

Commissioner Batson asked Dr. Hampton if Greenville Technical College's bachelor's in applied manufacturing is covered in H.3017. Dr. Hampton replied that Greenville Technical College's bachelor's in applied manufacturing would not be covered, because changes were previously made for approved baccalaureate programs to receive the three years of funding at two-year institutions.

Commissioner Mobley **motioned** approval of the proposed regulatory changes to the LIFE Scholarship Program. Commissioner Horne **seconded**, and the motion **carried**.

d) **South Carolina Need-based Grants Program** *(For Approval)*

Ms. Harris provided an overview of the Public Agenda that was approved by the Commission. She explained that the Commission Public Agenda is striving to increase the percentage of S.C. residents with a postsecondary credential to 60 percent by 2030. Ms. Harris stated that this places emphasis on the importance of financial aid affordability and the opportunity to obtain a postsecondary credential to meet South Carolina's workforce needs which would be access. She said the S.C. Commission on Higher Education formed a Financial Aid Advisory Committee. Ms. Harris reported that the first Committee meeting was held on January 27, 2021, and the Committee has continued to meet monthly. She explained that the committee is made up of Directors of Financial Aid Offices, as well as other professionals in the offices from the public four-year institutions and representatives from the SC Technical College System.

Ms. Harris reported that the Committee examined the methodology and funding model for the SC Need-based Grant Program as well as the rationale for funding. She stated after reviewing the funding model and funding rationale, the Committee made regulatory recommendations to maximize the financial assistance for the neediest students in South Carolina.

Ms. Harris reported that there were two recommendations that the Committee voted to put forth:

- 1) Increase the maximum award amount of the SC Need-based Grant to \$3,500 per year for full-time students and \$1,750 per year for part-time students.
- 2) Permit the SC Need-based Grant to be awarded up to three terms per academic year, which would be fall, spring and summer. The SC Need-based Grant is currently only allowed to be awarded up to two terms per year.

Ms. Harris stated the S.C. Commission on Higher Education Financial Aid Committee feels very strongly that the recommendations will make an immediate impact on the students of South Carolina in their ability to attend and obtain a postsecondary credential. She said the Committee is making the recommended changes in the regulations.

Commissioner Mobley **motioned** approval of the proposed regulation for the South Carolina Need-based Grants Program. Commissioner Horne **seconded**, and the motion **carried**.

Commissioner Mobley asked if there were any changes to dual enrollment funding. Dr. Woodfaulk replied that there were not any changes in dual enrollment. She explained that dual enrollment students take advantage of Lottery Tuition Assistance. Dr. Woodfaulk stated that Lottery Tuition Assistance started around 10 years ago to allow for dual enrolled students to receive Lottery Tuition Assistance.

4. SC State Approving Agency Update (SAA) (For Information)

Mr. Frank Myers provided background information on the S.C. Commission on Higher Education Veterans Education and Training. He explained that the SC Veterans Education and Training is designated as the State Approving Agency (SAA) and is appointed by the Governor. Mr. Myers stated that the SAA approves programs for Veterans Affairs on the job training for the colleges and universities. He said the SAA works with other SAA offices in other states.

Mr. Myers stated that much of the SAA work is done in accordance with Title 38 Code of Federal Regulations (CFR), Sections 21.4253, 21.4254, 21.4261, and 21.4262. He said SAA works in cooperation

with the Department of Veterans Affairs to ensure that schools, and the veterans understand that the programs are viable that they are enrolling into receive the GI Bill benefits. Mr. Myers stated that compliance surveys are conducted at the colleges and universities, training employers to help ensure that veterans get the most benefit of the VA educational benefits.

Mr. Myers reported that the Johnny Isakson and David P. Roe, MC Veterans Health Care and Benefits Improvement Act of 2020, P.L.116-315, removes the requirement for the covered individual to be enrolled at a public institution for three years. He stated that the Act is effective August 1, 2021.

Mr. Myers explained that Section 1010, P.L.116-315, verification of enrollment to receive VA educational assistance benefits, institutions certify the VA students to initiate their housing benefits, and after the add-drop period the registrar reviews the verification of the student's enrollment. He said if the student fails to certify within two consecutive months, the VA will withhold their monthly housing allowance.

Mr. Myers explained that Section 1019, P.L.116-315, overpayments to eligible persons or veterans, holds the institution financially responsible. He said VA students and those eligible cannot certify themselves for VA educational benefits. Mr. Myers reported that the change was effective January 5, 2021. He stated institutions that certify VA students and those eligible for their VA benefits will now be responsible for benefits paid directly to an educational institution.

Mr. Myers provided the VA public education institution tuition rates for 2018 (\$23,671.92), 2019 (\$24,476.79) and 2020 (\$25,162.14). He stated the public tuition rates are the same nationwide. Mr. Myers reported that the new tuition rates beginning August 1, 2021 will increase to \$26,042.81. He stated the new tuition rate is a 3.5% increase. Commissioner Batson asked if rates were the maximum GI tuition rate to be paid for the veteran. Mr. Myers replied that in 2018, the VA academic year was from August 1- July 31 of the following year. He stated that each year an average is taken of all the public institutions nationwide which controls the amount. Commissioner Batson asked would a student attending a technical college in South Carolina be entitled to receive the \$26,042.82 even though their tuition is a lot less. Mr. Myers provided an example of tuition at \$5,000 for the semester, and if the student benefits are 100%. He stated the VA will pay 100% of the \$5,000 tuition. Mr. Myers reported if the student is at 80% or 60%, then the student will be paid that portion of the tuition. He stated the student will not receive the \$26,042.82, however, Mr. Myers stated that the student will receive a housing allowance based on the rates of the college.

Mr. Myers provided data on VA students who are eligible to receive VA education benefits from April 2019 – April 2021. He stated that there was a decrease of 153 (12.5%) veterans receiving benefits, and a decrease of 1,362 (12.5%) veterans receiving benefits in 2021.

Mr. Myers reported that in 2019 and 2020 there were 31 compliance surveys for educational institutions. He stated that there were 32 compliance surveys in 2021. Mr. Myers provided the overpayments and underpayments for VA FFY 2019-2021. Mr. Myers stated that there were three institutions that contributed to the significant number of overpayments. He said the three institutions are for-profit schools. Commissioner Batson asked if there was one institution in 2020-21 that accounted for nearly 98% of the overpayments, and if the institution was a for-profit institution. Mr. Myers replied yes, and he explained that the institution was a theological school. Dr. Woodfaulk stated that in South Carolina, the theological schools do not have to be licensed by CHE. She said schools of theology, do not undergo licensure or overview by CHE. Commissioner Batson asked if under the new rule, would the institution have to pay back the funds. Mr. Myers replied that the institutions would have to pay the funds back. He stated the SAA ensures that the institutions are complying.

Mr. Myers explained that if an institution does not certify veterans correctly and does not end veterans benefits in a timely manner that this will contribute to overpayments. He said the schools should alert the VA, if the students are not maintaining attendance and not doing well academically. Mr. Myers said the veteran benefits must be stopped until the student has good academic standings and good attendance standings.

Mr. Myers provided the top ten educational institutions in South Carolina with veterans and those eligible receiving VA educational benefits. He provided the schools that had a drop in their number of veterans receiving VA educational benefits.

Mr. Myers concluded with a summary of his presentation. He stated Public Law 1315 is most significant as the educational institutions will need to know that if they fail to certify students accurately and promptly it will result in overpayments. He stated the data is received from the VA. Mr. Myers reported that in 2021-22, the SAA will engage in risk-based surveys.

5. Other Business

Dr. Woodfaulk introduced Ms. Antonia Adams, a Southern Education Foundation Leadership Initiative Fellow, who has an eight-week internship at CHE. She said that CHE received a National College Access

Grant to help with FAFSA completion over the summer. Dr. Woodfaulk stated that Ms. Adams is an alumna of Piedmont Technical College, where she graduated with an associate degree.

Ms. Adams provided greetings to the Committee. She said that she is originally from South Carolina. Ms. Adams stated that she graduated at the top of her class in 2015 from the Edgefield County School District. She said she furthered her education at Piedmont Technical College with honors and received an Associate in Arts degree. Ms. Adams stated that she is currently receiving her bachelor's degree at the University of South Carolina Honors College. Ms. Adams stated after graduation she plans to obtain her Juris Doctor degree in Public Policy Law. She said she hopes to continue her work in higher education and to increase access for education for low income individuals and to work particularly with at-risk individuals.

6. Adjournment

There being no additional items before the Committee, Commissioner Batson requested a motion for adjournment. A motion (Mobley) was made, seconded (Horne) to adjourn the meeting at 3:40 p.m.