**A** **BILL**

TO AMEND THE CODE OF LAWS OF SOUTH CAROLINA, 1976, BY ADDING SECTION 59‑112‑45 SO A TO PROVIDE THAT TUITION RATES FOR UNDERGRADUATE IN‑STATE STUDENTS AT PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION IN THIS STATE MAY NOT INCREASE FOR A FOUR‑YEAR OR EIGHT‑SEMESTER TIME PERIOD BEGINNING WITH THE 2017‑2018 SCHOOL YEAR; TO PROVIDE A SIMILAR BUT MODIFIED INCREASE PROHIBITION FOR CURRENT STUDENTS AND CERTAIN OTHERS; TO PROVIDE DISCRETION FOR SCHOOLS TO EXTEND THESE PERIODS FOR PROGRAMS NOT NORMALLY CAPABLE OF COMPLETION WITH THESE PERIODS AND IN OTHER EXTENUATING INDIVIDUAL CIRCUMSTANCES; TO PROVIDE MISCELLANEOUS REQUIREMENTS CONCERNING WINTER AND SUMMER CLASSES, TOLLING FOR PERIODS OF MILITARY SERVICE, AND FOR CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH STUDENTS DO NOT COMPLETE AN UNDERGRADUATE DEGREE WITHIN THE FOUR‑YEAR OR EIGHT‑SEMESTER TIME LIMIT, AMONG OTHER THINGS; AND TO DEFINE NECESSARY TERMINOLOGY.

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of the State of South Carolina:

SECTION 1. Chapter 112, Title 59 of the 1976 Code is amended by adding:

“Section 59‑112‑45. (A) For eligible undergraduate students who first enroll in a public institution of higher education in this State for the 2017‑2018 School Year, the tuition charged to that student during the four continuous academic years following his initial enrollment may not exceed the amount that the student was charged at the time he first enrolled at that institution. The institution may extend this four‑year time period for a particular undergraduate program that the institution determines will require more than four years to complete. The institution shall provide undergraduate students a fixed tuition rate for a time period of eight consecutive fall and spring semesters beginning with his first semester of enrollment.

(B) Eligible undergraduate students who first enrolled in a public institution of higher education for the first time before the 2017‑2018 School Year and who are still enrolled at that institution on the effective date of this section are eligible for a similar fixed tuition rate as provided in subsection (A) based on the rate of the most recent semester of attendance.

(C) If a student has not completed his degree at the end of the eighth semester, then, beginning with the ninth semester, he is subject to a tuition increase equal to the rate paid by students who entered the institution one academic year after the date of that student’s initial enrollment. This increased fixed rate is applied only to the ninth and tenth semesters of enrollment. If the student is still enrolled in an undergraduate program at that institution after a tenth semester, that student shall pay the prevailing rate in effect for new students who enroll at that institution for the first time during that academic year.

(D) A student may request an extension to the maximum durations prescribed in this section if unusual or extenuating circumstances existed that prohibited the student from earning a degree by the end of the eight or eleven semester period. An extension request submitted pursuant to this subsection must be made before the end of the last semester in which that fixed tuition plan expires.

(E) Classes taken in summer and winter sessions are not included in the eight or eleven semester calculation. If a student begins enrollment in a summer or winter session, the student must receive the fixed tuition rate of the subsequent fall or spring semester, and the calculation of the student’s eight eligible semesters will begin with that fall or spring semester.

(F) Notwithstanding another provision of this section, the time for the fixed tuition rate for students who are members of the military and who are called into active duty is tolled during the period of active duty service. Students who are members of the military and who are called into active duty shall reenroll at the institution within twelve months after the official end of their active duty assignment in order to retain their original fixed tuition level.

(G) Students who enroll as part‑time, degree‑seeking undergraduates shall pay a prorated per‑credit amount based on the fixed tuition rate prescribed in this section for full‑time students. Part‑time students are subject to the same eight consecutive semester requirement prescribed for full‑time students.

(H) For the purposes of this section:

(1) ‘Eligible student’ means an undergraduate student at a public institution of higher education in this State and does not include students enrolled in law schools, postgraduate students, nondegree‑seeking students, students auditing coursework, visiting students, and high school students taking college level courses.

(2) ‘Tuition’ means actual tuition charged and does not include fees, surcharges, room and board, or other charges that a student may incur as part of his educational expenses while attending a public institution of higher education in this State.”

SECTION 2. This act takes effect July 1, 2017.

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