

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA  
SESSION 2015

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HOUSE BILL 129  
Committee Substitute Favorable 3/17/15  
Committee Substitute #2 Favorable 3/24/15

Short Title: High Achieving Tuition Scholarships.

(Public)

Sponsors:

Referred to:

March 4, 2015

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

5 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

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

- 9 (1) Encourage higher-performing students at community colleges.  
10 (2) Utilize the State's educational resources to the fullest.  
11 (3) Create more educational and career options for students.  
12 (4) Realize significant cost-savings to the State.  
13 (5) Develop a more competitive workforce.

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

- 16 (1) In the academic semester prior to enrolling in a community college,  
17 graduates with at least a 3.5 unweighted grade point average from either a (i)  
18 public high school located in this State or (ii) a nonpublic high school or  
19 home school, as defined in Article 39 of Chapter 115C of the General  
20 Statutes, located in this State.  
21 (2) Presents evidence the student is either a United States citizen or eligible  
22 noncitizen.  
23 (3) Qualifies as a resident of this State for tuition purposes, as provided in  
24 Article 14 of Chapter 116 of the General Statutes.  
25 (4) Gains admission as a student at a North Carolina community college in a  
26 curriculum program.  
27 (5) Complies with Selective Service registration requirements.  
28 (6) Affirmatively states the student does not have a felony conviction for a  
29 controlled substance offense under Article 5 of Chapter 90 of the General  
30 Statutes.

31 **SECTION 3.** Award of Scholarships. – The State Education Assistance Authority  
32 (Authority) shall annually award High Achieving Tuition Scholarships to all eligible students in  
33 an amount not to exceed the cost of 16 credit hours of tuition per fall or spring academic  
34 semester for a maximum of four academic semesters. The Authority shall require students to  
35 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 State or federal sources. The  
3 Authority shall award scholarships to eligible students in the order in which they are received.  
4 The Authority shall award scholarships beginning with the fall semester of the 2016-2017  
5 school year to students 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 annually renewed if the student demonstrates all of the following:

- 8 (1) A cumulative 3.0 grade point average.
- 9 (2) Completion of a minimum of 30 semester credit hours by the end of the  
10 academic year.
- 11 (3) An affirmative statement the student does not have a felony conviction for a  
12 controlled substance offense under Article 5 of Chapter 90 of the General  
13 Statutes.

14 **SECTION 5.** Scholarship Revocation. – A scholarship awarded to an eligible  
15 student shall be revoked at the conclusion of the first semester of an academic year for any of  
16 the following:

- 17 (1) Failure to maintain a course load of at least 12 credit hours.
- 18 (2) Default or unpaid refund on a student financial aid program.

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

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

27 **SECTION 8.** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Authority the  
28 sum of fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) for the 2015-2016 fiscal year for administrative costs  
29 related to the implementation of the Program. There is appropriated two million dollars  
30 (\$2,000,000) for the 2016-2017 fiscal year for administrative costs and award of scholarships.  
31 The Authority may use up to five percent (5%) of the appropriated funds for administrative  
32 costs associated with the Program. Any unexpended funds for this purpose shall not revert at  
33 the end of the fiscal year but shall remain available to award scholarships to eligible students.

34 **SECTION 9.** The Board of Governors of The University of North Carolina shall  
35 adopt a policy to permit any student admitted to a constituent institution who receives a High  
36 Achieving Tuition Scholarship to defer admission to the constituent institution for two years,  
37 beginning with the 2016-2017 school year. Deferred admission shall be contingent upon the  
38 successful completion of an associate's degree and remaining in good standing in the  
39 Scholarship while enrolled in the community college.

40 **SECTION 10.(a)** For the 2015-2016 school year, the State Board of Education  
41 shall direct local boards of education to survey high school students in their senior year who  
42 meet the eligibility requirements of the High Achieving Tuition Scholarship to determine  
43 interest in the program, including numbers of students who intend to apply for the scholarship,  
44 and reasons that eligible students may choose not to apply for the scholarship. The State Board  
45 of Education shall report to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight Committee no later than  
46 December 15, 2015, on the results of this survey.

47 **SECTION 10.(b)** The Board of Governors of The University of North Carolina  
48 and the State Board of Community Colleges shall jointly identify and report to the Joint  
49 Legislative Education Oversight Committee by April 1, 2016, on potential issues related to the  
50 transition of High Achieving Tuition Scholarship recipients from community college to

1 university enrollment and other recommendations to improve and expand the High Achieving  
2 Tuition Scholarship Program.

3 **SECTION 10.(c)** The State Education Assistance Authority shall report annually  
4 on or before September 1, beginning in 2017, to the Joint Legislative Education Oversight  
5 Committee on the implementation of the High Achieving Tuition Scholarship Program. The  
6 report shall include the following information:

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

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