MISSISSIPPI POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE BOARD

IHL Executive Offices, Room 218
3825 Ridgewood Road, Jackson, MS 39211

October 12, 2021 at 10:30 a.m.

Teleconference: 1-888-822-7517, Access code: 2791682#
Zoom: https://itsmsgov.zoom.us/j/85246758441?pwd=bWZCVE9RdkxUMDBhM29qVVk1QVBJUT09

Agenda

CALL TO ORDER

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EXECUTIVE SESSION IF DETERMINED NECESSARY

STRATEGIC PLANNING DISCUSSION

1. Approve February 15, 2021 Strategic Planning Committee Meeting Minutes 33
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ADJOURNMENT

MINUTES

BE IT REMEMBERED, that the Mississippi Postsecondary Education Financial Assistance Board held a regular meeting on Wednesday, June 23, 2021 at 10:30 a.m. Members of the Board were invited to participate in the meeting in person or remotely via Zoom or teleconference. Members of the media and public were invited to attend the meeting in Room 218 of the Education and Research Center, 3825 Ridgewood Road, Jackson, Mississippi, 39211.

The following member(s) participated via Zoom or teleconference:
- Ben Burnett, MAICU appointee
- Debbi Braswell, MAICU appointee
- Steven Cunningham, IHL Board appointee
- Barney Daly, Lt. Governor's appointee
- Dolly Marascalco, MCCB appointee
- Sharon Ross, Governor's appointee
- Jim Turcotte, Governor's appointee and Chairman

The following member(s) did not participate:
- Tyrone Jackson, MCCB institutional appointee
- Mark Keenum, IHL institutional appointee

Also in attendance were:
- Kim Gallaspy, IHL Director of Legislative Services (Zoom)
- Meg Harris, Assistant Director of Operations, Student Financial Aid (Zoom)
- Molly Minta, Reporter, Mississippi Today (public viewing space)
- Jennifer Rogers, Director of Student Financial Aid and Postsecondary Board Director (Zoom)
- Apryll Washington, Director of Policy and Planning, Student Financial Aid (Zoom)

The meeting was called to order at 10:31 a.m. by Chairman Turcotte.

MINUTES

On motion by Mr. Daly and seconded by Dr. Cunningham, all Board Members legally present and participating voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the board meeting held on April 21, 2021 as originally drafted.

ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

Item 1: Ms. Rogers presented the FY 2023 Budget Request and Narrative for approval. On motion by Dr. Burnett, seconded by Ms. Marascalco, all Board Members legally present and participating voted unanimously to approve the FY 2023 Budget Request.

1. Approve the FY 2023 Budget Request

The Mississippi Office of Student Financial Aid requests approval of the FY 2023 Legislative Budget Request. Board policy Part 601, Chapter 9, Rule 9.1 (IV) states, "Annually, the Board will review the annual legislative budget request for the Mississippi Office of Student Financial Aid and make a budget recommendation to the Agency."

Exhibit 1 – FY 2023 Budget Request (Page 17)

Exhibit 2 – FY 2023 Budget Narrative (Page 18)

Recommendation: Board staff recommends approval of this item.

MINUTES

Exhibit 1

MBR - FY 2023	**FY21 Awards**	**FY21 Amount**	**FY22 AOB Awards**	**FY22 AOB Amount**	**FY23 Awards**	**FY23 Amount**	**Awards +/- FY22 AOB**	**Amount +/- FY22 AOB**	**Change**
1- Administration									
Salaries, Wages and Fringes		$ 697,978		$ 732,877		$ 754,863		$ 21,986	
Travel		$ 8,000		$ 8,000		$ 8,000		$ -	
Contractual Service		$ 550,000		$ 536,040		$ 536,040		$ -	
Commodities		$ 10,000		$ 10,000		$ 10,000		$ -	
Equipment		$ 10,000		$ 10,000		$ 10,000		$ -	
Total Administration		**$ 1,275,978**		**$ 1,296,917**		**$ 1,318,903**		**$ 21,986**	**1.7%**
2- MTAG/MESG and HELP									
MTAG	17,311	$ 9,704,518	17,860	$ 9,710,362	18,039	$ 10,372,195	179	$ 661,833	
MESG	3,439	$ 7,787,994	3,814	$ 8,360,206	4,114	$ 9,256,500	300	$ 896,294	
HELP	4,333	$ 27,146,165	4,607	$ 28,219,626	5,107	$ 32,681,208	500	$ 4,461,582	
Total MTAG/MESG/HELP	**25,083**	**$ 44,638,677**	**26,281**	**$ 46,290,194**	**27,260**	**$ 52,309,903**	**979**	**$ 6,019,709**	**13.0%**
3 - Forgivable Loan and Repayment Programs									
Teacher Programs:									
CNDT (Graduate)	0	$ -	0	$ -	0	$ -	0	$ -	
NEW Winter-Reed			150	$ 2,000,000	300	$ 1,350,000	150	$ (650,000)	
Nursing Programs:									
NELB	0	$ -	0	$ -	0	$ -	0	$ -	
NELR	0	$ -	0	$ -	0	$ -	0	$ -	
NELM (Graduate)	0	$ -	0	$ -	0	$ -	0	$ -	
NERM (Graduate)	0	$ -	0	$ -	0	$ -	0	$ -	
NELP (Graduate)	0	$ -	0	$ -	0	$ -	0	$ -	
NTSP (Graduate)	0	$ -	0	$ -	0	$ -	0	$ -	
Health/Science Programs:									
SLPL (Graduate)	0	$ -	0	$ -	0	$ -	0	$ -	
SREB (Graduate)	29	$ 556,800	35	$ 672,000	25	$ 480,000	-10	$ (192,000)	
Total Loan/Repay Programs	**29**	**$ 556,800**	**185**	**$ 2,672,000**	**325**	**$ 1,830,000**	**140**	**$ (842,000)**	**-31.5%**
4 - Other									
LAW	10	$ 110,757	13	$ 144,846	15	$ 172,500	2	$ 27,654	
Nissan	3	$ 28,216	4	$ 40,000	4	$ 40,000	0	$ -	
Total Other	**13**	**$ 138,973**	**17**	**$ 184,846**	**19**	**$ 212,500**	**2**	**$ 27,654**	**15.0%**
TOTAL Loans, Schols, Grants	**25,125**	**$ 45,334,450**	**26,483**	**$ 49,147,040**	**27,604**	**$ 54,352,403**	**1,121**	**$ 5,205,363**	**10.6%**
TOTAL	**25,125**	**$ 46,610,428**	**26,483**	**$ 50,443,957**	**27,604**	**$ 55,671,307**	**1,121**	**$ 5,227,350**	**10.4%**
General Funds		$ 42,085,128		$ 47,107,957		$ 53,061,307		$ 5,953,350	12.6%
Total General Funds		**$ 42,085,128**		**$ 47,107,957**		**$ 53,061,307**		**$ 5,953,350**	**12.6%**
Special Funds									
Spend Auth - Investments		$ 28,216		$ 40,000		$ 40,000		$ -	
Spend Auth - Collections		$ 1,197,027		$ 1,276,000		$ 1,200,000		$ (76,000)	
Spend Auth - LAW funds		$ 110,757		$ 20,000		$ 20,000		$ -	
Spend Auth - Other		$ -		$ 2,000,000		$ 1,350,000		$ (650,000)	
Total Special Funds		**$ 1,336,000**		**$ 3,336,000**		**$ 2,610,000**		**$ (726,000)**	**-21.8%**
ORIGINAL SFA BUDGET		**$ 43,421,128**		**$ 50,443,957**		**$ 55,671,307**		**$ 5,227,350**	**10.4%**
Deficit General Funds		$ 3,600,000		$ -		$ -		$ -	
Def. Spend Auth - Collections		$ 500,000		$ -		$ -		$ -	
FINAL SFA BUDGET		**$ 47,521,128**		**$ 50,443,957**		**$ 55,671,307**		**$ 5,227,350**	
Carryover/Ret. to Collections		$ 910,700		$ -					

Exhibit 2

NARRATIVE
FY 2023 BUDGET REQUEST

State Student Financial Aid

The Mississippi Office of Student Financial Aid (SFA) is the administering agency for all state-funded student financial aid programs. The office is guided by a two-fold public service mission to provide financial assistance to students in pursuit of educational and professional goals and to help the state fulfill workforce needs in specific service areas and achieve the goal of a more educated citizenry. The office seeks to build public awareness of the diverse financial resources available through ongoing communication with individuals, colleges and universities, secondary schools, governing boards, legislators, communities, and other constituency groups.

SFA works independently and in partnership with other college prep and planning organizations to build public awareness of the financial resources offered by the state. The office provides information through high school counselors, college nights, parent association meetings, college fairs, and publications. Due in part to these ongoing efforts, the ever-increasing cost of attendance, and the college readiness efforts at the K-12 level, more students than ever before are expected to pursue postsecondary education, and their families are expected to seek financial assistance.

FY 2023 Appropriation Request

On behalf of the students and the state of Mississippi, SFA requests **$55,671,307 for FY23**, which represents **an increase of $5,227,350 or 10.4%** over the original FY22 appropriated dollars. The FY23 request includes a request for **$53,061,307 in General Funds**, which represents **an increase of $5,953,350 or 12.6%** over the original FY22 appropriation and a request for **$2,610,000 in Special Funds**, which represents **a decrease of $726,000 or 21.8%** from the original FY22 appropriation.

1-Administration

I. Program Description: SFA is responsible for the comprehensive planning, management and evaluation processes required to administer the state's many, diverse financial assistance programs. The office assesses and allocates resources, implements fiscal accountability measures, and annually evaluates all program components for compliance with statutes and legislative intent as well as for effectiveness in recruiting and retaining students in higher education in Mississippi.

II. Program Objective: SFA seeks to communicate the accomplishments, needs, and value of the state's financial assistance programs to numerous and varied constituency groups; to implement effective management strategies; to be wise stewards of state resources; and to provide prompt, quality service.

III. Current program activities as supported by the funding in Columns 5-12 (FY22 Estimated and FY23 Increase/Decrease for continuations) of MBR-1-03 and designated Budget Unit Decisions columns of MBR-1-03-A:
(D) Additional Needs – **$21,986**: Funds are requested to provide cost of living salary increases for all employees.

2-MTAG/MESG and HELP

I. Program Description: SFA is responsible for the comprehensive management, including budgeting, disbursement of funds and evaluation, of three (3) grant programs. In March of 1995, two (2) grant programs, the Mississippi Tuition Assistance Grant (MTAG) and the Mississippi Eminent Scholars Grant (MESG), were created to assist Mississippi students who do not qualify for full Pell grants. In April of 1997, an additional grant program, the Higher

Education Legislative Plan for Needy Students (HELP), was created to provide need-based financial assistance, as determined by parental adjusted gross income.

II. Program Objective: Provide adequate resources to support the delivery of the three (3) grant programs and to ensure compliance with the appropriate state laws in delivering financial aid.

III. Current program activities as supported by the funding in Columns 5-12 (FY22 Estimated and FY23 Increase/Decrease for continuations) of MBR-1-03 and designated Budget Unit Decisions columns of MBR-1-03-A:

(D) Additional Needs - **$6,019,709**: Since FY19, MTAG has seen modest growth of about 1% in recent years, and additional modest growth is expected to continue. ACT began publishing Superscores in April 2021, and the Mississippi Postsecondary Education Financial Assistance Board voted to accept ACT Superscores for the purposes of state aid. Therefore, SFA expects to award MESG to an additional 300 students who will qualify with an ACT Superscore of 29. SFA expects to award HELP to an additional 500 students who will qualify with an ACT Superscore of 20. The income threshold for HELP eligibility was scheduled to increase to $42,500 in the 2016-17 academic year, but the threshold has been frozen at $39,500 since the FY17 SFA appropriation bills. This budget anticipates that the freeze will continue in future years. The **MTAG request is $10,372,195**, which represents an **increase of $661,833** over FY22 projections. The **MESG request is $9,256,500**, which represents an **increase of $896,294** over FY22 projections**.** The **HELP request is $32,681,208**, which represents **an increase of $4,461,582** over FY22 projections.

3-FORGIVABLE LOAN AND REPAYMENT PROGRAMS

I. Program Description: SFA operates the legislatively created Critical Needs Dyslexia Therapy Teacher Forgivable Loan Program (CNDT) and the new Winter F. Winter and Jack Reed, Sr. Teacher Loan Repayment Program (WRTR). WRTR is funded separately through the Winter-Reed Trust. SFA also administers the IHL Board-created Graduate Teacher Forgivable Loan Program (GTS) and Counselor and School Administrator Forgivable Loan Program (CSA), but funding currently is not requested for these programs. The following programs previously administered by SFA have been repealed: William F. Winter Teacher Forgivable Loan Program (WWTS), William Winter Alternate Route Teacher Forgivable Loan Program (WWAR), Mississippi Teacher Loan Repayment Program (MTLR), and Teacher Education Scholars Forgivable Loan (TES) Program. SFA operates the following nursing loan programs: Nursing Education Forgivable Loan Programs for baccalaureate, masters, and Ph.D. study (NELB, NELR, NELM, NERM, and NELP) and Nursing Teacher Stipends (NTSP). SFA operates the following student financial aid health/science related programs: Speech-Language Pathologist Forgivable Loan Program (SLPL) and the Southern Regional Education Board Forgivable Loan Program for optometry (SREB). Funding for the Graduate and Professional Degree Forgivable Loan Program for study in chiropractic medicine, orthotics, prosthetics, or podiatrics (STSC); Medical and Dental Education Forgivable Loan Programs (MED and DENT); and Health Care Professions Forgivable Loan Program (HCP) has been discontinued by the Mississippi Legislature.

II. Program Objective: Student Financial aid programs have been developed:

a. To meet demonstrated critical shortages in the fields of medicine, nursing, nursing education, physical and natural sciences, and teacher education;
b. To attract, educate, and retain qualified teachers and medical personnel to serve the people of Mississippi;
c. To insure that the best interest of Mississippi is served by providing students with financial assistance for programs of study not offered in regularly supported Mississippi institutions; and
d. To manifest the belief that the continued growth and development of Mississippi requires improved levels of postsecondary educational attainment; and
e. To meet the needs of specific student groups.

III. Current program activities as supported by the funding in Columns 5-12 (FY22 Estimated and FY23 Increase/Decrease for continuations) of MBR-1-03 and designated Budget Unit Decisions columns of MBR-1-03-A:

(D) Additional Needs – (**$842,000)**: A decrease in expenditures for the Forgivable Loan and Loan Repayment Programs is requested. SFA, under advisement from the Mississippi Postsecondary Education Financial Assistance Board (Postsecondary Board or Board), requests the Legislature target available funds to ensure full funding of the undergraduate grant programs. *Miss. Code Ann.* § 37-106-14 (2) requires the Board to award grants first and limit loans to renewal applicants only on a first-come, first-served basis with preference for renewals. Therefore, funds have been unavailable for most of these programs for several years. The Postsecondary Board is requesting the Legislature phase out funding for the SREB Regional Contract program. Also, more funding was appropriated for the Winter-Reed Loan Repayment Program than was needed during the first year. The amount requested represents only what is needed to fund new and returning teachers.

TEACHER PROGRAMS:

The Critical Needs Dyslexia Therapy Teacher Forgivable Loan (CNDT) funds are available to Mississippi teachers who are seeking a Class AA Educator's License with a 203 Endorsement for Dyslexia Therapy. Due to budget constraints, no applicants were awarded during FY22. The **CNDT request is $0**, which represents **no change from FY22**.

The William F. Winter – Jack Reed, Sr. Teacher Loan Repayment Program (WRTR) helps new teachers repay their undergraduate student loans. The **WRTR request is $1,350,000,** which represents a **decrease of $650,000 from the amount appropriated in FY22**.

NURSING PROGRAMS:

The Nursing Education Forgivable Loan Programs – Bachelor's (NELB); Master's (NELM); Ph.D./DNP (NELP); RN to BSN (NELR); and RN to MSN (NERM) funds assist the state's efforts to recruit and retain nurses. Master's and Ph.D. level nursing students will also have the education required to teach in nursing education programs. Due to budget constraints, no applicants were awarded during FY22. The **NELB request is $0**, which represents **no change from FY22**. The **NELM request is $0**, which represents **no change from FY22**. The **NELP request is $0**, which represents **no change from FY22**. The **NELR request is $0**, which represents **no change from FY22**. The **NERM request is $0**, which represents **no change from FY22**. The programs were not funded in FY22 due to insufficient funds.

The Nursing Teacher Stipend Forgivable Loan Program (NTSP) funds eligible Master's and Ph.D. level nursing students in nursing education tracks who commit to serve as nurse educators upon completion of their education. The **NTSP request is $0**, which represents **no change from FY22**. The program was not funded in FY22 due to insufficient funds.

HEALTH/SCIENCE RELATED PROGRAMS:

The Speech-Language Pathologist Forgivable Loan Program (SLPL) was first created by the 2012 Legislature for students seeking a first master's degree in Speech-Language Pathology, Communicative Disorders, or Communication Sciences and Disorders. The loan will be forgiven for recipients who serve as licensed speech-language pathologists in a Mississippi public or charter school for one year for each year of funding received. The **SLPL request is $0**, which represents **no change from FY22**. The program was not funded in FY22 due to insufficient funds.

The Southern Regional Education Board Forgivable Loan Programs (SREB) awards students in out-of-state optometry programs contracted through the SREB Regional Contract Program. Mississippi contracts 9 seats per entering class, for a total of 36 contract seats each year. The cost of each contract seat typically increases annually; however, SREB has committed to retain the 2019-20 rate of $19,200 through FY 2023 to help states and institutions recover from revenue losses caused by COVID-19. Nevertheless, because no other forgivable loan programs have been funded in recent years, SFA, under direction of the Postsecondary Board, requests the Legislature phase out the SREB program in order to target all available funds for the undergraduate grant programs. To phase out the program, SFA would award renewal students only. The **SREB request is $480,000 for 25 seats**, which represents a **decrease of $192,000 from FY22**.

4. OTHER

I. Program Description: SFA operates the Law Enforcement Officers and Firemen Scholarship Program (LAW), which is funded by the Mississippi Legislature and the Nissan Scholarship, which is funded through special source funds for which SFA must request spending authority.

II. Program Objective: Student Financial aid programs have been developed:
   a. To manifest the belief that the continued growth and development of Mississippi requires improved levels of postsecondary educational attainment and
   b. To meet the needs of specific student groups.

III. Current program activities as supported by the funding in Columns 5-12 (FY22 Estimated and FY23 Increase/Decrease for continuations) of MBR-1-03 and designated Budget Unit Decisions columns of MBR-1-03-A: (D) Additional Needs – **$27,654:** An overall increase in expenditures for the Other programs is expected. Increases and decreases are requested as follows for the following programs based on increases and decreases in demand and eligibility.

The Law Enforcement Officers and Firemen Scholarship Program (LAW) provides education to the dependents of deceased or disabled service men and women. The **LAW request is $172,500**, which represents an **increase of $27,654 over FY22**.

The Nissan Scholarship Program (NISS) provides aid to students at public institutions who major in a field that will advance the automotive industry in Mississippi. The **NISS request is $40,000**, which represents an **no change from FY22**.

Item 2: Ms. Rogers presented the FY 2023-27 Five-Year Strategic Plan. On motion by Mr. Daly, seconded by Ms. Braswell, all Board Members legally present and participating voted unanimously to approve the FY 2023-27 Five-Year Strategic Plan.

2. Approve the FY 2023-27 Five-Year Strategic Plan

The Mississippi Office of Student Financial Aid requests approval of the FY 2023-27 Five-Year Strategic Plan. Board policy does not currently require approval of the Five-Year Strategic Plan, but the Plan is required annually by the Legislative Budget Office

Exhibit 5 – FY 2023-27 Five-Year Strategic Plan (Page 24)

Exhibit 6 – FY 2023-27 Five-Year Strategic Plan Narrative (Page 25)

Recommendation: Board staff recommends approval of this item.

Exhibit 3

MBR - FY2023-2027	FY 2023	FY 2024	FY 2025	FY 2026	FY 2027
1- Administration					
Salaries, Wages and Fringes	$ 754,863	$ 777,509	$ 800,834	$ 824,859	$ 849,605
Travel	$ 8,000	$ 8,000	$ 8,000	$ 8,000	$ 8,000
Contractual Service	$ 536,040	$ 536,000	$ 536,000	$ 536,000	$ 536,000
Commodities	$ 10,000	$ 10,000	$ 10,000	$ 10,000	$ 10,000
Equipment	$ 10,000	$ 10,000	$ 10,000	$ 10,000	$ 10,000
Total Administration	**$ 1,318,903**	**$ 1,341,509**	**$ 1,364,834**	**$ 1,388,859**	**$ 1,413,605**
2- MTAG/MESG and HELP					
MTAG	$ 10,372,195	$ 10,475,917	$ 10,580,676	$ 10,580,676	$ 10,580,676
MESG	$ 9,256,500	$ 9,819,000	$ 10,269,000	$ 10,269,000	$ 10,269,000
HELP	$ 32,681,208	$ 36,272,110	$ 39,660,683	$ 40,453,897	$ 41,262,975
Total MTAG/MESG and HELP	**$ 52,309,903**	**$ 56,567,027**	**$ 60,510,359**	**$ 61,303,573**	**$ 62,112,651**
3 - Forgivable Loan/Repay Programs					
Teacher Programs:					
CNDT (Graduate)	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Winter-Reed (New)	$ 1,350,000	$ 2,250,000	$ 2,250,000	$ 2,250,000	$ 2,250,000
Nursing Programs:					
NELB	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
NELR	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
NELM (Graduate)	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
NERM (Graduate)	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
NELP (Graduate)	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
NTSP (Graduate)	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
Health/Science Related Programs:					
SLPL	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -	$ -
SREB	$ 480,000	$ 356,400	$ 181,800	$ -	$ -
Total Forgive Ln/Repay Programs	**$ 1,830,000**	**$ 2,606,400**	**$ 2,431,800**	**$ 2,250,000**	**$ 2,250,000**
4 - Other					
LAW	$ 172,500	$ 175,950	$ 179,469	$ 183,058	$ 186,720
Nissan	$ 40,000	$ 40,000	$ 40,000	$ 40,000	$ 40,000
Total Other	**$ 212,500**	**$ 215,950**	**$ 219,469**	**$ 223,058**	**$ 226,720**
TOTAL Lns, Schols, Grants	**$ 54,352,403**	**$ 59,389,377**	**$ 63,161,628**	**$ 63,776,631**	**$ 64,589,371**
TOTAL	**$ 55,671,307**	**$ 60,730,886**	**$ 64,526,463**	**$ 65,165,491**	**$ 66,002,976**
General Funds	$ 53,061,307	$ 57,270,886	$ 61,066,463	$ 61,755,491	$ 62,592,976
Total General Funds	**$ 53,061,307**	**$ 57,270,886**	**$ 61,066,463**	**$ 61,755,491**	**$ 62,592,976**
Special Funds					
Spending Authority - Investments	$ 40,000	$ 40,000	$ 40,000	$ 40,000	$ 40,000
Spending Authority - Collections	$ 1,200,000	$ 1,150,000	$ 1,150,000	$ 1,100,000	$ 1,100,000
Spending Authority - LAW funds	$ 20,000	$ 20,000	$ 20,000	$ 20,000	$ 20,000
Spending Authority - Other	$ 1,350,000	$ 2,250,000	$ 2,250,000	$ 2,250,000	$ 2,250,000
Total Special Funds	**$ 2,610,000**	**$ 3,460,000**	**$ 3,460,000**	**$ 3,410,000**	**$ 3,410,000**
TOTAL SFA BUDGET	**$ 55,671,307**	**$60,730,886**	**$64,526,463**	**$65,165,491**	**$66,002,976**

Exhibit 4

The Mississippi Office of Student Financial Aid
157-00

2023-2027 Five-Year Strategic Plan

1. Comprehensive Mission Statement

The two-fold public service mission of the Mississippi Office of Student Financial Aid is to provide financial assistance to students in pursuit of educational and professional goals and to help the state achieve the goal of a more educated citizenry while alleviating critical workforce needs in specific service areas.

2. Philosophy

The Mississippi Office of Student Financial Aid is committed to the advancement of our state through education and workforce development. It is our belief that student financial assistance benefits not only the individual but also the general public. The philosophy of the Office is to alleviate the familial burden of paying for college, while being good stewards of the state's limited resources. The Office strives to operate efficiently by utilizing technology and leveraging partnerships; transparently by reporting on our operations and being accessible to the public; and safely by complying with all state and federal laws enacted for the protection of privacy.

3. Relevant Statewide Goals and Benchmarks

Statewide Goal #1: Economic Development – To develop a robust state economy that provides the opportunity of productive employment for all Mississippians

Relevant Benchmarks #1:

- Percentage of the civilian non-institutional population 16 years and over employed
- Job vacancy rate, by industry and occupation
- Wage and salary disbursements (total earnings)
- Average annual pay
- Median household income
- Percentage of workers whose family income falls above 150% of the federal poverty guidelines

Statewide Goal #2: Public Schools - To make available a quality K-12 public education for all Mississippians that prepares them, upon high school graduation, to either enter the labor force with an employable skill or to successfully complete a higher education program

Relevant Benchmarks #2:

- Percentage of public school core academic subject classes staffed with teachers who are highly qualified
- Percentage of public school teachers certified through alternative programs

Statewide Goal #3: Higher Education - To make available an accessible, quality public higher education at an affordable cost that prepares Mississippians to become productive, financially self-sufficient members of society while meeting the human resource needs of Mississippi and its employers, including the creation of new jobs through the commercialization of university-based research

Relevant Benchmarks #3:

- Percentage of full-time, first-time enrollment cohort who earns half of total required credit hours for graduation by the end of the first year at a community college or by the end of the second year at a university
- Percentage of full-time, first-time enrollment cohort who graduate with a college credential in the appropriate time-frame
- Percentage of state's population age 25 years and over with a bachelor's degree or higher
- Number of graduates in high-need disciplines (i.e., science, technology, engineering, math, education, including non-teaching areas and nursing), by discipline
- Number of graduates in teaching from Mississippi public higher educational institutions
- Percentage of teacher candidates from Mississippi public higher educational institutions who become Mississippi public school teachers following graduation
- Percentage of graduates in high-need disciplines practicing in Mississippi, by discipline
- Percentage of Mississippi median family income required to cover tuition and fees at Mississippi community colleges and at Mississippi public four-year higher educational institutions
- Average student debt upon graduation

Statewide Goal #4: Health – To protect Mississippians from risks to public health and to provide them with the health- related information and access to quality healthcare necessary to increase the length and quality of their lives

Relevant Benchmarks #4:

- Number of health professional shortage areas
- Number of practitioners needed to remove health professional shortage area designations, by type of practitioner

Statewide Goal # 5: To create an efficient government and an informed and engaged citizenry that helps to address social problems through the payment of taxes, the election of capable leaders at all levels of government, and participation in charitable organizations through contributions and volunteerism

Relevant Benchmarks #5:

- Administrative efficiency: Expenditures on state government administrative activities as a percentage of total operational expenditures
- Average wait time for state government services
- Number and average cost of regulatory actions taken, by regulatory body and type of action
- State dollars saved by providing government services online (e.g., document retrieval, issuance of new business permits, license renewal)

4. Overview of the Agency 5-Year Strategic Plan:

The Mississippi Office of Student Financial Aid will continue to administer effectively and efficiently the state's many, diverse financial assistance programs. The Office will budget responsibly and provide meaningful support to the Postsecondary Education Financial Assistance Board. The Office seeks to make college more accessible to and affordable for Mississippi students through the timely, simple disbursement of financial aid.

The Office will continue efforts to improve communication with students, parents, and high school counselors about the state-supported financial aid programs available. The Office partners closely with the staff of Get2College, a program of the Woodward Hines Education Foundation (WHEF). Get2College offers free college planning and financial aid help to students statewide. The staff of Get2College is highly knowledgeable of college access and is cross-trained on state financial aid. The Office will continue to utilize social media and conduct workshops for high school counselors, but the Office will rely more heavily on partners like Get2College to represent state aid at college fairs, College Nights/Parent Nights, and other outreach initiatives. The Office will also coordinate its efforts with the Mississippi Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators, the ACT Council and State Organization, College Countdown, and the Mississippi Counselors Association, among others.

The accessibility of all state-funded financial aid programs will be evaluated annually through careful monitoring of program rules and regulations and the application process to determine if any such rules and regulations and/or the application process have consistently limited student access to a program or created an undue hardship to eligible applicants.

The Office will maximize its use of technology to provide efficient delivery of financial resources to students, accurate assessment of program development, and increased personnel productivity.

The Office will implement management strategies that ensure all authorized programs grow and develop in an orderly and rational manner, that the resources entrusted to the office are used effectively and efficiently, and that the programs and services of the system are of the highest quality.

The Office will administer the residency-based Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance Grant (MTAG) and the merit-based Mississippi Eminent Scholars Grant (MESG) according to law to make college more accessible and affordable for some Mississippi students. The number of MTAG recipients has grown by about 1% each year since 2019, but higher education anticipates population loss in the coming years. The number of MESG recipients has grown by about 1.5% each year, but that annual growth may not be realized due to population shifts. However, the number of MESG recipients *is* expected to increase annually in FY 2023 and FY 2025 due to the Postsecondary Board's 2021 decision to accept ACT Superscores.

The Office will continue to advocate for more need-based aid programs to ensure that low- and moderate-income Mississippi students have access to affordable higher education opportunities. Currently, low-income students (full Pell-eligible) cannot by law qualify for MTAG, but can qualify for the Higher Education Legislative Plan for Needy Students (HELP) by also meeting certain academic requirements. The HELP program provides full tuition scholarships to students with demonstrated financial need who are college ready upon graduating from high school. The program grew rapidly in recent years, but the rapid annual growth has stabilized as expected. Nevertheless, the number of HELP recipients is expected to grow between FY 2023 and FY 2025 due to the Postsecondary Board's decision to accept ACT Superscores. Some additional cost increases will still occur every year based on rising tuition.

The Office will administer the state's forgivable loan programs according to law to help the state achieve the goal of a more educated citizenry while alleviating critical workforce needs in specific service areas. As a part of these efforts, the Office will work with the State Department of Education to monitor the teacher shortage issue to effectively project needed resources and to propose necessary program enhancements which promote teacher education, specifically at the undergraduate level. While certain forgivable loan programs are considered to be effective, others are not. The Office will continue to work with the Postsecondary Board and legislators to make data-driven recommendations for the elimination, consolidation, and/or conversion to loan repayment programs of the state's many forgivable loan programs.

5. Agency's External/Internal Assessment:

External Assessment:

a) Funding - Funding instability is an ongoing threat to the effective and efficient administration of student financial aid. Annually, the Office requests the funds needed to fully award all students who demonstrate eligibility for the programs as established by state law. When the amount appropriated is less than the amount needed, the Office must work with the Postsecondary Board to make difficult decisions regarding who will be awarded and who will not in order to balance the budget as required by law. Mississippi law requires that awards be made first to all undergraduate grant applicants, then to loan applicants on a first-come, first-served basis. If funds are still inadequate, then grant funds must be pro-rated. In FY2016, FY2020, and FY2021, the uncertainty of receiving a deficit appropriation resulted in late awards and student frustration and fear. Programs have been underfunded since FY2016, and since FY2017 awards in all forgivable loan programs have been severely reduced or eliminated.

b) Newly Created Programs - The creation of new state student financial aid programs places an increased administrative burden on the Office. Although funding is often appropriated for the purpose of making awards through newly created programs, additional funding for administration is typically not provided.

c) Need-Based Aid – Despite the growth of the HELP grant, additional need-based aid is needed to improve college access and affordability for the state's most vulnerable populations.

d) Program Changes - Legislative changes to existing programs will impact student eligibility rates, award rates, and the amount of money needed to award eligible students.

e) Student Choice - Student choice and performance continuously impacts award rates and award amounts. College of enrollment and major can impact whether or not a student is eligible for some state aid as well as the amount of aid for which the student is eligible. Academic performance, such as hours completed and GPA, can also impact whether or not a student establishes and/or maintains aid eligibility.

f) Federal Expected Family Contribution (EFC) - Changes to the auto-zero EFC income threshold for federal aid eligibility impacts eligibility for the Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance Grant. An increase to the threshold will decrease eligibility for MTAG. A decrease to the threshold will increase eligibility for MTAG. The federal EFC is changing to the Student Aid Index (SAI) in 2023-24 and will include negative figures.

g) FAFSA Simplification – Congress recently passed legislation to simplify the FAFSA form and to change other rules related to the premier federal aid programs. SFA is working with a task force of other states to create models to understand how the federal aid changes will impact state aid.

h) Federal Rules - Reauthorization of the Higher Education Act is overdue. It is believed that the reauthorization legislation will likely provide for a new Federal-State Partnership program to provide additional need-based financial aid in the states. In order for the state to participate, such a program would require an increased investment in need-based aid to meet the matching requirements for the state to participate.

i) Interest Rate - The interest rate charged on state forgivable loans is equal to the unsubsidized federal student loan rate at the time a student enters repayment. As the federal rate increases and decreases, so does the state rate. The federal rate changes annually with the 10-Year Treasury Note. Due to the future variability of federal student loan interest rates, it is difficult to estimate the future revenue stream from interest income collected on the repayment of state forgivable loans.

j) Collections - As a result of past efforts to improve default prevention practices, more students are completing the service obligation and fewer are defaulting or entering repayment. Also, fewer loans have been issued in recent years due to the budget shortfalls. Therefore, the revenue collected on the repayment of loans will decline in future years as fewer students enter monetary repayment, leaving the Office more dependent upon General Fund appropriations to meet budgetary demands.

k) Administrative Burden - Federal regulations can impact the administration of state financial aid, particularly the administration of loans. In recent years, the Office has responded to new regulations requiring multiple disclosures on all non-federal loans (even state loans); intensified identity theft protection rules; changes to allowable collection costs; and restrictions on the use of telephone technology to contact borrowers. The Office incurs costs to comply with new federal and state regulations.

Internal Assessment:

a) All funds administered by the Board shall be accounted for in an annual report that shall be submitted to the Legislature within ten (10) days after the convening of each new legislative session. The report should detail for each grant, scholarship, or forgivable loan program the number of recipients, the total amount of awards made, and the average award amount. The report shall include the number of students at each institution receiving financial assistance and the amount of such assistance. For forgivable loan programs, the report shall also include a summary of the repayment status and method of repayment for student cohorts as well as an accounting of the receipt of funds in repayment. Furthermore, all funds received and expended shall be reported and otherwise accounted for in accordance with the provisions of Section 37-106-11, Mississippi Code of 1972, except where individual identifying information must be withheld pursuant to the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), 20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99.

b) The Office continuously assesses the state's financial aid programs.
   1. The Office worked with the Harvard University Kennedy School of Government on a project using Regression Discontinuity Design Method to evaluate the Mississippi Eminent Scholars Grant (MESG) and the Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance Grant (MTAG) on their impact on in-state enrollment and degree completion.
   2. The Office applied for and received "Technical Assistance" from the Education Commission of the States as part of its Redesigning State Financial Aid project. ECS reviewed Mississippi's state aid programs through the lens of four principles of redesign. These four principles maintain that 1) aid programs should be student centered; 2) aid programs should be goal driven and data informed; 3) aid programs should be timely and flexible; and 4) aid programs should be broadly inclusive.
   3. Lifetracks has been expanded to include data from Student Financial Aid. NSPARC published a report regarding the effectiveness of state aid programs. The report found:
      a. First-year retention rates and six-year graduation rates are higher for state aid recipients in every program (MTAG, MESG, and HELP) than for similar (racially, socio-economically, academically, etc.) non-recipients. The study addresses questions of academic success and suggests that each program promotes improved outcomes for enrolled students.
      b. The study does not address questions related to access for MTAG and HELP. For example, the study cannot tell us whether low-income students are more likely to pursue a college degree because of state grant availability.
      c. The study indicates that MESG does not increase or impact in-state enrollment rates but does increase enrollment in four-year colleges over two-year colleges.
      d. The forgivable loan data show that forgivable loan recipients remain employed in the appropriate field at high rates up to five years after completion of the service obligation. The results are particularly important and encouraging for fields like education that have experienced high turnover. The results are less meaningful in fields, like nursing, that experience lower rates of attrition.
   4. The Office continues to work with the Postsecondary Board to develop recommendations to be presented to the Mississippi Legislature for redesigning the state student financial aid programs to be more effective and efficient.

Internal Management System

The Office operates under the auspices of the Mississippi Institutions of Higher Learning, which oversees the daily administration of state student financial aid. The Office works closely with the Mississippi Postsecondary Education Financial Assistance Board, which bears authority for all aspects of the state financial aid programs and the administrative rules governing those programs. The Postsecondary Board meets about four or five times a year to address program and budget-related issues.

6. Agency Goals, Objectives, Strategies and Measures for FY 2023 through FY 2027:

BUDGET PROGRAM 1: Administration

GOAL A: Effectively and efficiently administer the state's many, diverse financial assistance programs.

MINUTES

OBJECTIVE A.1.: Assess the availability of resources and budget available resources in a responsible manner.

Outcome: Percentage of eligible applicants receiving state financial aid.

STRATEGY A.1.1.: Use applicable trend data (related to high school graduation, college-going, outmigration/inmigration, tuition/Cost of Attendance, etc.) to predict future take-up rates for various financial aid programs.

Output: Accurate projection model to determine future budget needs as indicated by minimal difference between projected award amounts on the MBR (budget request) and actual expenditures on awards.

Explanatory: The accuracy of the projection model is greatly impacted by the factors identified in the external assessment in section 5, particularly the creation of new programs and changes to existing programs.

STRATEGY A.1.2.: Allocate appropriated funds in compliance with statute.

Output: Total amount of Annual Operating Budget

Output: Number of Financial Aid Programs administered

Output: Eligible applicants receiving student financial aid through programs administered by the Office

Output: Total amount of aid awarded to students through programs administered by the Office

Efficiency: Annual cost to administer the state's financial aid programs.

Efficiency: Administrative cost per eligible financial aid recipient.

Efficiency: Administrative cost as a percentage of the Annual Operating Budget.

OBJECTIVE A.2.: Provide support and guidance to the Postsecondary Education Financial Assistance Board.

Outcome: The Postsecondary Board responds in a timely manner to questions related to the administration of state financial aid programs as indicated by the average response time in days.

Outcome: Compliance with all statutes, policies, and rules governing the state's student financial aid programs.

*Outcome***:** Compliance with the APA guidelines for changing program Rules and Regulations.

Outcome: Compliance with all federal laws related to financial aid, privacy, lending, collection of debt, etc.

STRATEGY A.2.1.: Annually review the Board-approved Rules and Regulations for each program and the General Administration Rules and Regulations

Output: Agenda items to address issues and concerns related to program and administration rules

Output: Number of Postsecondary Board meetings

OBJECTIVE A.3.: Effectively and efficiently manage the annual State Aid application, award, and disbursement process.

Outcome: Provide access to all State Aid related information online.

Outcome: Limit the wait time for receipt of government services by communicating electronically, as evidenced by the availability of all communication in electronic format.

Outcome: Minimize the cost of human capital required to process the ever-increasing number of applications by utilizing technology, as evidenced by the number of full-time employees.

Outcome: Effective and efficient delivery of student financial aid dollars to the colleges and universities for distribution to students

STRATEGY A.3.1.: Annually update the online application for State Aid.

Output: Number of applications processed annually.

Output: Number of documents processed annually.

GOAL B: Maximize the role State Aid plays in recruiting and retaining students in higher education.

OBJECTIVE B.1.: Promote awareness of the available state-supported financial aid programs among students, parents, and school counselors.

Outcome: Increase the number of state applications completed, as evidenced by the percent increase over the previous year.

Outcome: Increase the number of students receiving aid, as evidenced by the percent increase over the previous year.

Outcome: Effective and efficient communication with counselors, students, and parents regarding financial aid opportunities

STRATEGY B.1.1.: Conduct workshops for high school counselors, attend college fairs, and present at college nights/parent nights.

Output: Number of workshops conducted, college fairs attended, and/or presentations at college nights/parents nights

STRATEGY B.1.2.: Contribute to student-focused publications.

Output: Number of ads and/or articles in publications.

STRATEGY B.1.3.: Utilize technology and social media to meet students where they are.

Output: Number of unique pageviews for www.mississippi.edu/financialaid and www.msfinancialaid.org

Output: Bounce rate for www.mississippi.edu/financialaid and www.msfinancialaid.org

Output: Number of Facebook followers

Output: Number of Twitter followers

OBJECTIVE B.2.: Communicate the accomplishments, needs, and value of the state's financial assistance programs to various constituency groups.

Outcome: Public high school counselors are knowledgeable of state aid programs and capable of helping students, as evidenced by the rate of participation in the counselor web portal.

Outcome: Private high school counselors are knowledgeable of state aid programs and capable of helping students, as evidenced by the rate of participation in the counselor web portal.

Outcome: Legislators continue to invest in state aid programs to make college more accessible and affordable for Mississippi students, as evidenced by the percent of need met by appropriations.

STRATEGY B.2.1.: Develop an understanding of program rules, general administration policies, and procedures among institutional financial aid administrators, college access organizations, and aid recipients.

Output: Updates delivered at MASFAA, Counselor workshops (MCA, MDE Counselor Institute, SACAC Drive-in, ESF New Counselor Workshops, etc.)

Output: Emails delivered to State Aid recipients.

Output: Letters delivered to State Aid recipients.

STRATEGY B.2.2.: Promote program values and needs to policymakers and other change agents.

Output: Updates to the Education Achievement Council, education leaders, and State Legislators at JLBC Hearings, etc.

GOAL C: To reduce the rate of default on the state's forgivable loan programs and increase the percentage of forgivable loan recipients who repay with service rather than money.

OBJECTIVE C.1.: Implement default prevention programs for all forgivable loans.

Outcome: Anticipated overall rate of default on all state forgivable loan programs for all cohorts.

Outcome: Anticipated rate of on-time repayment through service on all state forgivable loan programs for all cohorts.

STRATEGY C.1.1.: Maintain a Loan Repayment Specialist on staff to address all issues related to loan repayment or forgiveness.

Output: Separation, grace-ending, service deferment/cancellation, and past due notices mailed/emailed

Output: Funds collected in repayment of forgivable loans

Output: Tax offset funds collected

BUDGET PROGRAM 2: MTAG/MESG and HELP

MINUTES

GOAL A: To increase college access and improve affordability for Mississippi families.

OBJECTIVE A.1.: Make financial aid awards to Mississippi residents who qualify for one or more of the state's primary undergraduate grant programs (MTAG, MESG, and HELP) in compliance with appropriate state laws and rules.

Outcome: Mississippi residents receive financial aid to attend college in Mississippi, making college more accessible and affordable.

STRATEGY A.1.1.: Administer the primary undergraduate grant programs.

Output: Total number of students receiving financial aid through the primary undergraduate grant programs (MTAG, MESG, and HELP)

Output: Total amount of funds awarded through the primary undergraduate grant programs (MTAG, MESG, and HELP)

Output: Total number of primary undergraduate grant programs

Efficiency: Average student award through the primary undergraduate grant programs

STRATEGY A.1.2.: Administer the Mississippi Resident Tuition Grant Program (MTAG), created in 1995 to assist with the cost of tuition for Mississippi students with a 15 ACT and/or 2.5 GPA who are not eligible for a full federal Pell grant.

Output: Number of MTAG recipients

Output: Amount of MTAG awarded

Efficiency: Average student award through the MTAG program

STRATEGY A.1.3.: Administer the Mississippi Eminent Scholars Grant Program (MESG), created in 1995 to reward Mississippi students for excellent academic achievement (29 ACT and 3.5 GPA) in high school and to encourage high achieving students to stay in-state for college.

Output: Number of MESG recipients

Output: Amount of MESG awarded

Efficiency: Average student award through the MESG program

STRATEGY A.1.4.: Administer the Higher Education Legislative Plan for Needy Students (HELP) scholarship, created in 1997 to provide financial assistance for needy students who demonstrate college readiness with a 20 ACT, 2.5 GPA, and completion of a rigorous high school curriculum.

Output: Number of HELP recipients

Output: Amount of HELP awarded

Efficiency: Average student award through the HELP program

Explanatory Note: The cost of HELP has increased dramatically over recent years as the Office has reached out to middle and high school counselors to make more students aware of the program. In addition, changes to HELP were enacted by the 2014 Legislature to simplify the application process and to raise the maximum income eligibility threshold. Continued growth is expected. Increased demand is anticipated for each fiscal year through FY 2021. After demand stabilizes, the annual cost of the program will continue to increase at the same rate tuition increases.

BUDGET PROGRAM 3: Forgivable Loan and Repayment Programs

GOAL A: To help the state achieve the goal of a more educated citizenry while alleviating critical workforce needs in specific service areas.

OBJECTIVE A.1.: Make financial aid awards to students who qualify for one of the state's forgivable loan or repayment programs.

Outcome: Meet demonstrated critical shortages in the fields of medicine, nursing, nursing education, physical and natural sciences, and teacher education.

Outcome: Attract, educate and retain qualified teachers and medical personnel to serve the people of Mississippi.

Outcome: Ensure that the best interest of Mississippi is served by providing students with financial assistance for programs of study not offered in regularly supported Mississippi institutions.

Outcome: To manifest the belief that the continued growth and development of Mississippi requires improved levels of postsecondary educational attainment.

STRATEGY A.1.1.: Administer the state forgivable loan and repayment programs.

Output: Total number of students receiving financial aid through the forgivable loan and repayment programs

Output: Total amount of funds expended on the forgivable loan and repayment programs

Output: Total number of forgivable loan and repayment programs

Efficiency: Average student award through the state forgivable loan and repayment programs

STRATEGY A.1.2.: Administer forgivable loan programs for undergraduate teacher education, including the William Winter Teacher Forgivable Loan (WWTS) and William Winter Alternate Route Teacher Forgivable Loan (WWAR) Programs, which seek to relieve the state's teacher shortage. Both programs have been repealed. No funds are requested in future years for WWTS or WWAR.

STRATEGY A.1.3.: Administer forgivable loan programs for undergraduate teacher education, including the Critical Needs Teacher Forgivable Loan (CNTP) and Critical Needs Alternate Route Forgivable Loan (CNAR) Programs. Both programs have been repealed. No funds are requested in future years for CNTP or CNAR.

STRATEGY A.1.4.: Administer forgivable loan programs for undergraduate teacher education, including the Teacher Education Scholars Forgivable Loan Program (TES) and the Alternate Route Teacher Education Scholars Forgivable Loan (TESA) program as an expansion of the existing TES program. Both programs have been repealed. No funds are requested in future years for TES or TESA.

STRATEGY A.1.5.: Administer forgivable loan programs for undergraduate teacher education, including the Mississippi Teaching Fellows Program, created in 2014 to recruit high quality teachers into teacher prep programs in our state's colleges and universities. The program has been repealed. No funds are requested in future years.

STRATEGY A.1.6.: Administer forgivable loan programs for graduate teacher education, including the Graduate Teacher Forgivable Loan (GTS) and Counselor and School Administrator Forgivable Loan (CSA) Programs, which support classroom teachers and administrators who seek graduate level education to improve their skills and abilities, desperately needed in Mississippi's public schools. The program was created by the IHL Board, not the Legislature, thus funding is not required. Both programs will be discontinued with the other teacher loan programs that have been repealed.

STRATEGY A.1.7.: Administer forgivable loan programs for graduate teacher education, including the Critical Needs Dyslexia Therapy Teacher Forgivable Loan (CNDT), which is available to Mississippi teachers who are seeking a Class AA Educator's License with a 203 Endorsement for Dyslexia Therapy.

Output: Number of CNDT awards

Output: Amount of CNDT awards

Efficiency: Average student award through the CNDT program

Explanatory Note: Due to budget constraints, full funding hasn't been available from FY17 through FY22. SFA, under advisement from the Mississippi Postsecondary Education Financial Assistance Board (Postsecondary Board or Board), requests the Legislature target available funds to ensure full funding of the undergraduate grant programs. *Miss. Code Ann.* § 37-106-14 (2) requires the Board to award grants first and limit loans to renewal applicants only on a first-come, first-served basis with preference for renewals. Therefore, funds are not requested for future years.

STRATEGY A.1.8.: Administer forgivable loan programs for graduate teacher education, including the Southern Regional Education Board Doctoral Scholars Forgivable Loan Program (SDSP), which seeks to improve the success of minority students in Mississippi's postsecondary institutions. The program was created by the IHL Board, not the Legislature, thus funding is not required. After evaluating its effectiveness, the Office has discontinued the SDSP program.

STRATEGY A.1.9.: Administer a loan repayment program for teacher education, called the Mississippi Teacher Loan Repayment Program (MTLR), which provides funds to repay a portion of the undergraduate loans of eligible Mississippi teachers in exchange for their service or continued teaching service in Mississippi's public schools. The program has been repealed. No funds are requested in future years.

STRATEGY A.1.10.: Administer forgivable loan programs for undergraduate nursing education, including the Nursing Education Forgivable Loan Programs – Bachelor's (NELB) and RN to BSN (NELR), which assist the state's efforts to recruit and retain nurses to fill the nursing shortage.

Output: Number of NELB awards

Output: Amount of NELB awards

Output: Number of NELR awards

Output: Amount of NELR awards

Efficiency: Average student award through the NELB program

Efficiency: Average student award through the NELR program

Explanatory Note: Due to budget constraints, full funding hasn't been available from FY17 through FY22. SFA, under advisement from the Mississippi Postsecondary Education Financial Assistance Board (Postsecondary Board or Board), requests the Legislature target available funds to ensure full funding of the undergraduate grant programs. *Miss. Code Ann.* § 37-106-14 (2) requires the Board to award grants first and limit loans to renewal applicants only on a first-come, first-served basis with preference for renewals. Therefore, funds are not requested for future years.

STRATEGY A.1.11.: Administer forgivable loan programs for graduate nursing education, including the Nursing Education Forgivable Loan Programs – Masters (NELM), RN to MSN (NERM) and Ph.D./DNP (NELP), which assist the state's efforts to recruit and retain nurses to fill the nursing shortage. Master's and Ph.D. level nursing students will also have the education required to teach in nursing education programs, when current nurse educators leave the profession in mass, as anticipated over the coming years.

Output: Number of NELM awards

Output: Amount of NELM awards

Output: Number of NERM awards

Output: Amount of NERM awards

Output: Number of NELP awards

Output: Amount of NELP awards

Efficiency: Average student award through the NELM program

Efficiency: Average student award through the NERM program

Efficiency: Average student award through the NELP program

Explanatory Note: Due to budget constraints, full funding hasn't been available from FY17 through FY22. SFA, under advisement from the Mississippi Postsecondary Education Financial Assistance Board (Postsecondary Board or Board), requests the Legislature target available funds to ensure full funding of the undergraduate grant programs. *Miss. Code Ann.* § 37-106-14 (2) requires the Board to award grants first and limit loans to renewal applicants only on a first-come, first-served basis with preference for renewals. Therefore, funds are not requested for future years.

STRATEGY A.1.12.: Administer forgivable loan programs for graduate nursing education, including the Nursing Teacher Stipend Forgivable Loan Program (NTSP), which funds eligible Masters and Ph.D. level nursing students who commit to serve as nurse educators upon completion of their education.

Output: Number of NTSP awards

Output: Amount of NTSP awards

Efficiency: Average student award through the NTSP program

Explanatory Note: Due to budget constraints, full funding hasn't been available from FY17 through FY22. SFA, under advisement from the Mississippi Postsecondary Education Financial Assistance Board (Postsecondary Board or Board), requests the Legislature target available funds to ensure full funding of the undergraduate grant programs. *Miss. Code Ann.* § 37-106-14 (2) requires the Board to award grants first and limit loans to renewal applicants only on a first-come, first-served basis with preference for renewals. Therefore, funds are not requested for future years.

STRATEGY A.1.13.: Administer forgivable loan programs for graduate health-related education, including the Speech-Language Pathologist Forgivable Loan Program (SLPL), which awards master's degree students in Speech-Language Pathology, Communicative Disorders, or Communication Sciences and Disorders who plan to serve as licensed speech-language pathologists in a Mississippi public or charter school.

Output: Number of SLPL awards

Output: Amount of SLPL awards

Efficiency: Average student award through the SLPL program

Explanatory Note: Due to budget constraints, full funding hasn't been available from FY17 through FY22. SFA, under advisement from the Mississippi Postsecondary Education Financial Assistance Board (Postsecondary Board or Board), requests the Legislature target available funds to ensure full funding of the undergraduate grant programs. *Miss. Code Ann.* § 37-106-14 (2) requires the Board to award grants first and limit loans to renewal applicants only on a first-come, first-served basis with preference for renewals. Therefore, funds are not requested for future years.

STRATEGY A.1.14.: Administer forgivable loan programs for graduate health-related education, including the Southern Regional Education Board Forgivable Loan Program (SREB), which awards Mississippi students in out-of-state optometry programs contracted through the SREB Regional Contract Program.

Output: Number of SREB awards

Output: Amount of SREB awards

Efficiency: Average student award through the SREB program

Explanatory Note: Mississippi currently contracts 9 seats per entering class, for a total of 36 contract seats each year. The cost of each contract seat increases annually. *Miss. Code Ann.* § 37-106-14 (2) requires the Board to award grants first and limit loans to renewal applicants only on a first-come, first-served basis with preference for renewals. Because no other forgivable loan programs have been funded in recent years, SFA, under direction of the Postsecondary Board, requests the Legislature phase out the SREB program in order to target all available funds for the undergraduate grant programs. To phase out the program, SFA would award renewal students only. Therefore, the annual request for funds will decrease each year until funds are no longer requested after FY25.

STRATEGY A.1.15.: Administer forgivable loan programs for graduate health-related education, including the Graduate and Professional Degree Forgivable Loan Program (STSC), which places students in out-of-state programs in chiropractic, orthotic, prosthetic, or podiatric programs that are not offered in Mississippi. The 2017 Legislature stopped funding for new awards and renewal awards were anticipated through 2018-19. Funding is not requested for future years.

STRATEGY A.1.16.: Administer forgivable loan programs for graduate health-related education, including the State Medical Education Forgivable Loan (MED) and State Dental Education Forgivable Loan (DENT) Programs, which award family doctors and dentists who commit to practice in Mississippi after becoming licensed. The 2017 Legislature stopped funding for new awards and renewal awards were anticipated through 2018-19. Funding is not requested for future years.

STRATEGY A.1.17.: Administer forgivable loan programs for undergraduate and graduate health-related education, including the Health Care Professions Forgivable Loan Program (HCP), which provides funds to students who agree to work in speech, physical, or occupational therapy at the state's hospitals and medical facilities. The 2017 Legislature stopped funding for new awards, and renewal awards were anticipated through 2017-18. Funding is not requested for future years.

STRATEGY A.1.18.: Administer forgivable loan programs for graduate health-related education, including the Veterinary Medicine Minority Forgivable Loan Program (VMMP), which awards minorities who commit to practice veterinary medicine in Mississippi after becoming licensed. The program was created by the IHL Board, not the Legislature, thus funding is not required and is not requested for future years.

STRATEGY A.1.19.: Administer other forgivable loan programs for undergraduate and graduate education, including the Family Protection Specialist Social Worker Forgivable Loan Program (SWOR), which makes awards to Department of Human Services employees who commit to work as Family Protection Specialists for three years after becoming licensed social workers. The 2017 Legislature stopped funding for new awards, and there are currently no renewal applicants on the program. Funding is not requested for future years.

STRATEGY A.1.20.: Administer a loan repayment program for teacher education, called the William F. Winter – Jack Reed, Sr. Teacher Loan Repayment Program (WRTR), which provides funds to repay a portion of the undergraduate loans of eligible Mississippi teachers in exchange for their service or continued teaching service in Mississippi's public schools. The program was established by the 2021 Legislature. 150 teachers were funded in FY22. Funds are requested to fund an additional 150 teachers as well as renewal teachers each year.

Output: Number of WRTR awards

Output: Amount of WRTR awards

Efficiency: Average award through the WRTR program

BUDGET PROGRAM 4: Other Programs

GOAL A: To improve college access and affordability for students with special circumstances and interests.

OBJECTIVE A.1.: Make financial aid awards to students who qualify for one of the state's other programs.

Outcome: To manifest the belief that the continued growth and development of Mississippi requires improved levels of postsecondary educational attainment.

STRATEGY A.1.1.: Administer the state's other programs.

Output: Total number of students receiving financial aid through other programs

Output: Total amount of funds expended on the other programs

Output: Total number of programs

Efficiency: Average student award through the other state programs

STRATEGY A.1.2.: Administer other programs for graduate education, such as the Public Management Graduate Internship Program (PMGT), which provides internships in public management in the state. The 2017 Legislature stopped funding for new awards. Funding is not requested for future years.

STRATEGY A.1.3.: Administer other programs for undergraduate education, including the Law Enforcement Officers and Firemen Scholarship Program (LAW), which provides education to the dependents of deceased or disabled service men and women.

Output: Number of LAW awards

Output: Amount of LAW awards

Efficiency: Average student award through the LAW program

Explanatory Note: A slight increase in award cost is anticipated in future years as tuition costs increase.

STRATEGY A.1.4.: Administer other programs for undergraduate education, including the GEAR UP Scholarship Program (GUMS), which provides scholarships to Mississippi students who participated in the state GEAR UP program during the 7th through 12th grades. FY 2018 represented the fourth and final year of awards to the second cohort of GEAR UP students. Awards were made from investment dollars set aside for this purpose, and funding is not requested for future years.

STRATEGY A.1.5.: Administer other programs for undergraduate education, including the Nissan Scholarship Program (NISS), which provides aid to students at public institutions who major in a field that will advance the automotive industry in Mississippi.

Output: Number of NISS awards

Output: Amount of NISS awards

Efficiency: Average student award through the NISS program

Explanatory Note: Awards are made from investment dollars set aside for this purpose. Costs are expected to remain around the same amount each year.

Item 3A: Ms. Rogers presented a proposal to update APA Part 605 General Administration Rules and Regulations, Section I.C.3.b) to update the requirements and process for evaluating homeschool transcripts. The Board discussed the matter and changed the word “other” in the final sentence of the new section to “course-related”. On motion by Ms. Marascalco, seconded by Ms. Braswell, all Board Members legally present and participating voted unanimously to approve the proposed rule update with the updated wording, contingent upon completion of the Administrative Procedures Act process.

3. Approve Updates to APA Part 605 General Administration Rules and Regulations:

A. Section I.C.3.b). to Update Requirements and Process for Evaluating Homeschool Transcripts.

Summary:
Applicants for the HELP Grant are required to take a specific high school curriculum. For most students, the high school counselor certifies completion of the curriculum. Some students, including homeschool students, do not have counselors who are authorized to certify the curriculum. These students must submit a high school transcript, which the Office evaluates for eligibility. Over the past several years, we have experienced a surge of homeschool students who submit altered transcripts after their initial transcript has been evaluated and their HELP application has been denied. The altered transcripts reveal additional courses or courses with different names that allow the student to qualify for the HELP Grant. In September 2019, the Office requested and received approval to update the General Administration Rules and Regulations to address this problem. The updated rules required that the official high school transcript *must* include all courses attempted, completed or in progress and to clarify that *only one* final homeschool transcript would be accepted.

Recently, issues have arisen:

1. The current rules do not allow a homeschool student to report a higher GPA if the student's GPA improves during the final semester.

2. The current rule has been challenged because no definition is offered for the phrase "final transcript."

The Office requests the Board keep the policy of accepting only one transcript for the purpose of course evaluation for the HELP Core Curriculum but alter the policy as follows to allow homeschool students to submit an updated GPA. The proposed language eliminates the reference to a "final" transcript and clarifies that the signed and notarized transcript should include all courses the student has taken or will take. The language also gives the Office the flexibility to accept a second transcript should the student's GPA increase while not requiring additional evaluation of coursework.

I. APPLICATION PROCESS

C. The following supporting documents may be requested to complete an application for state student financial aid. The documents are grouped according to the purpose for which they are requested.

3. Merit Documentation - The Office will collect documents to determine a student's academic or merit eligibility for state student financial aid.

b) Official High School Transcript - The official high school transcript must include all courses attempted, completed, ~~or~~ in progress, or to be completed; the GPA on a 4.0 scale; and the ACT/SAT score if available. A homeschool transcript must be signed and notarized. By submitting a signed and notarized transcript, applicants certify the transcript includes a complete and accurate list of the courses attempted, completed, in progress, or to be completed. A subsequent signed and notarized transcript may be submitted to report an improved GPA, but no ~~other~~course-related changes on the subsequent transcript will be considered. ~~Only one final homeschool transcript will be accepted and evaluated by the Office~~.

Recommendation:
Board approval is recommended, contingent upon completion of the Administrative Procedures Act process.

Item 3B: Ms. Rogers presented a proposal to update APA Part 605 General Administration Rules and Regulations, Sections II.B. and II.C. to update the process for determining initial and continuing eligibility. On motion by Ms. Ross, seconded by Ms. Marascalco, all Board Members legally present and participating voted unanimously to approve the proposed rule update, contingent upon completion of the Administrative Procedures Act process.

3. Approve Updates to APA Part 605 General Administration Rules and Regulations:

A. Section II.B and II.C to Update the Process for Determining Initial and Continuing Eligibility.

Summary:
The Office of Student Financial Aid has a process for determining an applicant's eligibility for aid. However, the process outlined in the General Administration Rules and Regulation does not currently align with practice. The written process indicates that supporting documents are evaluated after a program's deadline date, but supporting documents are evaluated fully as they are received. This practice has been in place and is not new.

The Office requests the Board approve the following changes to align the written policy with the policy in practice.

II. DETERMINING ELIGIBILITY

B. Process for Determining Initial Eligibility

To determine a student's eligibility for state student financial aid, the Office may consider a student's residency status, academic standing, enrollment status, licensure status, financial need, and preparation for the program. Below is the process the Office will follow:

1. The Office will receive a student's online application.

2. The Office will notify the student of documents needed for determining initial eligibility.

3. The Office will collect the documents requested.

4. A Program Administrator will evaluate documents as they are submitted and update the student's account with information obtained from the documents (i.e. GPA, HELP core curriculum, residency, etc.), the date the document was received, and ~~with~~ a code ~~as~~ to signify whether the document satisfies the request.

5. After the deadline for the submission of documents, all student accounts will be reviewed electronically.

6. Students, whose accounts show missing or outstanding documents, will be considered ineligible.

7. Students, whose accounts show no missing or outstanding documents, will advance for further electronic evaluation.

8. For advancing students, ~~documents will be~~ information obtained from the Mississippi Aid Application and previously evaluated supporting documents will be reviewed electronically to determine if the student meets the eligibility requirements of the appropriate program.

9. Students who meet all eligibility requirements will be awarded aid, as long as money is available for making awards.

10. Students who do not meet all eligibility requirements will receive notice regarding which eligibility requirement has not been made.

11. No student should receive undergraduate grant aid through more than one state-supported undergraduate grant program in the same term of enrollment. If a student is eligible for aid through multiple grant programs, the student shall be awarded from the program that awards the larger sum.

12. No student shall receive undergraduate grant aid from any program or any combination of programs for more than eight semesters or twelve trimesters.

C. Process for Determining Continuing Eligibility

To determine a student's continuing eligibility for state student financial aid, the Office may consider a student's residency status, academic standing, enrollment status, licensure status, financial need, and preparation for the program. Below is the process the Office will follow:

1. The Office will receive a student's online application.

2. The Office will notify the student of documents needed for determining continuing eligibility.

3. The Office will collect the documents requested.

4. A Program Administrator will evaluate documents as they are submitted and update the student's account with information obtained from the documents (i.e. GPA, HELP core curriculum, residency, etc.), the date the document was received, and ~~with~~ a code ~~as~~ to signify whether the document satisfies the request.

5. After the deadline for the submission of documents, all student accounts will be reviewed electronically.

6. Students, whose accounts show missing or outstanding documents, will be considered ineligible.

7. Students, whose accounts show no missing or outstanding documents, will advance for further electronic evaluation.

8. For advancing students, ~~documents will be~~ information obtained from the Mississippi Aid Application and previously evaluated supporting documents will be reviewed electronically to determine if the student meets the eligibility requirements of the appropriate program.

9. Students who meet all eligibility requirements will be awarded aid, as long as money is available for making awards.

10. Students who do not meet all eligibility requirements will receive notice regarding which eligibility requirement has not been made.

11. No student should receive undergraduate grant aid through more than one state-supported undergraduate grant program in the same term of enrollment. If a student is eligible for aid through multiple grant programs, the student shall be awarded from the program that awards the larger sum.

12. No student shall receive undergraduate grant aid from any program or any combination of programs for more than eight semesters or twelve trimesters.

Recommendation:
Board approval is recommended, contingent upon completion of the Administrative Procedures Act process.

Item 4: The following updates and announcements were made:

- Dr. Steven Cunningham was introduced and welcomed to the Board. Dr. Cunningham is the IHL Board Representative, appointed to complete the term vacated by Ms. Ann Lamar when her term on the IHL Board concluded.

- The Advisory Committee continues their work to recommend changes to the state grant programs. The committee hope to be prepared to present their recommendations within a month. A Doodle poll will be circulated to determine a meeting time when the committee is ready to present.

- A separate Doodle poll will be circulated to determine the best date/time for the September Board meeting.

4. Updates and Announcements

ADDITIONAL AGENDA ITEMS IF NECESSARY

The Board did not consider any additional agenda items.

EXECUTIVE SESSION IF DETERMINED NECESSARY

The Board did not consider the need the enter Executive Session.

MINUTES

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board, Dr. Turcotte declared the meeting adjourned.

Jennifer Rogers

Director, Mississippi Postsecondary Education Financial Assistance Board

ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

1. Approve Update to Disbursement Policy in APA Part 605: General Administration Rules and Regulations

Summary:

The current disbursement policy outlined in the General Administration Rules and Regulations states that "funds are considered to be disbursed to the student at the point at which the institution makes the funds unconditionally available to the student for use in payment of tuition, fees, or other eligible costs of attendance". The rules go on to state that funds do not have to be returned to the state if a student's enrollment changes *after* the funds are disbursed.

All institutions are required to submit enrollment files to the state aid office immediately following the final add/drop date at the beginning of the term. SFA does not send money to the institutions on behalf of eligible students until after receiving the enrollment file. SFA then sends funds based on a student's actual enrollment as reported in the enrollment file. Most institutions wait for SFA to process the enrollment file and send funds before "disbursing" funds to the student. These institutions will simply waive a portion of tuition or fees in anticipation of receiving state aid. Despite not being the norm, it is perfectly allowable for an institution to advance payment to the student using the institution's own funds, thereby "disbursing" funds to the student before SFA sends the funds to the institution.

A problem occurs when an institution pays the student in advance, but then the student stops out or drops below full-time enrollment before SFA sends funds. According to the rules as currently written, in such a situation, the student is entitled to keep the funds because the funds were "disbursed" to the student before the student's enrollment changed. This is a loophole. The reason SFA processes enrollment files before sending funds is to ensure that SFA is only disbursing state aid to students who are currently enrolled and meeting the program requirements.

Request

The Office requests approval to update the rule to clarify that no funds may be considered "disbursed to the student" prior to receipt of enrollment verification. Below is an excerpt from the General Administration Rules and Regulations with the proposed update tracked.

Title 10: Education Institutions and Agencies

Part 605: General Administration Rules and Regulations

Part 605 Chapter 1: General Administration Rules and Regulations

Rule 1.1 General Administration Rules and Regulations.

IV. DISBURSEMENT PROCESS

State financial aid funds will be disbursed directly to the approved institution on behalf of the eligible student. Money will never be disbursed directly to the student.

A. Enrollment Verification - No state financial aid funds will be disbursed until the Office receives verification of enrollment. Each approved institution will submit an Enrollment Verification Report after the final add/drop date at the beginning of each term. The Office will process the Enrollment Verification Reports in the order in which they are received.

B. Requesting Funds - After the Office has processed the Enrollment Verification Report, the Office requests that funds be disbursed to the institution for eligible students with confirmed enrollment.

C. Transferring Funds to the Institution - State financial aid funds will be transferred to the institution by check or electronic funds transfer. After funds are requested, the transfer of funds may take as long as 14-21 days. Once the funds have been transferred to the institution, the institution will be responsible for crediting each student’s account with the correct award amount.

D. Disbursing Funds to the Student - Funds are considered to be disbursed to the student at the point at which the institution makes the funds unconditionally available to the student for use in payment of tuition, fees, or other eligible costs of attendance. Funds are considered to be disbursed to the student if the institution uses its own funds to advance payment of the funds and later requests the Board for reimbursement. Funds are not considered to be disbursed if the institution merely waives payment of costs pending receipt of payment from the Office. In no case are funds considered to be disbursed to the student before the Office receives verification of enrollment.

E. Returning Funds to the State - If a student, who is required to maintain continuous full-time enrollment for continued eligibility, withdraws or drops to below full-time status before state financial aid funds are disbursed to the student, the institution should return the funds to the state. The student will not be eligible for state financial aid for the subsequent term since he/she did not maintain continuous full-time enrollment. If a student, who is required to maintain continuous full-time enrollment for continued eligibility, withdraws or drops to below full-time status after state financial aid funds are disbursed to the student, the student may keep the funds. However, the student will not be eligible for state financial aid for the subsequent term since he/she did not maintain continuous full-time enrollment.

Recommendation: Board staff recommends approval of this item.

ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

2. Selection of Chairperson for 2021-22

Summary:
According to APA Part 601, Chapter 2, Rule 2.1, Section III, the board shall elect from its membership a chairman. Dr. Jim Turcotte was elected as chairman in September 2020. The Board should elect a chairperson to serve during 2021-2022 academic/aid year. The rules allow a chairperson to serve consecutive terms.

3. Updates and Announcements

STRATEGIC PLANNING DISCUSSION

1. Approve February 15, 2021 Strategic Planning Committee Meeting Minutes

BE IT REMEMBERED, that the Mississippi Postsecondary Education Financial Assistance Board held a strategic planning meeting on Monday, February 15, 2021 at 1:00 p.m. Due to recommendations from the Mississippi State Department of Health for social distancing due to the coronavirus, members of the Board participated in the meeting remotely via Zoom or teleconference. Members of the media and public were invited to attend the meeting in Room 218 of the Education and Research Center, 3825 Ridgewood Road, Jackson, Mississippi, 39211 or via teleconference or Zoom.

The following member(s) participated via Zoom or teleconference:

- Debbi Braswell, MAICU appointee
- Ben Burnett, MAICU appointee
- Barney Daly, Lt. Governor's appointee
- Tyrone Jackson, MCCB Institutional appointee
- Mark Keenum, IHL Institutional appointee
- Ann Lamar, IHL Board appointee
- Dolly Marascalco, MCCB appointee
- Sharon Ross, Governor's appointee
- Jim Turcotte, Governor's appointee and Chairman

The following member(s) did not participate:

- Rep. Mac Huddleston, Advisory Member, Chairman, House Universities and Colleges Committee
- Sen. Rita Parks, Advisory Member, Chairman, Senate Universities and Colleges Committee

Also in attendance remotely were:

- Terry Bland, Advisory Committee of Aid Directors, Itawamba Community College
- Garry Jones, Advisory Committee of Aid Directors, East MS Community College
- Nicole Patrick, Advisory Committee of Aid Directors, MS University for Women
- Letherio Ziegler, Advisory Committee of Aid Directors, MS Valley State University
- David Williamson, Advisory Committee of Aid Directors, University of Southern MS
- Laura Diven-Brown, Advisory Committee of Aid Directors, University of MS
- Paul McKinney, Advisory Committee of Aid Directors, MS State University
- Isabelle Higbee, Advisory Committee of Aid Directors, Millsaps
- Kim Gallaspy, Asst. Commissioner for Government Relations, IHL
- Meg Harris, Assistant Director of Operations, Student Financial Aid
- Andrea Mayfield, Executive Director, MCCB
- Molly Minta, Reporter, *Mississippi Today*
- Jennifer Rogers, Director of Student Financial Aid and Postsecondary Director
- Apryll Washington, Assistant Director of Policy and Planning, Student Financial Aid

STRATEGIC PLANNING DISCUSSION

Item 1: The meeting was called to order by Chairman Turcotte.

Item 2: The following individuals serve as directors of financial aid for their respective institutions. These individuals were invited by Chairman Turcotte to serve as an ad-hoc advisory committee to assist the Board in developing a recommendation for redesigning the state's aid programs:

- Terry Bland, Itawamba Community College
- Garry Jones, East Mississippi Community College
- Nicole Patrick, Mississippi University for Women
- Letherio Ziegler, Mississippi Valley State University
- David Williamson, University of Southern Mississippi
- Laura Diven-Brown, University of Mississippi
- Paul McKinney, Mississippi State University
- Isabelle Higbee, Millsaps College

Item 3: On motion by Ms. Braswell and seconded by Dr. Keenum, all Board Members legally present and participating voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the third Strategic Planning Committee meeting held on December 17, 2020 as originally drafted.

Item 4: Ms. Rogers updated the Board about ACT Superscores. The Board voted in summer 2020 to accept ACT Superscores for state aid for eligibility, and the decision increased the SFA FY22 budget request by about $4.1 million. Since then, ACT has delayed publication of ACT Superscores. Because the Board's policy is to accept only "official" ACT Superscores published by ACT, the Office has no way to accept the Superscores. In addition, the Legislature has responded to the Board's decision to accept Superscores by proposing Legislation to take the decision out of the Board's hands. Senator Briggs Hopson, Chairman of Appropriations, introduced SB 2547, which passed through the Senate, to raise the ACT score for MTAG from 15 to 17 and for MESG from 29 to 30. The ACT score required for HELP would remain at 20 but must come from a single test administration. It would be very difficult to administer programs if Superscores could be accepted for some programs but not for others. Since Superscores are not available and the Legislature has expressed dissatisfaction over the Board's decision to accept Superscores, does the Board wish to consider rolling back the decision?

Daly: Is there any reason why we can't wait to see if the scores become available or the Senate bill passes?

Rogers: The Board can wait or act now.

Turcotte: The Board felt the country was moving in the direction of accepting Superscores and MS would be out of sync if we didn't.

Marascalco: I am not in favor of this decision to accept Superscores, because we can't afford it.

Keenum: The IHL Board has already voted to accept and embrace Superscores, so a decision not to accept Superscores would put us out of sync with IHL.

STRATEGIC PLANNING DISCUSSION

Mayfield: Yes, MCCB and IHL are accepting Superscores for admissions and placement purposes, but the Board needs to consider this from a wholistic standpoint. The state cannot afford to accept the Superscores due to the budget pressure.

Jackson: The community college presidents have taken the position to support not using Superscores for state aid because of the budget.

Rogers: If we leave the decision in place, but we don't get Superscores until very late in the year, that creates a lot of confusion for students and creates administrative upheaval.

Turcotte: I think if we move forward with the One Grant proposal, we can recommend something that fits into the budget even with Superscores.

Rogers: Agreed, but that doesn't solve the problem for the current year.

Keenum: Will it change how you award if you get Superscores or don't get Superscores?

Rogers: No, we will either use the highest score or the Superscores, whichever we have available at the time we start to make awards. And we have budgeted for Superscores in our request, should they become available.

Marascalco: We can't count on the Legislature for fully funding the request.

Turcotte: Whether we do it now or later, everyone will go to Superscores. Everyone in the country is going to Superscores and we will be left behind if we do not. I think we should move on to discuss a new program design instead of this Superscore question.

Braswell: Is it possible to accept the Superscores to the extent they are available?

Rogers: That is where we are now, because the policy is very clear that we will not be calculating scores.

Braswell: I agree with Turcotte that Mississippi will be left behind if we don't accept Superscores.

Mayfield: But what if the Legislature doesn't fund the additional cost of the Superscores?

Turcotte: We will prorate and we certainly don't want to do that.

Keenum: Hate to turn back on the decision after a few months just because we are now concerned about the impact on the budget. That is something we considered when the original decision was made and the potential cost was built into the budget. I propose we table the conversation and move forward with our strategic planning conversation.

Rogers: We do not need a motion for staying the course. A motion is only needed if we are to reverse the decision.

Turcotte: Does anyone wish to propose a motion?

Jackson: I move that the Board reverse the decision to accept Superscores for state aid eligibility and revisit for FY23.

Marascalco: I was not on the Board when the original decision was made, so I feel torn about seconding the motion.

Turcotte: Hearing no second, we will move forward.

Ross: I probably should have asked this earlier, but if the country is embracing Superscores, how is everyone else addressing this problem?

Rogers: Remember there is a difference between accepting Superscores for admission and placement and accepting Superscores for scholarships and state aid. Although many local institutions have chosen to accept Superscores for admissions, they will have to choose separately to accept Superscores for Institutional scholarships, and they will always have the ability to raise the scores they award. As a state, we don't have any flexibility. Also, remember that most states, aside from some Southern states, do not award state aid on the basis of merit. They do not use ACT scores in their determination of who receives aid, so this is of no consequence. Some states also are SAT states, not ACT states. If a state uses ACT scores to determine aid eligibility, they are in the same situation as we are in and will have to make a determination about accepting or not accepting Superscores for state aid purposes. Using ACT scores for aid determination, however, is not the norm nationally. But, no, ACT is not publishing Superscores for anyone at this time. Some institutions may be choosing to calculate their own Superscores.

Item 5: Dr. Turcotte introduces the idea of developing a proposal for "one grant," using the model developed in 2018 as a starting point for development. He outlined three assumptions for consideration: 1) Any new proposal should not be expected to exceed the cost of the existing programs; 2) The programs provide the greatest possible access for the most students; and 3) The proposal blends need and merit. Dr. Turcotte invites comments:

Keenum: Like the idea of marrying need and merit. The 2018 proposal seemed too heavily focused on need.
Daly: Has the "one grant" been used in other states? Will it be phased in?
Turcotte: We would prefer to do everything at once, but will have to work with the Legislature on that.
Rogers: There are no two grant programs in any two states that are exactly alike, but the 2018 proposal was loosely based on a new "performance-based" scholarship that came out of Indiana's recent state aid redesign.
Diven-Brown: One-grant model appeals for its simplicity and transparency. We realized three years ago that we are trying to serve many competing interests. Because of the high level of need in the state, we did think it was important to build in a need component. We also discussed the desire to serve the large and ever-growing nontraditional population in the state that has never been served before. Is that population still a priority?
Turcotte: The Board has not fully discussed who fits where in the priority order, but, yes, they are important.
Higbee: The goal in 2018 and now should be simplification. The difficulty comes in trying to serve three very different populations between the publics, privates, and two-years. The current grid looks complicated but is actually pretty straightforward. More than anything, it would need marketing,
McKinney: The 2018 proposal does probably need some work, but one good thing about it is that it removed the merit and income cliffs. We really need to smooth out those cliffs.
Braswell: During the 2018 meeting, we kept the Legislative purpose of state aid in mind as the mission. That purpose to provide affordable access to as many Mississippi students as possible. That is why we were so focused on those cliffs. But it may

cost more money if we want to touch more lives. We will have to weigh that tradeoff.

Turcotte: I would like to charge the advisory committee of financial aid directors to go work on a proposal without our interference.

Williamson: The 2018 model is a good starting point, but it definitely needs to be simplified. Agree with Mayfield that we may need caps on HELP or any need-based aid program. Plugged USM population into 2018 model and would be able to award more students, even though some students may receive less aid.

Rogers: In the 2018 model, we plugged in actual state aid recipients and applicants. Nearly every institution would have received more money, even if the money was going to different students. My biggest question at this time is how important to the Board is the consideration of part-time students.

Keenum: My priority would be full-time students, but I think the answer will likely be driven by the budget. I would like the advisory committee to come back to the Board to tell us how much a "one grant" plan would cost for the existing population and how much to add in additional populations, such as part-time.

Marascalco: I think we definitely do need to consider part-time students and not put them at the bottom of the priority list. We need to consider working parents and others who need to work while they are in school.

Rogers: Patrick posted a question for the Board about whether there are other priorities of the Board that the committee needs to be aware of? In response, just keep in mind that the Board is very aware of the cliffs for both need and merit. A HELP student receives a tremendously generous award, but someone making just $1 over the income threshold may only qualify for a $500 MTAG award. HELP award may be too high and escalates exponentially due to the number of qualifiers and the increasing cost of tuition.

Keenum: Consider asking the Legislature to somehow index the value of the awards, so that the awards maintain purchasing power, but the total cost doesn't escalate too quickly. Appropriations would grow, but in a measured way over time.

Braswell: I don't think we need to expect the SFA appropriation to stay the same and expect to serve ever more students. Can we ask for more money if we are serving more students over time?

Turcotte: Yes, we should ask for what we need to serve the most students as effectively as possible.

Item 6: Dr. Turcotte asked the advisory committee of financial aid directors to meet separately to discuss recommendations, considering the following priorities and assumptions: 1) maintain roughly the same budget; 2) serve as many students as possible; 3) maintain a blend of need and merit; 4) smooth the cliffs; 5) determine the costs of serving both full-time and part-time learners. Once the committee has some data and recommendations, they will bring those back before the full Board.

Marascalco: Is there something we or the Legislature can do to stop students from getting their state aid and never going to class? The money should be paid directly to the school and only given to students if they are actually going to school.

STRATEGIC PLANNING DISCUSSION

Rogers: First, all financial aid, both federal and state, is paid directly to the school. After the student's direct expenses (tuition, room, board, etc.) are paid, if there is money left over, the school will write a check to the student in the form of a refund that can be used on other educational expenses. But aid jumping, as you're describing, does not happen with state aid. State aid is disbursed only after the add/drop period concludes, so we know for a fact the student is actually enrolled and attending classes. The student must also enroll in and complete 15 hours and maintain a specific GPA, which we check every semester. So, even if a student receives aid for one semester and then drops out, they cannot get aid again without first re-establishing full-time, continuous enrollment (i.e. enroll without the benefit of aid for at least one semester) and pull up the GPA before regaining aid eligibility.

McKinney: The federal government cracked down on "Pell-jumpers" several years ago. Just as with state aid, we work very hard to crack down on fraud.

Jones: With the pandemic, we are able to adjust incomes that have been reduced due to job-loss. We may end up seeing more students qualify for HELP over the next couple of years, because of those income changes. We need to be ready for that.

Bland: We are going to have to balance the difference in expenses between two-years and four-years. That is why we had the two tiers in the matrix.

Higbee: Any time you have an aid system, you will have those that abuse the system, but for the most part, most Mississippi students use the aid as it was designed.

Diven-Brown: What defines merit?

Turcotte: We'd like the committee to make a recommendation about how we *should* define merit.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the Board, Dr. Turcotte declared the meeting adjourned.

Jennifer Rogers

Director, Mississippi Postsecondary Education Financial Assistance Board

2. Strategic Planning Advisory Committee Presentation

3. Discussion and Next Steps