

TICUA Policy Update

March 16, 2017

Reconnect Moves Forward

The House Education Administration and Planning voted to move the Governor's Adult Reconnect bill to the Government Operations Committee while the Senate Education Committee has moved it on to Finance. The bill was amended to include four year colleges and universities which have Associate degree programs which includes a number of TICUA member colleges and universities.

The Reconnect scholarship is restricted to students who are declared independent by way of the FAFSA, have not received a previous degree, and be enrolled in at least 6 credit hours. It is anticipated that 24,000 students will be taking advantage of the program which begins in the fall of 2018 at a cost of over \$10 million. Currently enrolled students will be eligible upon the inception of the program. As with Tennessee Promise, the Reconnect program is a last-dollar scholarship; the Pell Grant and other state aid must be counted prior to Reconnect dollars being received. The scholarship amount for the four year institutions is capped at the average community college tuition and required fees rate.

More information on Reconnect: <https://www.tn.gov/nexttennessee/topic/nt-one-pagertennessee-reconnect>

STRONG Act Moves to Finance

The STRONG Act has moved to the Finance Committees in both the House and the Senate. This is the final step before moving to the full chambers for a vote. The STRONG Act allows a member of any National Guard branch to receive free tuition at a public university or a scholarship equivalent to average of the public university tuition at a TICUA member institution. Students must first apply federal and state non-payback aid before the STRONG Act funds are applied.

This four-year pilot program requires the Reservist to be in good standing with the National Guard, not have previously received a BA or BS degree, and maintain a 2.0 GPA. The scholarship is a reimbursement program and pays for hours completed each semester. As well, the program is capped at 120 credit hours.

More information on the STRONG Act: <http://www.tn.gov/nexttennessee/topic/nt-one-pager-tennessee-strong-act>

Undocumented Student Aid Bill to be Heard

The Senate Education Committee and the subcommittee of the House Education Administration and Planning Committee will review a bill which will allow students without documented citizenship to receive in-state tuition at public colleges and universities. Bill sponsors Sen. Todd Gardenhire and Rep.

Mark White introduced similar legislation in the past but were unable to secure the votes for passage. This year the measure has the early support of Governor Bill Haslam.

To be eligible students must have lived in Tennessee for two years prior to either graduating from a Tennessee high school, obtaining a passing score on the GED or HiSET, or graduating from a homeschool program. The bill enables each institution's governing board or governing system to decide whether or not they will allow the discounted tuition for undocumented students.

Private/Public Board Members Allowed

Sen. Dolores Gresham and Rep. David Hawk are sponsoring a bill which will allow Trustees serving on a TICUA member board to also serve on a board of a public Locally Governed Institution (LGI). Last year's passage of the FOCUS act prohibited Governor Haslam's appointees to the governing Boards of the former TBR universities to serve on any other higher education institutional board. As a result, some of Board members of TICUA institutions were asked to resign in order to accept the Governor's appointment. If passed, this bill will modify the restriction to apply only to other public institution and system governing boards and not to private colleges or universities.