

## Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation

Friday April 29, 2016

- DECISION ITEM C:** Emergency and Proposed Rules  
Tennessee Community College Reconnect Grant
- Staff Recommendation:**
- (1) That the Tennessee Assistance Student Corporation adopts Rule 1640-1-27 as emergency and proposed rules.
  - (2) That the TSAC Board of Directors authorizes the Executive Director to make any necessary technical corrections to these rules including changes suggested by the Tennessee Attorney General.
- Background:**
- The proposed rule implements Chapter 363 of the 2015 Public Acts, the Tennessee Community College Reconnect Grant, as amended by Senate Bill 2595.
- Following approval by the Board, these rules will be submitted to the Tennessee Attorney General for review, and will then be filed with the Secretary of State.
- A summary of the program is provided on the following page.
- Supporting Document:** *Tennessee Community College Reconnect Grant Program Summary*
- Rules of the Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation, Chapter 1640-1-27, Community College Reconnect Scholarship*

## **Tennessee Community College Reconnect Grant Program Summary**

- The Community College Reconnect (CCR) Grant is a pilot grant to assist adults in completing an associates degree at a Tennessee Community College.
- CCR is a last-dollar scholarship program funded with a non-recurring \$1.5 million appropriation.
- Recipients must meet the following criteria:
  - Be an independent student as determined by the FAFSA.
  - Be a Tennessee resident for one year prior to receiving the CCR grant.
  - Not have been enrolled in a postsecondary institution for at least one year prior to receiving the CCR grant.
  - Enroll in at least nine semester hours.
  - Maintain continuous enrollment.
  - Maintain 2.0 GPA.
  - No income requirements.
- CCR will start in fall of 2016 and continue until the \$1.5 million is fully expended.
- The \$1.5 million appropriation will be allocated to campuses to be distributed on a first-come, first-served basis, until the entire \$1.5 million is disbursed.

**RULES  
OF  
TENNESSEE STUDENT ASSISTANCE CORPORATION**

**CHAPTER 1640-01-27  
COMMUNITY COLLEGE RECONNECT GRANT**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

1640-01-27-.01	Definitions	1640-01-27-.07	Personal or Medical Leave of Absence
1640-01-27-.02	Scholarship Award Amounts	1640-01-27-.08	Reporting Requirements
1640-01-27-.03	Distribution of Funds	1640-01-27-.09	Award Made In Error
1640-01-27-.04	Application Process	1640-01-27-.10	Refund Policy
1640-01-27-.05	Eligibility	1640-01-27-.11	Transfer Students
1640-01-27-.06	Terminating Events	1640-01-27-.12	Appeal and Exception Process

**1640-01-27-.01 DEFINITIONS.**

- (1) Board of Regents: The board of regents of the state university and community college system of Tennessee.
- (2) Continuous Enrollment: The term is defined in T.C.A. 49-4-902.
- (3) Cumulative Grade Point Average: The grade point average as calculated by the eligible postsecondary institution.
- (4) Degree: A two-year associate degree conferred on students by an eligible postsecondary institution.
- (5) Eligible Postsecondary Institution: An eligible public two-year postsecondary institution operated by the board of regents of the state university and community college system.
- (6) FAFSA: The term is defined in T.C.A. § 49-4-902.
- (7) Gift Aid: The term is defined in T.C.A. § 49-4-708.
- (8) Independent Student: A student who is classified as independent as determined by the FAFSA.
- (9) Satisfactory Academic Progress: Progress in a course of study in accordance with the standards and practices used for Title IV programs by the eligible postsecondary institution at which the student is currently enrolled.
- (10) Semester: The term is defined in T.C.A. § 49-4-902.
- (11) Semester Hour: The credit hour used by a postsecondary institution, if the institution is on a semester system, or its equivalent if the institution is on a system other than a semester system. "Semester hour" includes each semester hour attempted, whether remedial or for credit toward a degree, but shall not include any semester hours attempted before graduating from high school or earning a GED® or HiSET®.
- (12) Tennessee Resident: A resident of Tennessee as defined by regulations promulgated by the Tennessee Board of Regents.
- (13) Terminating Event: The occurrence of an event described in T.C.A. § 49-4-927(f).

(Rule 1640-01-27-.01, continued)

- (14) Title IV: The term is defined in T.C.A. § 49-4-902.
- (15) TSAC: Tennessee Student Assistance Corporation.
- (16) Tuition and Mandatory Fees: Tuition and mandatory fees required for the enrollment or attendance of students at eligible postsecondary institutions that are charged to all students, and shall not include fees charged for TN eCampus, online courses, specific programs of study, books, or supplies even if such fees are considered necessary for enrollment.

**Authority:** T.C.A. §§ 49-4-201, 49-4-204, 49-4-708, 49-4-902, and 49-4-927.

**1640-01-27-.02 SCHOLARSHIP AWARD AMOUNTS.**

- (1) The Community College Reconnect Grant is intended to provide financial assistance to offset tuition and mandatory fees associated with pursuing an associate degree at an eligible postsecondary institution after all other gift aid has been credited to tuition and mandatory fees.
- (2) Award amounts for the program shall be determined in accordance with T.C.A. § 49-4-927 and shall be set in the General Appropriations Act.
- (3) All tuition discounts and waivers for which a student qualifies shall first be deducted from the student's tuition and mandatory fees before gift aid is credited.
- (4) All gift aid from sources other than the Community College Reconnect Grant shall be credited first to tuition and mandatory fees to reduce the student's Community College Reconnect Grant award. In any given semester, if all other gift aid exceeds tuition and mandatory fees then the student shall not be eligible for the Community College Reconnect Grant in that semester.
- (5) The receipt of a Community College Reconnect Grant is contingent upon admission to and enrollment in an eligible postsecondary institution. Qualifying for the Community College Reconnect Grant does not guarantee admission to an eligible postsecondary institution.

**Authority:** T.C.A. §§ 49-4-201, 49-4-204, and 49-4-927.

**1640-01-27-.03 DISTRIBUTION OF FUNDS.**

- (1) Funds shall be distributed to each eligible postsecondary institution in the form of a block grant. The amount received by the institution will be determined by TSAC and will be calculated using the institution's number of enrolled independent students as a percentage of the total independent student population for all eligible postsecondary institutions.
- (2) Each eligible postsecondary institution shall make awards to eligible applicants on a first-come, first-served basis. For purposes of the Community College Reconnect Grant, an applicant is eligible for an award if all eligibility requirements of T.C.A. § 49-4-927 have been met and, if selected, completed the verification process.

**Authority:** T.C.A. §§ 49-4-201, 49-4-204, and 49-4-927.

**1640-01-27-.04 APPLICATION PROCESS.**

- (1) Students participating in the Community College Reconnect Grant shall file a FAFSA, or renewal FAFSA, in each year of program participation. The FAFSA must be submitted by

(Rule 1640-01-27-.04, continued)

mail or electronically as directed in the FAFSA instructions. Students shall file the FAFSA or renewal FAFSA according to the following deadlines:

- (a) No later than September 1 for fall enrollment, or
  - (b) No later than February 1 for spring and summer enrollment.
- (2) The FAFSA shall serve as the only application for the Community College Reconnect Grant program. No additional application shall be required.

**Authority:** T.C.A. §§ 49-4-201, 49-4-204, and 49-4-927.

**1640-01-27-.05 ELIGIBILITY.**

- (1) To be eligible to receive a Community College Reconnect Grant a student shall meet the requirements of T.C.A. § 49-4-927(b).
- (a) A minimum of thirty (30) hours earned prior to enrollment as a Reconnect student shall be applicable to the associate degree the student is pursuing.
- (2) To continue to be eligible to receive a Community College Reconnect Grant a student shall meet the requirements of T.C.A. § 49-4-927(d).
- (a) A Reconnect student enrolled in the minimum number of hours required by the Community College Reconnect Grant in any semester shall also maintain attendance in the hours enrolled.

**Authority:** T.C.A. §§ 49-4-201, 49-4-204, and 49-4-927.

**1640-01-27-.06 TERMINATING EVENTS.**

- (1) A student shall receive the Community College Reconnect Grant until reaching a terminating event as described in T.C.A. § 49-4-927(f).

**Authority:** T.C.A. §§ 49-4-201, 49-4-204, and 49-4-927.

**1640-01-27-.07 PERSONAL OR MEDICAL LEAVE OF ABSENCE.**

- (1) A student may be granted a medical or personal leave of absence from continuous enrollment at an eligible postsecondary institution as long as all other applicable eligibility criteria are met. Allowable medical or personal reasons may include illness of the student; illness or death of an immediate family member; extreme financial hardship of the student or student's immediate family; fulfillment of a religious commitment encouraged of members of that faith; fulfillment of required military service; or other extraordinary circumstances beyond the student's control where attendance by the student creates a substantial hardship. In the event an institution denies a student's request for a medical or personal leave of absence, the student may appeal the decision in accordance with these rules.
- (2) A student granted a medical or personal leave of absence who resumes attendance at an eligible postsecondary institution may retain the Community College Reconnect Grant if funding remains available. The institution will make a final decision of eligibility and funding availability.

**Authority:** T.C.A. §§ 49-4-201, 49-4-204, and 49-4-927.

**1640-01-27-.08 REPORTING REQUIREMENTS.**

- (1) The eligible postsecondary institution shall report the following data elements for each recipient to TSAC at the end of each semester:
  - (a) First name,
  - (b) Last name,
  - (c) Social Security Number,
  - (d) Amount of Community College Reconnect Grant received,
  - (e) Enrollment Status (full-time or part-time),
  - (f) Number of hours enrolled at census date,
  - (g) Number of hours at completion of semester,
  - (h) Grade point average,
  - (i) Satisfactory academic progress – Yes / No,
  - (j) Ineligible reason (if student loses award).
- (2) The eligible postsecondary institution shall report other data elements as requested by TSAC for evaluation and analysis of the program.

**Authority:** T.C.A. §§ 49-4-201, 49-4-204, and 49-4-927.

**1640-01-27-.09 AWARD MADE IN ERROR.**

- (1) Repayment from the student shall not be required if TSAC determines that the error was through no fault of the student.
- (2) Repayment from the student shall be required if TSAC determines that fraud was committed or the error was due to the fault of the student. When repayment is required, the student may not receive additional student aid from TSAC until repayment is made.
- (3) Repayment from the eligible postsecondary institution will be required if TSAC determines that the error was due to the fault of the institution.

**Authority:** T.C.A. §§ 49-4-201, 49-4-204, and 49-4-927.

**1640-01-27-.10 REFUND POLICY.**

- (1) If a recipient of the Community College Reconnect Grant fails to complete a semester for any reason, the eligible postsecondary institution shall apply its refund policy to determine whether a refund may be required. The eligible postsecondary institution shall provide the student with a notice indicating the amount to be returned to the student. The eligible postsecondary institution shall notify TSAC of the refund. The eligible postsecondary institution shall also be responsible for obtaining repayment from the student. The student shall be ineligible for student aid from TSAC until the refund is paid. Funds returned through the refund policy shall be used to make additional awards to students through the Community College Reconnect Grant.

(Rule 1640-01-27-.10, continued)

**Authority:** T.C.A. §§ 49-4-201, 49-4-204, and 49-4-927.

**1640-01-27-.11 TRANSFER STUDENTS.**

- (1) A student who meets all academic and non-academic requirements of the Community College Reconnect Grant may transfer from one eligible postsecondary institution to another eligible postsecondary institution and maintain the scholarship, provided:
  - (a) The student is able to complete the diploma or associate degree in the amount of time remaining before reaching a terminating event as outlined in T.C.A § 49-4-927(f), and
  - (b) The eligible postsecondary institution receiving the transfer student has sufficient program funding available to fund the remaining hours necessary for the student to complete the diploma or associate degree.

**Authority:** T.C.A. §§ 49-4-201, 49-4-204, and 49-4-927.

**1640-01-27-.12 APPEAL AND EXCEPTION PROCESS.**

- (1) Each eligible postsecondary institution shall use their existing Institutional Review Panel (IRP) for purposes of reviewing and rendering decisions regarding appeals for the Community College Reconnect Grant. The IRP shall use the same procedures and timelines as those that currently exist for the review of Tennessee Education Lottery Scholarship (TELS) appeals as outlined in Tenn. Comp. R. & Reg. 1640-01-19.
- (2) TSAC shall use the existing TELS Appeals Panel to consider appeals and render decisions for those students who appeal a decision made by the IRP and for appeals made directly to TSAC. The same guidelines shall exist for appeals of the Community College Reconnect Grant as those that are currently in place for TELS as outlined in Tenn. Comp. R & Reg.1640-01-19.

**Authority:** T.C.A. §§ 49-4-201, 49-4-204, 49-4-924, and 49-4-927.