

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA
SESSION 2019**

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HOUSE BILL 128

Short Title: High Achieving Tuition Scholarships. (Public)

Sponsors: Representatives Elmore, Hurley, Goodman, and Howard (Primary Sponsors).
For a complete list of sponsors, refer to the North Carolina General Assembly web site.

Referred to: Education - Community Colleges, if favorable, Appropriations, Education, if favorable, Appropriations, if favorable, Rules, Calendar, and Operations of the House

February 21, 2019

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED

AN ACT TO CREATE THE HIGH ACHIEVING TUITION SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM FOR SCHOLARSHIPS FOR TOP-PERFORMING HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS ATTENDING NORTH CAROLINA COMMUNITY COLLEGES AND TO APPROPRIATE FUNDS FOR THAT PURPOSE.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

SECTION 1. Purpose of Program. – There is created the High Achieving Tuition Scholarship Program. The purposes of the High Achieving Tuition Scholarship Program include the following:

- (1) Encourage higher-performing students at community colleges.
- (2) Utilize the State's educational resources to the fullest.
- (3) Create more educational and career options for students.
- (4) Realize significant cost-savings to the State.
- (5) Develop a more competitive workforce.

SECTION 2. Scholarship Eligibility. – A student shall be eligible to receive a High Achieving Tuition Scholarship if the student meets all of the following requirements:

- (1) In the academic semester prior to enrolling in a community college, graduates with at least a 3.5 unweighted grade point average from either a (i) public high school located in this State or (ii) a nonpublic high school or home school, as defined in Article 39 of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes, located in this State.
- (2) Presents evidence the student is either a United States citizen or eligible noncitizen.
- (3) Qualifies as a resident of this State for tuition purposes, as provided in Article 14 of Chapter 116 of the General Statutes.
- (4) Gains admission as a student at a North Carolina community college in a curriculum program.
- (5) Complies with Selective Service registration requirements.
- (6) Affirmatively states the student does not have a felony conviction for a controlled substance offense under Article 5 of Chapter 90 of the General Statutes.

SECTION 3. Award of Scholarships. – Within the funds available for the program, the State Education Assistance Authority (Authority) shall annually award High Achieving



1 Tuition Scholarships to eligible students in an amount not to exceed the cost of 16 credit hours
2 of tuition per fall or spring academic semester for a maximum of four academic semesters. The
3 Authority shall require students to complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)
4 to be eligible for a scholarship award and shall reduce the amount of the scholarship award for
5 any student by the amount of grants or scholarships received by that student from other State or
6 federal sources. The Authority shall award scholarships to eligible students in the order in which
7 they are received. The Authority shall award scholarships beginning with the fall semester of the
8 2020-2021 academic year to students graduating from high school in the 2019-2020 school year.

9 **SECTION 4.** Scholarship Renewal. – A scholarship awarded to an eligible student
10 shall be annually renewed if the student demonstrates all of the following:

- 11 (1) A cumulative 3.0 grade point average.
- 12 (2) Completion of a minimum of 30 semester credit hours by the end of the
13 academic year.
- 14 (3) The student does not have a felony conviction for a controlled substance
15 offense under Article 5 of Chapter 90 of the General Statutes demonstrated by
16 the student submitting an affirmative statement of that fact to the Authority.

17 **SECTION 5.** Scholarship Revocation. – A scholarship awarded to an eligible student
18 shall be revoked at the conclusion of the first semester of an academic year for any of the
19 following:

- 20 (1) Failure to maintain a course load of at least 12 credit hours.
- 21 (2) Default or an unpaid refund on a student financial aid program.

22 **SECTION 6.** Scholarship Administration. – The Authority shall adopt rules for
23 administration of the High Achieving Tuition Scholarship Program.

24 **SECTION 7.** Course Counseling and Transfer. – Community colleges shall ensure
25 that scholarship recipients are provided counseling and assistance in maintaining the necessary
26 grade point averages and selecting coursework that reflects their educational and career goals.
27 For students planning to enter a constituent institution of The University of North Carolina, the
28 State Board of Community Colleges shall ensure that credits earned by those students
29 participating in the program are transferable.

30 **SECTION 8.** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Board of Governors
31 of The University of North Carolina the sum of fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) for the
32 2019-2020 fiscal year to be allocated to the Authority for administrative costs related to the
33 implementation of the High Achieving Tuition Scholarship Program. There is appropriated from
34 the General Fund to the Board of Governors of The University of North Carolina the sum of two
35 million dollars (\$2,000,000) for the 2020-2021 fiscal year to be allocated to the Authority for
36 administrative costs and award of scholarships. The Authority may use up to five percent (5%)
37 of the appropriated funds for administrative costs associated with the program. Any unexpended
38 funds for the purposes set forth in this section shall not revert at the end of each fiscal year but
39 shall remain available to award scholarships to eligible students.

40 **SECTION 9.** The Board of Governors of The University of North Carolina shall
41 adopt a policy to permit any student admitted to a constituent institution who receives a High
42 Achieving Tuition Scholarship to defer admission to the constituent institution for two years,
43 beginning with the 2020-2021 academic year. Deferred admission shall be contingent upon the
44 successful completion of an associate degree and remaining in good standing in the scholarship
45 program while enrolled in the community college.

46 **SECTION 10.(a)** For the 2019-2020 school year, the State Board of Education shall
47 direct local boards of education to survey high school students in their senior year who meet the
48 eligibility requirements of the High Achieving Tuition Scholarship Program to determine interest
49 in the program, including numbers of students who intend to apply for the scholarship, and
50 reasons that eligible students may choose not to apply for the scholarship. The State Board of

1 Education shall report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee no later than
2 December 15, 2019, on the results of this survey.

3 **SECTION 10.(b)** The Board of Governors of The University of North Carolina and
4 the State Board of Community Colleges shall jointly identify and report to the Joint Legislative
5 Education Oversight Committee by April 1, 2023, on potential issues related to the transition of
6 High Achieving Tuition Scholarship recipients from community college to university enrollment
7 and other recommendations to improve and expand the High Achieving Tuition Scholarship
8 Program.

9 **SECTION 10.(c)** The State Education Assistance Authority shall report annually on
10 or before September 1, beginning in 2021, to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight
11 Committee on the implementation of the High Achieving Tuition Scholarship Program. The
12 report shall include at least the following information:

- 13 (1) Number of students applying for the scholarship, including information about
14 student demographics and geographic location.
- 15 (2) Number of students awarded the scholarship, including information about
16 student demographics and geographic location, and community college
17 attended.
- 18 (3) Amount of funds expended for scholarships.
- 19 (4) Number of students whose scholarships were revoked and reasons for
20 revocation.
- 21 (5) Other relevant information as determined by the Authority.

22 **SECTION 11.** This act becomes effective July 1, 2019.