

TICUA Policy Update
April 26, 2007

Lottery Bills Move Slowly

Both the House and the Senate Education Committees attempted to start reviewing individual bills impacting the Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarship (TELS) programs but were hampered by time constraints. The Senate Education Committee was only allotted an hour and was unable to begin the bill calendar due to an important presentation regarding the K-12 BEP funding model. The House Higher Education Subcommittee began the review but only had 25 minutes to discuss bills after a late start and introductory comments. Both Committees hope to move faster next week.

Legislators Consider Keeping TELS GPA

After what seemed to be unanimity around removing the TELS GPA in favor of the institutional GPA, there is now discussion about making no changes to the policy. Legislators are becoming concerned that using the institutional GPA would place some students at a disadvantage when it comes to transferring to another institution. TICUA, along with Vanderbilt colleagues Mary Pat Teague, Clyde Walker, and Karen Hauser, met with Senate Education Chair Jamie Woodson to explain how the institutional GPA benefits students and institutions.

Financial aid directors, institutional researchers, registrars, and other campus officials who believe this is a much needed change are encouraged to immediately write their legislators to express their opinion. Final deliberations on the lottery bills will be taking place over the next few weeks.

Take action now by going to <http://capwiz.com/tnsaa/state/main/?state=TN>

Higher Education Officials Meet With Attorney General's Office

This past week statewide higher education officials (including TICUA) met with the Tennessee Attorney General's (AG) office to discuss the national concern regarding the student loan programs. The AG informed those at the meeting that they are currently involved in "fact finding" activities among Tennessee's higher education institutions. They also indicated that they are borrowing largely from the work done by the New York Attorney General Andrew Cuomo. It is TICUA's understanding that letters of inquiry are being sent to campuses and that the distribution is expected to be widespread. They offered little additional comment.

Meanwhile, the University of Tennessee and the Tennessee Board of Regents are conducting internal reviews and the Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation is planning on sending out general guidance on the student loan issue. The Tennessee

Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators has already posted a code of ethics on their website.

THEC Approves Wharton Report

During their spring meeting this week the Tennessee Higher Education Commission approved the Wharton Committee Report on the lottery scholarship programs. The focus of the report was to make recommendations to improve general scholarship retention rates and address socioeconomic disparities in scholarship qualification and retention. The report calls for keeping the eligibility requirements the same, bolstering academic preparation, creating an early commitment program for middle and high school students, increasing provisions for non-traditional students, lowering the renewal GPA from 3.0 to 2.75, and use the interest from the lottery excess funds to supplement the TSAA program. The cost of these improvements will exhaust the available funds for expanding the lottery scholarship programs. THEC expressed their desire to support these changes during this legislative session.

To view the full report click on:

http://www.state.tn.us/thec/2004web/division_pages/commission_pages/meetings/meeting_pdf/apr2007mtg_pdfs/II.%20THEC%20Lottery%20Scholarship%20Committee%20Report.pdf