

# LIFE Scholarship

## Frequently asked Questions

### What is the LIFE Scholarship?

The Legislative Incentive for Future Excellence (LIFE) Scholarship is a merit-based scholarship program administered by the financial aid office at each eligible public and independent institution in South Carolina. The LIFE Scholarship may be used towards the cost-of-attendance for up to eight terms based on the students' initial college enrollment date. Student's must be enrolled in their first one-year program, first associate's degree, first two-year program leading to a baccalaureate degree, first baccalaureate degree, or first professional degree.

### What is the LIFE Scholarship Enhancement?

The General Assembly established the LIFE Scholarship Enhancement in order to increase the number of students in the State majoring in mathematics and science and to increase the access to higher education, improve the employability of South Carolina's students so as to attract business to the State, provide incentives for students to be better prepared for college, and to encourage students to graduate from college on time. Students enrolled at two-year institutions are not eligible to receive a LIFE Scholarship Enhancement. Students can receive the LIFE Scholarship Enhancement beginning their second/sophomore year in college (based on initial date of college enrollment).

### The Purpose:

- Increase ACCESS to higher education
- Improve EMPLOYABILITY of South Carolina students
- Provide INCENTIVES for students to be better prepared for college
- Encourage students to GRADUATE from college on time
- LIFE Scholarship Enhancement's purpose is to increase the number of students in the State majoring in mathematics and science

### Award Amount:

Eligible Institutions	Award Amount*
Four-year Public	Up to the cost-of-attendance, not to exceed \$4,700, plus a \$300 book allowance
Four-year Independent	Up to \$4,700 plus a \$300 book allowance
Two-year Public and Independent	Up to the cost-of-tuition at USC Regional campuses to include a \$300 book allowance, not to exceed \$5,000
Technical	Up to the cost-of-tuition to include a \$300 book allowance, not to exceed \$5,000
LIFE Scholarship Enhancement (Four-year Institutions Only)	Up to the cost of attendance, not to exceed \$2,500

\*Award amounts are awarded half in the fall and half in the spring. Cost-of-tuition shall mean the award amount charged for registering for credit hours of instruction and mandatory fees assessed to all students. (The LIFE Scholarship in combination with all other scholarships and grants shall not exceed the cost-of-attendance as defined in Title IV regulations for any academic year.)

To qualify for a LIFE Scholarship, a student must meet ALL of the following requirements in addition to the initial eligibility requirements, if you are a first-time entering freshman, listed on page two of this handout. To qualify for a LIFE

**\*\*\*Please be aware that the information provided in this handout is subject to change during the Legislative Session. The Commission staff will update this information as necessary.**



Scholarship Enhancement, a student must meet ALL of the eligibility requirements for a LIFE Scholarship and be a recipient of LIFE Scholarship funds. In addition, to receive a LIFE Scholarship Enhancement the student must be a math or science major and have successfully completed a total of at least fourteen credit hours of instruction in mathematics and life and physical science courses (including AP, IB and dual enrollment courses taken during high school) by the end of the student's first year of enrollment in college (based on initial date of college enrollment).

### **General Eligibility Requirements:**

- Graduate from high school or complete a home school program as prescribed by law;
- Attend an eligible South Carolina public or private college or university;
- Be a U.S. citizen or permanent resident (green card holder) at the time of high school graduation and be a legal resident of South Carolina as defined in applicable State statutes governing the determination of residency for tuition and fee purposes at the time of high school graduation;
- Be enrolled as a full-time degree-seeking student;
- Certify that he or she has never been convicted of any felonies and has not been convicted of any second of subsequent alcohol or other drug-related misdemeanor convictions within the past academic year;
- Verify that he or she is not in default and does not owe a refund or repayment on any Federal or State financial aid;
- Must not be a SC HOPE Scholarship, Palmetto Fellows Scholarship or Lottery Tuition Assistance recipient.
- For a LIFE Scholarship Enhancement, students must attend an eligible four-year South Carolina public or private college or university.

### **Initial Eligibility Requirements for a LIFE Scholarship:**

In order to qualify for the LIFE Scholarship, first-time entering freshman attending an eligible four-year institution must meet two of three of the following criteria:

- 1. Earn a cumulative 3.0 grade point average (GPA) based on the SC Uniform Grading Scale upon high school graduation**
  - a. The grade point average must be reported to two decimal places (minimum) and cannot be rounded. The GPR must be calculated after official completion of courses required for graduation.
- 2. Score an 1100 on the SAT or an equivalent of 22 on the ACT**
  - a. SAT/ACT scores will be accepted through the June national test administration of the high school graduation year.
  - b. It is permissible to select the highest SAT Evidence-based Reading score combined with the highest SAT Evidenced-based Math score from different test administrations.
  - c. The ACT composite score may be based on multiple test sittings.
- 3. Rank in the top 30% of the graduating class**
  - a. The ranking percentages must be reported in two decimal places (minimum) and cannot be rounded. The class rank must be based on the SC Uniform Grading Scale.
  - b. The rank must be based on all students who received their diploma during the traditional graduation ceremony typically in May/June. The graduating class cannot include any students who graduated during the summer.

**First-time entering freshmen attending an eligible two-year or technical institution must earn a cumulative 3.0 GPA based on the UGP as described in (1a) above. The standardized test score and class rank requirements are waived.**



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## Initial Eligibility Requirements for a LIFE Scholarship Enhancement:

A student must meet ALL of the eligibility requirements for a LIFE Scholarship and be a recipient of LIFE Scholarship funds. In addition, all to receive a LIFE Scholarship Enhancement the student must be a declared math or science major by the beginning of the second academic year of college enrollment. Approved lists of eligible majors and eligible courses to meet the fourteen credit hour course requirement for the LIFE Scholarship Enhancement are provided on the Commission's website at [www.che.sc.gov](http://www.che.sc.gov).

## To Regain or Earn the LIFE Scholarship or LIFE Scholarship Enhancement:

After completion of the first academic year of college or to earn the scholarship while in college, students must:

- Meet all general eligibility criteria;
- Earn an average of 30 credit hours\* by the end of each academic year (fall, spring, summer) equaling a minimum of 30 credit hours consistent with the policies and procedures of the institution if a rising second year student, 60 credit hours if a rising third year student consistent with the policies and procedures of the institution, or 90 credit hours consistent with the policies and procedures of the institution if a rising fourth year student; and
- Earn a minimum 3.0 LIFE grade point average (GPA) based on grades earned at ALL institutions attended excluding remedial, continuing education, and non-degree credit courses by the end of each academic year (fall, spring, summer). Please note that the new LIFE GPA includes any dual enrollment grades earned while in high school.
- To receive the LIFE Scholarship Enhancement, the student must be a recipient of the LIFE Scholarship in his/her second, third, or fourth year of enrollment at an eligible four-year institution in SC. In addition the student must have a declared major in a math or science field and have successfully completed a total of at least fourteen credit hours of instruction in mathematics and life and physical science courses (including AP, IB and dual enrollment courses taken during high school) by the end of the student's first year of enrollment in college (based on initial date of college enrollment).

*\* Credit hours include any college credits earned during an academic year, as well as any AP, IB, Dual Enrollment, CLEP, and exempted credit hours*

## If You Plan to Transfer, Read This!

- Students who receive the LIFE Scholarship and transfer mid-year to another institution may be eligible to receive the Scholarship or LIFE Scholarship Enhancement for the spring term if they met the eligibility requirements at the end of the previous academic year for both the LIFE Scholarship and the LIFE Scholarship Enhancement.
  - If you are a freshman, mid-year transferring student, transferring to the same type of institution two-year to two-year or four-year to four-year the same requirements apply (eligibility at time of enrollment).
  - If you are a freshman transferring mid-year from a two-year to a four-year institution then you must meet the eligibility requirements of a first time entering freshman enrolling at a four year institution.

## If transferring to another eligible institution, to receive the LIFE Scholarship INITIALLY, students must:

- Have earned a cumulative 3.0 LIFE GPA at eligible institutions; and
- Have earned a minimum of 30 credit hours (second year transfer), 60 credit hours (third year transfer), or 90 credit hours (fourth year transfer) at all prior institutions or an annual equivalent for a student who begins mid-year at the participating institution.
- To receive the LIFE Scholarship Enhancement, the student must be a LIFE Scholarship recipient in their second, third, or fourth year of college enrollment (based on initial date of college enrollment). In addition, the student must declare a major in math or science and successfully completed a total of at least fourteen credit hours of instruction in mathematics and life and physical science courses (including AP, IB and dual enrollment courses taken during high school) by the end of the student's first year of enrollment in college (based on initial date of college enrollment).



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## For scholarship eligibility after the initial year of transfer, students must:

Earn a cumulative 3.0 LIFE GPA based on grades earned at all eligible institutions attended excluding remedial, continuing education, and non-degree credit courses by the end of the academic year (fall, spring, summer); and Meet one of the following:

- Earn 30 credit hours\* if entering the second year of college based on initial enrollment; or
- Earn 60 credit hours if entering the third year of college based on initial enrollment; or
- Earn 90 credit hours if entering the fourth year of college based on initial enrollment; or
- Earn 120 credit hours if entering the fifth year of an approved five-year bachelor's degree program based on initial enrollment.

\* Credit hours include any college credits earned during an academic year, as well as any AP, IB, Dual Enrollment, CLEP, and exempted credit hours

For the LIFE Scholarship Enhancement, students must meet all eligibility requirements for the LIFE Scholarship and be a recipient of LIFE Scholarship funds. In addition, the student must be a math or science major who has successfully completed a total of at least fourteen credit hours of instruction in mathematics and life and physical science courses (including AP, IB and dual enrollment courses taken during high school) by the end of the student's first year of enrollment in college (based on initial date of college enrollment).

## Frequently Asked Questions

### *How do I apply for the LIFE Scholarship or LIFE Scholarship Enhancement?*

There is no application for the LIFE Scholarship or LIFE Scholarship Enhancement. The college or university will automatically determine eligibility and will notify students if eligible for the LIFE Scholarship or LIFE Scholarship Enhancement. If you believe that you are eligible, but have not received notification from the institution, please contact the financial aid office at the college or university for additional information.

### *How long can I receive the LIFE Scholarship or LIFE Scholarship Enhancement?*

The LIFE Scholarship is limited to ten (10) consecutive terms for the first approved five-year baccalaureate degree program, eight (8) consecutive terms for the first four-year degree program, four (4) consecutive terms for the first associate's degree program or a two-year program that is acceptable for full credit toward a baccalaureate degree or two (2) consecutive terms for the first one-year certificate or diploma program. The available number of terms for scholarship funding is based on the time of initial college enrollment.

Students may receive a LIFE Scholarship Enhancement for a maximum of six consecutive terms (i.e., three academic years) for an approved associate's degree program that exceeds 68 credit hours, a first bachelor's degree in an eligible program or an eligible program of study that is structured so as not to require a bachelor's degree for acceptance into the program and leads to a graduate degree program, and eight consecutive terms (i.e., four academic years) towards an approved five-year bachelor's degree program and six consecutive terms towards a 3 plus 2 program.

A list of approved five-year programs can be found here:

[http://www.che.sc.gov/CHE\\_Docs/StudentServices/LIFE/Directives/ApprovedFive-YearBachelorsDegrees.pdf](http://www.che.sc.gov/CHE_Docs/StudentServices/LIFE/Directives/ApprovedFive-YearBachelorsDegrees.pdf)

### *Can I qualify for the LIFE Scholarship or LIFE Scholarship Enhancement if I graduated from a high school out-of-state or completed an approved home school program as prescribed by law?*

Yes, as long as you can provide verification to the college that you were a dependent of a South Carolina resident and a U.S. Citizen/Legal permanent resident at the time of high school graduation and at the time of college enrollment and you met all other eligibility criteria. In order to qualify for the LIFE Scholarship, the GPA and class rank requirements must be based on the UGP. Therefore, as a high school senior enrolled in an approved home school program or an out-of-state high school, you must request to have your grade point average and rank reported based upon on the UGP.



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Should you feel that you meet the LIFE Scholarship eligibility requirements, please contact the admission office at your planned institution of attendance or the SC Commission on Higher Education to discuss the appropriate documentation that will need to be submitted on the student's behalf. Additional information may be required in order to make a determination of LIFE Scholarship eligibility.

***May I receive the LIFE Scholarship or LIFE Scholarship Enhancement if I am required to take remedial courses?***

First-time entering freshmen attending an eligible two-year or technical college who enroll in remedial courses during the first term(s) of enrollment will not be eligible for scholarship funds during this period unless the student is enrolled in at least twelve credit hours of non-remedial courses. Credit hours earned during the term(s) of remedial enrollment will not be used to determine remaining scholarship eligibility at the completion of remediation unless the student has completed at least twelve hours of non-remedial coursework each term of enrollment. The student will be eligible for the LIFE Scholarship for the term following completion of remediation if the student was eligible to receive the LIFE Scholarship upon high school graduation. Upon meeting all of the eligibility requirements for the LIFE Scholarship and the LIFE Scholarship Enhancement, students can receive a LIFE Scholarship Enhancement during their second, third or fourth year of undergraduate study in a math or science related major.

***What do I need to do to keep the LIFE Scholarship or LIFE Scholarship Enhancement once it is awarded?***

To keep the LIFE Scholarship, students must earn a cumulative 3.0 LIFE grade point average (GPA) and an average of 30 credit hours each academic year. In addition, any credit hours attempted or earned before high school graduation, hours exempted by examination, or advanced placement credit accepted by the institution as academic credit, will be reflected in the total number of cumulative hours earned. Also, remember that the academic year is considered fall, spring and summer. Therefore, you can use the summer to bring up a GPA or earn credit hours. For the LIFE Scholarship Enhancement, the student must continue to be enrolled full-time as a math or science major at a four-year SC institution and be a recipient of the LIFE Scholarship at the time of LIFE Scholarship Enhancement disbursement.

***How do I get the LIFE Scholarship or LIFE Scholarship Enhancement to transfer institutions?***

If you transfer institutions you will need to contact the financial aid office at the new institution concerning your eligibility for the LIFE Scholarship and LIFE Scholarship Enhancement.

***What happens if I fall below the minimum credit hour or GPA requirement?***

Students who fail to earn a cumulative 3.0 LIFE GPA at the end of the academic year or the requisite number of hours required, may regain eligibility the next academic year if their cumulative LIFE GPA is a 3.0 at the end of the academic year and they have earned a minimum of 30 credit hours if a rising sophomore, 60 credit hours if a rising junior, or 90 credit hours if a rising senior. The academic year is considered fall, spring and summer. Therefore, you can use the summer to bring up a GPA or earn credit hours. Please consult your college or university financial aid office to verify that credit hours earned during the summer at another institution will be accepted. Students who do not meet the annual credit hour requirement at the end of each academic year (based on initial date of college enrollment) cannot receive a LIFE Scholarship or LIFE Scholarship Enhancement.

***What happens if an extenuating circumstance has caused me to fall below the required number of credit hours or grade point average?***

If a truly extenuating circumstance resulted in the loss of LIFE Scholarship eligibility, you may submit an appeal to the Commission on Higher Education. Applications for appeal may be obtained after June 1 from the institution's Financial Aid Office, the Commission on Higher Education, or <http://www.che.sc.gov/Students,FamiliesMilitary/Appeals.aspx>. Applications are reviewed annually. The deadline for receipt of appeal applications is in late September. Please check the CHE website for specific appeals deadlines. **Students cannot submit an appeal to the Commission for the LIFE Scholarship Enhancement. Students can only appeal the loss of a LIFE Scholarship.**



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***May I use credit hours earned through AP, CLEP or collegiate hours earned prior to high school graduation toward the credit hour requirement?***

Any credit hours earned before high school graduation, hours exempted by examination, or advanced placement credit hours do not count against the semester limits and may be used towards the credit hour requirement if accepted by the institution for the LIFE Scholarship and towards the fourteen credit hour requirement for the LIFE Scholarship Enhancement.

***Can I use my LIFE Scholarship for a summer term?***

Yes. A student would need to demonstrate meeting the continued eligibility requirements as stated above by the end of the spring term. Additional enrollment requirements for a summer term must be met in order for a student to receive the Scholarship.

Please contact the LIFE Scholarship coordinator at your home institution to discuss your specific summer term Scholarship eligibility.

***Can I use the LIFE Scholarship or LIFE Scholarship Enhancement to study abroad, co-op, or go on an internship?***

Yes, you can use the LIFE Scholarship and LIFE Scholarship Enhancement, but the home institution must approve the internship, cooperative work program, travel study program, or National or International Student Exchange program and accept full-time transfer credit hours. In addition, you must continue to meet eligibility requirements. Please see LIFE Regulation for the LIFE Scholarship and LIFE Scholarship Enhancement for further details.

***Can I use the LIFE Scholarship to attend an out-of-state school?***

No. In compliance with the established LIFE Scholarship Law and Regulations, a student must be enrolled at an eligible South Carolina institution in order to participate in the LIFE Scholarship program.

A student may be eligible to participate in the Academic Common Market. The Academic Common Market allows for South Carolina residents who are enrolled in specific programs at out-of-state institutions to be charged only the applicable in-State tuition by the institution in which the student is enrolled. Participation in this program still does not allow for the LIFE Scholarship to be used at an out-of-state institution.

More information on the Academic Common Market can be found here:

<http://www.che.sc.gov/Students.FamiliesMilitary/LearningAboutCollege/AcademicCommonMarketInformation.aspx>

***What happens to my LIFE Scholarship or LIFE Scholarship Enhancement if I get deployed with the military overseas?***

The semesters you are deployed will not count against the maximum terms of eligibility for the LIFE Scholarship or LIFE Scholarship Enhancement.

***What happens if I drop out of school and re-start the next semester?***

The LIFE Scholarship and the LIFE Scholarship Enhancement are continuous programs. Therefore, if you drop out or take a leave of absence from the institution, the “clock is still ticking” so to speak. You will still have to adhere to the yearly credit hour requirements just like you would if you were still in school. During your time off, terms of eligibility are being used even if you are not enrolled or receiving any LIFE Scholarship funds. The total terms of eligibility a student has is based upon the initial term of enrollment.

***If I need to drop a class one quarter or semester will I lose the LIFE Scholarship or LIFE Scholarship Enhancement?***

No, you will not automatically lose the Scholarship or Enhancement. Scholarships and Enhancements are awarded to full-time students annually. However, you must meet the credit hour requirement by the end of the academic year to maintain eligibility. Therefore, you must have a total of 30 credit hours after your first year, a total of 60 credit hours after your second year, and a total of 90 credit hours after your third year of college. Any credit hours attempted or earned before high school graduation, hours exempted by examination, or advanced placement credit accepted by the institution as academic credit will be reflected in the total number of cumulative credit hours earned. Students must meet all eligibility requirements to receive a LIFE



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Scholarship or LIFE Scholarship Enhancement.

***What happens if I have been convicted of an alcohol or other drug misdemeanor offense?***

Students who have been adjudicated delinquent or have been convicted or pled guilty or *nolo contendere* to **any second or subsequent** alcohol or other drug-related misdemeanor offense are ineligible for the LIFE Scholarship and/or LIFE Scholarship Enhancement for one academic year after the adjudication, conviction, or plea occurred. The student will lose eligibility the next academic year immediately following conviction and will lose the Scholarship and Enhancement for the fall and spring terms.

***May I qualify for the LIFE Scholarship if I complete my high school graduation requirements a semester early?***

Students who complete their high school graduation requirements prior to the official graduation date reported on the final high school transcript may be eligible to receive the LIFE Scholarship pending the approval of their college or university. An Early Graduation Application Form can be obtained from your institution's financial aid office.

***May I qualify for the LIFE Scholarship or LIFE Scholarship Enhancement if I qualify under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973?***

Students who qualify under ADA can receive the LIFE Scholarship and the LIFE Scholarship Enhancement upon meeting all eligibility requirements (see, regulations). Students who qualify under the ADA must register with the institution's Disability Services Office. The Institutional Disability Services Provider must provide written documentation to the Office of Financial Aid each academic year verifying that the student is approved to be enrolled in less than full time status or earn less than the required annual credit hours. In order to renew the Scholarship each academic year, the student must complete the required number of hours approved by the institutional Disability Services Provider and earn a cumulative 3.0 LIFE grade point average. Students must meet all requirements as stipulated by state law and regulation to receive a LIFE Scholarship and/or LIFE Scholarship Enhancement.

***If I am a LIFE Scholarship/LIFE Scholarship Enhancement Recipient, am I eligible to receive Lottery Tuition Assistance during the summer of the same academic year?***

No, according to the law, if you received the LIFE Scholarship or LIFE Scholarship Enhancement, you cannot receive Lottery Tuition Assistance during the same academic year. For example, if you are awarded the LIFE Scholarship during the fall and spring terms, then you are not eligible to receive Lottery Tuition Assistance during the summer term. However, if you transfer mid-year from an eligible four-year institution to an eligible two-year institution and you received the LIFE Scholarship at the four-year institution, you may be eligible to receive Lottery Tuition Assistance.

***If I am enrolled in the Bachelor of Arts in Interdisciplinary Studies Program at one of the USC Regional Campuses can I receive the LIFE Scholarship or LIFE Scholarship Enhancement for my 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> years of study?***

In order for you to receive the LIFE Scholarship and/or LIFE Scholarship Enhancement your 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> years of study you will need to transfer to USC-Columbia.

***For more information about the LIFE Scholarship Program or the LIFE Scholarship Enhancement, contact:***

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803-856-0609

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