

MISSISSIPPI POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE BOARD



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

May 7, 2025, at 2:30 p.m.

Teleconference: 1-888-822-7517, Access code: 2791682#

Zoom: <https://itsmsgov.zoom.us/j/85978561520?pwd=2E1kNnSI5uZibEABb4OcZvg2NzDab.1>

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ADJOURNMENT

MINUTES

BE IT REMEMBERED, that the Mississippi Postsecondary Education Financial Assistance Board held a regular meeting on Tuesday, January 14, 2025 at 10:30 a.m. Members of the Board participated in the meeting remotely via Zoom or teleconference. Due to an unforeseen power outage in the IHL Executive Office building, members of the media and public were also invited to attend the meeting remotely via Zoom or teleconference.

The following member(s) participated:

- Ben Burnett, MAICU institutional appointee (remote)
- Barney Daly, Lt. Governor's appointee (remote)
- Jason Dean, MAICU association appointee (remote)
- Dewayne Middleton, MCCB institutional appointee
- Sue Stedman, Governor's appointee (remote)
- Jim Turcotte, Governor's appointee and Chairman (remote)
- Dianne Watson, MCCB Board appointee (remote)

The following member(s) did not participate:

- Steven Cunningham, IHL Board appointee
- Mark Keenum, IHL institutional appointee

The following Advisory Board member(s) did not participate:

- Senator Nicole Boyd, Universities and Colleges Committee Chair
- Representative Donnie Scoggin, Universities and Colleges Committee Chair

Also in attendance either in person or remotely were:

- Jennifer Rogers, Director of Student Financial Aid and Postsecondary Board Director
- Meg Harris, Assistant Director of Operations, Student Financial Aid
- Shirley Mitchell, Program Administrator, Student Financial Aid
- Adele Russell, Program and Office Administrator, Student Financial Aid
- Frances West, Program Administrator, Student Financial Aid
- Lori Ball, Director of Financial Aid, Mississippi State University
- Heather Dearman, Director of Financial Aid, Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College
- Marie Roberts, Woodward Hines Education Foundation
- Melissa Temple, Director of Nursing, IHL

The meeting was called to order at 10:30 a.m. by Chairman Turcotte.

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On motion by Ben Burnett and seconded by Dewayne Middleton, all Board Members legally present and participating voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the board meeting held on September 27, 2024, as originally drafted.

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ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

Item 1: Jennifer Rogers presented the 2024 Annual Report of the State-Supported Student Financial Aid Programs for review and approval. On motion by Barney Daly and seconded by Dianne Watson all Board Members legally present and participating voted unanimously to approve the 2024 Annual Report for submission to the Legislature.

1. Review and Approve the 2024 Annual Report of the State-Supported Student Financial Aid Programs for Submission to the Mississippi Legislature

Summary:

The 2024 Annual Report is submitted under separate cover as Exhibit 1. Some highlights of the report include the following:

Awards (p. 7):

- 32,678 state-supported awards (up 6,355 or 24.1%), totaling \$52.9 million (up about \$2.64 million or 5.3%) – increase due primarily to Dual Enrollment/Dual Credit Scholarship (DEDC)
- 32,262 individual recipients (up 6,460 students or 25%)
- \$1,619 average award amount (down \$291 or 15.2%) – decrease due primarily to low DEDC award amounts

Recipients (pp. 8-9):

- 32,262 individual recipients
- Every county represented
- 89% Dependent; 10% Independent
- 39% Male; 61% Female
- 96% aged 12-24
- 24% self-identify as African American; 67% as Caucasian; 9% other
- Income breakdown for dependent students:
 - 19% below \$40K; 25% below \$80K; 56% over \$80K (35% between \$100-\$250K)
- Income breakdown for independent students:
 - 54% earn below \$10K; 12% below \$20K; 34% over \$20K

Appropriation/Budget/Expenses (pp. 10-11):

- Governmental Appropriations totaled \$65.57 million (up \$11.9 million or 22.26%)
 - \$50.65 million appropriated in General Funds (up \$18K)
 - \$9.8 million additional General Funds for DEDC
 - \$5.1 million new and reappropriated Education Enhancement Funds (EEF) (up \$2.1 million to fund new FAITH Scholarship)
- Special Fund Support totaled \$1.74 million (down \$4.76 million or 73.23%)
- Other Appropriations totaled \$6 million to fund the Nurse Retention Loan Repayment Program (NULR)
- \$73.3 million total appropriation and operating budget
- \$54.9 million total expended (expenses)
 - \$52.9 million on current year awards
 - \$766K on prior year awards

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- \$1.42 million on administration (1.9% of budget; 2.5% of expenses)
 - \$787K salaries/benefits
 - \$5K travel
 - \$506K contractual services (\$253K to IHL, remaining \$253K to application, website, cybersecurity, ECSI, etc.)
 - \$35K commodities
 - \$88K capital outlay
- \$19 million balance
 - \$9.6 million reappropriated in FY 2025 (unspent EEF funds, unspent Special Funds, unspent ARPA funds for NULR)
 - \$1.7 million General Fund balance available for reappropriation in FY 2026
 - \$7.7 million DEDC General Funds lapsed and returned to State

Breakdown of Awards by Institution and Type (pp. 12-13):

- 4-Year Publics: 46% of awards, 71% of funds
- 2-Year Publics: 45% of awards, 18% of funds
- Privates: 8% of awards, 8% of funds
- Grants: 99% of awards; 96.4% of funds
- Undergraduate: 99% of awards; 96.4% of funds

Charts of Awards and Amounts by Program Over Time (pp. 14-17)

Loan Repayment (pp. 18-22)

- 2,023 accounts under management
 - 16% accounts in school/grace/deferment
 - 2% current service
 - 2% current money
 - 76% default (delinquent or in collections)
 - 4% closed current year
 - \$19.2 million principal balance outstanding
- \$713K net collections
 - \$821K collected
 - \$108K cost to service loans
- 5% overall default rate on accounts in tracked cohorts

Detailed program pages:

- Undergraduate grant programs
- Loan repayment programs
- Forgivable loan programs
 - Undergraduate
 - Graduate
 - Inactive (accounts not tracked by cohort for default rates)

Request:

The Office requests approval to submit the 2024 Annual Report of State-Supported Student Financial Aid Programs to the Legislature.

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Item 2: Jennifer Rogers asked the Board to consider changing the definition of full-time for state aid eligibility from 15 credit hours per term to 12 credit hours per term as it was prior to 2016. On motion by Barney Daly, seconded by Ben Burnett, all Board Members legally present and participating voted unanimously to revert to the original policy of defining full-time enrollment for the purpose of receiving state aid as 12 credit hours per term. The policy change will be effective beginning with the 2025-2026 academic year. All relevant rules will be updated accordingly during the Board's April 2025 meeting.

2. Consider Changing the Definition of Full-Time for State Aid from 15 Credit Hours to 12 Credit Hours

Summary:

In June 2016, the Board voted to change the definition of full-time from 12 credit hours to 15 credit hours per term for purposes of receiving state aid. The change was prompted in part by a \$10 million budget deficit for the 2016-2017 academic year. The change also coincided with a statewide and national push for students to "Take 15" and "Finish in Four". The Office has been asked to provide data to inform a discussion about reverting to the standard definition of full-time as 12 credit hours.

For federal aid eligibility, full-time is defined as 12 credit hours per semester, so the alternate state aid eligibility requirement often creates confusion and establishes differing standards. Since changing the definition, many more students are taking dual enrollment and dual credit courses in high school. Such courses allow students to take fewer courses each term and still complete a degree "on time" in the standard two- or four-year time frame. Heavy course load requirements can also discourage students from pursuing high demand STEM majors that often require students to take multiple science, mathematics, and engineering courses in a single term.

IPEDS data is not yet available to determine what impact the 15-credit requirement has had on 6-year graduation rates. The most recent IPEDS data is for 2022, but the Board's credit-hour rule wasn't implemented until the 2016-17 aid year. The first year of data would be 2024.

The anticipated cost of changing the definition would be approximately \$2.5 million annually, per the chart below.

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	Cancelled Less than Full-time				Cancelled Continuous Full-Time		Total	
Fund	Count	Amount	Count	Amount	Count	Amount	Count	Amount
	Fall 2023		Spring 2024		Spring 2024		AY 2023-24	
HELP	45	\$148,036	81	\$ 274,390	187	\$ 741,528	313	\$ 1,163,954
MESG	27	\$ 33,750	66	\$ 82,500	35	\$ 43,750	128	\$ 160,000
MTAG	864	\$318,124	1,424	\$ 525,075	893	\$ 293,225	3,181	\$ 1,136,424
All	936	\$499,910	1,571	\$ 881,965	1,115	\$1,078,503	3,622	\$ 2,460,378
	Fall 2022		Spring 2023		Spring 2023		AY 2022-23	
HELP	55	\$155,205	93	\$ 294,438	188	\$ 697,300	336	\$ 1,146,943
MESG	40	\$ 50,000	74	\$ 92,500	78	\$ 97,500	192	\$ 240,000
MTAG	1,038	\$372,575	1,531	\$ 554,150	961	\$ 324,500	3,530	\$ 1,251,225
All	1,133	\$577,780	1,698	\$ 941,088	1,227	\$1,119,300	4,058	\$ 2,638,168
	Fall 2021		Spring 2022		Spring 2022		AY 2021-22	
HELP	40	\$121,985	64	\$ 213,884	214	\$ 830,647	318	\$ 1,166,516
MESG	36	\$ 45,000	73	\$ 91,250	61	\$ 76,250	170	\$ 212,500
MTAG	887	\$323,825	1,399	\$ 513,525	1,003	\$ 328,550	3,289	\$ 1,165,900
All	963	\$490,810	1,536	\$ 818,659	1,278	\$1,235,447	3,777	\$ 2,544,916

Recommendation:

Board staff provides the information for consideration and discussion but makes no recommendation at this time.

Item 3: Jennifer Rogers presented a request for the Board to revise the FY 2026 Budget Request. Two possible budget revisions were presented, Budget A and Budget B. On motion by Ben Burnett, seconded by Dewayne Middleton, all Board Members legally present and participating voted unanimously to approve Budget B.

3. **Revise the FY 2026 Budget Request**

Request:

The Office requests the Board revise the FY 2026 Budget Request to reflect new award trends, to request re-appropriation of FY 2025 funds for use in FY 2026, and to contribute cash on hand (collections).

Summary:

The FY 2026 Budget Request was approved by the Board in June 2024. The request included relatively static year-over-year funding for MTAG and HELP. The request acknowledged that MTAG program eligibility could be impacted by the 2024-2025 changes to the FAFSA and Pell formula, but the anticipated impact of the changes was unclear, hence the static request. The request also acknowledged that HELP recipient numbers were down in 2023-2024 but expected to rebound in 2024-2025.

MTAG awards are down considerably due to the federal changes, and HELP awards have not rebounded. Further investigation has revealed that family incomes have risen just enough to put otherwise HELP-eligible students just above the \$39,500+ income

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threshold. MTAG and HELP recipient numbers for 2024-2025 as shown in the chart below.

Program	FY25 AOB Awards	FY25 AOB Amounts	FY25 Updated Awards	FY25 Updated Amounts
MTAG	18,060	\$ 10,473,044	13,500	\$ 8,617,122
MESG	3,600	\$ 8,222,790	3,690	\$ 8,749,110
HELP	4,693	\$ 33,135,780	3,919	\$ 30,222,327
Total	26,353	\$ 51,831,614	21,109	\$ 47,588,559

To fully fund these award levels in FY 2025, SFA will not spend any cash on hand (collections) and will lapse about \$2.7 million in General Funds by the end of the current fiscal year.

The FY26 Budget Request should be adjusted to reflect the following:

- Decreased award levels anticipated in FY 2026
- Additional funds available from FY 2025 for reappropriation in FY 2026
- Contribution of cash on hand (collections)

Two revised FY 2026 Budget Requests are provided for consideration. Budget A assumes no changes to the 15-hour credit requirement for full-time. Budget B assumes the full-time credit hour requirement is reduced from 15 to 12.

Recommendation:

Board staff recommends approval of this item and submission of an explanatory letter to legislative leadership.

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2025-26 Program Allocation for Revised MBR - Budget A									
Expenditures by Program	FY25 Updated Awards	FY25 Updated Amounts	FY26 MBR Awards	FY26 MBR Amounts	FY26 Revised Awards	FY26 Revised Amounts	(+/-) FY26 MBR Awards	(+/-) FY26 MBR Amounts	Change
1- Administration									
Salaries, Wages and Fringes		\$ 814,116		\$ 841,680		\$ 841,680		\$ -	
Travel		\$ 8,000		\$ 8,000		\$ 8,000		\$ -	
Contractual Service		\$ 550,000		\$ 620,000		\$ 550,000		\$ (70,000)	
Commodities		\$ 10,000		\$ 10,000		\$ 10,000		\$ -	
Equipment		\$ 10,000		\$ 10,000		\$ 10,000		\$ -	
Total Administration		\$ 1,392,116		\$ 1,489,680		\$ 1,419,680		\$ (70,000)	-4.7%
2- MTAG/MESG and HELP									
MTAG	13,550	\$ 7,926,750	18,060	\$ 10,473,044	13,686	\$ 8,006,018	(4,375)	\$ (2,467,027)	
MESG	3,690	\$ 8,579,250	3,636	\$ 8,305,018	3,727	\$ 8,665,043	91	\$ 360,025	
HELP	3,959	\$ 28,702,750	4,693	\$ 33,715,656	3,999	\$ 29,497,099	(694)	\$ (4,218,557)	
Total MTAG/MESG/HELP	21,199	\$45,208,750	26,389	\$52,493,718	21,411	\$46,168,159	-4,978	\$ (6,325,559)	-12.1%
3 - Loan & Repayment Prgs									
Teacher Programs:									
CNDT (Graduate)	4	\$ 31,000	5	\$ 50,000	5	\$ 50,000	0	\$ -	
Winter-Reed Loan Repay	450	\$ 2,000,000	425	\$ 2,000,000	425	\$ 2,000,000	0	\$ -	
Health/Science Programs:									
SLPL (Graduate)	6	\$ 70,000	6	\$ 70,000	6	\$ 70,000	0	\$ -	
SREB (Graduate)	34	\$ 692,546	36	\$ 762,624	36	\$ 762,624	0	\$ -	
Total Loan & Repay Programs	494	\$ 2,793,546	472	\$ 2,882,624	472	\$ 2,882,624	0	\$ -	0.0%
4 - Other									
LAW	9	\$ 139,000	10	\$ 100,000	10	\$ 150,000	0	\$ 50,000	
Nissan	0	\$ -	1	\$ 11,000	1	\$ 11,000	0	\$ -	
FAITH Scholarship	285	\$ 3,450,000	400	\$ 4,000,000	400	\$ 4,000,000	0	\$ -	
Total Other	294	\$ 3,589,000	411	\$ 4,111,000	411	\$ 4,161,000	0	\$ 50,000	1.2%
TOTAL Loans, Schols, Grants	21,987	\$51,591,296	27,272	\$59,487,342	22,294	\$53,211,783	-4,978	\$ (6,275,559)	-10.5%
TOTAL SFA BUDGET	21,987	\$52,983,412	27,272	\$60,977,022	22,294	\$54,631,463	(4,978)	\$ (6,345,559)	-10.4%
COMBINED BUDGETS FY 2026 Funding Sources	FY25 AOB		Original FY26 MBR		Revised FY26 MBR - Budget A		(+) FY26 Original MBR Amounts		Change
SFA APPROPRIATION									
GOV. APPROPRIATIONS									
General Support		\$ 51,952,895		\$ 52,052,538		\$ 40,647,626		\$ (11,404,912)	-
General Support (Reappropriated)		\$ -		\$ 1,622,837		\$ 5,622,837		\$ 4,000,000	-
Other General Support - DE/DC		\$ -		\$ -		\$ -		\$ -	-
EEF - New									
FAITH & Winter-Reed		\$ 3,000,000		\$ 6,000,000		\$ 6,000,000		\$ -	-
EEF - Reappropriated									
FAITH & Winter-Reed		\$ -		\$ -		\$ -		\$ -	-
FAITH		\$ 100,000		\$ -		\$ -		\$ -	-
Winter-Reed		\$ 1,900,000		\$ -		\$ -		\$ -	-
Total Gov. Appropriations		\$56,952,895		\$59,675,375		\$52,270,463		\$ (7,404,912)	-
SPECIAL FUNDS									
Nissan		\$ -		\$ 11,000		\$ 11,000		\$ -	-
Total Interest Income		\$ -		\$ 11,000		\$ 11,000		\$ -	-
Law Fund		\$ 20,000		\$ 20,000		\$ 20,000		\$ -	-
Total Other Sources		\$ 20,000		\$ 20,000		\$ 20,000		\$ -	-
Estimated Collections		\$ 2,330,000		\$ 1,270,647		\$ 2,330,000		\$ 1,059,353	-
Total Cash on Hand		\$ 2,330,000		\$ 1,270,647		\$ 2,330,000		\$ 1,059,353	-
Total Special Funds		\$ 2,350,000		\$ 1,301,647		\$ 2,361,000			
Total SFA Appropriation		\$59,302,895		\$60,977,022		\$54,631,463		\$ (6,345,559)	-

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2025-26 Program Allocation for Revised MBR - Budget B									
Expenditures by Program	FY25 Updated Awards	FY25 Updated Amounts	FY26 MBR Awards	FY26 MBR Amounts	FY26 Revised Awards	FY26 Revised Amounts	(+/-) FY26 MBR Awards	(+/-) FY26 MBR Amounts	Change
1- Administration									
Salaries, Wages and Fringes		\$ 814,116		\$ 841,680		\$ 841,680		\$ -	
Travel		\$ 8,000		\$ 8,000		\$ 8,000		\$ -	
Contractual Service		\$ 550,000		\$ 620,000		\$ 550,000		\$ (70,000)	
Commodities		\$ 10,000		\$ 10,000		\$ 10,000		\$ -	
Equipment		\$ 10,000		\$ 10,000		\$ 10,000		\$ -	
Total Administration		\$ 1,392,116		\$ 1,489,680		\$ 1,419,680		\$ (70,000)	-4.7%
2- MTAG/MESG and HELP									
MTAG	13,550	\$ 7,926,750	18,060	\$ 10,473,044	17,216	\$ 10,071,068	(845)	\$ (401,977)	
MESG	3,690	\$ 8,579,250	3,636	\$ 8,305,018	3,919	\$ 9,111,443	283	\$ 806,425	
HELP	3,959	\$ 28,702,750	4,693	\$ 33,715,656	4,335	\$ 31,975,729	(358)	\$ (1,739,927)	
Total MTAG/MESG/HELP	21,199	\$45,208,750	26,389	\$52,493,718	25,469	\$51,158,239	-920	\$ (1,335,479)	-2.5%
3 - Loan & Repayment Prgs									
Teacher Programs:									
CNDT (Graduate)	4	\$ 31,000	5	\$ 50,000	5	\$ 50,000	0	\$ -	
Winter-Reed Loan Repay	450	\$ 2,000,000	425	\$ 2,000,000	425	\$ 2,000,000	0	\$ -	
Health/Science Programs:								\$ -	
SLPL (Graduate)	6	\$ 70,000	6	\$ 70,000	6	\$ 70,000	0	\$ -	
SREB (Graduate)	34	\$ 692,546	36	\$ 762,624	36	\$ 762,624	0	\$ -	
Total Loan & Repay Programs	494	\$ 2,793,546	472	\$ 2,882,624	472	\$ 2,882,624	0	\$ -	0.0%
4 - Other									
LAW	9	\$ 139,000	10	\$ 100,000	10	\$ 150,000	0	\$ 50,000	
Nissan	0	\$ -	1	\$ 11,000	1	\$ 11,000	0	\$ -	
FAITH Scholarship	285	\$ 3,450,000	400	\$ 4,000,000	400	\$ 4,000,000	0	\$ -	
Total Other	294	\$ 3,589,000	411	\$ 4,111,000	411	\$ 4,161,000	0	\$ 50,000	1.2%
TOTAL Loans, Schols, Grants	21,987	\$51,591,296	27,272	\$59,487,342	26,352	\$58,201,863	-920	\$ (1,285,479)	-2.2%
TOTAL SFA BUDGET	21,987	\$52,983,412	27,272	\$60,977,022	26,352	\$59,621,543	(920)	\$ (1,355,479)	-2.2%
COMBINED BUDGETS FY 2026 Funding Sources	FY25 AOB		Original FY26 MBR		Revised FY26 MBR - Budget B		(+) FY26 Original MBR Amounts		Change
SFA APPROPRIATION									
GOV. APPROPRIATIONS									
General Support		\$ 51,952,895		\$ 52,052,538		\$ 45,637,706		\$ (6,414,832)	-
General Support (Reappropriated)		\$ -		\$ 1,622,837		\$ 5,622,837		\$ 4,000,000	-
Other General Support - DE/DC		\$ -		\$ -		\$ -		\$ -	-
EEF - New									
FAITH & Winter-Reed		\$ 3,000,000		\$ 6,000,000		\$ 6,000,000		\$ -	-
EEF - Reappropriated									
FAITH & Winter-Reed		\$ -		\$ -		\$ -		\$ -	-
FAITH		\$ 100,000		\$ -		\$ -		\$ -	-
Winter-Reed		\$ 1,900,000		\$ -		\$ -		\$ -	-
Total Gov. Appropriations		\$56,952,895		\$59,675,375		\$57,260,543		\$ (2,414,832)	-
SPECIAL FUNDS									
Nissan		\$ -		\$ 11,000		\$ 11,000		\$ -	-
Total Interest Income		\$ -		\$ 11,000		\$ 11,000		\$ -	-
Law Fund		\$ 20,000		\$ 20,000		\$ 20,000		\$ -	-
Total Other Sources		\$ 20,000		\$ 20,000		\$ 20,000		\$ -	-
Estimated Collections		\$ 2,330,000		\$ 1,270,647		\$ 2,330,000		\$ 1,059,353	-
Total Cash on Hand		\$ 2,330,000		\$ 1,270,647		\$ 2,330,000		\$ 1,059,353	-
Total Special Funds		\$ 2,350,000		\$ 1,301,647		\$ 2,361,000			
Total SFA Appropriation		\$59,302,895		\$60,977,022		\$59,621,543		\$ (1,355,479)	-

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ADDITIONAL AGENDA ITEMS IF NECESSARY

The Board did not consider any additional agenda items.

EXECUTIVE SESSION IF DETERMINED NECESSARY

The Board did not determine the need for an Executive Session.

ADJOURNMENT

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



Director, Mississippi Postsecondary Education Financial
Assistance Board

REGULAR AGENDA

1. 2025 Legislative Session Update

Summary:

No legislation creating or impacting state financial aid programs passed during the 2025 Legislative Session. Legislation tracked included:

Requested by SFA:

- [HB 627 – Forgivable loan programs; revise authority of Postsecondary Education Financial Assistance Board to administer and repeal unfunded programs](#) – Introduced by Rep. Scoggin to update the forgivable loan code section and repeal the State Medical, State Dental, Graduate and Professional, Health Care Professions, Family Protection Specialist Social Worker, and Speech-Language Pathologist Forgivable Loan Programs. Estimated annual cost: \$0
- [HB 628: MTAG; revise and rename as the MS Resident Tuition Assistance and Workforce Acceleration Grant Program to expand access to certain student populations](#) - Introduced by Rep. Scoggin, the bill included all changes proposed by the Redesign Taskforce, except that it did not raise award amounts. Estimated cost: \$19M. New state aid recipients: 38,000.
- MTAG Works - Expand MTAG by removing the Pell exclusion, allowing part-time enrollment, removing initial academic eligibility requirements, and increasing award amounts. Although proposed by the State Aid Redesign Taskforce and supported by the Postsecondary Board, no bills were sponsored that reflected all proposed changes. Estimated cost: \$31.5M. New state aid recipients: 38,000.
- [HB 814 - HELP Grant; remove core curriculum requirement certification and revise family size and income for Pell eligibility](#) – Introduced by Rep. Scoggin to make technical changes to the HELP Grant. Estimated annual cost: <\$500K

“Free College” Proposals:

- [HB 11 and HB 1556: Mississippi Career and Technical Education Employability \(MissCATEE\) Program; establish to provide tuition-free community college](#) – Introduced by Rep. D. Bell, the bills were virtually the same and would create a forgivable loan for all community college students in high priority CTE majors. Students would receive loans up to the amount of tuition in exchange for remaining in the specified workforce development location in Mississippi and working in the specified field for a certain period of time. MCCB estimated annual cost: \$17.1M. No recipient estimates provided by MCCB.
- [SB 2527: Mississippi Resident Promise Grant Program; create to provide financial assistance to community college students](#) – Introduced by Sen. Boyd, the bill would provide last-dollar free community college tuition for full-time students within one year of high school graduation who met certain academic requirements. Estimated cost: \$9-12M. Total estimated recipients: 6,800. New state aid recipients: 0.

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- [SB 2528: Reconnect Grant Program; create](#) – Introduced by Sen. Boyd, the bill would provide last-dollar free community college for adult students. Estimated cost: \$26M. New state aid recipients: 11,000.
- [SB 2529: Mississippi Career Promise Grant Program; create to provide financial assistance to students](#) – Introduced by Sen. Boyd, the bill would create a forgivable loan for all community college students in specific CTE majors. Students would receive loans up to the full cost of attendance in exchange for remaining in Mississippi and working in the specified field for a certain period of time. Estimated cost: \$62M. New state aid recipients: 5,000.

New Loan Repayment Programs:

- [HB 593: Rural Physicians Retention Loan Repayment Program; create](#) – Rep. Creekmore
- [SB 2514: Nurse Teacher Loan Repayment Program; create](#) – Sen. Parks
- [SB 2524: Board Certified Behavior Analyst Loan Repayment Program; create](#) – Sen. Boyd
- [SB 2595: Educational Counselor, Psychologist and Psychiatrist Loan Repayment Program; create](#) – Sen. Parker

Other:

- [SB 2444: Tuition for certain veterans to attend universities or community colleges; establish program for combat veterans](#) – Sen. Tate

Annual Appropriation:

- [SB 3009: Appropriation; IHL – Student Financial Aid - DEAD](#)

Recommendation:

No action is required.

2. Update on FY 2025 Awards and Budget

Summary:

As expected, the FY 2025 appropriation was adequate to fully fund all authorized programs. Also as expected, Mississippi Office of Student Financial Aid will end the year with a surplus of general funds, which will be carried over for use in FY 2026. For the fourth consecutive year, the Mississippi Office of Student Financial Aid did not request additional funds mid-year through a deficit appropriation.

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Recommendation:

No action is required.

3. Update Program Rules and Regulations to Change the Definition of Full-Time

Request

The Mississippi Office of Student Financial aid requests approval to update A) APA Part 605 General Administration Rules and Regulations; B) APA Part 611 Mississippi Tuition Assistance Grant Rules and Regulations; C) APA Part 613 Mississippi Eminent Scholars Grant Rules and Regulations; D) APA Part 615 Higher Education Legislative Plan for Needy Students Rules and Regulations; and E) APA Part 617 Mississippi Law Enforcement Officers and Firefighters Scholarship Rules and Regulations. Updates are requested to change the definition of full-time enrollment from 15 credit hours per term to 12 credit hours per term.

Summary

The authorizing statute for most of the undergraduate state grant programs requires recipients to enroll full-time, but the statute does not define the number of hours required for full-time enrollment.

In June 2016, the Board voted to change the definition of full-time from 12 credit hours to 15 credit hours per term for purposes of receiving state aid. The change was prompted in part by a \$10 million budget deficit for the 2016-2017 academic year. The change also coincided with a statewide and national push for students to “Take 15” and “Finish in Four”.

For federal aid eligibility, full-time is defined as 12 credit hours per semester, so the alternate state aid eligibility requirement often creates confusion and establishes differing standards. Since changing the definition, many more students are taking dual enrollment and dual credit courses in high school. Such courses allow students to take fewer courses each term and still complete a degree “on time” in the standard two- or four-year time frame. Heavy course load requirements can also discourage students from pursuing high demand STEM majors that often require students to take multiple science, mathematics, and engineering courses in a single term.

In January 2025, the Board voted to change the definition of full-time from 15 credit hours per term back to 12 credit hours per term. The changes requested here are needed to implement the approved policy change in the program Rules and Regulations.

The recommended changes are as follows:

A. APA Part 605 General Administration Rules and Regulations

Title 10: Education Institutions and Agencies

Part 605 Chapter 1: General Administration Rules and Regulations

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Rule 1.1 General Administration Rules and Regulations. These Rules and Regulations apply to the general administration of all student financial assistance programs administered by the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning (hereafter referred to as the “Agency”) or the Mississippi Postsecondary Education Financial Assistance Board (hereafter referred to as the “Board” or “Postsecondary Board”) and are subject to change by the Board. These Rules and Regulations are meant to provide additional guidance for, not supplant the approved Rules and Regulations for each student financial assistance program. The Mississippi Office of Student Financial Aid (hereinafter referred to as the “Office”) will act on behalf of the Board and/or Agency to administer the student financial assistance programs.

...

II. DETERMINING ELIGIBILITY

...

D. Special Issues Related to Determining Eligibility

...

4. Continuous Full-Time Enrollment

- a) Full-time Enrollment - For some state aid programs, a student must enroll full-time and maintain continuous full-time enrollment as a requirement for eligibility.

- (1) Full-time enrollment for undergraduate students is defined as follows, unless exceptions are made for all students in a specific program at a specific institution:

- (a) ~~Fifteen~~ Twelve (~~15~~12) earned semester hours each academic term (excluding summer) or nine (9) earned trimester hours per academic term or twenty-four (24) earned clock hours per week for a program using clock hours.

- (b) Hours must be reported by a single institution.

- (c) Hours may be undergraduate or graduate course hours as long as the student is pursuing an undergraduate degree.

...

Source: Miss. Code Ann. § 37-106-1 through § 37-106-83.

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B. APA Part 611 Mississippi Tuition Assistance Grant (MTAG) Rules and Regulations

Title 10: Education Institutions and Agencies

Part 611 Chapter 1: Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance Grant (MTAG) Rules and Regulations

Rule 1.1 Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance Grant (MTAG) Rules and Regulations.

These Rules and Regulations are subject to change by the Mississippi Postsecondary Education Financial Assistance Board (Postsecondary Board). All eligible students shall receive a Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance Grant (MTAG) award; however, the amount of each MTAG award depends upon the availability of funds as authorized by the State Legislature.

I. GENERAL ELIGIBILITY

...

- B. The applicant must be continuously enrolled (not less than two semesters or three trimesters in each successive academic year) full-time (minimum ~~15~~ 12 semester hours or 9 trimester hours) at the undergraduate level at one (1) eligible institution in the State of Mississippi.

...

II. APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

- A. First-time applicants must:

...

- 6. Be enrolled full-time (minimum ~~15~~ 12 semester hours or 9 trimester hours) at the undergraduate level at one (1) eligible institution in the State of Mississippi. Evidence of enrollment will be automatically provided to the Postsecondary Board by the attending institution.

...

- B. Renewal applicants must:

...

- 4. Maintain continuous, full-time enrollment at one (1) eligible institution in the State of Mississippi for not less than two semesters or three trimesters in each successive academic year, unless granted an exception for cause.

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- a) Full-time enrollment consists of a minimum ~~15~~12 semester hours or 9 trimester hours at the undergraduate level. Evidence of enrollment will be automatically provided to the Postsecondary Board by the attending institution, unless requested from the applicant.

...

Source: Miss. Code Ann. § 37-106-29.

C. APA Part 613 Mississippi Eminent Scholars Grant (MESG) Rules and Regulations

Title 10: Education Institutions and Agencies

Part 613 Chapter 1: Mississippi Eminent Scholars Grant (MESG) Rules and Regulations

Rule 1.1 Mississippi Eminent Scholars Grant (MESG) Rules and Regulations. These Rules and Regulations are subject to change by the Mississippi Postsecondary Education Financial Assistance Board (Postsecondary Board). All eligible students shall receive a Mississippi Eminent Scholars Grant (MESG) award; however, the amount of each MESG award depends upon the availability of funds as authorized by the State Legislature.

I. GENERAL ELIGIBILITY

...

- B. The applicant must be continuously enrolled (not less than two semesters or three trimesters in each successive academic year) full-time (minimum ~~15~~12 semester hours or 9 trimester hours) at the undergraduate level at one (1) eligible institution in the State of Mississippi.

...

II. APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

...

- A. First-time applicants must:

...

4. Be enrolled full-time (minimum ~~15~~12 semester hours or 9 trimester hours) at the undergraduate level at one (1) eligible institution in the State of Mississippi. Evidence of enrollment will be automatically provided to the Postsecondary Board by the attending institution.

...

REGULAR AGENDA

B. Renewal applicants must:

...

3. Maintain continuous, full-time enrollment at one (1) eligible institution in the State of Mississippi for not less than two semesters or three trimesters in each successive academic year, unless granted an exception for cause.

...

- a) Full-time enrollment consists of a minimum ~~15~~12 semester hours or 9 trimester hours at the undergraduate level. Evidence of enrollment will be automatically provided to the Postsecondary Board by the attending institution, unless requested from the applicant.

...

Source: Miss. Code Ann. § 37-106-31.

D. APA Part 615 Higher Education Legislative Plan for Needy Students Grant (HELP) Rules and Regulations

Title 10: Education Institutions and Agencies

Part 615 Chapter 1: Higher Education Legislative Plan for Needy Students Grant (HELP) Rules and Regulations

Rule 1.1 Higher Education Legislative Plan for Needy Students Grant (HELP) Rules and Regulations. These Rules and Regulations are subject to change by the Mississippi Postsecondary Education Financial Assistance Board. All eligible students shall receive a Higher Education Legislative Plan for Needy Students (HELP) award; however, the amount of each award depends upon the availability of funds as authorized by the State Legislature.

...

II. APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

...

A. First-time applicants must:

...

REGULAR AGENDA

5. Be enrolled or accepted for enrollment as a full-time (minimum ~~15~~12 semester hours or 9 trimester hours) undergraduate student at one (1) eligible Mississippi postsecondary institution. Evidence of enrollment will be automatically provided to the Board by the attending institution.

...

Source: Miss. Code Ann. § 37-106-75.

E. APA Part 617 Mississippi Law Enforcement Officers and Firefighters (LAW) Rules and Regulations

Title 10: Education Institutions and Agencies

Part 617 Chapter 1: Mississippi Law Enforcement Officers and Firefighters Scholarship (LAW) Rules and Regulations

Rule 1.1 Mississippi Law Enforcement Officers and Firefighters Scholarship (LAW) Rules and Regulations. These Rules and Regulations are subject to change by the Mississippi Postsecondary Education Financial Assistance Board (Postsecondary Board). The Mississippi Law Enforcement Officers and Firefighters Scholarship Program offers financial assistance to dependent children and spouses of any Mississippi law enforcement officer, full-time firefighter or volunteer firefighter who has suffered fatal injuries or wounds or become permanently and totally disabled as a result of injuries or wounds which occurred in the performance of the official and appointed duties of his or her office.

I. GENERAL ELIGIBILITY:

- A. The applicant must enroll full-time (minimum ~~15~~12 semester hours or 9 trimester hours) at the undergraduate level at one (1) state-supported college or university within the state of Mississippi.

...

II. APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS:

- A. First-time applicants must:

...

6. Enroll full-time (minimum ~~15~~12 semester hours or 9 trimester hours) at the undergraduate level at one (1) eligible state-supported institution in the State of Mississippi. Evidence of enrollment will be automatically provided to the Postsecondary Board by the attending institution.

...

REGULAR AGENDA

B. Renewal applicants must:

...

3. Maintain full-time enrollment (minimum ~~15~~12 semester hours or 9 trimester hours) at the undergraduate level at one (1) eligible state-supported institution in the State of Mississippi. Evidence of enrollment will be automatically provided to the Postsecondary Board by the attending institution.

...

Source: Miss. Code Ann. § 37-106-39.

Recommendation

Board staff recommends approval of Agenda Items 3A – 3E, pending completion of the APA Process.

4. Update APA Part 621 Nissan Scholarship (NISS) Rules and Regulations

Request

The Mississippi Office of Student Financial aid requests approval to update APA Part 621 Nissan Scholarship (NISS) Rules and Regulations to simplify the annual selection process for recipients for the Nissan Scholarship.

Summary

The current rules for the Nissan Scholarship establish a seven-member selection committee and process that requires SFA to seek appointments annually from the IHL Commissioner and MCCB Executive Director from the faculties of the public two- and four-year institutions. SFA must request the annual appointments, wait for the appointments to be made, send all application materials to the appointees, allow ample time for scoring, collect score results, and tally score results before making an award offer. The proposed change will simplify and streamline the recipient selection process by allowing SFA to request scoring assistance from colleagues among the IHL, MCCB, and SFA staff.

Title 10: Education Institutions and Agencies

Part 621 Chapter 1: Nissan Scholarship (NISS) Rules and Regulations

Rule 1.1 Nissan Scholarship (NISS) Rules and Regulations. These Rules and Regulations are subject to change by the Mississippi Postsecondary Education Financial Assistance Board (Postsecondary Board).

...

VII. SELECTION PROCESS

REGULAR AGENDA

- A. Upon recommendation by the Mississippi Office of Student Financial Aid, ~~the Nissan Scholarship Selection Committee~~North America, Inc. will determine the number of Nissan scholarships to be awarded annually.
- B. There will be a Nissan Scholarship Selection Committee appointed each year. The committee shall consist of the following ~~seven-five~~ members: one member from Nissan North America, Inc. ~~who will review and approve the list of recipients~~, two ~~educator~~ representatives ~~appointed by from~~ the Mississippi Community College Board ~~staff from within all community and junior college faculties~~, ~~and~~ two ~~educator~~ representatives ~~appointed by from~~ the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning ~~staff from within the university faculties~~, ~~one representative from the Office of Academic Affairs of the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning and~~ the The Director of the Mississippi Office of Student Financial Aid ~~who~~ shall act as the coordinator of the selection committee.

...

Source: *Miss. Code Ann.* § 37-106-11.

Recommendation

Board staff recommends approval, pending completion of the APA Process.

5. Update APA Part 623 Fostering Access and Inspiring True Hope Scholarship (FAITH) Rules and Regulations

Request

The Mississippi Office of Student Financial aid requests approval to update APA Part 623 Fostering Access and Inspiring True Hope Scholarship (FAITH) Rules and Regulations to clarify that FAITH awards will not be increased to cover unusual or unnecessary costs, such as those associated with study abroad programs.

Summary

The current rules for the Fostering Access and Inspiring True Hope (FAITH) Scholarship allow the scholarship to award up to the student's full Cost of Attendance (COA). Study abroad programs and other optional experiential learning opportunities offered through a student's home institution often cost substantially more than the published rate of resident tuition, thereby increasing the student's COA and resulting in a larger FAITH award. Larger awards could strain the budget and result in the State denying FAITH awards to other students who should be eligible. The proposed change will still allow FAITH recipients to pursue such opportunities if the student can secure scholarships or other funding but will not require the State to cover the increased cost.

Title 10: Education Institutions and Agencies

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Part 623 Chapter 1: State Representative Bill Kinkade Fostering Access and Inspiring True Hope (FAITH) Scholarship Rules and Regulations

Rule 1.1 State Representative Bill Kinkade Fostering Access and Inspiring True Hope (FAITH) Scholarship Rules and Regulations. These Rules and Regulations are subject to change by the Mississippi Postsecondary Education Financial Assistance Board.

...

III. LENGTH AND AMOUNT OF AWARD

- A. For students attending a Mississippi public institution, the annual award amount of the FAITH Scholarship will be equal to the student's total Cost of Attendance (COA) less all other grant aid. FAITH awards will not be increased to cover unusual or unnecessary costs of attendance, such as those associated with study abroad or other programs outside the scope of a student's usual course of study. For students attending a Mississippi non-public four-year institution, the annual award amount of the FAITH Scholarship will be equal to the average of the prior year's published undergraduate COA of all public institutions less all other grant aid.

...

Source: *Miss. Code Ann.* § 37-106-75.

Recommendation

Board staff recommends approval, pending completion of the APA Process.

6. **Approve Personnel Changes**

Request

The Mississippi Office of Student Financial aid requests approval by the Board to make personnel changes within the Mississippi Office of Student Financial Aid. The Office requests to change the title of the Director to Executive Director and to hire a Deputy Director.

Summary

During the annual SFA Retreat in December 2024, the Office discussed workloads, workflow processes, and staffing needs. The workload of the three Program Administrators has increased significantly over the last three years since the creation of the Winter-Reed Teacher Loan Repayment Program and the Nurse Retention Loan Repayment Program. Previously, the Office staffed a Loan Repayment Specialist who led the administration of all the forgivable loan programs and served as the liaison between borrowers in repayment and the Office's third-party servicer. When the last Loan Repayment Specialist left in June 2019, the Office decided not to fill the position, because the Office was awarding fewer forgivable loans than in the past. The remaining loan-related workload was divided between the Program Administrators and the Director, with the Program Administrators taking over the borrower calls and account management and the Director assuming the role of servicer/collection agency liaison and

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handling all efforts related to tax intercepts and default prevention. Even with the added duties, the Director's workload was manageable, because the Assistant Director of Policy and Planning, who also served as a Program Administrator, acted as a lead for the Program Administrators and also provided support for the Director. However, the Assistant Director of Policy and Planning departed in April 2023, and the vacancy was filled with a Program Administrator instead of an Assistant Director.

The Office proposes to change the Director's title to Executive Director and hire a Deputy Director. The Director's title change is requested to provide distinction between the Director and Deputy Director position titles; no salary increase is requested. The proposed Deputy Director would serve as the Office lead in the Executive Director's stead when needed, provide guidance and leadership for the team of Program Administrators, oversee administration of the expanding loan repayment programs, and assume all other loan-related tasks (servicer/collection agency liaison, tax intercepts, and default prevention) currently being handled by the Director. The new Deputy Director would provide relief for the existing Program Administrators and the Director, while also creating a direct path of leadership succession for the Mississippi Office of Student Financial Aid.

A job description is provided below. The salary range would be listed as \$110,000 - \$120,000, commensurate with education and experience. The position would bring the total of full-time staff from seven to eight.

Deputy Director of Student Financial Aid

Job title:	<i>Deputy Director of Student Financial Aid</i>		
Reports to:	<i>Executive Director of Student Financial Aid</i>		
Department:	<i>Mississippi Office of Student Financial Aid</i>		
Job Classification:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Exempt <input type="checkbox"/> Nonexempt	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Full time <input type="checkbox"/> Part time <input type="checkbox"/> Contract	

Job Summary

Assist with the administration of a multi-million dollar financial aid application and award-processing system by assisting the director with policy development, implementation and review, conducting data analysis and research, responding to legislative requests, and overseeing the administration of the state's forgivable loan and loan repayment programs.

Essential Duties and Responsibilities

- Oversee the administration of the state's forgivable loan and loan repayment programs by:
 - Continuously reviewing best practices in default prevention and updating the Office's default prevention program accordingly.
 - Managing the implementation of default prevention procedures, such as generating and sending monthly "deferment ending", "grace ending", "separation", and "past due" letters/emails.
 - Serving as the liaison between the Office of Student Financial Aid and its contracted loan servicer.
 - Serving as the liaison between the Office of Student Financial Aid and any collection agencies contracted by the Office to assist with the collection of delinquent accounts.

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- Serving as the liaison between the Office of Student Financial Aid and the Mississippi Department of Revenue for issues related to the state tax offset program.
- Ensuring that the contracted loan servicer has an up-to-date, accurate handbook and other materials needed to service state forgivable loans properly.
- Monitoring periodic reports produced by the loan servicer, including but not limited to, open inventory, tax offset, small and credit balance, paid in full this month, and paid in full this year reports.
- Monitoring periodic reports produced by the collection agencies, including but not limited to, debtor status, demographic changes, placement acknowledgment, placement analysis, bankruptcy and closed/returned reports.
- Finalizing and processing tax offsets received from the Mississippi Department of Revenue
- Conducting monthly reporting for the loan repayment programs
- Responding to audit requests related to the forgivable loan or loan repayment programs
- Support the team of Program Administrators in the administration of state financial aid programs by:
 - Answering questions related to program rules and regulations
 - Assisting with the identification and resolution of problems with the awarding or disbursement of aid
 - Resolving account questions that have been escalated to a supervisor
 - Organize and lead Program Administrator training and resource development
- Assist in outreach efforts with students, parents, high school counselors, and other stakeholders as needed.
- Assist the Executive Director with policy development, implementation, and review as needed.
- Assist the Executive Director with the collection and analysis of state financial aid data as needed.
- Assist the Executive Director with legislative, data, and other information requests as needed.
- Lead special projects and perform additional duties assigned by the Executive Director.
- Maintain a working knowledge of pertinent federal and state regulations.
- Stay informed of higher education and financial aid industry news to ensure a nimble and appropriate response when warranted.

Qualifications

Education:

- Bachelor's degree required.
- Master's degree preferred.

Other preferred experience/training:

- Minimum five years' experience in the administration of state financial aid programs required.

Working conditions

The employee encounters no special environmental working conditions while performing the duties of this job. The noise level in the work environment is usually moderate.

Physical requirements

While performing the duties of this job, the employee is regularly required to talk and hear. The employee is also required to use hands to finger or grasp objects, tools, or controls and reach with hands and arms. The employee must regularly lift and/or move up to 10 pounds. Specific vision abilities required by this job include close vision.

Direct reports

N/A

Approved by:	
Date approved:	

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Recommendation

Board staff recommends approval.

7. Updates and Announcements

Board Member Appointments

June Meeting