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S.271

Introduced by Senators Hardy, Balint, Baruth, Bray, Hooker, Ingram,
McCormack and Perchlik

Referred to Committee on

Date:

Subject: Education; postsecondary; tuition-free scholarship program

Statement of purpose of bill as introduced: This bill proposes to create the
Community College Scholarship Program to provide tuition-free scholarships
for Vermont residents who attend the Community College of Vermont.

An act relating to the creation of a Community College of Vermont tuition-
free scholarship program for Vermont residents

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

* * * Community College Scholarship Program; Creation * * *

Sec. 1. 16 V.S.A. chapter 87, subchapter 3A is added to read:

Subchapter 3A. Community College Scholarship Program

§ 2848. COMMUNITY COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

(a) Title. This subchapter shall be known and may be cited as the

“Community College Scholarship Program.”

(b) Definitions. As used in this section:

1 (1) “Eligible postsecondary institution” means the Community College
2 of Vermont.

3 (2) “Eligible postsecondary program” means a curriculum of courses
4 leading to a certificate or an associate’s degree at an eligible postsecondary
5 institution.

6 (3) “Full-time student” means a student who is enrolled full time at an
7 eligible postsecondary institution for at least two semesters of a single
8 academic year and enrolled in a minimum of 12 credit hours per semester.

9 (4) “Gift aid” means grant or scholarship financial aid received from the
10 federal government and grant or scholarship financial aid received from the
11 State.

12 (5) “Part-time student” means a student who is enrolled on a less than
13 full-time basis at an eligible postsecondary institution.

14 (6) “Program” means the Community College Scholarship Program.

15 (7) “Scholarship” means a scholarship awarded under the Program.

16 (8) “Semester” means a fall, spring, or summer semester at an eligible
17 postsecondary institution if the institution is on a semester system or the
18 equivalent if the institution is on a system other than a semester system.

19 (c) Administration of Program. The Corporation shall administer the
20 Program under the following terms and conditions and subject to the

1 availability of funds deposited into the Community College Scholarship Fund
2 established under section 2849 of this title:

3 (1) To qualify for a scholarship, the student must:

4 (A) be a Vermont resident as determined by the eligible
5 postsecondary institution;

6 (B) complete the Program application for each academic year of
7 enrollment in accordance with a schedule determined by the Corporation;

8 (C) complete the free application for federal student aid (FAFSA)
9 and the Vermont grant application each academic year in which the student
10 seeks to receive a scholarship;

11 (D) satisfy a means test by being at or below an annual income of
12 \$100,000.00, or if the student is a dependent, by the student's parents or
13 guardians being at or below an annual income of \$100,000.00, as calculated
14 and reported on the FAFSA form as interpreted by the Corporation;

15 (E) for the first year of study at the eligible postsecondary institution,
16 be enrolled full time or part time at the institution or be accepted for admission
17 on a full-time or part-time basis at the institution and, for each year following
18 the first year of study, be a full-time or part-time student in good academic and
19 behavioral standing as determined by the institution; and

20 (F) be seeking a certificate or an associate's degree.

1 (2) Exceptions to the qualification requirements under subdivision (1) of
2 this subsection may be made by the Corporation for extenuating circumstances,
3 as provided in rules or policies adopted by the Corporation.

4 (3)(A) Subject to subdivision (3)(C) of this subsection (c), scholarships
5 may be for a maximum of 60 credit hours, minus any credit hours earned
6 through early college and dual enrollment under sections 944 and 946 of this
7 title, completed over a period not to exceed five years. The Agency of
8 Education shall provide the Corporation with such information on the early
9 college and dual enrollment programs that the Corporation requests in order to
10 administer the Program.

11 (B) A student who has obtained a certificate under the Program shall
12 remain eligible under the Program to seek an associate's degree, provided that
13 the limitations in subdivision (3)(A) of this subsection (c) shall apply.

14 (C) The Corporation may make exceptions to the limitations in
15 subdivision (3)(A) of this subsection (c) to accommodate students with an
16 approved medical or personal leave or students with a documented learning
17 disability, as provided in rules or policies adopted by the Corporation.

18 (4) A scholarship shall cover the cost of tuition at the eligible
19 postsecondary institution for up to one academic year based on full-time
20 enrollment, which shall be charged at the resident rate. The scholarship
21 amount shall be prorated for a part-time student. A scholarship shall apply on

1 a “last dollar” basis, after all other gift aid as defined under subdivision (b)(4)
2 of this section. The Corporation shall pay the scholarship directly to the
3 eligible postsecondary institution.

4 (5) The Corporation shall not, in awarding scholarships, grants, and
5 other forms of financial aid available to students authorized under other
6 statutes, disfavor students who receive or are eligible to receive a scholarship
7 on the basis that they have the scholarship available to them.

8 (6) The Corporation is authorized to adopt rules and policies to establish
9 deadlines for applications, for appeal procedures for the denial or revocation of
10 the scholarship, and otherwise to effectuate the purposes of this section.

11 (7) If a student who receives a scholarship does not complete a course or
12 courses that are funded by the scholarship, the student shall not be obligated to
13 repay the scholarship funds.

14 (d) Reporting.

15 (1) The Corporation and the eligible postsecondary institution shall
16 provide assistance to the General Assembly by researching and analyzing data
17 concerning the effectiveness of the Program, including student academic
18 success, completion rates, scholarship retention, and recommendations for
19 future funding.

20 (2) The Corporation and the eligible postsecondary institution shall
21 report its findings annually to the Senate and House Committees on Education

1 on or before November 15. The provisions of 2 V.S.A. § 20(d) (expiration of
2 required reports) shall not apply to the required report to be made under this
3 subsection.

4 * * * Community College Scholarship Program; Funding * * *

5 Sec. 2. 16 V.S.A. § 2849 is added to read:

6 § 2849. COMMUNITY COLLEGE SCHOLARSHIP FUND

7 (a) There is established the Community College Scholarship Fund for the
8 purpose of financing the Community College Scholarship Program established
9 pursuant to section 2848 of this title and for necessary costs incurred in
10 administering the Fund. The Fund shall be administered:

11 (1) pursuant to 32 V.S.A. chapter 7, subchapter 5, except that interest
12 earned on the Fund and any remaining balance shall be retained in the Fund;
13 and

14 (2) by the Secretary of the Administration or designee.

15 (b) Into the Fund shall be deposited the following:

16 (1) For fiscal year 2022 and each fiscal year after, an amount of
17 \$6,000,000.00 shall be appropriated and transferred from the General Fund to
18 the Fund. For each subsequent fiscal year, the amount appropriated and
19 transferred under this subdivision shall be increased over the fiscal year 2022
20 amount by the consensus of the Joint Fiscal Office and Administration,
21 determined by the National Income and Product Accounts (NIPA) Implicit

1 Price Deflator for State and Local Government Consumption Expenditures and
2 Gross Investment as reported by the U.S. Department of Commerce, Bureau of
3 Economic Analysis, through the fiscal year for which the payment is being
4 determined.

5 (2) Proceeds from grants, donations, contributions, taxes, and any other
6 sources of revenue as may be provided by statute, rule, or act of the General
7 Assembly.

8 (c) The Commissioner of Finance and Management may draw warrants for
9 disbursements from this Fund in anticipation of receipts.

10 * * * Community College of Vermont; Staffing * * *

11 Sec. 3. COMMUNITY COLLEGE OF VERMONT; STAFFING

12 There is appropriated to the Community College of Vermont from the
13 General Fund for fiscal year 2021 the amount of \$400,000.00 for four full-time
14 positions specializing in student academic support and mentoring, particularly
15 for first-generation students and other students in need of additional assistance.

16 * * * Effective Date * * *

17 Sec. 4. EFFECTIVE DATE

18 This act shall take effect on July 1, 2020. Scholarship grants under this act
19 shall be awarded starting with the 2021–2022 academic year.