

SENATE BILL 1597

By Green

AN ACT to amend Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49, Chapter 4, Part 9; Title 49, Chapter 7; Title 49, Chapter 8 and Title 49, Chapter 9, relative to creating the Tennessee Come Back for Your Future scholarship.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE:

SECTION 1. Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49, Chapter 4, Part 9, is amended by adding the following language as a new section:

49-4-944.

(a) To be eligible for a Tennessee Come Back for Your Future scholarship, a student shall:

(1) Not be ineligible for the scholarship under § 49-4-904;

(2) Have been a Tennessee resident, as defined by regulations promulgated by the board of regents under § 49-8-104, for one (1) year immediately preceding the date of application for the scholarship or the renewal of the scholarship;

(3) Not have been enrolled in or attended any postsecondary institution for at least twelve (12) months immediately preceding the date of application for the scholarship;

(4) Be within sixty (60) semester hours of obtaining a baccalaureate degree or within thirty (30) semester hours of obtaining an associate degree;

(5) For the 2014-2015 academic year, be admitted to and enroll in:

(A) An eligible four-year public postsecondary institution, if the student seeks a baccalaureate degree;

(B) An eligible two-year public postsecondary institution, if the student seeks an associate degree; or

(C) An eligible four-year public postsecondary institution that offers associate degrees, if the student seeks an associate degree;

(6) File the FAFSA;

(7) Apply for the scholarship by filing a Tennessee Come Back for Your Future application as required by TSAC;

(8) Provide transcripts to the eligible public postsecondary institution in which the student intends to enroll within five (5) business days after submission of the Tennessee Come Back for Your Future application required under subdivision (a)(7); and

(9) Seek all nonrepayable, non-lottery postsecondary financial assistance for which the student is eligible as determine by the eligible public postsecondary institution's financial aid office.

(b)

(1) Before TSAC may award a Tennessee Come Back for Your Future scholarship, the student and eligible public postsecondary institution in which the student intends to enroll shall examine the student's past postsecondary coursework and determine that the student has already earned sufficient credits towards the degree sought to enable the student to complete:

(A) A baccalaureate degree by earning an additional sixty (60) or fewer semester hours of credit at the institution; or

(B) An associate degree by earning an additional thirty (30) or fewer semester hours of credit at the institution.

(2) The student and the eligible public postsecondary institution in which the student intends to enroll shall establish a degree plan by which the student who is within (60) semester hours of a baccalaureate degree shall be able to

obtain the baccalaureate degree or the student who is within thirty (30) semester hours of an associate degree shall be able to obtain the associate degree. The plan shall specify the courses that the student must take to obtain the degree, the semesters in which those courses will be offered and the length of time that will be required to obtain the degree. The plan shall not require more than sixty (60) semester hours, if the student is seeking a baccalaureate degree, or more than thirty (30) semester hours, if the student is seeking an associate degree. The plan shall set the time required for the student to obtain a baccalaureate degree at no more than two (2) calendar years and the time required for the student to obtain an associate degree at no more than one (1) calendar year. In establishing the degree plan, the institution shall strive to enable the student to complete the degree sought in the shortest time possible and with the fewest number of semester hours.

(3) The student shall agree to enroll in at least fifteen (15) semester hours per semester during any fall or spring semester. The student may enroll in fewer than fifteen (15) semester hours in a summer or interim semester. In the last semester of attendance before obtaining the degree the student need only take the number of semester hours required for the student to complete the degree.

(4) The eligible public postsecondary institution shall strive to complete the evaluation of a student's previous postsecondary transcript or transcripts and to establish the degree plan as quickly as possible, but no later than one (1) month after the student's application to TSAC for award of the scholarship; provided, that the student provides the student's previous postsecondary transcript or transcripts and makes the request for evaluation of such transcript or

transcript within five (5) business days after filing the application for the scholarship. A student who fails to provide the student's previous postsecondary transcript or transcripts within five (5) business days after filing the application for the scholarship shall be ineligible for the scholarship.

(5) The eligible public postsecondary institution shall file a written copy of the degree plan with TSAC immediately after finalizing the plan. With the permission of the student, the copy may be transmitted electronically to TSAC.

(c) To be eligible for a Tennessee Come Back for Your Future scholarship, a student shall not be required to meet any academic standard at the time of enrollment in the eligible public postsecondary institution; except that, under the student's degree plan, the student shall be mathematically able at the time of enrollment to achieve any grade point average required for graduation with the degree sought.

(d) To continue to be eligible for a Tennessee Come Back for Your Future scholarship, a student shall:

(1) Maintain continuous enrollment at the eligible public postsecondary institution at which the student established the degree plan;

(2) Take at least the number of semester hours of coursework that are required under the degree plan and that are in compliance with subdivision (b)(3) in each semester of enrollment;

(3) Make satisfactory academic progress towards graduation with the degree sought according to the student's degree plan and as determined by the eligible public postsecondary institution at which the student is enrolled; and

(4) Reapply for the scholarship at any time specified by TSAC.

(e) If a student ceases to be eligible for the Tennessee Come Back for Your Future scholarship at any time for any reason, then the student shall not be able to regain the scholarship.

(f)

(1) A student may receive a Tennessee Come Back for Your Future scholarship under this section until the occurrence of the first of the following events:

(A) The student has earned the degree sought under the degree plan;

(B)

(i) The student has attempted a total of sixty (60) semester hours pursuant to the degree plan, if the student is seeking a baccalaureate degree; or

(ii) The student has attempted a total of thirty (30) semester hours pursuant to the degree plan, if the student is seeking an associate degree; or

(C) The amount of time set in the degree plan for receipt of the degree sought has passed.

(2) A Tennessee Come Back for Your Future scholarship student who has an approved medical or personal leave of absence from the eligible public postsecondary institution may continue to receive the scholarship upon resuming the student's education at the eligible public postsecondary institution; provided, that the student continues to meet all applicable eligibility requirements. A medical or personal leave of absence under this subsection (f) shall be approved by the institutional review panel. A student who takes an approved leave of

absence shall be eligible for the scholarship until the occurrence of the first of the following events:

(A) The student has earned the degree sought under the degree plan;

(B)

(i) The student has attempted a total of sixty (60) semester hours pursuant to the degree plan, if the student is seeking a baccalaureate degree; or

(ii) The student has attempted a total of thirty (30) semester hours pursuant to the degree plan, if the student is seeking an associate degree; or

(C) The sum of the time the student receives the Tennessee Come Back for Your Future scholarship before the leave of absence and after the leave of absence equals the amount of time that is specified in the degree plan for receipt of the scholarship.

(g) Notwithstanding subdivision (d)(1), a student who receives a Tennessee Come Back for Your Future scholarship and attends an eligible public postsecondary institution may transfer to another eligible public postsecondary institution without loss of the scholarship; provided, that:

(1) The student continues to meet all requirements for the scholarship;

(2) The student applies and is admitted to the eligible public postsecondary institution to which the student seeks to transfer;

(3) Prior to the student's transfer, the student and the eligible public postsecondary institution to which the student seeks to transfer establish a degree plan at that institution as required by subdivision (b)(2). The sum of the

semester hours the student attempted at the institution from which the student transfers plus the semester hours required to finish the degree at the institution to which the student transfers shall not exceed sixty (60) semester hours, if the student is seeking a baccalaureate degree, or thirty (30), if the student is seeking an associate degree. The sum of the time the student attended the institution from which the student transfers plus the time required to finish the degree at the institution to which the student transfers shall not exceed the limits of subdivision (b)(2); and

(5) The student reapplies for the scholarship or notifies TSAC of the transfer as required by TSAC.

(h) Subject to the amounts appropriated by the general assembly and any law relating to a shortfall in funds available for postsecondary financial assistance from the net proceeds of the state lottery, the amount of a Tennessee Come Back for Your Future scholarship shall be one-half ($\frac{1}{2}$) the tuition and required fees for the semester at the eligible public postsecondary institution for the course load for which the student is enrolled.

(i) If the sum of all financial assistance, including a Tennessee Come Back for Your Future scholarship, for which a student qualifies exceeds the institutionally defined total cost of attendance at the eligible public postsecondary institution the student is attending, then the student's Tennessee Come Back for Your Future scholarship shall be reduced so that the financial aid actually received by the student does not exceed the institutionally defined total cost of attendance.

(j) Notwithstanding § 49-4-903(a), TSAC shall award Tennessee Come Back for Your Future scholarships on a first come, first served basis; provided, however, that no more than a total of five million dollars (\$5,000,000) of net lottery proceeds shall be

expended for Tennessee Come Back for Your Future scholarships during the life of the program.

(k) Only students obtaining Tennessee Come Back for Your Future scholarships during the 2014-2015 academic year shall be eligible to receive the scholarship in any academic year beyond the 2014-2015 academic year.

(l) The comptroller of the treasury, through the comptroller's office of research and education accountability, shall review and study the Tennessee Come Back for Your Future scholarship to determine the effectiveness of the program in encouraging and enabling students who completed at least one-half ($\frac{1}{2}$) of the coursework for a baccalaureate or associate degree before dropping out of college for at least twelve (12) months to obtain a degree. The office of research and education accountability shall report its findings and conclusions to the speakers of the senate and house of representatives and the education committees of the senate and house of representatives before December 31, 2016.

SECTION 2. Tennessee Code Annotated, Section 49-4-902, is amended by adding the following language as a new, appropriately designated subdivision:

() "Business day" means a day on which the eligible public postsecondary institution's administrative offices are open for regular business;

SECTION 3. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law, the public welfare requiring it.