**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND SECTION 59‑53‑30, CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, RELATING TO OPEN ADMISSIONS POLICIES REQUIRED OF TECHNICAL COLLEGES, SO AS TO ELIMINATE THE OPEN ADMISSIONS POLICY, TO PROVIDE THE STATE BOARD FOR TECHNICAL AND COMPREHENSIVE EDUCATION SHALL ESTABLISH CERTAIN COMMON MINIMUM ADMISSIONS SCORES FOR ITS INSTITUTIONS, TO PROVIDE VARIATIONS IN CERTAIN CIRCUMSTANCES, AND TO PROVIDE GUIDANCE THAT INSTITUTIONS SHOULD GIVE INDIVIDUALS WHO MEET THESE MINIMUM SCORES; TO AMEND SECTION 59‑149‑50, RELATING TO THE CRITERIA FOR LIFE SCHOLARSHIPS, SO AS TO STRENGTHEN ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS, AND COMPUTER SCIENCE FOUNDATIONS OF HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS SEEKING LIFE SCHOLARSHIPS BY REQUIRING SUCCESSFUL COMPLETION OF CERTAIN ENGLISH AND MATHEMATICS OR COMPUTER SCIENCE COURSEWORK DURING THEIR SENIOR YEARS, TO PROVIDE THE COMMISSION ON HIGHER EDUCATION SHALL ADJUST THE REQUIRED MINIMUM SCORES TO REFLECT ANY CHANGES IN THE SCORING RANGES OF THE SAT OR ACT, AND TO EXCLUDE MEMBERS OF THE 2019‑2020 SENIOR CLASS FROM THESE REQUIREMENTS; AND TO AMEND SECTION 59‑150‑360, RELATING TO TUITION ASSISTANCE FOR STUDENTS WHO ATTEND TECHNICAL COLLEGES OR TWO‑YEAR PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING, SO AS TO PROVIDE THIS ASSISTANCE FOR STUDENTS SEEKING CERTAIN BUSINESS OR INDUSTRY CREDENTIALS, AMONG OTHER THINGS.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. Section 59‑53‑30 of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“Section 59‑53‑30. (A) Before August 1, 2021, the State Board for Technical and Comprehensive Education shall establish common minimum admission scores for institutions within its jurisdiction, and may differentiate scores based on areas of study for programs that award credit toward a degree, certificate, or diploma. For individuals who do not meet the minimum scores, the colleges shall provide information regarding continuing education programs and other programs that do not award credit toward a degree, certificate, or diploma. In addition to, or in lieu of, separate admissions scores, the State Board for Technical and Comprehensive Education and the State Board of Education shall establish Lexile and Quartile scores that serve as common minimum admission scores and provide guarantees that students with sufficient scores are not required to attend or enroll in reading or mathematics remediation at the postsecondary level.

(B) Institutions of the South Carolina Technical Education System shall ~~maintain open admissions policies unless determined to be economically unfeasible by the State Fiscal Accountability Authority and~~ establish and maintain low tuition and fees in order to provide access to post‑secondary education and insure that such educational opportunities shall not be denied to anyone.

(C) Upon request and justification and with the approval of the State Board of Education, the Board may authorize an institution within its jurisdiction to contract with local school districts to offer adult literacy courses and programs and secondary‑level ~~vocational~~ career and technical education courses and programs.

(D) Upon request and justification and with the approval of the Commission on Higher Education, the Board may authorize an institution within its jurisdiction to offer two‑year college parallel programs. The Commission on Higher Education shall approve all criteria for college parallel courses.”

SECTION 2.A. Section 59‑149‑50(A) of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“(A) To be eligible for a LIFE Scholarship, a student must be either a student who has graduated from a high school located in this State having earned at least one unit of credit in mathematics or computer science and one unit of credit in English/language arts which may be accomplished by dual enrollment during the senior year beginning July 1, 2024, a student who has completed at least three of the final four years of high school within this State, a home school student who has successfully completed a high school home school program in this State in the manner required by law, a student who has graduated from a preparatory high school outside this State, while a dependent of a parent or guardian who is a legal resident of this State and has custody of the dependent, or a student whose parent or guardian has served in or has retired from one of the United States Armed Forces within the last four years, paid income taxes in this State for a majority of the years of service, and is a resident of this State. These students also must meet the requirements of subsection (B) and be eligible for in‑state tuition and fees as determined pursuant to Chapter 112, Title 59 and applicable regulations. In addition, the student must have graduated from high school with a minimum of a 3.0 cumulative grade average on a 4.0 scale and have scored 1100 or better on the Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) or ~~have the equivalent ACT score~~ 22 on the ACT; provided that, if the student is to attend such a public or independent two‑year college or university in this State, including a technical college, the SAT/ACT requirement does not apply. If a student chooses to attend such a public or independent institution of this State and does not make the required SAT/ACT score or the required high school grade point average, as applicable, the student may earn a LIFE Scholarship after his freshman year if he meets the grade point average and semester credit hour requirements of subsection (B). For the purpose of meeting the rank criteria pursuant to this section, the existing high school rank of a South Carolina resident attending an out‑of‑state high school may be used provided it is calculated pursuant to a state‑approved, standardized grading scale at the respective out‑of‑state high school. If the Commission on Higher Education determines that a state‑approved standardized grading scale substantially deviates from the South Carolina Uniform Grading Scale, the state‑approved standardized grading scale shall not be used to meet the eligibility requirements for the LIFE Scholarship.”

B. In the event SAT or ACT changes their respective scoring ranges, the Commission on Higher Education shall adjust the minimum scores required by this chapter in order to ensure equivalency.

C. The provisions of this SECTION do not apply to students in the senior class of the 2020‑2021 School Year.

SECTION 3. Section 59‑150‑360(A) and (F) of the 1976 Code is amended to read:

“(A)(1) A person who qualifies for in‑state tuition rates pursuant to Chapter 112, Title 59 may receive tuition assistance to attend a technical college of this State or a public two‑year institution of higher learning. A person who qualifies for in‑state tuition rates pursuant to this title may attend an independent two‑year institution of higher learning and receive lottery tuition assistance each year limited to the highest amount of tuition assistance received by students at public two‑year institutions. In order to qualify as a first time entering freshman and before attempting twenty‑four academic credit hours, a student must:

(~~1~~a) be a South Carolina resident for a minimum of one year;

(~~2~~b) be enrolled and maintain six credit hours each semester in a certificate, degree, or diploma program, or be enrolled in a noncredit program that awards a nationally recognized business or industry credential as defined by the State Board for Technical and Comprehensive Education;

(~~3~~c) make reasonable progress toward completion of the requirements for the certificate, degree, or diploma program;

(~~4~~d) if enrolled in a program awarding college credit, complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) application. If a student feels that he will definitely not qualify to receive federal financial aid, the student may complete a simple form of minimum questions created by the State Board for Technical and Comprehensive Education and the Commission on Higher Education to determine if the student definitely will not qualify to receive federal financial aid. If it is determined that the student definitely will not qualify to receive federal financial aid, the student shall sign a form created by the State Board for Technical and Comprehensive Education and the Commission on Higher Education, and the student is exempted from completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid. The State Board for Technical and Comprehensive Education and the Commission on Higher Education shall promulgate regulations to set thresholds for determining if a student definitely will not qualify to receive federal financial aid; ~~and~~

(~~5~~e) not be the recipient of a LIFE Scholarship; and

(f) for a student enrolled in a noncredit program that awards a nationally recognized business or industry credential as defined by the State Board for Technical and Comprehensive Education, the student shall have graduated from high school or earned an equivalent high school credential within seven years of first entering the ninth grade.

(2) Regulations for implementation of this section are the responsibility of the South Carolina State Board for Technical and Comprehensive Education, for the technical college system, and the Commission on Higher Education, for the two‑year public and private institutions. These regulations must be developed in a coordinated effort, provide for the allocation of funds based on the tuition assistance granted at each institution, and be interchangeable between each of the institutions affected.

(F) In order for a student seeking credit hours for a certificate, degree, or diploma to be eligible after attempting twenty‑four academic credit hours the student must have earned a grade point average of 2.0 or better on a 4.0 grading scale.”

SECTION 4. This act takes effect upon approval by the Governor.

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