

MISSISSIPPI POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE BOARD



IHL Executive Offices
3825 Ridgewood Road, Jackson, MS 39211

January 15, 2026, 2:00 p.m.

Zoom:

<https://itsmsgov.zoom.us/j/84217979197?pwd=tiRN0kvJl4YCmbBUOmoDnzkA286vIV.1>
Teleconference: 1-888-822-7517, Access code: 2791682#

MINUTES

BE IT REMEMBERED, that the Mississippi Postsecondary Education Financial Assistance Board held a regular meeting on Thursday, January 15, 2026 at 2:00 p.m. 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.

The following member(s) participated:

- Barney Daly, Lt. Governor's appointee (remote)
- Jason Dean, MAICU association appointee (remote)
- Teresa Hubbard, IHL Board appointee (remote)
- Mark Keenum, IHL institutional appointee (remote)
- Dewayne Middleton, MCCB institutional appointee (remote)
- Sue Stedman, Governor's appointee (remote)
- Jim Turcotte, Governor's appointee and Chairman (remote)
- Dianne Watson, MCCB Board appointee (in person)

The following member(s) did not participate:

- Ben Burnett, MAICU 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:

- Meg Harris, Assistant Director of Operations, Student Financial Aid
- Shirley Mitchell, Program Administrator, Student Financial Aid

- Jennifer Rogers, Executive Director, Student Financial Aid and Postsecondary Board
- Adele Russell, Program and Office Administrator, Student Financial Aid
- Apryll Washington, Deputy Director, Student Financial Aid
- Frances West, Program Administrator, Student Financial Aid
- Heather Dearman, Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College (remote)
- Kari Dedwylder, Jones College (remote)
- Glenn Swartzfager, Office of the Attorney General

The meeting was called to order at 2:02 p.m. by Chairman Turcotte.

MINUTES

On motion by Barney Daly and second by Jason Dean, all Board Members legally present and participating voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the board meeting held on October 8, 2025, as originally drafted.

ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

Item 1: Jennifer Rogers presented the 2025 Annual Report of the State-Supported Student Financial Aid Programs for review and approval. On motion by Mark Keenum and second by Dewayne Middleton all Board Members legally present and participating voted unanimously to approve the 2025 Annual Report for submission to the Legislature.

1. Review and Approve the 2025 Annual Report of the State-Supported Student Financial Aid Programs for Submission to the Mississippi Legislature

Summary:

The 2025 Annual Report is submitted under separate cover as Exhibit 1. Some highlights of the report include the following:

Awards (p. 7):

- 22,710 state-supported awards (down 9,968 or 30.5%), totaling \$51.3 million (down \$1.61 million or 3%) – decrease due primarily to the discontinuation of the Dual Enrollment/Dual Credit Scholarship (DEDC)
- 22,377 individual recipients (down 9,885 students or 30.6%)
- \$2,258 average award amount (up \$640 or 39.5%) – increase due primarily to the discontinuation of DEDC which awarded small amounts

Recipients (pp. 8-9):

- 22,377 individual recipients
- Every county represented
- 87% Dependent; 13% Independent
- 41% Male; 59% Female
- 96% aged 12-24 (traditional)
- 19.5% self-identify as African American; 72% as Caucasian; 8.5% other
- Income breakdown for dependent students:
 - 17% below \$40K; 17% below \$80K; 66% over \$80K (42% between \$100-\$250K)

- Income breakdown for independent students:
 - 52% earn below \$10K; 8% below \$20K; 40% over \$20K

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

- Governmental Appropriations totaled \$56.95 million (down \$8.6 million or 13%)
 - \$51.95 million appropriated in General Funds
 - \$5 million new and reappropriated Education Enhancement Funds (EEF)
- Special Fund Support totaled \$2.35 million (up \$610K or 35%)
- Other Appropriations totaled \$5.39 million to fund the Nurse Retention Loan Repayment Program (NULR)
- \$64.69 million total appropriation and operating budget
- \$54.36 million total expended (expenses)
 - \$51.3 million on current year awards
 - \$2.9 million on prior year awards
 - \$1.31 million on administration (2% of budget; 2.4% of expenses)
 - \$808K salaries/benefits
 - \$4.5K travel
 - \$484K contractual services (\$250K to IHL, remaining \$234K to application, website, cybersecurity, ECSI, etc.)
 - \$7K commodities
 - \$10K capital outlay
- \$12.1 million balance
 - \$11.7 million reappropriated in FY 2026 (unspent GF, unspent EEF funds, unspent Special Funds, unspent ARPA funds for NULR)
 - \$400K in EEF funds lapses

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

- 4-Year Publics: 59% of awards, 72% of funds
- 2-Year Publics: 30% of awards, 14% of funds
- Privates: 8% of awards, 8% of funds
- Grants: 97% of awards; 93% of funds
- Undergraduate: 97% of awards; 93% of funds

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

Loan Repayment (pp. 18-22)

- 1,955 accounts under management
 - 11% accounts in school/grace/deferment
 - 2% current service
 - 4% current money
 - 77% default (delinquent or in collections)
 - 6% closed current year
 - \$18.2 million principal balance outstanding
- \$743K net collections
 - \$851K 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 2025 Annual Report of State-Supported Student Financial Aid Programs to the Legislature.

Item 2.A.: Jennifer Rogers presented a request to the Board to update APA Part 605: General Administration Rules and Regulations to allow the Board to suspend its rules. On motion by Dianne Watson and second by Barney Daly all Board Members legally present and participating voted unanimously to update the rule as recommended.

2. Approve Update to APA Part 605: General Administration Rules and Regulations to Allow the Board to Suspend Rules

Summary:

In October 2025, the Board tabled discussion of a request to update APA Part 605: General Administration Rules and Regulations to create a process for considering appeals for issues unrelated to continuous, full-time enrollment or satisfactory academic progress (SAP). The Board asked the Office to seek guidance from the Office of the Attorney General.

The Office of the Attorney General provided a memo, which can be summarized as follows:

- A properly adopted policy has the force and effect of law.
- There is no constitutional or statutory provision prohibiting the suspension of rules, regulations, policies, and/or procedures if the action of the Board is consistent with statute and aligns with legislative intent.
- There is no constitutional or statutory provision mandating the application of the non-appealability rule, and in fact, the suspension of the non-appealability rule aligns with legislative intent that the code be broadly construed to encourage and financially assist Mississippi students.
- The Director has the power of final approval of any application submitted “subject to the review of the Board.” Thus, the Legislature specifically provided the Board with authority to review “any application submitted.”
- There should be a “rational connection between the facts found and the choice made” to suspend a rule.
- The suspension of the rules must not be arbitrary, capricious, or discriminatory.
- An “arbitrary and capricious” act is one “not done according to reason or judgment but, rather, in a whimsical manner.”
- While the Board has discretion to suspend its rules and regulations, it is not required to do so.
- If the Board decides to suspend its rules and regulations, the Board must have a logical, non-discriminatory reason supported by facts and in harmony with legislative intent.

- The Board should exercise extreme caution when choosing to suspend its rules.
- If rules are suspended, the basis for the Board's suspension of the rules and regulations must be recorded in its official minutes to avoid questions as to why the rules and regulations were suspended.
- The Board should codify its authority and discretion to suspend the rules.

Request:

In accordance with the memo, the Office requests the Board amend its rules as follows to allow for the suspension of rules:

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. 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 suspension or 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.

Recommendation:

Board staff recommends approval.

Item 3: Jennifer Rogers asked the Board to suspend its rule requiring the submission of a single homeschool transcript in order to reconsider a request from the October 2025 meeting to accept a subsequent transcript for a homeschool student previously denied eligibility. On motion by Mark Keenum and second by Dianne Watson, all Board Members legally present and participating voted unanimously to suspend the rule. The Board then considered the question of whether to accept a subsequent transcript from the homeschool student in question so that the student might be considered eligible for the HELP Grant. After much discussion, the Board took no action to accept the student's subsequent transcript or grant the student's eligibility.

3. Reconsider Request for Board to Suspend Rule 1.1 Section 1(C)(3)(b) from APA Part 605 Requiring the Submission of a Single Homeschool Transcript

Summary:

Applicants for the HELP Grant are required to document completion of a specific high school curriculum which is the same as the required IHL College Preparatory Curriculum. Documentation is received directly from the high school for public and private high school students. However, homeschool students must submit a signed and notarized transcript. The current rules govern the submission of homeschool transcripts (underlining added for emphasis):

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, 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 course-related changes on the subsequent transcript will be considered.

A 2025-26 HELP Grant applicant attempted to submit a subsequent transcript after the applicant was considered ineligible due to failure to document completion of the HELP Core Curriculum because the student's original signed and notarized transcript did not include the required technology credit. After communicating with the student and the student's parent, the parent submitted a letter requesting the Board reconsider the existing rule and accept the subsequent transcript.

In October 2025, the Board voted to approve a motion to allow the applicant to submit a subsequent transcript but asked the Office to seek additional guidance from the Office of the Attorney General.

Request:

According to the memo provided by the Office of the Attorney General, the Board can suspend its rule requiring the submission of a single homeschool transcript. In light of the additional guidance provided in the memo, Board staff requests the Board reconsider the October request to determine 1) whether to suspend its rule requiring the submission of a single homeschool transcript, and 2) if the Board moves to suspend its rule, provide the rationale and basis for the Board's suspension of the rule for recording in the official minutes.

[REDACTED]
Southaven, MS 38672

July 11, 2025

Mississippi Post-Secondary Financial Assistance Board
c/o Mississippi Office of Student Financial Aid
3825 Ridgewood Road
Jackson, MS 39211

RECEIVED
JUL 25 2025
MISSISSIPPI STUDENT
FINANCIAL AID

Dear Members of the Mississippi Post-Secondary Financial Assistance Board:

I am writing to you today on behalf of my son, [REDACTED], who has been homeschooled since kindergarten. He has completed a rigorous course of study alongside his peers in a classical homeschool group where they studied mathematics, Latin grammar, English literature and composition, science, fine arts, history, and philosophy. Because his homeschool group used an integrated interdisciplinary approach, so many areas were well-covered that they could have easily qualified for Carnegie units. It seemed impossible to list them all separately, so when I sat down to make his transcript, it was overwhelming. I was so focused on ensuring that all the details were correct for what I considered to be his main classes that I forgot about listing others like physical education, science labs, speech, debate, & technology separately. That was an incredibly costly mistake because a technology credit is one of the requirements for the HELP grant.

As a homeschool mom, I struggled to find a high school technology curriculum that seemed worth the expense, so I researched the objectives for a high school technology class and made sure to cover them through the course of his studies. He learned about online safety, took a typing class, and developed competency in Google Docs in preparation for writing his research papers and essays. He used PowerPoint to make multimedia presentations in history class and Canvas for his dual enrollment courses at Northeast Community College. He is proficient in Windows 10, Microsoft Word, Excel, & Fiserv Banking Software and helps new coworkers learn to use those programs in his work as a bank teller.

[REDACTED] loves the bank so much that he wants to pursue a degree in finance to return to North Mississippi and serve the community as a leader in that locally owned bank. As the eldest of five children, he needs all the financial aid he can get, so I am just devastated that my clerical error will prevent him from receiving this much-needed assistance. I believe that [REDACTED] is exactly the type of student that this Board exists to help, and the opportunity for him to receive a college education will benefit Mississippi, as it is his dream to stay here and make a positive impact in his home state.

In summary, we followed the application process to the best of our knowledge, and my child completed the required curriculum- we just didn't accurately reflect that on his transcript initially. I humbly ask the Board to have mercy on this first-time homeschool mom and make an exception to allow us to resubmit his final, corrected high school transcript for consideration for the HELP Grant. I'm not asking for any rules to be broken, just clarity on whether there is any way to be reconsidered this semester or to set things right for future eligibility. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Item 4: Jennifer Rogers presented updates on the legislation on which the Office has collaborated for the 2026 Legislative Session. No action was taken by the Board.

4. Update on 2026 Legislative Requests

Summary:

The Office has worked with legislators on legislation to accomplish the following:

- Create a Mississippi Workforce Promise Grant program.
- Remove the Core Curriculum requirement for HELP Grant eligibility.
- Expand the Law Enforcement Officers and Firefighters Scholarship statute to include eligibility for dependents of employees of agencies not in existence at the time the initial statute was authorized.

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 at 3:22 pm.



Executive Director, Mississippi Postsecondary Education Financial Assistance Board