

By: Representative Fleming

To: Universities and  
Colleges; Appropriations

## HOUSE BILL NO. 159

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 BOARD OF TRUSTEES OF STATE  
7 INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER LEARNING TO ADMINISTER THE PROGRAM; TO  
8 REQUIRE THE BOARD, ACTING JOINTLY WITH THE STATE BOARD FOR  
9 COMMUNITY AND JUNIOR COLLEGES, TO PROMULGATE RULES AND REGULATIONS  
10 FOR THE ADMINISTRATION OF THE PROGRAM; TO ESTABLISH INITIAL  
11 ELIGIBILITY GRADE POINT AVERAGE REQUIREMENTS; TO PROVIDE THAT  
12 GRANTS MUST BE AWARDED ON A FIRST-COME, FIRST-SERVED BASIS; AND  
13 FOR RELATED PURPOSES.

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

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

23 (2) Any legal resident of the state who enrolls in an  
24 academic course or courses made available on the Internet by an  
25 accredited community or junior college or institution of higher  
26 learning in furtherance of an associate, baccalaureate, graduate  
27 or specialist degree may apply for a grant under this program.  
28 Grants may not exceed the actual tuition or enrollment costs for  
29 the specific course or courses in which a student is enrolled,  
30 plus any required fees imposed as a condition for the enrollment.  
31 Subject to the availability of funding, the Board of Trustees of  
32 State Institutions of Higher Learning, in its discretion, may



33 authorize grants to be applied toward the cost of books and other  
34 materials required for a course. However, no funds awarded under  
35 this program may be used for the purchase of computer equipment or  
36 for Internet services made available to the public by  
37 subscription, membership or other affiliation with an Internet  
38 service provider. The maximum annual grant that may be awarded to  
39 a student under this program is One Thousand Dollars (\$1,000.00)  
40 per academic year. For purposes of this section, the term  
41 "academic year" means August 1 through the next succeeding July  
42 31.

43 (3) The Board of Trustees of State Institutions of Higher  
44 Learning shall administer the grant program established under this  
45 section. The board, acting jointly with the State Board for  
46 Community and Junior Colleges, shall promulgate rules and  
47 regulations necessary to carry out the purposes and intent of this  
48 section, which must include provisions addressing the following:

49 (a) The application process and deadline;

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

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

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

59 (e) The maximum total amount which may be awarded to a  
60 person and the maximum number of years which a person may receive  
61 awards under the program; and

62 (f) Any other provisions deemed necessary by the boards  
63 for the proper administration of the program.

64 (4) A person who has a baccalaureate degree may receive  
65 grants only in furtherance of a master's, doctorate or specialist



66 degree. A person who has a master's degree may receive grants  
67 only in furtherance of a doctorate or specialist degree. Persons  
68 possessing a doctorate degree or specialist degree are not  
69 eligible to receive grants under the program.

70 (5) As a requirement for initial eligibility, an applicant  
71 for a grant must have a cumulative minimum grade point average of  
72 2.50 calculated on a 4.00 scale for all coursework attempted in  
73 the two (2) years preceding the date of application. As a  
74 condition for additional grants, an applicant must make steady  
75 academic progress toward the degree being sought and must maintain  
76 a cumulative grade point average of at least 3.00 calculated on a  
77 4.00 scale.

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

84 **SECTION 2.** This act shall take effect and be in force from  
85 and after July 1, 2002.

