

**Revised Process to Determine Academic Program and Course Eligibility
for Scholarship Enhancement**

In June 2007, the South Carolina General Assembly passed Act 115, enabling students awarded LIFE and Palmetto Fellows scholarships to receive a scholarship enhancement if they met the scholarship enhancement criteria, including majoring in Commission-defined science and mathematics majors (SC Code of Laws, as amended, §59-104-25 and §59-149-15). The legislation as enacted provided for enhancement awards to be applied at the start of the fall term of the 2007-2008 academic year.

As directed, the Commission on Higher Education (CHE) worked to define what constituted a science or mathematics major per the conditions of the legislation, and began administering the awards in the fall of 2007.

In February 2015, CHE approved a revised process for determining academic program and course eligibility for additional LIFE and Palmetto Fellows scholarship awards to eligible students (“scholarship enhancements”). The revision includes four components:

1. A process to review academic program and course eligibility
2. Recommended guidelines for institutions to apply for academic program and course eligibility
3. A definition of eligible academic programs and courses
4. Implementation of a committee to review course and program eligibility requests

As a part of this revision, CHE also approved the following documents:

1. *Instructions for Institutional Application for Degree Programs and Individual Courses*, including a definition of eligible programs for student majors in science and mathematics (See Attachment 1.)
2. *Scholarship Enhancement Eligibility Review Committee (SEER) guidelines*, establishing the profile and charge of an advisory committee to review course and program eligibility requests (See Attachment 2.)

The *Instructions* include the definition for eligible programs and courses; a summary of student eligibility; protocols for institutional submission of applications; and a timetable for submission, review and notification to institutions of results. The *Instructions* also include summaries and references to pertinent legislation and regulations: specifically, the South Carolina Code of Laws, as amended §59-104-25 and §59-149-15, and the program regulations for LIFE and Palmetto Fellows as included in the South Carolina Code of Regulations Chapter 62, R.62-300-375 and R.62-1200.1-75, respectively.

LIFE and Palmetto Fellows Scholarship Enhancement Eligibility

Instructions for Institutional Application For Degree Programs and Individual Courses

LEGISLATIVE CHARGE

In 2007, the South Carolina General Assembly passed Act 115, enabling students awarded LIFE and Palmetto Fellows scholarships to receive an additional scholarship award stipend (“Scholarship Enhancement”), if they met the scholarship enhancement criteria, including majoring in Commission-defined science and mathematics degree programs. Post-secondary and workforce retention of distinguished students are the goals of the awards. (SC Code of Regulations, R.62-300-B and 62-1200-1)

The South Carolina Commission on Higher Education (CHE) administers the LIFE and Palmetto Fellows Scholarship Enhancements in accordance with South Carolina Code of Laws, as amended §59-104-25 and §59-149-15, and pursuant to the program regulation for the Palmetto Fellows and LIFE Scholarship Programs under South Carolina Code of Regulations Chapter 62. The legislation directs the Commission to define science and mathematics majors:

The Commission on Higher Education by regulation shall define what constitutes a science or mathematics major but at a minimum shall include majors in science or mathematics disciplines, computer science or informational technology, engineering, science education, math education, and health care and related disciplines including medicine and dentistry. (SC Code of Laws, as amended, §59-104-25 and §59-149-15)

To refine its determination of the eligibility of academic programs and courses, the Commission issues the following procedures:

- Standardization of the process to review academic programs and courses
- Instructions for application for eligibility
- A definition of eligible science and mathematics majors

The *Instructions for Institutional Application* are intended to summarize, clarify and remain consistent with the applicable Code of Laws and Code of Regulations. Applicable laws and regulations are published on the South Carolina Legislature website and on the Commission website.

DEFINITION

Through its research the scholarship enhancement program eligibility task force charged with formulating review guidelines concluded that defining an academic program that “constitutes a science or mathematics major” as mandated by state statute is an iterative process on international, federal and state levels, and therefore warrants continual review, resulting in the periodic update of the published list of approved academic programs and courses.

For current evaluation, eligible science and mathematics majors include life and physical sciences, engineering, mathematics, information technology and health disciplines as defined by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics Standard Occupational Classification Recommendation. To help determine eligibility, the Commission will consider the following questions:

1. **Growth.** How does the program continue to attract and produce STEM professionals in growing economic areas?

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2. **Competitiveness.** How will the degree program help to improve students' competitiveness for international job opportunities within the state?
3. **Graduate Study.** How does the proposed program prepare students for graduate study?

STUDENT ELIGIBILITY

SC Code of Regulations R.62-318-A and B specify requirements for student eligibility for scholarship enhancement to include 1) Palmetto Fellows and LIFE eligibility; 2) satisfaction of the fourteen (14) credit hour prerequisite; 3) satisfactory collegiate academic progress; 4) full-time enrollment in a declared major in an eligible degree program; 5) and institutional eligibility. Moreover, the Commission affirms student transferability: for a course counting toward eligibility for a student at one institution, the student maintains the eligibility credits earned when he or she transfers to another in-state institution.

"Enrollment in a minor does not meet the requirements of an eligible degree program for the Palmetto Fellows or LIFE Scholarship Enhancement. Students must be enrolled in a declared major in an eligible degree program that is approved and assigned a CIP Code by the Commission. Eligible degree programs are those listed as such on the Commission's Web site." (Code of Regulations R.62-310-M and 62-1200.5-P)

The Commission has published listings of approved scholarship enhancement degree programs as well as courses for satisfying the 14-credit hour requirement. However, mathematics, science and allied health programs approved at one institution do not confer *de facto* approval to other institutions. Each institution must submit applications for all of the academic programs or courses it requests the Commission to consider for scholarship enhancement eligibility. Mathematics and science programs or courses that appear and remain on the Commission-approved scholarship enhancement list do not require new applications. Institutions are required to complete the following instructions to submit an application for consideration for degree program or course approval.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR INSTITUTIONAL APPLICATION

1. Applications will be considered for review only for academic degree programs eligible for consideration. (See **Academic Program Eligibility.**)
2. Applications will be considered for review only for individual courses eligible for consideration. (See **Course Eligibility.**)
3. Only an institution's Chief Academic Officer (CAO) or the CAO designee may submit applications. (See **Authorship.**)
4. Applications may be submitted year round but will be considered only during one of two review cycles. (See **Timetable.**)
5. Applications will be considered for review only if they comply with the requirements itemized. (See **Requirements for Academic Program Applications.**)

Academic Program Eligibility

Existing Programs. Applications will be considered only if the existing academic program satisfies all of the following requirements:

1. Listing in the Commission's Inventory of Academic Programs
2. Coding by the Catalog of Instructional Programs (CIP) under one of the codes approved by the CHE
3. Listing in the institution's official catalog with a defined course of study, including course descriptions
4. Identification in the application of the courses in the curriculum that meet the 14-credit hour requirement

New Programs. Academic programs the Commission has not approved previously require the submission of a New Program Proposal according to the *Policies and Procedures for New Academic Programs, Program Modifications, Program Notifications, Program Terminations, and New Centers*. The institution's data and rationale for the proposed program's eligibility for scholarship enhancement should be included in the New Program Proposal (see **APPLICATION** instructions below). The Scholarship Enhancement Eligibility Review Committee (SEER) will evaluate the content submitted for scholarship enhancement consideration from the New Program Proposal by the same panel review process it uses to review stand-alone scholarship enhancement applications.

Course Eligibility

Applications for course eligibility will follow the same submission guidelines as academic program submissions. Applications will be considered only if the course has already secured the following items:

1. An approved CIP code, and
2. A course prefix consistent with programs of study included in the list of eligible programs

Authorship

Only an institution's Chief Academic Officer (CAO) or the CAO designee may submit applications to CHE for consideration of academic program or course approval. Applications for degree programs or courses will not be accepted from unauthorized institutional staff, or from students, students' family members, or other third parties.

Timetable

Institutions may submit applications for scholarship enhancement eligibility during one of two review cycles per year, February or September (see Table), concurring with CHE's cycle of new academic program proposals. Applications must be submitted and approved prior to the beginning of the academic year requested for implementation. The February cycle is considered "prior to" the beginning of the new academic year, and the September cycle is considered "the same as the new academic year. Specifically, submissions by the February review cycle (applications due January 15th) will be considered spring term applications during the current academic year. Therefore, in accordance with the Commission's procedure, *Policy for Addition and Removal of Programs to the List of Programs Eligible for Math/Science Scholarship Enhancements* (2010), if the application is approved, student eligibility status for the scholarship enhancement begins with the freshman class enrolling in the program the next new academic year. Submissions during the September cycle (applications due August 15th) will be considered fall semester applications of the same calendar year (the new academic year). Therefore, if approved, scholarship enhancement eligibility begins with the freshman class enrolling in the program beginning the fall term of the following academic year. (N.B. Eligible students do not *receive* scholarship enhancements until their sophomore year. SC Code of Laws as amended, §59-104-25-A and §59-149-15-A)

Example: If an application is reviewed by:

- February 2015, and it is approved, student eligibility status begins with the freshman class in Fall 2015.
- September 2015, and it is approved, student eligibility status begins with the freshman class in Fall 2016.

This timetable is designed to assure the Commission review panel, SEER, has opportunities for thorough yet timely analysis.

The Commission advises institutions seeking same calendar year eligibility for new programs or program modifications that include the request for scholarship enhancement to submit proposals on the February cycle. In the rare instance that an institution considers submitting a proposal for a new program or a program modification during the May cycle for implementation during the fall semester of the same calendar year (see the timetable in the *Policies and Procedures for New Academic Programs, Program Modifications, Program Notifications, Program Terminations, and New Centers*), including a request for scholarship enhancement, the request cannot be considered by the review panel until the September meeting, after the fall term has begun. (See Timetable and Example; see Table)

Table

COMMISSION EVALUATION PROCESS FOR SCHOLARSHIP ENHANCEMENT			
Scholarship Enhancement Application Due	Scholarship Enhancement Eligibility Committee Meeting	Notification to Institutions	Implementation Cycle (earliest possible date)
January 15	February	April 15	Same calendar year, beginning the Fall term
August 15	September	November 15	Next calendar year, beginning the Fall term

Applications for submission may be approximately two or three pages for individual courses or academic programs, respectively, to include the cover/contact page, standard formatting for margins, font selection and size, and single-spacing for paragraphs.

Applications for courses and applications for academic programs are separate documents with separate instructions. See below for the respective application requirements.

APPLICATION for Individual Courses

Page 1. Cover/contact Page

- Name of Institution and Academic Unit
- Full Name of Course including Prefix and Number
- Course Contact Information: Name, Unit or Office, E-mail, Phone

Page 2. Course Information

- Course Description
- Type of Course, e.g., general education, major requirement, etc.
- List the course's unique features including laboratory or experiential learning components, if applicable
- Current CIP code (Classification of Instructional Programs)

Appendix

- Syllabus

APPLICATION for Academic Programs

Page 1. Cover/contact Page

- Name of Institution and Academic Unit
- Name of Program (include concentrations, options, and tracks) and CIP Code
- Program Contact Information: Name, Unit or Office, E-mail, Phone
- Institutional Approvals and Dates of Approval

Page 2. Academic Program Information

- State the nature and purpose of the proposed program.
- List the program's objectives.
- List the program's unique features including dual-degree partnerships, articulation agreements, or internships.
- Provide a concise explanation for consideration of the degree program's eligibility for scholarship enhancement. This rationale should address *growth*, *competitiveness* and *graduate study* as described in the definition.

Page 3. Curriculum Outline

- Provide a curriculum sheet or outline of the academic program, itemizing each course by title, course prefix and number, and by course requirement: general education, core or concentration coursework, or electives.
- Identify the courses in the curriculum that meet the 14-credit-hour requirement.

Appendix

- At its discretion, the Commission may request additional information as warranted (e.g., employment opportunities or projections).

Scholarship Enhancement Eligibility Review Committee (SEER)

Purpose

1. To review applications for academic program and course eligibility according to the procedures in the *Instructions for Institutional Application for Degree Programs and Individual Courses*.
2. To review, at a minimum of every four years, the definition of eligible science and mathematics majors; the criteria for determining eligible academic programs and courses as published in the *Instructions*; the list of approved academic programs and courses for continued inclusion; and the protocols in the *Instructions* to improve the application process.
3. To provide the recommendations from application reviews and committee deliberations to the Commission's Office of Academic Affairs.

Composition

SEER includes one representative from a comprehensive public institution, an independent institution, the technical college system, a research institution, and two staff members from the Commission: one each from Academic Affairs and Student Affairs. (Total = 6.) Preferred representation from each institution includes a full-time academician in mathematics, life and physical sciences, computer science, informational technology, engineering or the health disciplines.

Definition

SEER reviews applications according to the definition for science and mathematics majors published in the *Instructions*. To help determine eligibility, the committee considers three criteria: **growth**, **competitiveness** and preparation for **graduate study**. (See *Instructions*.)

Schedule

SEER reviews applications twice per year according to the timetable in the *Instructions*.

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