



## *House Budget and Research Office*

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### **2020 SESSION: HIGHER EDUCATION HIGHLIGHTS**

Georgia's colleges, universities, and technical colleges provide renowned training, research, and credentials necessary for the economic and cultural needs of society. They are able to do so with the significant resources and strategic prioritization implemented by the Georgia General Assembly during the 2020 Legislative Session.

In addition to supplying the state with top tier education and research, the University System of Georgia (USG) and the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) have worked in concert with the state's public health leaders to respond to COVID-19. The doctors, nurses, and other healthcare personnel positioned to treat and research the virus are trained at the state's colleges and technical schools. Both systems provided personal protective equipment and testing supplies throughout the state to supplement the needs of hospitals and clinics. Institutions like Augusta University will also continue to provide healthcare and logistical support necessary for Georgia's ongoing response.

While COVID-19 created uncertainty in other aspects of postsecondary education, the Georgia Student Finance Commission (GSFC) will continue to provide students with their earned financial aid without interruption and respond to any inquiries students and parents may have about their awards. This stability is enhanced by the Georgia Lottery achieving a record \$1.23 billion for education at the end of Fiscal Year 2020. These funds will continue to support the flagship Zell Miller Scholarship, HOPE Scholarship, and HOPE Grant programs through the current school year.

#### **FY 2021 Budget**

- Through USG's Teaching program and TCSG's Technical Education program, over \$2.3 billion is appropriated for the instruction of students and maintenance of facilities in FY 2021.
- The HOPE Scholarship, HOPE Grant and Zell Miller Scholarship receive over \$57 million in new funds in order to offer over 439,000 total awards.
- The Fiscal Year 2021 budget appropriates \$201 million to USG and \$92 million to TCSG in new bonds for capital projects that include facility renovations, new construction, and the design and planning of future buildings at postsecondary institutions. An additional \$16.5 million in new bonds are allocated to the Georgia Public Libraries System (GPLS) for the construction and renovation of libraries across the state.

- The state's budget acknowledges \$195 million in federal 'CARES Act' relief funds sent directly to assist the state's colleges, universities, and libraries. Of those funds, \$36 million are specifically going to Historically Black Colleges and Universities and minority-serving institutions across Georgia.
- As a growing part of Georgia's economy, the Fiscal Year 2021 budget embraces business opportunities of technology and cybersecurity by providing the Cyber Innovation and Training Center at Augusta University with \$75,000 to pursue the U.S. Department of Defense's Cybersecurity Maturity Model Certification (CMMC) to bring more projects to the state. An additional \$150,000 is going to TCSG to begin a Rural Technical Worker Pilot program, which will experiment with using technology to expanding opportunities for work across all regions of the state.
- GPLS will maintain over nearly \$3.8 million in materials grants that were fully restored during the previous fiscal year. These grants allow library systems, especially smaller and rural ones, to purchase books, technology, and other resources that are available to everyone for free.
- The medical partnership program between Augusta University and the University of Georgia is receiving \$1.35 million to further expand the number of physicians educated at Georgia schools each year.
- The REACH Scholarship program is receiving \$1 million in additional funds to add 13 new school systems and their scholars to the program.

#### 2020 Legislation

- **HB 292** repeals the requirement for an accrued liability to be paid to the Teachers Retirement System (TRS) on behalf of participating Regent's Optional Retirement Plan (ORP) members and the normal contribution rate resulting from employees who cease to be members of TRS. This bill is certified by the Georgia Department of Audits and Accounts as a fiscal retirement bill, and the actuarial investigation determines there is no cost.
- **HB 444** renames the 'Move on When Ready Act' as the 'Dual Enrollment Act.' House Bill 444 limits the number of credit hours the dual enrollment program will fund to 30 hours, and the 30-hour cap applies to current students who have taken 18 course credit hours or less. Students who have taken more than 19 hours may receive an additional 12 hours. Grade-level participation is limited to 11th and 12th graders; however, to continue producing a skilled workforce, 10th grade students may participate in dual enrollment courses provided by the TCSG. Furthermore, 10th grade students who have obtained a Zell Miller Scholarship score on the ACT or SAT or a ninth grader enrolled in dual credit courses may take core courses at a postsecondary institution during the student's 10th grade year. HB 444 limits allowable courses to core subjects: English, math, science, social studies, or a foreign language as calculated for HOPE purposes according to O.C.G.A. 20-2-157. There are 2,613 eligible core courses and 4,592 career technical agricultural education courses available.
- **SB 134** assigns the Board of Regents as the administrative body for the Georgia Commission on the Holocaust. The commission was administratively attached to the Department of Community Affairs.