

**GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
SESSION 2015**

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**HOUSE BILL 129**

Short Title: High Achieving Tuition Scholarships. (Public)

Sponsors: Representatives Elmore, Dobson, Holloway, and McNeill (Primary Sponsors).  
*For a complete list of Sponsors, refer to the North Carolina General Assembly Web Site.*

Referred to: Education - Community Colleges, if favorable, Education - Universities, if favorable, Appropriations.

March 4, 2015

A BILL TO BE ENTITLED  
AN ACT TO CREATE THE HIGH ACHIEVING TUITION SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM  
FOR SCHOLARSHIPS FOR TOP PERFORMING HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS  
ATTENDING NORTH CAROLINA COMMUNITY COLLEGES.

The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

**SECTION 1.** Purpose of Program. – There is created the High Achieving Tuition Scholarship Program. The purposes of the High Achieving Tuition Scholarship Program include the following:

- (1) Decrease the strain that universities are experiencing from serving an increasing number of students.
- (2) Decrease the drop off in enrollment of students in their sophomore year.
- (3) Encourage higher performing students at community colleges.
- (4) Utilize the State's educational resources to the fullest.
- (5) Create more educational and career options for students.
- (6) Realize significant cost savings to the State.
- (7) Develop a more competitive workforce.

**SECTION 2.** Scholarship Eligibility. – A student shall be eligible to receive a High Achieving Tuition Scholarship if the student meets all of the following requirements:

- (1) Within seven months prior to applying for the scholarship, graduates with at least a 3.5 unweighted grade point average from either a (i) public high school located in this State or (ii) a nonpublic high school or home school, as defined in Article 39 of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes, located in this State.
- (2) Presents evidence of United States citizenship.
- (3) Qualifies as a resident of this State for tuition purposes, as provided in Article 14 of Chapter 116 of the General Statutes.
- (4) Gains admission as a degree-seeking student at a North Carolina community college.
- (5) Complies with Selective Service registration requirements.

**SECTION 3.** Award of Scholarships. – The State Education Assistance Authority (Authority) shall annually award High Achieving Tuition Scholarships to all eligible students in an amount not to exceed the cost of 16 credit hours of tuition per fall or spring academic semester for a maximum of four academic semesters. The Authority shall require students to complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) to be eligible for a scholarship



1 award and shall reduce the amount of the scholarship award for any student by the amount of  
2 grants or scholarships received by that student from other sources. The Authority shall award  
3 scholarships to eligible students in the order in which they are received. The Authority shall  
4 award scholarships beginning with the fall semester of the 2016-2017 school year to students  
5 graduating from high school in the 2015-2016 school year.

6 **SECTION 4.** Scholarship Renewal. – A scholarship awarded to an eligible student  
7 shall be renewed if the student demonstrates maintenance of satisfactory academic progress by  
8 maintaining a 3.0 grade point average and completion of a minimum of 30 semester credit  
9 hours by the end of the academic year.

10 **SECTION 5.** Scholarship Revocation. – A scholarship awarded to an eligible  
11 student shall be revoked for any of the following at the conclusion of each semester:

- 12 (1) Failure to maintain a 2.5 grade point average.
- 13 (2) Failure to maintain a course load of at least 12 credit hours.
- 14 (3) Default or unpaid refund on a student financial aid program.
- 15 (4) Felony convictions for a controlled substances offense under Article 5 of  
16 Chapter 90 of the General Statutes.

17 **SECTION 6.** Scholarship Administration. – The Authority shall adopt rules for  
18 administration of the High Achieving Tuition Scholarship Program.

19 **SECTION 7.** Course Counseling and Transfer. – The State Board of Community  
20 Colleges shall adopt rules requiring community colleges to ensure that scholarship recipients  
21 are provided counseling and assistance in selecting coursework that reflects their educational  
22 and career goals. For students planning to enter a constituent institution of The University of  
23 North Carolina, the State Board of Community Colleges shall ensure that credits earned by  
24 those students participating in the program are transferable.

25 **SECTION 8.** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the State Education  
26 Assistance Authority the sum of two million dollars (\$2,000,000) for the 2016-2017 fiscal year  
27 for administrative costs and award of scholarships. It is the intent of the General Assembly to  
28 appropriate three million five hundred thousand dollars (\$3,500,000) in recurring funds for the  
29 2017-2018 fiscal year for administrative costs and award of scholarships. Any unexpended  
30 funds for this purpose shall not revert at the end of each fiscal year but shall remain available to  
31 award scholarships to eligible students.

32 **SECTION 9.** The Board of Governors of The University of North Carolina shall  
33 adopt a policy to permit any student admitted to a constituent university who receives a High  
34 Achieving Tuition Scholarship to defer admission to the constituent institution for two years,  
35 beginning with the 2016-2017 school year.

36 **SECTION 10.(a)** For the 2015-2016 school year, the State Board of Education  
37 shall direct local boards of education to survey high school students in their senior year who  
38 meet the eligibility requirements of the High Achieving Tuition Scholarship to determine  
39 interest in the program, including numbers of students who intend to apply for the scholarship,  
40 and reasons that eligible students may choose not to apply for the scholarship. The State Board  
41 of Education shall report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee no later than  
42 December 1, 2015, on the results of this survey.

43 **SECTION 10.(b)** The Board of Governors of The University of North Carolina  
44 and the State Board of Community Colleges shall jointly identify and report to the Joint  
45 Legislative Education Oversight Committee by April 1, 2016, on potential issues related to the  
46 transition of High Achieving Tuition Scholarship recipients from community college to  
47 university enrollment, and other recommendations to improve and expand the High Achieving  
48 Tuition Scholarship Program.

49 **SECTION 10.(c)** The State Education Assistance Authority shall report annually  
50 on or before March 1, beginning in 2017, to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight

1 Committee on the implementation of the High Achieving Tuition Scholarship Program. The  
2 report shall include the following information:

- 3 (1) Number of students applying for the scholarship, including information  
4 about student demographics and geographic location.  
5 (2) Number of students awarded the scholarship, including information about  
6 student demographics and geographic location, and community college  
7 attended.  
8 (3) Amount of funds expended for scholarships.  
9 (4) Number of students whose scholarships were revoked and reasons for  
10 revocation.  
11 (5) Other relevant information, as determined by the State Education Assistance  
12 Authority.

13 **SECTION 11.** This act becomes effective July 1, 2015.