

MISSISSIPPI POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE BOARD



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

June 24, 2026, at 10:30 a.m.

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

Zoom: <https://itsmsgov.zoom.us/j/82358308696?pwd=XbDUuYhBlgkK4yTUCYm0pm913DowCH.1>

Agenda

CALL TO ORDER

INTRODUCTIONS

MINUTES

May 13, 2026, Board Meeting Minutes.....3

REGULAR AGENDA ITEMS

1. Approve the FY 2028 Budget Request (MBR)18
 - Exhibit 1 – 2027-28 Program Allocation for MBR..... 19
 - Exhibit 2 – FY 2028 Budget Request with Funding by Source20
 - Exhibit 3 – FY 2028 SFA Budget Request Narrative.....21
2. Approve the FY 2028-32 SFA Five-Year Strategic Plan25
 - Exhibit 4 – FY 2028-32 5-Year Strategic Plan with Expenditures by Program....27
 - Exhibit 5 – FY 2028-32 5-Year Strategic Plan with Funding by Source28
 - Exhibit 6 – FY 2028-32 SFA 5-Year Strategic Plan Narrative29
3. Update APA Part 623 Fostering Access and Inspiring True Hope Scholarship (FAITH) Rules and Regulations to Limit Housing Costs40
4. Change Institutional Name in APA Part 605 General Administration Rules and Regulations41

AGENDA

- 5. Selection of Chairperson for 2026-27.....43
- 6. Updates and Announcements43

ADDITIONAL AGENDA ITEMS IF NECESSARY

OTHER BUSINESS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

EXECUTIVE SESSION IF DETERMINED NECESSARY

ADJOURNMENT

BE IT REMEMBERED, that the Mississippi Postsecondary Education Financial Assistance Board held a regular meeting on Wednesday, May 13, 2026 at 3:00 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)
- Sue Stedman, Governor's appointee (remote)
- Jim Turcotte, Governor's appointee and Chairman (remote)
- Dianne Watson, MCCB Board appointee (remote)

The following Advisory Board member(s) participated:

- Senator Nicole Boyd, Universities and Colleges Committee Chair (remote)

The following member(s) did not participate:

- Dewayne Middleton, MCCB institutional appointee (remote)
- Ben Burnett, MAICU institutional appointee

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

- 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 (remote)
- 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
- Lori Ball, Mississippi State University (remote)
- Laura Diven-Brown, University of Mississippi (remote)
- Jaime Missimer, Pearl River Community College (remote)
- Glenn Swartzfager, Office of the Attorney General (remote)
- Laura Mayer, IHL (remote)
- Tina Carter, Legislative Budget Office
- Candice Wilder, *Mississippi Today*

The meeting was called to order at 3:00 p.m. by Chairman Turcotte.

MINUTES

On motion by Barney Daly and second by Teresa Hubbard, all Board Members legally present and participating voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the board meeting held on January 15, 2026, as originally drafted.

MINUTES

ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

Item 1: Jennifer Rogers presented an update regarding the legislation that passed during the 2026 Legislative Session. No action was taken by the Board.

1. 2026 Legislative Session Update

Summary:

Several pieces of legislation impacting the Mississippi Office of Student Financial Aid (SFA) passed during the 2026 Legislative Session, including:

- [HB 562 – Upskill Mississippi Grant Program; establish to provide last-dollar tuition assistance at community colleges for certain programs](#) – Creates a last-dollar tuition assistance program for adults enrolled in community college programs that lead to jobs in priority occupations. The program was not legislatively funded.
- [SB 2368 – Higher Education Legislative Plan Grant Program; amend](#) – Eliminates the HELP curriculum requirement and makes technical changes to the Mississippi Law Enforcement Officers and Firefighters Scholarship.

Appropriation Bills:

- [HB 1940: Appropriations; additional appropriations for FY26 & FY27](#) – Makes a \$5.1 million deficit appropriation to SFA for FY 2026.
- [SB 3060: Appropriation; IHL – Student Financial Aid](#) – Makes a \$56.9 million appropriation to SFA for FY 2027.

Recommendation:

No action is required.

Item 2: Jennifer Rogers presented an update on the budget for the current year. No action was taken by the Board.

2. Update on FY 2026 Awards and Budget

Summary:

As expected, the FY 2026 appropriation was not adequate to fully fund all authorized programs. For the first time in five years, SFA requested additional funds mid-year through a deficit appropriation. SFA requested and received \$5.1 million in additional authority to spend funds from collections to fully fund the undergraduate grant programs.

SFA anticipated the number of HELP and MTAG awards would increase for the 2025-26 aid year due to changes made to simplify the FAFSA process, the change to require only 12 credit hours for full-time instead of 15 credit hours, and the increase of the HELP income threshold. Award numbers for both programs increased. However, the award numbers increased significantly *more* than anticipated, especially for HELP. SFA requested the additional spending

MINUTES

authority to avoid the need for proration during the spring term and fully fund MTAG, MESG, and HELP.

Recommendation:

No action is required.

Item 3: Jennifer Rogers presented a request for the Board to approve the FY 2027 Annual Operating Budget (AOB) and the proposed allocation of awards for the 2026-27 aid year. Rogers began by comparing the FY 2026 appropriation to the initial FY 2027 Mississippi Budget Request (MBR), the revised MBR, and the actual FY 2027 appropriation. She then compared the allocation of awards in the original FY 2026 AOB to the actual allocation of awards for 2025-26. Finally, she presented the proposed allocation of awards for 2026-27 and the corresponding FY 2027 AOB. After some discussion, on motion by Barney Daly and second by Mark Keenum, all Board Members legally present and participating voted unanimously to approve the FY 2027 AOB and proposed allocation of awards for 2026-27, signaling their understanding of the need to request a deficit appropriation of approximately \$7.3 million and their desire to identify approximately \$1.6 million in additional funds to fully fund the FAITH Scholarship.

3. Approve FY 2027 Annual Operating Budget and Program Allocation

The Mississippi Office of Student Financial Aid requests approval of the FY27 Annual Operating Budget and Program Allocation.

Summary:

Each year in June or July, the Board approves SFA's annual budget request (MBR) for the subsequent fiscal year. The fiscal needs of SFA may vary substantially between the time the budget is requested and the following spring when legislators are setting budgets and making appropriations. For this reason, SFA often submits a revised request (MBR) to the Legislature near the end of the Legislative Session.

Chart 1: FY 2027 Annual Operating Budget includes details of the FY26 Appropriation, the original FY27 MBR, the FY27 Revised MBR, and the FY27 Appropriation.

- FY26 Appropriation – For FY 2026, SFA received \$47,255,243 in General Funds; authority to spend about \$6,232,339 in carryover unspent General Funds from FY24 and FY25; \$3,000,000 in Education Enhancement Funds (EEF) for FAITH and Winter-Reed; \$250,000 in re-appropriated EEF Funds; and \$1,433,515 in spending authority from collections and other sources. The total original SFA appropriation was \$58,489,080. SFA also received a mid-year deficit appropriation of \$5,100,000 in authority to spend funds from collections. The total of all appropriations for FY26 was \$63,271,097.
- FY27 MBR - In the official budget request submitted in June 2025, SFA requested \$54,356,022 in General Funds; \$6,470,828 in EEF Funds for FAITH and Winter-Reed; and additional spending authority of \$1,542,660 from collections and interest income. The total SFA Original MBR was \$62,369,510.

MINUTES

- FY27 Revised MBR - In December of 2025 and again in March of 2026, the Office submitted additional information to the appropriations chairs and the Legislative Budget Office to revise the request to \$59,750,234 in General Funds; \$6,475,078 in new EEF Funds for FAITH and Winter-Reed; and additional spending authority of \$1,542,875, for a total SFA appropriation of \$67,768,187.
- FY27 Appropriation - The 2026 Mississippi Legislature passed *SB 3060, Appropriation; IHL – Student Financial Aid*, which was significantly less than what was requested. SFA will receive \$47,261,364 in General Funds; \$3,000,000 in EEF Funds for FAITH and Winter-Reed; \$5,100,000 in EEF Funds for MTAG, MESH, and HELP; and \$1,542,660 in spending authority from collections and other sources. The total FY27 SFA appropriation is \$56,904,024.
- FY27 Appropriation (+/-) FY26 Appropriation and FY27 Appropriation (+/-) FY27 Revised MBR - The total FY27 Appropriation is \$6,367,073 less than the final FY26 appropriation that included the deficit. The difference can be explained primarily by the loss of \$6.2 million in carryover funds from FY24 and FY25, which were exhausted in FY26 and not replaced. The total FY27 appropriation was \$10,864,163 less than the FY27 revised MBR. The difference can be explained by the loss of carryover funds and by the Legislature's unwillingness to fund the additional \$3.5 million in new EEF money requested for FAITH and Winter-Reed.

Allocation:

Miss. Code Ann. § 37-106-14 (2) requires the Board to award grants first and limit loans on a first-come, first-served basis with preference for renewals only if funding is sufficient. The appropriation is adequate to award all grants projected at this time as well as new and renewal loans in authorized programs. The appropriation bill provides specific appropriation for certain programs as follows:

- SREB Regional Contract Program (SREB): *Section 5. It is the intention of the Legislature that...the Board...shall expend...an amount not exceeding the funding necessary, contingent upon the availability of qualified applicants, for ten (10) new entering optometry students and the number of returning optometry students who received funding under the program during the preceding school year.*
- Law Enforcement Officers and Firefighters Scholarship (LAW): *Section 6. It is the intention of the Legislature that priority shall be given and funds shall be first allocated to all students eligible for financial aid under the provisions of Section 37-106-39, Mississippi Code of 1972.*
- Speech-Language Pathologist Forgivable Loan (SLPL): *Section 11. Of the funds appropriated in Section 1, an amount **not to exceed** Seventy Thousand Dollars (\$70,000.00) is provided for the Speech-Language Pathologists Loan Forgiveness Program....*
- Winter-Reed Teacher Loan Repayment Program (WRTR) and Fostering Access and Inspiring True Hope (FAITH) Scholarship: *Section 13. Of the funds appropriated in Section 2 of this act, Three Million Dollars (\$3,000,000.00) shall be derived from funds in the Education Enhancement Fund deposited pursuant to Sections 27-65-75 and 27-67-31, Mississippi Code of 1972. This amount shall be used for the Fostering Access and Inspiring True Hope (FAITH) Scholarship Program Act established by Section 37-*

MINUTES

106-81, Mississippi Code of 1972, and the William F. Winter and Jack Reed, Sr., Teacher Loan Repayment Program established by Section 37-106-36, Mississippi Code of 1972.

Re-appropriations:

Section 16. The following sum, or so much thereof as may be necessary, is reappropriated out of any money in the Education Enhancement Fund not otherwise appropriated, to the Mississippi Office of Student Financial Aid for the purpose of reauthorizing the expenditure of Education Enhancement Funds to defray the expenses of the Mississippi Office of Student Financial Aid for the Fostering Access and Inspiring True Hope (FAITH) Scholarship Program Act and the William F. Winter and Jack Reed, Sr., Teacher Loan Repayment Program, as authorized in Senate Bill 2008, 2025 First Extraordinary Session, for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2026, and ending June 30, 2027.....\$ 500,000.00.

Notwithstanding the amount reappropriated under the provisions of this section, in no event shall the amount expended exceed the unexpended balance as of June 30, 2026, from the amount authorized for the previous fiscal year. In addition, this reappropriation shall not change the purpose for which the funds were originally authorized.

Chart 2: 2026-27 Program Allocation shows the FY26 Budgeted Awards and Amounts (initial allocations for the current year), and the FY26 Actual Awards and Amounts (actually awarded) are provided for comparison. Also shown for comparison are the awards and amounts projected for the FY27 Original MBR Allocation and the awards and amounts projected for the FY27 Revised MBR (budget requested near the end of the 2026 Legislative Session). Approval is needed for the FY27 Proposed Allocation of Awards and Amounts (allocation of the Annual Operating Budget). The final columns show the difference between the FY27 Proposed Allocation and the Revised MBR and difference between the FY27 Proposed Allocation and the FY26 Actual Allocation.

The proposed allocations for the FY27 Annual Operating Budget are as follows:

- 1-Administration: 3% cost of living raises and \$2,000 increase to the Travel budget.
- 2-MTAG, MESG, and HELP: Make full awards to all eligible applicants. The projected number of awards represent a modest 1% increase to the number of awards for MTAG and MESG and a 3% increase to HELP due to last year's increase in the HELP income threshold. The projected award amounts represent the average award amounts paid in 25-26, with a 3% tuition increase built in for HELP.
- 3-Forgivable Loan Programs:
 - Award no new or renewal applicants through CNDT.
 - Award no teachers through WRTR, due to limited EEF funding all of which is needed for FAITH (Section 13).
 - Award 1 renewal student through SLPL (Section 11).
 - Award 10 new contract seats and all renewals for SREB (Section 5).
- 4-Other:
 - Award all eligible LAW applicants (Section 6).
 - Award 1 renewal Nissan Scholarship recipient.
 - Award FAITH applicants on a first-come, first-served basis, with preference for renewals until \$3M has been exhausted (Section 13). Although carryover funds were reappropriated for FAITH and WRTR, all FY26 funds will be expended and no funds will be available for carryover.

MINUTES

The FY27 Proposed Allocation is \$7.3 million more than the \$56.9 million appropriation. Legislators are aware the appropriation is \$6.4 million below what was appropriated in FY26 and \$10.9 million below the revised request. Legislators have indicated that SFA should request a mid-year deficit appropriation rather than pro-rating grant awards by 12.5%.

Recommendation:

Board staff recommends approval of this item.

MINUTES

Exhibit 1

FY 2027 Annual Operating Budget						
COMBINED BUDGETS Funding Sources	FY26 Approp	FY27 MBR	FY27 Revised MBR	FY27 Approp	FY27 Approp (+/-) FY26 Approp	FY27 Approp (+/-) FY27 Revised MBR
SFA APPROPRIATION						
<i>GOV. APPROPRIATIONS</i>						
General Support	\$ 47,255,243	\$ 54,356,022	\$ 59,750,234	\$ 47,261,364	\$ 6,121	\$ (12,488,870)
General Support Re-appropriated	\$ 6,232,339	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ (6,232,339)	\$ -
EEF-New						
FAITH & Winter-Reed	\$ 3,000,000	\$ 6,470,828	\$ 6,475,078	\$ 3,000,000	\$ -	\$ (3,475,078)
MTAG, MESG & HELP	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 5,100,000	\$ 5,100,000	\$ 5,100,000
EEF-Re-appropriated						
FAITH & Winter-Reed	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FAITH	\$ 100,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ (100,000)	\$ -
Winter-Reed	\$ 150,000	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ (150,000)	\$ -
Total Gov. Appropriations	\$56,737,582	\$60,826,850	\$66,225,312	\$55,361,364	\$ (1,376,218)	\$(10,863,948)
<i>OTHER SPECIAL FUNDS</i>						
<i>GRANTS AND CONTRACTS</i>						
Federal	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
State	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Grants and Contracts	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
<i>INTEREST INCOME</i>						
Nissan	\$ 11,000	\$ 22,660	\$ 22,875	\$ 11,000	\$ -	\$ (11,875)
Total Interest Income	\$ 11,000	\$ 22,660	\$ 22,875	\$ 11,000	\$ -	\$ (11,875)
<i>OTHER SOURCES</i>						
Law Fund	\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000	\$ -	\$ -
Total Other Sources	\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000	\$ -	\$ -
<i>CASH ON HAND</i>						
Estimated Collections	\$ 1,402,515	\$ 1,500,000	\$ 1,500,000	\$ 1,511,660	\$ 109,145	\$ 11,660
<i>Deficit Spending Authority</i>	<i>\$ 5,100,000</i>	<i>\$ -</i>	<i>\$ -</i>	<i>\$ -</i>	<i>\$ (5,100,000)</i>	<i>\$ -</i>
Total Cash on Hand	\$ 6,502,515	\$ 1,500,000	\$ 1,500,000	\$ 1,511,660	\$ (4,990,855)	\$ 11,660
Total Other Special Funds	\$ 6,533,515	\$ 1,542,660	\$ 1,542,875	\$ 1,542,660	\$ (4,990,855)	\$ (215)
Total SFA Appropriation	\$63,271,097	\$62,369,510	\$67,768,187	\$56,904,024	\$ (6,367,073)	\$(10,864,163)
<i>Needed Deficit Request</i>				\$ 7,309,023		
<i>Total w/ Deficit</i>				\$64,213,047		

MINUTES

Exhibit 2

2026-27 Program Allocation														
Expenditures by Program	FY26 Budgeted Allocation		FY26 Actual Allocation		FY27 Original MBR Allocation		FY27 Revised MBR Allocation		FY27 Proposed Allocation		Proposed (+/-) Revised MBR		Proposed (+/-) FY26 Actual	
	Awards	Amounts	Awards	Amounts	Awards	Amounts	Awards	Amounts	Awards	Amounts	Awards	Amounts	Awards	Amounts
1- Administration														
Salaries, Wages and Fringes		\$ 998,740		\$ 998,740		\$ 1,028,702		\$ 1,028,702		\$ 1,028,702		\$ -		\$ 29,962
Travel		\$ 8,000		\$ 8,000		\$ 8,000		\$ 10,000		\$ 10,000		\$ -		\$ 2,000
Contractual Service		\$ 550,000		\$ 550,000		\$ 550,000		\$ 550,000		\$ 550,000		\$ -		\$ -
Commodities		\$ 10,000		\$ 10,000		\$ 10,000		\$ 10,000		\$ 10,000		\$ -		\$ -
Equipment		\$ 10,000		\$ 10,000		\$ 10,000		\$ 10,000		\$ 10,000		\$ -		\$ -
Total Administration		\$ 1,576,740		\$ 1,576,740		\$ 1,606,702		\$ 1,608,702		\$ 1,608,702		\$ -		\$ 31,962
2- MTAG/MESG and HELP														
MTAG	17,017	\$ 9,954,945	17,885	\$ 10,747,654	17,528	\$ 10,253,593	18,064	\$ 10,855,131	18,064	\$ 10,855,131	0	\$ -	179	\$ 107,477
MESG	3,844	\$ 8,772,008	3,882	\$ 9,000,242	3,882	\$ 8,859,728	3,921	\$ 9,090,244	3,921	\$ 9,090,244	0	\$ -	39	\$ 90,002
HELP	4,301	\$ 31,832,877	4,843	\$ 36,530,159	4,430	\$ 34,108,847	4,988	\$ 38,754,846	4,988	\$ 38,754,846	0	\$ -	145	\$ 2,224,687
Total MTAG/MESG/HELP	25,162	\$50,559,830	26,610	\$56,278,055	25,840	\$53,222,169	26,973	\$58,700,221	26,973	\$58,700,221	0	\$ -	363	\$ 2,422,166
3 - Forgivable Loan Programs														
Teacher Programs:														
CNDT (Graduate)	1	\$ 10,000	0	\$ -	0	\$ -	0	\$ -	0	\$ -	0	\$ -	0	\$ -
Winter-Reed Loan Repay	425	\$ 1,500,000	197	\$ 917,000	470	\$ 2,000,000	425	\$ 2,000,000	0	\$ -	-425	\$ (2,000,000)	(197)	\$ (917,000)
Health/Science Programs:														
SLPL (Graduate)	6	\$ 70,000	2	\$ 28,902	4	\$ 70,000	2	\$ 30,000	1	\$ 10,000	-1	\$ (20,000)	(1)	\$ (18,902)
SREB (Graduate)	35	\$ 741,440	34	\$ 720,256	37	\$ 814,000	37	\$ 814,000	36	\$ 762,624	-1	\$ (51,376)	2	\$ 42,368
Total Forgivable Loan Programs	467	\$ 2,321,440	233	\$ 1,666,158	511	\$ 2,884,000	464	\$ 2,844,000	37	\$ 772,624	-427	\$ (2,071,376)	-196	\$ (893,534)
4 - Other														
LAW	10	\$ 132,000	8	\$ 88,176	12	\$ 163,152	10	\$ 117,312	10	\$ 120,000	0	\$ 2,688	2	\$ 31,824
Nissan	1	\$ 11,000	1	\$ 11,104	2	\$ 22,660	2	\$ 22,874	1	\$ 11,500	-1	\$ (11,374)	0	\$ 396
FAITH Scholarship	278	\$ 3,570,087	278	\$ 3,650,864	338	\$ 4,470,828	350	\$ 4,475,078	228	\$ 3,000,000	-122	\$ (1,475,078)	(50)	\$ (650,864)
Total Other	289	\$ 3,713,087	287	\$ 3,750,144	352	\$ 4,656,640	362	\$ 4,615,264	239	\$ 3,131,500	-123	\$ (1,483,764)	-48	\$ (618,644)
TOTAL Loans, Schols, Grants	25,918	\$56,594,357	27,130	\$61,694,357	26,703	\$60,762,808	27,799	\$66,159,485	27,249	\$62,604,345	-550	\$ (3,555,140)	119	\$ 909,988
TOTAL SFA BUDGET	25,918	\$58,171,097	27,130	\$63,271,097	26,703	\$62,369,510	27,799	\$67,768,187	27,249	\$64,213,047	(550)	\$ (3,555,140)	119	\$ 941,950

MINUTES

Item 4: Jennifer Rogers presented a request to update the Higher Education Legislative Plan (HELP) Grant Rules and Regulations per changes to the authorizing code. On motion by Teresa Hubbard and second by Barney Daly, all Board Members legally present and participating voted unanimously to approve the proposed changes.

4. Update APA Part 615 Higher Education Legislative Plan for Needy Students Grant (HELP) Rules and Regulations per Legislative Changes

Request

The Mississippi Office of Student Financial Aid requests approval to update APA Part 615 Higher Education Legislative Plan for Needy Students Rules and Regulations to incorporate a change made during the 2026 Legislative Session. The HELP curriculum requirement was eliminated.

Summary

The Higher Education Legislative Plan for Needy Students Grant was amended during the 2026 Legislative Session to eliminate the requirement that eligible students must have completed a high school curriculum that includes the College Preparatory Curriculum required by the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning for admission into a state university.

Because the Legislature revised the statutory requirements, the current rule language must be updated so that the Board's rules are consistent with Miss. Code Ann. § 37-106-75 as amended.

The proposed rule revisions remove the curriculum requirement as well as language about the FAFSA deadline that was applicable to a single application cycle. The proposed changes are intended to align the rules with current law and support consistent administration of the HELP Grant.

The recommended changes are as follows:

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.

I. GENERAL ELIGIBILITY

...

F. The applicant must meet the following academic requirements:

...

- 1.** The applicant must have graduated from high school within the two (2) years preceding the application, as verified by the institution before disbursement of awards, with a minimum cumulative grade point

MINUTES

average (GPA) of 2.5 calculated on a 4.0 scale, as certified by the high school counselor or other school official.

~~2. The applicant must have successfully completed a high school curriculum that includes the College Preparatory Curriculum approved by the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning and required for admission into a state university.~~

2. ~~3.~~The applicant must have a composite score on the American College Test (ACT) of at least twenty (20) from a national test or tests. In lieu of ACT scores, students may submit equivalent SAT scores according to the official ACT/SAT concordance tables in publication at the time of the test in question.

...

I. APPLICATION REQUIREMENTS

A. First-time applicants must:

...

2. Submit by the document deadline of April 30:

...

~~d) Proof of completion of the HELP Core Curriculum which includes the College Preparatory Curriculum approved by the Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher Learning and required for admission into a state university.~~

d) ~~e)~~If the applicant has earned at least twelve (12) hours of college credit and is considered to be a currently enrolled student, proof of a cumulative grade point average (GPA) of at least 2.5 calculated on a 4.0 scale on earned credit hours as certified by the attending institution.

3. Fully complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) by the document deadline of April 30. ~~The FAFSA completion and submission deadline is temporarily extended through June 30, 2024 for the 24-25 FAFSA only.~~

...

B. Renewal Applicants Must:

...

2. Fully complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) annually by the document deadline of April 30. ~~The FAFSA completion and submission deadline is temporarily extended through June 30, 2024 for the 24-25 FAFSA only.~~

...

Source: Miss. Code Ann. § 37-106-75.

MINUTES

Recommendation

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

Item 5: Jennifer Rogers presented a request to update the Law Enforcement Officers and Firefighters Scholarship (LAW) Rules and Regulations per changes to the authorizing code. On motion by Mark Keenum and second by Barney Daly, all Board Members legally present and participating voted unanimously to approve the proposed changes.

5. Update APA Part 617 Mississippi Law Enforcement Officers and Firefighters (LAW) Rules and Regulations per Legislative Changes

Request

The Mississippi Office of Student Financial Aid requests approval to update APA Part 617 Mississippi Law Enforcement Officers and Firefighters Scholarship (LAW) Rules and Regulations to incorporate a change made during the 2026 Legislative Session. Senate Bill 2368 revised the definition of “Mississippi law enforcement officer.”

Summary

The Mississippi Law Enforcement Officers and Firefighters Scholarship was amended during the 2026 Legislative Session to revise the definition of “Mississippi law enforcement officer.” Under the amended statute, a Mississippi law enforcement officer includes: (1) any law enforcement officer who is certified and in good standing with the Board on Law Enforcement Standards and Training; (2) constables; (3) members of the National Guard serving as peace officers when ordered to state emergency duty under authority vested in the Governor; and (4) correctional officers employed by the Mississippi Department of Corrections.

The current LAW rules contain an older, detailed list of specific law enforcement officer categories, including state highway patrolmen, municipal police officers, sheriffs and deputy sheriffs, conservation officers, Alcoholic Beverage Control Division agents and inspectors, tax commission scales enforcement officers, agents of the Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics, and correctional, probation, and parole officers. Because the Legislature revised the statutory definition, the current rule language must be updated so that the Board’s rules are consistent with Miss. Code Ann. § 37-106-39 as amended.

The proposed rule revisions replace the outdated detailed listing with the broader statutory definition adopted by the Legislature. The proposed changes are intended to align the rules with current law and support consistent administration of the LAW Scholarship.

The recommended changes are as follows:

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).

...

MINUTES

II. GENERAL ELIGIBILITY

...

3. “Mississippi law enforcement officer” is defined as follows:

- a) Any law enforcement officer who is certified and in good standing with the Board on Law Enforcement Standards and Training.
- ~~a) “State highway patrolmen” including all law enforcement officers, regardless of department or bureau, of the Mississippi Highway Safety patrol.~~
- ~~b) “Municipal police officers” including all law enforcement officers of any municipality who are regular duty personnel on full-time status, but not including auxiliary officers or those serving on a temporary or part-time status.~~
- ~~c) “Sheriffs” and “deputy sheriffs” including all law enforcement officers of full-time duty status on a regular basis serving the sheriff’s department of any county at the time of death or injury, but not including deputy sheriffs who are engaged in administrative or civil duty, or deputy sheriffs serving in a temporary capacity or part-time basis.~~
- b) ~~d)~~ “Constables” including all duly elected constables of any beat of any county within the state ~~who were permanently or fatally injured~~ while actually engaged in the performance of their duties concerning the criminal laws of the county and state.
- ~~e) “Conservation officers” including all duly appointed game wardens employed by the State of Mississippi on a full-time status who were permanently or fatally injured while actually engaged in the performance of their duties concerning the game laws of the state.~~
- ~~f) “Alcoholic Beverage Control Division agents and inspectors” including all duly appointed agents and investigators of the Alcoholic Beverage Control Division of the Mississippi State Tax Commission on a full-time duty status who were permanently or fatally injured while actually engaged in the performance of their duties concerning the alcoholic beverage control laws of the state.~~
- c) ~~g)~~ Members of the National Guard serving as peace officers when ordered to state emergency duty under authority vested in the Governor by the Constitution and laws of the state ~~and who during that service were fatally or permanently injured.~~
- ~~h) “Tax commission scales enforcement officers” including all duly appointed scales enforcement officers of the Mississippi State Tax~~

MINUTES

~~Commission on a full time duty status who were permanently or fatally injured while actually engaged in the performance of their duties.~~

~~i) Duly appointed agents of the Mississippi Bureau of Narcotics.~~

~~d) j) Correctional, Probation and Parole~~ officers employed by the Mississippi Department of Corrections.

...

Source: Miss. Code Ann. § 37-106-39.

Recommendation

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

Item 6: Jennifer Rogers presented a request to update the Fostering Access and Inspiring True Hope Scholarship (FAITH) Rules and Regulations to limit the housing component of the FAITH award to only what would cover the cost of standard, double-occupancy housing. Teresa Hubbard motioned to approve the changes and Mark Keenum seconded the motion. However, after discussion regarding the definition of “standard”, Hubbard withdrew the motion and the Board agreed to table the request until the next meeting.

6. Update APA Part 623 Fostering Access and Inspiring True Hope Scholarship (FAITH) Rules and Regulations to Limit Housing Costs

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 the treatment of housing costs in the FAITH award calculation and to ensure that FAITH does not cover premium housing choices beyond a standard, double-occupancy assignment.

Summary

Under current rules, the FAITH Scholarship for students attending Mississippi public institutions is calculated as the student’s total Cost of Attendance (COA) less all other grant aid, and FAITH may also include costs associated with room and board during institutional holidays when such accommodations are available. However, the rules do not specify how the housing component of COA should be treated when students select higher-cost housing options, which can lead to FAITH subsidizing more expensive housing choices.

The proposed changes codify a standard, double-occupancy on-campus housing benchmark for FAITH and limit the housing component of the FAITH award when a student voluntarily selects higher-cost housing, while preserving Board discretion to address situations in which more expensive housing is required because standard housing is not reasonably available or is needed as a documented accommodation.

The recommended changes are as follows:

Title 10: Education Institutions and Agencies

MINUTES

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.

...
II. 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. The housing cost recognized for the FAITH Scholarship shall be the lesser of the actual cost of campus housing or the average cost of standard, double-occupancy campus housing for undergraduate students at the student's attending institution for the applicable term. When a student voluntarily selects single-occupancy or premium housing options, the housing cost recognized for this program shall not exceed the average amount described above, provided that standard, double-occupancy housing at or below that amount was reasonably available to the student at the time of selection. In unusual circumstances where higher-cost housing is required because standard, double-occupancy campus housing is not reasonably available to the student, or where higher-cost housing is necessary as a documented disability, medical, or mental health accommodation, the Board may, in its sole discretion, approve coverage of a higher housing amount upon receipt of supporting documentation. 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. § 37-106-81.

Recommendation

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

Item 7: Jennifer Rogers presented several updates for the Board.

The Board will need to meet again in late June or early July to approve the 2028 MBR (budget request for 27-28) and the 5-year strategic plan. Rogers will send a scheduling poll.

MSU's Research and Curriculum Unit included a redesign of the SFA website in their GEAR UP Grant. The new website should launch at the end of May or early June. Rogers will reveal the new site design during the next meeting.

As part of the new site, SFA is working with a video producer to create 15 short, "how-to" style videos to include on the site. Most of the videos are targeted at students and parents, but several will speak to

MINUTES

high school counselors and financial aid administrators. The goal of the videos is to communicate the answers to frequently asked questions in a fun, engaging way.

No action was taken by the Board.

7. Updates and Announcements

June Meeting
Redesigned Website
How-To Videos

ADDITIONAL AGENDA ITEMS IF NECESSARY

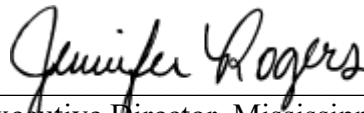
The Board did not consider any additional agenda items.

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 4:02 pm.



Executive Director, Mississippi Postsecondary Education Financial
Assistance Board

REGULAR AGENDA

1. Approve the FY 2028 Budget Request (MBR)

Request:

The Mississippi Office of Student Financial Aid requests approval of the FY 2028 MBR.

Summary:

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 is the 2027-28 Program Allocation for the Budget Request. The chart includes the FY27 Allocation based on the original appropriation (light blue), the FY27 Allocation based on the budget with anticipated deficit (blue; approved May 2026), the FY28 MBR (orange), the difference between the FY28 MBR and the FY27 Allocation based on the original appropriation (no color), and the difference between the FY28 MBR and the FY27 Allocation based on the budget with deficit (no color). Highlights include:

- 1-Administration: Request 3% cost of living salary increases and an additional full-time position to assist with program administration due to the creation of the UPSKILL Grant program; 5% increase to travel budget; and 2% increase to contractual services budget.
- 2-MTAG, MESH and HELP: Anticipates slight increase (1%) to the number of awards for MTAG, MESH, and HELP due to FY28 being the third year since the definition of full-time changed and the HELP income threshold increased; and 2.5% increase for HELP award amounts due to tuition increases.
- 3-Forgivable Loan and Repayment Programs:
 - Request repeal of Critical Needs Dyslexia Therapy Forgivable Loan.
 - Request full funding of Winter-Reed Teacher Loan Repayment at \$2M annually.
 - Request repeal of Speech Language Pathology Forgivable Loan.
 - Request full funding of SREB Regional Contract Forgivable Loan for optometrists, since the program has been a legislative priority.
- 4-Other:
 - Request full funding of LAW; anticipate 2.5% tuition increase.
 - Request spending authority for 2 Nissan Scholarships to be paid out of the Nissan trust.
 - Request full funding for FAITH; anticipate 2.5% tuition increase.
 - Request initial legislative funding for the UPSKILL Grant program, which was authorized during the 2026 Legislative Session but was not funded for FY27.

Exhibit 2 is the FY 2028 Budget Request with Funding by Source. The chart shows the FY27 Original Appropriation, the FY27 Appropriation with the deficit we will be requesting, the FY28 MBR, the difference between the FY28 request and the FY27 original appropriation and the difference between the FY28 request and the FY27 appropriation with the deficit.

Exhibit 3 is the FY 2028 SFA Budget Narrative, which corresponds to the SFA budget.

Recommendation:

Board staff recommends approval of the FY 2028 Budget Request.

REGULAR AGENDA

Exhibit 1

FY 2028 (2027-28) MBR												
Expenditures by Program	FY27 Allocation (Original Budget)		FY27 Allocation (Budget w/Deficit)		FY28 MBR		(+/-) FY27 Allocation (Original Budget)			(+/-) FY27 Allocation (Budget w/Deficit)		
	Awards	Amounts	Awards	Amounts	Awards	Amounts	Awards	Amounts	%	Awards	Amounts	%
1- Administration												
Salaries, Wages and Fringes		\$ 1,028,702		\$ 1,028,702		\$ 1,147,673		\$ 118,971			\$ 118,971	
Travel		\$ 10,000		\$ 10,000		\$ 10,500		\$ 500			\$ 500	
Contractual Service		\$ 550,000		\$ 550,000		\$ 561,000		\$ 11,000			\$ 11,000	
Commodities		\$ 10,000		\$ 10,000		\$ 10,000		\$ -			\$ -	
Equipment		\$ 10,000		\$ 10,000		\$ 10,000		\$ -			\$ -	
Total Administration		\$ 1,608,702		\$ 1,608,702		\$ 1,739,173		\$ 130,471	8.1%		\$ 130,471	8.1%
2- MTAG/MESG and HELP												
MTAG	18,064	\$ 9,498,239	18,064	\$ 10,855,131	18,244	\$ 10,963,389	180	\$ 1,465,150		180	\$ 108,258	
MESG	3,921	\$ 7,953,964	3,921	\$ 9,090,244	3,960	\$ 9,181,081	39	\$ 1,227,117		39	\$ 90,837	
HELP	4,988	\$ 33,938,995	4,988	\$ 38,754,846	5,038	\$ 40,119,577	50	\$ 6,180,582		50	\$ 1,364,731	
Total MTAG/MESG/HELP	26,973	\$51,391,198	26,973	\$58,700,221	27,242	\$60,264,047	269	\$ 8,872,849	17.3%	269	\$ 1,563,826	2.7%
3 - Forgivable Loan & Repayment Prgs												
Teacher Programs:												
CNDT (Graduate)	0	\$ -	0	\$ -	0	\$ -	0	\$ -		0	\$ -	
Winter-Reed Loan Repay	0	\$ -	0	\$ -	470	\$ 2,000,000	470	\$ 2,000,000		470	\$ 2,000,000	
Health/Science Programs:												
SLPL (Graduate)	1	\$ 10,000	1	\$ 10,000	0	\$ -	-1	\$ (10,000)		-1	\$ (10,000)	
SREB (Graduate)	36	\$ 762,624	36	\$ 762,624	36	\$ 781,704	0	\$ 19,080		0	\$ 19,080	
Total Forgivable Loan Programs	37	\$ 772,624	37	\$ 772,624	506	\$ 2,781,704	469	\$ 2,009,080	260.0%	469	\$ 2,009,080	260.0%
4 - Other												
LAW	10	\$ 120,000	10	\$ 120,000	10	\$ 123,000	0	\$ 3,000		0	\$ 3,000	
Nissan	1	\$ 11,500	1	\$ 11,500	2	\$ 23,575	1	\$ 12,075		1	\$ 12,075	
FAITH Scholarship	228	\$ 3,000,000	228	\$ 3,000,000	350	\$ 4,720,395	122	\$ 1,720,395		122	\$ 1,720,395	
UPSKILL	0	\$ -	0	\$ -	1,000	\$ 1,500,000	1,000	\$ 1,500,000		1,000	\$ 1,500,000	
Total Other	239	\$ 3,131,500	239	\$ 3,131,500	1,362	\$ 6,366,970	1,123	\$ 3,235,470	103.3%	1,123	\$ 3,235,470	103.3%
TOTAL Loans, Schols, Grants	27,249	\$55,295,322	27,249	\$62,604,345	29,110	\$69,412,721	1,861	\$14,117,399	25.5%	1,861	\$ 6,808,376	10.9%
TOTAL SFA BUDGET	27,249	\$56,904,024	27,249	\$64,213,047	29,110	\$71,151,894	1,861	\$14,247,870	25.0%	1,861	\$ 6,938,847	10.8%

REGULAR AGENDA

Exhibit 2

FY 2028 Budget Request (MBR)							
SFA BUDGET Funding Sources	FY 27 Appropriation (Original)	FY27 Appropriation (w/Deficit)	FY28 MBR	(+/-) FY27 (Original)		(+/-) FY27 (w/Deficit)	
				Amounts	%	Amounts	%
SFA APPROPRIATION							
GOV. APPROPRIATIONS							
General Support	\$ 47,261,364	\$ 47,261,364	\$ 64,087,924	\$ 16,826,560	35.6%	\$ 16,826,560	35.6%
General Support Re-appropriated	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	-	\$ -	-
<i>General Support - Deficit</i>	<i>\$ -</i>	<i>\$ 7,309,023</i>	<i>\$ -</i>	<i>\$ -</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>\$ (7,309,023)</i>	<i>-100.0%</i>
EEF - New							
FAITH & Winter-Reed	\$ 3,000,000	\$ 3,000,000	\$ 6,720,395	\$ 3,720,395	124.0%	\$ 3,720,395	124.0%
MTAG, MESG & HELP	\$ 5,100,000	\$ 5,100,000	\$ -	\$ (5,100,000)	-100.0%	\$ (5,100,000)	-100.0%
EEF - Reappropriated							
FAITH & Winter-Reed	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	-	\$ -	-
FAITH	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	-	\$ -	-
Winter-Reed	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	=	\$ -	=
Total Gov. Appropriations	\$55,361,364	\$62,670,387	\$70,808,319	\$15,446,955	27.9%	\$ 8,137,932	13.0%
OTHER SPECIAL FUNDS							
GRANTS AND CONTRACTS							
Federal	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	-	\$ -	-
State	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	-	\$ -	-
Total Grants and Contracts	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	-	\$ -	-
INTEREST INCOME							
Nissan	\$ 11,500	\$ 11,500	\$ 23,575	\$ 12,075	105.0%	\$ 12,075	105.0%
Total Interest Income	\$ 11,500	\$ 11,500	\$ 23,575	\$ 12,075	105.0%	\$ 12,075	105.0%
OTHER SOURCES							
Law Fund	\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000	\$ -	0.0%	\$ -	0.0%
Total Other Sources	\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000	\$ -	0.0%	\$ -	0.0%
CASH ON HAND							
Estimated Collections	\$ 1,511,160	\$ 1,511,160	\$ 300,000	\$ (1,211,160)	-80.1%	\$ (1,211,160)	-80.1%
<i>Deficit Spending Authority</i>	<i>\$ -</i>	<i>\$ -</i>	<i>\$ -</i>	<i>\$ -</i>	<i>-</i>	<i>\$ -</i>	<i>-</i>
Total Cash on Hand	\$ 1,511,160	\$ 1,511,160	\$ 300,000	\$ (1,211,160)	-80.1%	\$ (1,211,160)	-80.1%
Total Other Special Funds	\$ 1,542,660	\$ 1,542,660	\$ 343,575	\$ (1,199,085)	-77.7%	\$ (1,199,085)	-77.7%
Total SFA Appropriation	\$56,904,024	\$64,213,047	\$71,151,894	\$14,247,870	25.0%	\$ 6,938,847	10.8%

REGULAR AGENDA

Exhibit 3

NARRATIVE FY 2028 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 direct information through high school counselors, counselor association meetings, and counselor training events. College access partners in turn provide direct information to students. 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 state-supported financial assistance.

FY 2027 Appropriation Request

On behalf of the students and the state of Mississippi, SFA requests **\$71,151,894 for FY28**, which represents **an increase of \$14,247,870 or 25.0%** over FY27. The large increase is due primarily to the fact that SFA received \$10 million less than what was requested in FY27. The FY28 request includes:

Governmental Appropriations:

- **\$64,087,924 in General Funds**, which represents **an increase of \$16,826,560 or 35.6%** over FY27;
- **\$0 in spending authority for carryover General Funds**, which represents **no change** from FY27. No carryover funds from FY27 are expected to be available for use in FY28;
- **\$6,720,395 in Education Enhancement Funds earmarked for FAITH and WRTR** (\$4,720,395 for FAITH and \$2,000,000 for WRTR), which represents **an increase of \$3,720,395 or 124.0%** over FY27;
- **\$0 in Education Enhancement Funds earmarked for MTAG, MESH and HELP**, which represents a **decrease of \$5,100,000 or 100%** from FY27; SFA requests that all funds for MTAG, MESH, and FAITH come in the form of General Support instead of EEF.
- **\$0 in re-appropriated Education Enhancement Funds for FAITH and WRTR**, which represents **no change** from FY27;

Other Special Funds:

- **\$343,575 in Other Special Funds** (includes Federal and State Grants and Contracts, Interest Income, Cash on Hand and Other Sources), which represents a **decrease of \$1,199,085 or 77.7%** from FY27.

REGULAR AGENDA

- 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 administer the legislatively authorized state student financial aid programs; 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 (FY27 Estimated and FY28 Increase/Decrease for continuations) of MBR-1-03 and designated Budget Unit Decisions columns of MBR-1-03-A:
(D) Additional Needs – **\$130,471 or 8.1%**: Funds are requested to provide 3% cost of living salary increases for all current employees and a new full-time employee to assist with program administration. Funds are also requested for a 5% increase to the travel budget and a 2% increase to the contractual services budget.

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 (FY27 Estimated and FY28 Increase/Decrease for continuations) of MBR-1-03 and designated Budget Unit Decisions columns of MBR-1-03-A:
(D) Additional Needs – **\$8,872,849 or 17.3%**: The budget request anticipates a slight increase (1%) to the number of awards for MTAG, MESG, and HELP due to FY28 being the third year since the definition of full-time changed and the HELP income threshold increased. The budget also anticipates a 2.5% increase for HELP award amounts due to tuition increases. The primary cause for the increase is the underfunding of MTAG, MESG, and HELP in FY27 by approximately \$7.3 million. The MTAG/MESG and HELP request includes:
 - **\$10,963,389 for MTAG**, which represents an increase of **\$1,465,150** over FY27;
 - **\$9,181,081 for MESG**, which represents an increase of **\$1,227,117** over FY27;
 - **\$40,119,577 for HELP**, which represents an increase of **\$6,180,582** over FY27.

3-FORGIVABLE LOAN AND REPAYMENT PROGRAMS

REGULAR AGENDA

- I. Program Description: SFA operates one forgivable loan program, the Critical Needs Dyslexia Therapy Forgivable Loan Program (CNDT), and one loan repayment program, the Winter-Reed Teacher Loan Repayment Program (WRTR), to support teachers and education. SFA also administers two health/science related programs, the Speech-Language Pathologist Forgivable Loan Program (SLPL) and the Southern Regional Education Board Forgivable Loan Program for optometry (SREB).
- II. Program Objective: Student Financial aid programs have been authorized by the Legislature:
 - 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; and
 - 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.
- III. Current program activities as supported by the funding in Columns 5-12 (FY27 Estimated and FY28 Increase/Decrease for continuations) of MBR-1-03 and designated Budget Unit Decisions columns of MBR-1-03-A:

(D) Additional Needs – **\$2,009,080 or 260.0%**: An increase in expenditures for the Forgivable Loan and Loan Repayment Programs is requested to fully fund the Winter-Reed Teacher Loan Repayment Program at \$2,000,000 as it has been for every year prior to FY26 and to award all SREB Regional Contract Program seats at the projected rate for 2027-28.

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. The loan will be forgiven for recipients who serve as licensed dyslexia therapist in a Mississippi public or charter school for one year for each year of funding received. The Postsecondary Board recommends repealing the CNDT program as part of a continued effort to phase out all forgivable loan programs. The **CNDT request is \$0**, which represents **no change from FY27**.

The William F. Winter – Jack Reed, Sr. Teacher Loan Repayment Program (WRTR) helps teachers repay their student loans. The **WRTR request is \$2,000,000**, which represents an **increase of \$2,000,000 from FY27**. WRTR has historically been funded with EEF 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 Postsecondary Board recommends repealing the SLPL program as part of a continued effort

REGULAR AGENDA

to phase out all forgivable loan programs. The **SLPL request is \$0**. The request represents **a decrease of \$10,000 from FY27**.

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 10 seats per entering class, for a total of 40 contract seats each year. The cost of each contract seat typically increases annually. The rate for each seat in FY28 will be \$21,714. The **SREB request is \$781,704 for 36 seats**, which represents an **increase of \$19,080 over FY27**.

4. OTHER

- I. Program Description: SFA operates the Law Enforcement Officers and Firefighters Scholarship Program (LAW), which is funded by the Mississippi Legislature and partially through a special fund; the Nissan Scholarship (NISS), which is funded through the Nissan Trust; the Fostering Access and Inspiring True Hope Scholarship (FAITH), which is funded through EEF funds deposited in the FAITH Scholarship Trust; and the UPSKILL Mississippi Grant program, which was authorized in FY27 but not funded.
- 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 (FY27 Estimated and FY28 Increase/Decrease for continuations) of MBR-1-03 and designated Budget Unit Decisions columns of MBR-1-03-A: (D) Additional Needs – **\$3,235,470 or 103.3%**: An overall increase in expenditures for the Other programs is expected as follows:

The Law Enforcement Officers and Firemen Scholarship Program (LAW) provides education to the dependent children or spouses of deceased or disabled service men and women. The **LAW request is \$123,000**, which represents an **increase of \$3,000 over FY27**.

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 \$23,575**, which represents an **increase of \$12,075 over FY27**. NISS is funded with interest earned on the Nissan Trust.

The Representative Bill Kinkade Fostering Access and Inspiring True Hope (FAITH) Scholarship was created during the 2022 Legislative Session to make full awards to students who have interacted with the state's foster care system. SFA started making awards in 2023-24. The **FAITH request is \$4,720,395**, which represents an **increase of \$1,720,395 over FY27**. FAITH has historically been funded with EEF funds.

The UPSKILL Mississippi Grant Program was created during the 2026 Legislative Session to provide a last-dollar tuition only scholarship for adults pursuing a community college

REGULAR AGENDA

credential that leads to work in a priority sector. The program was not funded in FY27. The **UPSKILL request is \$1,500,000**, which represents an **increase of \$1,500,000 over FY27**.

Funding Request Explanation:

SFA requests a total of \$71,151,894 for FY28.

The request includes \$70,808,319 in General Support and \$343,575 in Special Funds.

The General Support request includes \$6,720,395 in EEF Funds (\$4,720,395 for FAITH and \$2,000,000 for WRTR).

The Special Funds request includes \$343,575 in spending authority for investments (\$23,575 for NISS and \$20,000 for LAW) and cash on hand from collections (\$300,000).

No prior-year General Funds or EEF funds are expected to be available for carryover or reappropriation in FY28.

REGULAR AGENDA

2. Approve the FY 2028-32 Five-Year Strategic Plan

The Mississippi Office of Student Financial Aid requests approval of the FY 2028-32 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 4 is the FY 2028-32 Five-Year Strategic Plan with Expenditures by Program.

Beyond the FY 2028 request noted above, the plan anticipates the following changes:

- 1-Administration: Requests 3% cost of living salary increases for all employees each year, an increase of 5% to the travel budget each year, and a 2% increase to the contractual services budget each year.
- 2-MTAG/MESG and HELP: Anticipates modest growth of 1% in the number of recipients for MTAG, MESG, and HELP through FY29 to account for four years of students since the HELP income threshold increased and the definition of full-time changed. The HELP Grant budget anticipates tuition increases of 2.5% each year.
- 3-Forgivable Loan and Repayment Programs: Anticipates repeal of the Critical Needs Dyslexia Therapy Forgivable Loan and Speech Language Pathology Forgivable Loan Programs as part of a continued effort to phase out all forgivable loan programs. Requests continued funding of the Winter-Reed Teacher Loan Repayment Program at \$2,000,000 each year and continued funding of the SREB Regional Contract Forgivable Loan Program for Optometrists.
- 4-Other: Anticipates growth of the FAITH Scholarship program through FY30. The LAW, NISS, and FAITH program budgets anticipate tuition increases of 2.5% each year. Anticipates increased funding for UPSKILL, maxing out at \$3,000,000 for 2,000 students by FY30.

Exhibit 5 is the FY 2028-32 Five-Year Strategic Plan with Funding by Source.

Exhibit 6 is the FY 2028-32 SFA Five-Year Strategic Plan Narrative.

Recommendation:

Board staff recommends approval of the FY 2027-31 Five-Year Strategic Plan.

REGULAR AGENDA

Exhibit 4

5-Year Strategic Plan with Expenditures by Program (FY 2028 - FY 2032)

Expenditures by Program	FY 2028		FY 2029			FY 2030			FY 2031			FY 2032		
	Awards	Amounts	Awards	Amounts	Additional Over Prior Year	Awards	Amounts	Additional Over Prior Year	Awards	Amounts	Additional Over Prior Year	Awards	Amounts	Additional Over Prior Year
1- Administration														
Salaries, Wages and Fringes		\$ 1,147,673		\$ 1,182,103	\$ 34,430		\$ 1,217,566	\$ 35,463		\$ 1,254,093	\$ 36,527		\$ 1,291,716	\$ 37,623
Travel		\$ 10,500		\$ 11,025	\$ 525		\$ 11,576	\$ 551		\$ 12,155	\$ 579		\$ 12,763	\$ 608
Contractual Service		\$ 561,000		\$ 572,220	\$ 11,220		\$ 583,664	\$ 11,444		\$ 595,338	\$ 11,673		\$ 607,244	\$ 11,907
Commodities		\$ 10,000		\$ 10,000	\$ -		\$ 10,000	\$ -		\$ 10,000	\$ -		\$ 10,000	\$ -
Equipment		\$ 10,000		\$ 10,000	\$ -		\$ 10,000	\$ -		\$ 10,000	\$ -		\$ 10,000	\$ -
Total Administration		\$ 1,739,173		\$ 1,785,348	\$ 46,175		\$ 1,832,807	\$ 47,459		\$ 1,881,586	\$ 48,779		\$ 1,931,723	\$ 50,137
2- MTAG/MESG and HELP														
MTAG	18,244	\$ 10,963,389	18,426	\$ 11,073,023	\$ 109,634	18,426	\$ 11,073,023	\$ -	18,426	\$ 11,073,023	\$ -	18,426	\$ 11,073,023	\$ -
MESG	3,960	\$ 9,181,081	4,000	\$ 9,272,892	\$ 91,811	4,000	\$ 9,272,892	\$ -	4,000	\$ 9,272,892	\$ -	4,000	\$ 9,272,892	\$ -
HELP	5,038	\$ 40,119,577	5,088	\$ 41,533,792	\$ 1,414,215	5,088	\$ 42,572,137	\$ 1,038,345	5,088	\$ 43,636,440	\$ 1,064,303	5,088	\$ 44,727,351	\$ 1,090,911
Total MTAG/MESG and HELP	27,242	\$60,264,047	27,514	\$61,879,707	\$1,615,660	27,514	\$62,918,052	\$1,038,345	27,514	\$63,982,355	\$1,064,303	27,514	\$65,073,266	\$1,090,911
3 - Forgivable Loan & Repayment Prgs														
Teacher Programs:														
CNDT (Graduate)	0	\$ -	0	\$ -	\$ -	0	\$ -	\$ -	0	\$ -	\$ -	0	\$ -	\$ -
Winter-Reed Loan Repay	470	\$ 2,000,000	470	\$ 2,000,000	\$ -	470	\$ 2,000,000	\$ -	470	\$ 2,000,000	\$ -	470	\$ 2,000,000	\$ -
Health/Science Related Programs:														
SLPL	0	\$ -	0	\$ -	\$ -	0	\$ -	\$ -	0	\$ -	\$ -	0	\$ -	\$ -
SREB	36	\$ 781,704	38	\$ 845,766	\$ 64,062	40	\$ 912,560	\$ 66,794	40	\$ 935,400	\$ 22,840	40	\$ 958,800	\$ 23,400
Total Forgive Ln/Repay Programs	506	\$ 2,781,704	508	\$ 2,845,766	\$ 64,062	510	\$ 2,912,560	\$ 66,794	510	\$ 2,935,400	\$ 22,840	510	\$ 2,958,800	\$ 23,400
4 - Other														
LAW	10	\$ 123,000	12	\$ 151,290	\$ 28,290	12	\$ 155,072	\$ 3,782	12	\$ 158,949	\$ 3,877	12	\$ 162,923	\$ 3,974
Nissan	2	\$ 23,575	2	\$ 24,164	\$ 589	2	\$ 24,768	\$ 604	2	\$ 25,388	\$ 619	2	\$ 26,022	\$ 635
FAITH Scholarship	350	\$ 4,720,395	368	\$ 5,087,237	\$ 366,842	400	\$ 5,667,846	\$ 580,609	400	\$ 5,809,542	\$ 141,696	400	\$ 5,954,780	\$ 145,239
UPSKILL	1,000	\$ 1,500,000	1,500	\$ 2,250,000	\$ 750,000	2,000	\$ 3,000,000	\$ 750,000	2,000	\$ 3,000,000	\$ -	2,000	\$ 3,000,000	\$ -
Total Other	1,362	\$ 6,366,970	1,882	\$ 7,512,692	\$ 395,722	2,414	\$ 8,847,686	\$ 584,995	2,414	\$ 8,993,879	\$ 146,192	2,414	\$ 9,143,726	\$ 149,847
TOTAL Lns, Schols, Grants	29,110	\$69,412,721	29,904	\$72,238,164	\$2,075,443	30,438	\$74,678,298	\$1,690,134	30,438	\$75,911,634	\$1,233,336	30,438	\$77,175,792	\$1,264,158
TOTAL SFA BUDGET	29,110	\$71,151,894	29,904	\$74,023,512	\$2,121,618	30,438	\$76,511,105	\$1,737,592	30,438	\$77,793,220	\$1,282,115	30,438	\$79,107,515	\$1,314,295

Exhibit 5

REGULAR AGENDA

5-Year Strategic Plan with Funding by Source (FY 2028 - FY 2032)									
SFA BUDGET FY 28-32 Funding Sources	FY 2028	FY 2029		FY 2030		FY 2031		FY 2032	
	Total Needed	Total Needed	Additional Over Prior Year	Total Needed	Additional Over Prior Year	Total Needed	Additional Over Prior Year	Total Needed	Additional Over Prior Year
SFA APPROPRIATION									
<i>GOV. APPROPRIATIONS</i>									
General Support	\$ 64,087,924	\$ 66,592,111	\$ 2,504,187	\$ 68,498,491	\$ 1,906,380	\$ 69,638,290	\$ 1,139,799	\$ 70,806,712	\$ 1,168,422
General Support Re-appropriated	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
<i>General Support - Deficit</i>	<i>\$ -</i>	<i>\$ -</i>	<i>\$ -</i>	<i>\$ -</i>	<i>\$ -</i>	<i>\$ -</i>	<i>\$ -</i>	<i>\$ -</i>	<i>\$ -</i>
EEF - New									
FAITH & Winter-Reed	\$ 6,720,395	\$ 7,087,237	\$ 366,842	\$ 7,667,846	\$ 580,609	\$ 7,809,542	\$ 141,696	\$ 7,954,780	\$ 145,239
MTAG, MESG & HELP	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
EEF - Reappropriated									
FAITH & Winter-Reed	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
FAITH	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Winter-Reed	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Gov. Appropriations	\$70,808,319	\$73,679,348	\$2,871,029	\$76,166,336	\$2,486,988	\$77,447,832	\$1,281,495	\$78,761,492	\$1,313,661
<i>OTHER SPECIAL FUNDS</i>									
<i>GRANTS AND CONTRACTS</i>									
Federal	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
State	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
Total Grants and Contracts	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -	\$ -
<i>INTEREST INCOME</i>									
Nissan	\$ 23,575	\$ 24,164	\$ 589	\$ 24,768	\$ 604	\$ 25,388	\$ 619	\$ 26,022	\$ 635
Total Interest Income	\$ 23,575	\$ 24,164	\$ 589	\$ 24,768	\$ 604	\$ 25,388	\$ 619	\$ 26,022	\$ 635
<i>OTHER SOURCES</i>									
Law Fund	\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000	\$ -	\$ 20,000	\$ -	\$ 20,000	\$ -	\$ 20,000	\$ -
Total Other Sources	\$ 20,000	\$ 20,000	\$ -	\$ 20,000	\$ -	\$ 20,000	\$ -	\$ 20,000	\$ -
<i>CASH ON HAND</i>									
Estimated Collections	\$ 300,000	\$ 300,000	\$ -	\$ 300,000	\$ -	\$ 300,000	\$ -	\$ 300,000	\$ -
<i>Deficit Spending Authority</i>	<i>\$ -</i>	<i>\$ -</i>	<i>\$ -</i>	<i>\$ -</i>	<i>\$ -</i>	<i>\$ -</i>	<i>\$ -</i>	<i>\$ -</i>	<i>\$ -</i>
Total Cash on Hand	\$ 300,000	\$ 300,000	\$ -	\$ 300,000	\$ -	\$ 300,000	\$ -	\$ 300,000	\$ -
Total Other Special Funds	\$ 343,575	\$ 344,164	\$ 589	\$ 344,768	\$ 604	\$ 345,388	\$ 619	\$ 346,022	\$ 635
Total SFA Appropriation	\$71,151,894	\$74,023,512	\$2,871,618	\$76,511,105	\$2,487,592	\$77,793,220	\$1,282,115	\$79,107,515	\$1,314,295

REGULAR AGENDA

Exhibit 6

The Mississippi Office of Student Financial Aid 157-00

2028-2032 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 for 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

REGULAR AGENDA

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 the 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 timeframe
- 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 # 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
- 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).

REGULAR AGENDA

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, Mississippi Counselors Association, and the Magnolia School 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. MTAG is unavailable to students who qualify for the maximum federal Pell grant. The office supports expanding access to MTAG to max Pell Grant recipients, part-time students, and adult learners. The office supports full funding of the legislatively authorized FAITH Scholarship for foster youth and the UPSKILL Mississippi Grant program for adults pursuing credentials in programs that lead to work in priority sectors.

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 (maximum 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 HELP Grant program budget anticipates tuition increases of 2.5%.

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. Nevertheless, data show forgivable loan programs to be ineffective and inefficient. 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 remaining forgivable loan programs.

5. Agency's External/Internal Assessment:

External Assessment:

REGULAR AGENDA

- 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 and will not be awarded 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 recent years, the uncertainty of receiving a deficit appropriation resulted in late awards and student frustration and fear.
- b) Timing – The timing of the budget process coupled with the uncertainty of full funding results in SFA making award offers to students in July before they plan to start college in August. Ideally, a mechanism to “forward fund” financial aid would be created so that the appropriation received in one year could fund the awards made in the next aid year. This would require two years of funding in the initial year but would allow the Office to make award offers to students as they apply and become eligible rather than waiting until a month before school starts to make awards.
- c) 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. Adequate time for implementation often is not allowed. The Office cannot implement a grant or loan program in three to five months. A full aid year is needed between the creation of a program and the anticipated implementation of said program.
- d) Need-Based Aid – Despite the growth of the HELP grant, additional need-based aid is needed to improve college access and affordability to help the state meet its education attainment goal, Ascent to 55%.
- e) Program Changes - Legislative changes to existing programs will impact student eligibility rates, award rates, and the amount of money needed to award eligible students.
- f) Student Choice - Student choice and performance continuously impact award rates and award amounts. The student’s institution 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.
- g) Student Aid Index (SAI, formerly known as Expected Family Contribution or EFC) - Changes to the SAI formula for federal aid eligibility impact eligibility for the Mississippi Resident Tuition Assistance Grant. There is an inverse relationship between SAI and MTAG eligibility. If more students qualify for a zero SAI (and maximum Pell grant), fewer students will qualify for MTAG. If fewer students qualify for a zero SAI, more students will qualify for MTAG.
- h) 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.
- i) Collections - Far fewer loans have been issued in recent years due to budget shortfalls and the elimination of forgivable loan programs. Therefore, the revenue collected on the repayment of loans declined significantly in FY 2023 and is expected to remain depressed

REGULAR AGENDA

in future years as fewer students enter monetary repayment, leaving the Office more dependent upon General Fund appropriations to meet budgetary demands.

- j) 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. The State Longitudinal Data System should be expanded to include data from Student Financial Aid. NSPARC published a report in 2018 regarding the effectiveness of state aid programs; however, the report should be completed annually.
 - 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 2026 through FY 2030:

REGULAR AGENDA

Budget Program 1: Administration

Goal: Effectively and efficiently administer the state's many diverse financial assistance programs.

Objective: Manage the application and award process for all programs as the primary function of the Mississippi Office of Student Financial Aid.

Outcome: Number of new applicants supported as evidenced by the number of new applications received

Outcome: Number of renewal applicants supported as evidenced by the number of renewal applications received

Outcome: Number of applicants supported throughout the application process as evidenced by the number of applicants who receive awards

Strategy: Administer all Student Financial Aid programs and carry out the functions of the Mississippi Postsecondary Education Financial Assistance Board.

Output: Total cost of Administration program

Output: Total amount of SFA annual operating budget

Output: Number of full-time employees

Efficiency: Administrative cost as a percentage of the total budget

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

Output: Number of outreach events for students, parents, and counselors

Output: Number of ads and/or articles in publications

Output: Number of social media followers

Output: Number of school districts and private high schools with an active data-sharing agreement in MAAPP

Output: Number of high school counselors with an active account in MAAPP

Efficiency: Administrative cost per applicant

Efficiency: Administrative cost per award recipient

Objective: Manage the servicing of the state forgivable loans programs.

REGULAR AGENDA

Outcome: Minimized percentage of defaults on all state forgivable loan programs for all cohorts

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

Strategy: Conduct default prevention activities and exercise due diligence in collection practices.

Output: Number of 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

Efficiency: Average collections per repayment account

Budget Program 2: MTAG/MESG and HELP

Goal: Effectively and efficiently administer the state's undergraduate grant programs.

Objective: Make financial aid awards to Mississippi residents who qualify for one of the state's primary undergraduate grant programs (MTAG, MESG, and HELP).

Outcome: Percentage of eligible applicants who receive an undergraduate grant award

Strategy: 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: Administer the Mississippi Resident Tuition Grant Program (MTAG) to assist with the cost of tuition for full-time Mississippi students with a 15 ACT and/or 2.5 GPA who are not eligible for a maximum federal Pell grant.

Output: Number of MTAG recipients

Output: Amount of MTAG awarded

Efficiency: Average student award through the MTAG program

REGULAR AGENDA

Strategy: Administer the Mississippi Eminent Scholars Grant Program (MESG) to reward full-time 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: Administer the Higher Education Legislative Plan for Needy Students (HELP) scholarship to provide financial assistance for full-time Mississippi students with financial need who demonstrate college readiness with a 20 ACT, 2.5 GPA, and completion of a college prep curriculum.

Output: Number of HELP recipients

Output: Amount of HELP awarded

Efficiency: Average student award through the HELP program

Budget Program 3: Forgivable Loan and Repayment Programs

Goal: Effectively and efficiently administer the state's forgivable loan and loan repayment programs.

Objective: Make financial aid awards to Mississippi residents who qualify for one of the state's forgivable loan or loan repayment programs (CNDT, SLPL, SREB, or WRTR).

Outcome: Percentage of eligible applicants who receive a forgivable loan or loan repayment award

Strategy: Administer the state forgivable loan programs.

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

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

Output: Total number of forgivable loan and repayment programs

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

REGULAR AGENDA

Strategy: Administer 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: SFA requests the Legislature phase out remaining forgivable loan funds and target available funds to the undergraduate grant programs and loan repayment programs.

Strategy: Administer 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: SFA requests the Legislature phase out remaining forgivable loan funds and target available funds to the undergraduate grant programs and loan repayment programs.

Strategy: Administer 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 previously contracted for 9 seats per entering class, for a total of 36 contract seats each year. The 2025 Legislature increased the number of new contract seats to 10 each year. The cost of each contract seat increases annually. Therefore, the annual request for funds will increase each year.

Strategy: Administer the William F. Winter – Jack Reed, Sr. Teacher Loan Repayment Program (WRTR), which provides funds to repay a portion of the student loans of eligible Mississippi teachers in exchange for their service in a Mississippi public or charter school.

REGULAR AGENDA

Output: Number of WRTR awards

Output: Amount of WRTR awards

Efficiency: Average award through the WRTR program

Budget Program 4: Other

Goal: Effectively and efficiently administer the state's other financial assistance programs.

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

Outcome: Percentage of eligible applicants who receive an award through one of the state's other programs

Strategy: 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: Administer the Law Enforcement Officers and Firefighters 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

Strategy: Administer 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. Nissan determines annually how many students will be awarded.

REGULAR AGENDA

Strategy: Administer the Rep. Bill Kinkade Fostering Access and Inspiring True Hope (FAITH) Scholarship Program. The FAITH Scholarship was created by the 2022 Legislature to provide up to full cost of attendance awards to students who have interacted with the state's foster care system.

Output: Number of FAITH awards

Output: Amount of FAITH awards

Efficiency: Average student award through the FAITH program

Explanatory Note: Awards are made from EEF dollars appropriated for this program. Costs are expected to escalate for the first five to six years as the program grows and then stabilize at around \$5,000,000 annually with increases due to increases in the annual Cost of Attendance.

REGULAR AGENDA

3. **Update APA Part 623 Fostering Access and Inspiring True Hope Scholarship (FAITH) Rules and Regulations to Limit Housing Costs**

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 the treatment of housing costs in the FAITH award calculation and to ensure that FAITH does not cover premium housing choices beyond a standard, double-occupancy assignment.

Summary

Under current rules, the FAITH Scholarship for students attending Mississippi public institutions is calculated as the student's total Cost of Attendance (COA) less all other grant aid, and FAITH may also include costs associated with room and board during institutional holidays when such accommodations are available. However, the rules do not specify how the housing component of COA should be treated when students select higher-cost housing options, which can lead to FAITH subsidizing more expensive housing choices.

The proposed changes codify a housing allowance that is the lesser of the student's actual housing cost and the institution's COA housing allowance. The proposed language preserves the Board's ability to address situations in which more expensive housing is required because housing is not reasonably available or is needed as a documented accommodation.

The recommended changes are as follows:

Title 10: Education Institutions and Agencies

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.

...

II. 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. The housing amount recognized shall be the lesser of the student's actual housing cost or the applicable housing allowance included in the institution's published COA for the student's housing status for the applicable term. If the student's actual housing cost exceeds the applicable COA housing allowance, the institution may submit a written request for the Board to recognize a higher housing amount. The request must explain the circumstances supporting the higher cost, including lack of available campus housing, documented disability, medical, or mental health accommodations.

REGULAR AGENDA

or other unusual circumstances beyond the student's control. The Board may approve a higher housing amount if it determines the cost is reasonable and necessary based on the circumstances provided by the institution 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. § 37-106-81.

Recommendation

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

4. Change Institutional Name in APA Part 605 General Administration Rules and Regulations

Request

The Mississippi Office of Student Financial Aid requests approval to update APA Part 605 General Administration Rules and Regulations to change the name of Mississippi College to Mississippi Christian University.

The recommended change is as follows:

Title 10: Education Institutions and Agencies

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.

...

II. DETERMINING ELIGIBILITY

...

D. Special Issues Related to Determining Eligibility

...

10. Eligible Institutions - All state financial aid programs require recipients to attend an eligible institution. Some state financial aid programs are not

REGULAR AGENDA

available to students at all “eligible” institutions. An eligible institution for state aid purposes is an institution of higher learning, public or private, located in Mississippi, which is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools, or its equivalent, or a business, vocational, technical or other specialized school recognized and approved by the Board. In keeping with the Legislative intent established in Miss. Code Ann. § 37-101-241, the Board hereby approves any community, junior, or senior college or university with the main campus in Mississippi that was chartered, authorized, or approved by the Mississippi Commission on College Accreditation prior to July 1, 1988. Eligible institutions for the SREB Regional Contract Program are not in Mississippi.

a) Eligible In-State Institutions:

Alcorn State University
Delta State University
Jackson State University
Mississippi State University
Mississippi University for Women
Mississippi Valley State University
University of Mississippi
University of Mississippi Medical Center
University of Southern Mississippi
Coahoma Community College
Copiah-Lincoln Community College
East Central Community College
East Mississippi Community College
Hinds Community College
Holmes Community College
Itawamba Community College
Jones County Junior College
Meridian Community College
Mississippi Delta Community College
Mississippi Gulf Coast Community College
Northeast Mississippi Community College
Northwest Mississippi Community College
Pearl River Community College
Southwest Mississippi Community College
Belhaven University
Blue Mountain Christian University
Millsaps College
Mississippi <u>College Christian University</u>
Rust College
Southeastern Baptist College
Tougaloo College
William Carey University

REGULAR AGENDA

Recommendation

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

5. Selection of Chairperson for 2026-27

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 June 2025. The Board should elect a chairperson to serve during 2026-2027 academic/aid year. The rules allow a chairperson to serve consecutive terms.

5. Updates and Announcements

Board Member Appointments

Redesigned Website

Website “How-To” Videos

Called Meeting to Approve Rules for UPSKILL

September Meeting