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To: Universities and
Colleges;
Appropriations

HOUSE BILL NO. 305

1 AN ACT TO ESTABLISH A GRANT PROGRAM FOR PERSONS TAKING
2 ACADEMIC COURSES ON THE INTERNET; TO PROVIDE THAT THE PURPOSE OF
3 THE PROGRAM IS TO ENCOURAGE MISSISSIPPI RESIDENTS TO FURTHER THEIR
4 POSTSECONDARY EDUCATION; TO AUTHORIZE GRANTS UNDER THE PROGRAM FOR
5 COURSES TAKEN OVER THE INTERNET IN FURTHERANCE OF A HIGHER
6 EDUCATION DEGREE; TO REQUIRE THE POST-SECONDARY EDUCATION
7 FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE BOARD TO ADMINISTER THE PROGRAM; TO REQUIRE
8 THE BOARD TO PROMULGATE RULES AND REGULATIONS FOR THE
9 ADMINISTRATION OF THE PROGRAM; TO ESTABLISH INITIAL ELIGIBILITY
10 GRADE POINT AVERAGE REQUIREMENTS; TO PROVIDE THAT GRANTS MUST BE
11 AWARDED ON A FIRST COME, FIRST SERVED BASIS; AND FOR RELATED
12 PURPOSES.

13 BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF MISSISSIPPI:

14 SECTION 1. (1) There is created a special grant program for
15 persons participating in academic courses available on the
16 Internet in furtherance of an associate, baccalaureate, graduate
17 or specialist degree. The purpose of the program is to encourage
18 eligible residents of Mississippi to further their education by
19 offering such persons, particularly nontraditional students, a
20 financial incentive for availing themselves of postsecondary
21 academic courses accessible by computer away from campus.

22 (2) Any legal resident of the state who enrolls in an
23 academic course or courses made available on the Internet by an
24 accredited community or junior college or institution of higher
25 learning in furtherance of an associate, baccalaureate, graduate
26 or specialist degree may apply for a grant under this program.

27 Grants may not exceed the actual tuition or enrollment costs for
28 the specific course or courses in which a student is enrolled,
29 plus any required fees imposed as a condition for the enrollment.

30 Subject to the availability of funding, the Post-Secondary
31 Education Financial Assistance Board, in its discretion, may
32 authorize grants to be applied toward the cost of books and other
33 materials required for a course. However, no funds awarded under
34 this program may be used for the purchase of computer equipment or
35 for Internet services made available to the public by
36 subscription, membership or other affiliation with an Internet
37 service provider. The maximum annual grant that may be awarded to
38 a student under this program shall be One Thousand Dollars
39 (\$1,000.00) per academic year. For purposes of this section, the
40 term "academic year" means August 1 through the next succeeding
41 July 31.

42 (3) The Post-Secondary Education Financial Assistance Board
43 shall administer the grant program established under this section.

44 The board shall promulgate rules and regulations necessary to
45 carry out the purposes and intent of this section, which must
46 include provisions addressing the following:

47 (a) The application process and deadline;

48 (b) Initial eligibility requirements, which may vary
49 depending on the degree being sought by the applicant;

50 (c) The documentation required from an applicant to
51 establish the person's enrollment in the Internet course and that
52 the course is required for the degree being sought by the
53 applicant;

54 (d) The accreditation requirements for community and
55 junior colleges and institutions of higher learning offering
56 courses on the Internet;

57 (e) The maximum amount which may be awarded to a person

58 and the maximum number of years which a person may receive awards
59 under the program; and

60 (f) Any other provisions deemed necessary by the board
61 for the proper administration of the program.

62 (4) A person who has a baccalaureate degree may receive
63 grants only in furtherance of a master's, doctorate or specialist
64 degree. A person who has a master's degree may receive grants
65 only in furtherance of a doctorate or specialist degree. Persons
66 possessing a doctorate degree or specialist degree are not
67 eligible to receive grants under the program.

68 (5) As a requirement for initial eligibility, an applicant
69 for a grant must have a cumulative minimum grade point average of
70 2.00 calculated on a 4.00 scale for all coursework attempted in
71 the two (2) years preceding the date of application. As a
72 condition for additional grants, an applicant must make steady
73 academic progress toward the degree being sought and must maintain
74 a cumulative grade point average of at least 2.00 calculated on a
75 4.00 scale.

76 (6) If funds are insufficient to fully fund grants for all
77 eligible applicants, the board shall award the grants to
78 first-time students on a first come, first served basis; however,
79 priority consideration must be given to persons previously
80 receiving grants under the program who are making steady academic
81 progress toward completion of the degree being sought.

82 SECTION 2. This act shall take effect and be in force from
83 and after July 1, 2000.