

No. 148. An act relating to establishing an interim committee that will develop proposed policies to restore the 1980 ratio of State funding to student tuition at Vermont State Colleges and to make higher education more affordable.

(S.40)

It is hereby enacted by the General Assembly of the State of Vermont:

Sec. 1. INTERIM STUDY OF HIGHER EDUCATION FUNDING; REPORT

(a) The higher education subcommittee of the Prekindergarten-16 Council established in 16 V.S.A. § 2905 shall study and develop proposed policies to make the Vermont State Colleges (VSC) and the University of Vermont (UVM) more affordable for Vermont residents by lowering costs and restoring the 1980 ratio of State funding to tuition costs and by restoring funding to the Vermont Student Assistance Corporation (VSAC) incentive grant program to reduce the difference between the VSAC incentive grant and the VSC and UVM tuition rates to the amount of that difference in 1980.

(b) In addition to the members of the higher education subcommittee identified in 16 V.S.A. § 2905(d), the following individuals shall be members of the subcommittee solely for purposes of this interim study:

(1) one UVM faculty member to be appointed by United Professions American Federation of Teachers Vermont;

(2) one VSC faculty member to be appointed by United Professions American Federation of Teachers Vermont;

(3) two students, one from UVM and one from VSC, at least one of whom is a current or past recipient of a VSAC incentive grant, appointed by their respective student government associations; and

(4) one VSAC outreach program counselor to be appointed by the VSAC President.

(c) Powers and duties.

(1) The subcommittee shall develop proposed policies to:

(A) lower student and family costs and debt so that UVM and VSC are more affordable for Vermonters;

(B) return to the 1980 level of State funding for the student tuition support ratio for UVM and VSC; and

(C) restore funding to the VSAC incentive grant program to reduce the difference between the VSAC incentive grant and the VSC and UVM tuition rates to the amount of that difference in 1980.

(2) In developing the proposed policies, the subcommittee shall consider:

(A) higher education funding for state colleges and universities in other states, with a particular focus on tuition ratios and funding methods supporting students and public institutions;

(B) the best policies for increasing the enrollment of Vermont students and keeping students in Vermont after they graduate from college;

(C) total spending as compared to instructional spending, and how institutional spending affects student costs;

(D) the uses of VSAC incentive grant funds, including the portability of use for attendance at in-state and out-of-state institutions;

(E) how to minimize the financial impact of living expenses on student costs; and

(F) any information available regarding the impact of VSC and UVM graduates and VSAC incentive grant recipients on Vermont's economy and on job creation and retention.

(d) The chair of the Prekindergarten-16 Council shall convene the first meeting of the interim subcommittee to occur on or before July 1, 2014, at which meeting the members shall elect a chair or co-chairs. On or before January 15, 2015, the subcommittee shall report to the General Assembly on its findings and any recommendations for legislative action.

(e) The subcommittee may meet no more than six times between July 1, 2014 and January 15, 2015 for the purposes of this interim study. For attendance at meetings during adjournment of the General Assembly, legislative members of the subcommittee shall be entitled to compensation and reimbursement for expenses under 2 V.S.A. § 406, and other members of the subcommittee who are not employees of the State of Vermont may be reimbursed at the per diem rate under 32 V.S.A. § 1010 if not otherwise compensated or benefited.

Sec. 2. EFFECTIVE DATE

This act shall take effect on passage.

Date Governor signed bill: May 27, 2014