

By: Representative Fleming

To: Universities and
Colleges; Appropriations

HOUSE BILL NO. 136

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, 2005.