



HB 0917

2003

1 A bill to be entitled

2 An act relating to student tuition assistance; creating
3 the Access to Better Learning and Education Grant Program;
4 providing legislative findings with respect to education
5 provided by for-profit colleges and universities;
6 providing for the Department of Education to administer
7 the grant program; providing requirements for eligibility;
8 providing for the grant program to be funded under a
9 formula based on planned enrollment and the state cost of
10 funding such enrollment at public institutions; providing
11 for an annual appropriation; requiring institutions to
12 remit undisbursed funds to the department; limiting the
13 period a student may receive a grant; providing an
14 effective date.

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16 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

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18 Section 1. The Access to Better Learning and Education
19 Grant Program.--

20 (1) The Legislature finds and declares that independent
21 for-profit colleges and universities eligible to participate in
22 the Access to Better Learning and Education Grant Program are an
23 integral part of the higher education system in this state and
24 that a significant number of state residents choose this form of
25 higher education. The Legislature further finds that strong,
26 viable independent for-profit colleges and universities reduce
27 the tax burden on the residents of the state. Because the Access
28 to Better Learning and Education Grant Program is not related to
29 a student's financial need or other criteria upon which
30 financial aid programs are based, it is the intent of the



HB 0917

2003

31 Legislature that the Access to Better Learning and Education
32 Grant Program not be considered a financial aid program but
33 rather a tuition assistance program for state residents.

34 (2) The Access to Better Learning and Education Grant
35 Program shall be administered by the Department of Education.
36 The State Board of Education shall adopt rules for administering
37 the program.

38 (3) The department shall issue an access grant to any
39 full-time student seeking a baccalaureate degree who is
40 registered at a for-profit college or university that is located
41 in and chartered by the state; that is accredited by the
42 Commission on Colleges of the Southern Association of Colleges
43 and Schools; that grants baccalaureate degrees; that is not a
44 state university or state community college; and that has a
45 secular purpose, if the receipt of state aid by students at the
46 institution would not have the primary effect of advancing or
47 impeding religion or result in an excessive entanglement between
48 the state and any religious sect.

49 (4) A person is eligible to receive an access grant if:

50 (a) He or she meets the general requirements, including
51 residency, for student eligibility as provided in section
52 1009.40, Florida Statutes, except as otherwise provided in this
53 section; and

54 (b)1. He or she is enrolled as a full-time undergraduate
55 student at an eligible college or university in a program of
56 study leading to a baccalaureate degree;

57 2. He or she is not enrolled in a program of study leading
58 to a degree in theology or divinity; and



HB 0917

2003

59 3. He or she is making satisfactory academic progress as
60 defined by the college or university in which he or she is
61 enrolled.

62 (5)(a) Funding for the Access to Better Learning and
63 Education Grant Program shall be based on a formula comprised of
64 planned enrollment and the state cost of funding undergraduate
65 enrollment at public institutions under section 1011.90, Florida
66 Statutes. The amount of the access grant issued to a full-time
67 student shall be an amount specified in the General
68 Appropriations Act. The access grant may be paid on a prorated
69 basis in advance of the registration period. The department
70 shall make payments to the college or university in which the
71 student is enrolled for credit to the student's account for
72 payment of tuition and fees. Institutions shall certify to the
73 department the amount of funds disbursed to each student and
74 shall remit to the department any undisbursed advances or
75 refunds within 60 days after the end of regular registration. A
76 student may not receive the award for more than 9 semesters or
77 14 quarters, except as otherwise provided in section 1009.40(3),
78 Florida Statutes.

79 (b) If the combined amount of the access grant issued
80 pursuant to this section and all other scholarships and grants
81 for tuition or fees exceeds the amount charged to the student
82 for tuition and fees, the department shall reduce the grant
83 issued under this section by an amount equal to the excess.

84 (6) If the number of eligible students exceeds the total
85 authorized in the General Appropriations Act, an institution may
86 use its own resources to assure that each eligible student
87 receives the full benefit of the grant amount authorized.

88 Section 2. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law.