

**TOPIC: TUITION ASSISTANCE FOR SHORT CERTIFICATES**

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**I. SUMMARY**

On May 22, 2015 the Governor signed HB 15-1275, which among other things creates a tuition assistance program for eligible students enrolled in short-term certificate programs. In addition, the General Assembly appropriated \$450,000 for this program for 2015-2016 fiscal year. Generally, short-term certificate programs do not qualify for the Pell grant program.

This item is intended to make the Commission aware of this new legislation and is presented for preliminary discussion. Staff intends to bring forward proposed eligibility criteria, guidelines, and allocations for the Commission's approval at the August CCHE meeting.

**II. BACKGROUND & ANALYSIS**

HB 15-1275 is part of the package of workforce bills that were passed during the 2015 legislative session. It is intended to support career pathways for low-income residents through short-term certificate programs.

Among other things, the legislation includes an initial year of funding for tuition assistance of \$450,000 for students would be Pell-eligible but whose coursework (short certificates) is not. Examples of such short certificates include, but are not limited to, Certified Nursing Assistants, Emergency Medical Technicians, welding certificates, and other short certificates that may lead to employment. Participation is limited to community colleges, local district colleges, area vocational schools, and the community college at Colorado Mesa University for FY 2015-16.

Eligible students are difficult to identify at this point, because certain certificates do not qualify for Pell many students do not complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) when enrolled in a short certificate program. Department Staff is working with representatives from institutions to determine a reasonable proxy for the first year of the program.

Between now and the August 6-7 meeting, staff will continue work with the eligible institutions to develop eligibility criteria, guidelines, and a proposed allocation methodology. In addition, staff will solicit feedback from the Fiscal Affairs and Audit Subcommittee to inform the proposed guidelines and allocations. Staff intends to bring an action item for the Commission's approval at the August CCHE meeting.

**III. STAFF RECOMMENDATIONS**

This item is for discussion only; no recommendation is necessary at this time.