

TICUA Policy Update

April 9, 2009

House Higher Ed Passes Scholarship Bills

This week the House Higher Education Subcommittee passed two lottery scholarship bills and the math/science teacher scholarship. The lottery bills included HB0474 which allows an extension of the five year limit for those students with documented disabilities. The Senate currently has the companion bill up for review in the Finance, Ways, and Means Committee. The second lottery bill is HB2008 which allows students of divorced parents, one of whom resides in Tennessee, to be eligible for the Hope Scholarship. The companion bill is stalled in the Senate.

The math/science service scholarship also passed out of the Subcommittee. This new program would target students majoring in either math or science with a 27 ACT composite and 27 sub-score in either math or science. The students would be eligible for a \$5,000 per year scholarship for up to five years. The initial funding would come from private sources. The scholar would be committing to teach either math or science in a Tennessee public school for each year the scholarship is received. The scholarship must be repaid proportionately if the service requirement is not met. The bill will be heard next week in the full House Education Committee.

Higher Education Budget Hearings

Both, the Senate and the House Education Committees heard from the heads of the Higher Education Commission, the University of Tennessee and the Board of Regents concerning their budget requests. Dr. Rich Rhoda, THEC, testified that the public higher education operational budgets have reached \$2.5 billion and that half of that is made up of tuition and fees. It is anticipated that deep cuts in the higher education budget will be avoided for the next two years as a result of receiving the Federal Stimulus dollars.

Herron Pushes Forward on Student Bills

Senator Roy Herron (and now gubernatorial candidate) has determined to push forward with his two bills impacting student life policies on TICUA member campuses. The first bill amends a statute that currently only applies to public universities to mandate that parents of students on private campuses be contacted upon the first alcohol or drug offense. All TICUA campuses responding to a poll indicated that they contact parents on first drug offenses but not everyone does on the first alcohol offense.

As currently drafted, the second bill mandates a one year suspension for students instigating or participating in hazing. Senator Herron has verbally agreed to amend the bill to make the suspension a permissive action by the school rather than mandatory.

TICUA has expressed concerns about the bills. The first concern centers on the State dictating discretionary policies on private colleges campuses. The second concern is instituting mandatory actions that do not allow the student life professional to take into account mitigating circumstances. The third deals with the use of vague terms in the hazing bill such as “instigate, participate, and hazing.” Senator Herron understands our concerns and is willing to talk about the bills with TICUA member campuses. TICUA notified member Chief Student Affairs Officers asking them to contact the Senator to express their concerns. Both bills are on the Senate Education Calendar for next week.