



## Community College Tuition Waivers – Fiscal Brief Update

Fiscal Brief

August 25, 2010

The 2010 General Assembly acted on many of the policy issues presented in Community College Tuition Waivers, a [March 2010 Fiscal Brief](#). Detailed below are the budgetary and statutory changes included in the [2010 Appropriations Act](#) (Session Law 2010-31, Senate Bill 897).

### High School Tuition Waiver

The General Assembly addressed high school students' participation in higher education courses in Section 7.24 of S.L. 2010-31. Briefly, this section of the budget bill does two things:

- 1) Sections (a) – (g) lay out how the General Assembly plans to (a) eliminate the current double funding for high schools students who are also taking classes at a community college or UNC system school and (b) control the growth of these programs. This plan would take place in FY 2011-12, and would include eliminating the tuition waiver for community college courses taken by high school students except for the waiver that applies to students in cooperative innovative high school programs established pursuant to Part 9 of Article 16 of Chapter 115C of the General Statutes.
- 2) Section (h) ensures that all the high school programs are operating under the same restrictions. In 2009, high school student community college class offerings were restricted such that students could only use their tuition waiver to take math, science, or technology-related courses from the community colleges. However, that restriction was not applied to Learn and Earn Online courses. This section changes the restriction, so that beginning in FY 2010-11 it applies equally to in-person and on-line courses.

Colleges may continue to provide the restricted courses on a self-supporting basis. Cost for self-supporting courses is determined locally and could vary widely based on the class and the number of students enrolled in the class.

It is important to note that the only change in 2010 for the community colleges is in Learn and Earn Online courses. The changes to Dual Enrollment and Huskins courses have been in effect since 2009.

### Prisoner Tuition Waiver

The prisoner education program was under continuation review in 2009, and without action would have ended. The General Assembly restored \$21 million of the funding for the prisoner education program (Item 40 on page F-8 of the [Joint Conference Committee Report](#)).

Additionally, Section 8.3 provided that funding is not restored for prison full-time equivalent students (or FTE) in federal prisons, local jails, or programs not related to job skills or basic skills education. First priority for the funds will be to fully restore the FTE for basic skills courses to the FY 2008-09 levels.

Funds not used for this purpose may be used for continuing education and curriculum courses related to job skills training. It also requires the Department of Correction and the NC Community College System to report back to the 2011 General Assembly on a number of items.

Finally, Section 8.4(a) rewrote G.S. 115D-5(b), reorganizing existing tuition waivers and making some changes (described below). As part of this rewrite, the prison inmate tuition waiver was reinstated as G.S. 115D-5(b)(14).

#### **Senior Citizen Tuition Waiver**

Section 8.4(a) amended the senior citizen tuition waiver to change the 96 contact hour limit for continuing education courses to one non-credit course per semester. The senior citizen tuition waiver is now located in G.S. 115D-5(b)(11).

#### **Emergency Personnel Tuition Waiver**

Section 8.4(a) amended the law enforcement tuition waiver to clarify that municipal, county, and State law enforcement officers fall under the law enforcement tuition waiver. The emergency personnel tuition waiver is now located in G.S. 115D-5(b)(2).

Further, Section 8.4(b) added a new section to G.S. 115D-39 stating that federal law enforcement officers whose permanent duty station is in North Carolina are eligible for in-state tuition for law enforcement training courses.

Section 8.4(c) also requires a report from the Community College System Office on the number and cost of courses taken by State law enforcement officers and of courses taken by local law enforcement officers.

#### **HRD Tuition waiver**

Section 8.4(a) added human resources development courses to the list of tuition waivers as G.S. 115D-5(b)(13). Previously this was the only community college tuition waiver not codified in statute. No changes were made to the waiver other than to incorporate it into statute.

#### **Further Study**

Section 8.4(d) requires the Fiscal Research Division, in consultation with the Community College System Office, to make a comprehensive study of the currently authorized tuition waivers and report to the 2011 General Assembly on waivers that should be modified or abolished.

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