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SENATE BILL DRS35229-LH-14A (12/20)

Short Title: NCGRADE.

(Public)

Sponsors: Senators Curtis, Brown, and McInnis (Primary Sponsors).

Referred to:

1 A BILL TO BE ENTITLED
2 AN ACT TO ESTABLISH A MINIMUM HIGH SCHOOL GRADE POINT AVERAGE AS
3 AN ADMISSION REQUIREMENT FOR THE UNC SYSTEM, TO ESTABLISH THE
4 NORTH CAROLINA GRADUATION RATE ACCELERATION DOUBLE
5 ENROLLMENT (NCGRADE) PROGRAM, TO ESTABLISH THE NCGRADE GRANT
6 PROGRAM, AND TO APPROPRIATE FUNDS TO IMPLEMENT THE NCGRADE
7 PROGRAM.

8 The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts:

9 SECTION 1.(a) Section 11.7 of S.L. 2015-241 is repealed.

10 SECTION 1.(b) This section is effective when it becomes law.

11 SECTION 2.(a) Part 3 of Article 1 of Chapter 116 of the General Statutes is
12 amended by adding a new section to read:

13 "**§ 116-40.13. UNC System grade point average admission requirement; admission**
14 **options.**

15 (a) Except as otherwise provided by this section and by Article 35 of this Chapter, no
16 constituent institution shall accept any student who applies for admission as a freshman at the
17 constituent institution unless the student has a minimum high school grade point average of 3.0
18 on a seven point scale.

19 (b) Each constituent institution may admit a student who has a high school grade point
20 average that is less than 3.0 on a seven point scale if the student satisfies all other admission
21 criteria and is deemed by the institution to have special talents and qualifications. The
22 maximum number of special talent students that may be enrolled by a constituent institution is
23 limited to three percent (3%) of the total number of first-time undergraduate applicants enrolled
24 in the academic year of admittance."

25 SECTION 2.(b) This section is effective when this act becomes law and applies to
26 admissions beginning with the 2018 fall academic semester.

27 SECTION 3.(a) Chapter 116 of the General Statutes is amended by adding a new
28 Article to read:

29 "Article 36.

30 "North Carolina Graduation Rate Acceleration Double Enrollment (NCGRADE) Program
31 "**§ 116-300. Legislative findings and intent.**

32 The General Assembly finds that the six-year graduation rate for students pursuing a
33 baccalaureate degree from several constituent institution of The University of North Carolina is
34 too low. The General Assembly also finds that, often, constituent institutions accept students
35 who are academically unprepared to meet the institution's academic standards and that those
36 students often fail to obtain baccalaureate degrees. The General Assembly further finds that it is



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1 important to design and implement a program for the purpose of achieving the following goals:
2 to assist more students to obtain a baccalaureate degree within a shorter time period; to provide
3 students with a college education at significantly lower costs for both the student and the State;
4 to help decrease the amount of debt resulting from loans that a student may owe upon
5 graduation; to provide a student with an interim degree that may increase a student's job
6 opportunities if the student chooses not to continue postsecondary education; and to provide
7 easier access to academic counseling that will assist a student in selecting coursework that
8 reflects the student's educational and career goals and helps the student succeed academically.

9 **"§ 116-301. North Carolina Graduation Rate Acceleration Double Enrollment Program**
10 **(NCGRADE) established.**

11 (a) NCGRADE Established. – The Board of Governors of The University of North
12 Carolina in conjunction with the State Board of Community Colleges shall establish the North
13 Carolina Graduation Rate Acceleration Double Enrollment Program (NCGRADE). NCGRADE
14 shall be a double enrollment admission program that allows an eligible student with a high
15 school grade point average of 2.5 to 2.99 on a seven point scale to be accepted for admission at
16 a constituent institution that is a NCGRADE participant provided the student also enrolls at a
17 community college designated as a NCGRADE partner for that constituent institution and
18 satisfies all other admission criteria of the constituent institution. While NCGRADE is
19 designed to focus on students that graduate with a high school grade point average of 2.5 to
20 2.99 on a seven point scale, an eligible student with a high school grade point average of 3.0 or
21 higher on a seven point scale may also apply for admission and be accepted through
22 NCGRADE rather than through a direct admission process at a NCGRADE constituent
23 institution. The provisions of this Article apply to any student accepted through the NCGRADE
24 admission process.

25 (b) Eligibility of Student. – To be eligible to be admitted to a NCGRADE constituent
26 institution, a student must satisfy all of the following criteria:

27 (1) Be a legal resident as defined by G.S. 116-143.1.

28 (2) Satisfy all admission criteria for the constituent institution, with the
29 exception of the minimum high school GPA of 3.0 on a seven point scale;
30 however, the student must have a high school GPA of at least 2.5 on a seven
31 point scale.

32 (3) Enroll in a community college designated as a partner with the constituent
33 institution for purposes of NCGRADE.

34 (c) Enrollment Status of NCGRADE Student; Associate Degree Requirement; Tuition
35 Rate; Time Limitations. – A student accepted at a constituent institution through NCGRADE is
36 enrolled as a freshman at both the constituent institution and the partner community college that
37 the student attends. A student must, within three years from the date of enrollment at a partner
38 community college, earn an associate degree from a partner community college in order to
39 continue to be classified as a NCGRADE student and to be eligible to enroll in credit courses at
40 the constituent institution through NCGRADE and receive a NCGRADE grant pursuant to
41 G.S. 116-302.

42 A NCGRADE student who obtains an associate degree pursuant to this section must enroll
43 as a full-time student at the NCGRADE constituent institution within one year of the date that
44 the student is awarded an associate degree from the partner community college. For purposes of
45 NCGRADE, a student enrolled in a NCGRADE constituent institution must be enrolled in at
46 least 15 credit hours at the constituent institution to be considered a full-time student.

47 A NCGRADE student shall be charged the community college tuition rate until the student
48 transfers to the constituent institution and officially enrolls as a full-time student at the
49 constituent institution.

50 (d) The State Board of Community Colleges, in consultation with the Board of
51 Governors of The University of North Carolina, shall adopt rules to ensure that a student

1 participating in NCGRADE is provided counseling and assistance in selecting coursework that
2 reflects the student's educational and career goals and that provides a smooth transition from
3 the community college to the constituent institution.

4 **§ 116-302. NCGRADE Grant Fund established.**

5 (a) There is established the NCGRADE Grant Fund which shall be administered by the
6 North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority. The funds in the NCGRADE Grant Fund
7 are nonreverting and shall be used as provided by this section.

8 (b) In addition to all other financial assistance made available to a to student attending a
9 constituent institution, there is granted to each full-time student who is enrolled and taking
10 credit hours at a constituent institution as a NCGRADE participant the sum of one thousand
11 dollars (\$1,000) each academic semester.

12 (c) In order to continue to be eligible for a grant, the student must do all of the
13 following:

14 (1) Make satisfactory academic progress toward earning a baccalaureate degree.

15 (2) Maintain a course load of at least 15 credit hours each academic semester, all
16 of which satisfy course requirements for a baccalaureate degree.

17 (3) Provide an affirmative statement to the constituent institution that the student
18 does not have a felony conviction.

19 (d) The grants provided for in this section shall be used as follows: to help pay for
20 tuition, and, if additional funds remain after paying the tuition for a student, to help pay for
21 fees. The grants provided for in this section shall be administered by the State Education
22 Assistance Authority pursuant to rules adopted by the State Education Assistance Authority not
23 inconsistent with this section. The State Education Assistance Authority shall not approve any
24 grant until it receives proper certification from the constituent institution that the student
25 applying for the grant is an eligible student who is enrolled for at least 15 credit hours at the
26 constituent institution. Upon receipt of the certification, the State Education Assistance
27 Authority shall remit at the times as it prescribes the grant to the constituent institution on
28 behalf, and to the credit, of the student.

29 (e) In the event a student on whose behalf a grant has been paid is not enrolled and
30 carrying a minimum academic load of 15 credit hours as of the tenth classroom day following
31 the beginning of the school term for which the grant was paid, the constituent institution shall
32 refund the full amount of the grant to the State Education Assistance Authority.

33 (f) In the event there are not sufficient funds to provide each eligible student with a full
34 grant:

35 (1) The Board of Governors of The University of North Carolina, with the
36 approval of the Office of State Budget and Management, may transfer
37 available funds to meet the needs of the programs provided by this section;
38 and

39 (2) Each eligible student shall receive a pro rata share of funds then available for
40 the remainder of the academic semester within the fiscal period covered by
41 the current appropriation.

42 **"§ 116-303. Semester limitation on eligibility for grant.**

43 (a) A student shall not receive a NCGRADE grant under this Article for more than four
44 full-time academic semesters. For purposes of this Article a full-time academic semester at a
45 constituent institution is at least 15 credit hours.

46 (b) Upon application by a student, the constituent institution may grant a waiver to the
47 student who may then receive a grant for the equivalent of one additional full-time academic
48 semester if the student demonstrates that any of the following have substantially disrupted or
49 interrupted the student's pursuit of a baccalaureate degree: (i) a military service obligation, (ii)
50 serious medical debilitation, (iii) a short-term or long-term disability, or (iv) other extraordinary

1 hardship. The constituent institution shall establish policies and procedures to implement the
2 waiver provided by this subsection."

3 **SECTION 3.(b)** This section is effective when it becomes law and applies to
4 admissions beginning with the 2018 fall academic semester.

5 **SECTION 4.(a)** NCGRADE Constituent Institutions. – The Board of Governors
6 shall annually review the enrollment records of the first-time, freshmen class enrolled by each
7 constituent institution over a three-year period of time, beginning with the 2013-2014 academic
8 year to determine the average high school grade point average of students accepted during that
9 time period. Any constituent institution that had an average over that three-year period of
10 first-time, freshmen classes in which more than five percent (5%) of the students enrolled had a
11 high school grade point average of less than 3.0 on a seven point scale shall be required to
12 participate in NCGRADE.

13 **SECTION 4.(b)** Partnership With Community Colleges. – Each NCGRADE
14 constituent institution shall identify four community colleges to participate in NCGRADE as
15 partners with the constituent institution. Any community college requested by a constituent
16 institution to partner with that institution for the NCGRADE program shall do so. A
17 community college may be partnered with more than one constituent institution.

18 One of the roles of the partner community colleges shall be to prepare any student
19 enrolled through NCGRADE to be academically competitive and successful in the student's
20 studies at both the community college and the constituent institution.

21 **SECTION 4.(c)** Campus Life. – Each NCGRADE constituent institution and its
22 partner community colleges shall work together to include NCGRADE students as part of the
23 community and student body of the constituent institution. The constituent institution shall
24 issue a student identification card to each NCGRADE student and shall also provide
25 NCGRADE students attending the community college with the same opportunity to live on
26 campus at the constituent institution as provided to all other students enrolled at the constituent
27 institution. The constituent institution shall also make available to NCGRADE students
28 membership in clubs and organizations sponsored by the constituent institution, including
29 service clubs, sports clubs, honor societies, art groups, and other similar organizations. The
30 partner community colleges shall develop satellite clubs on the campuses of the community
31 colleges to make it easier for NCGRADE students to participate in campus activities offered by
32 the constituent institution.

33 **SECTION 4.(d)** Implementation. – NCGRADE shall be implemented by the
34 2018-2019 academic year and shall apply to student applications and admissions policies for
35 the 2018 fall academic semester and each subsequent academic semester.

36 **SECTION 5.(a)** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Board of
37 Governors of The University of North Carolina the sum of six hundred thousand dollars
38 (\$600,000) for the 2017-2018 fiscal year to design and implement the NCGRADE program.

39 **SECTION 5.(b)** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the State Board of
40 Community Colleges the sum of six hundred thousand dollars (\$600,000) for the 2017-2018
41 fiscal year to design and implement the NCGRADE program.

42 **SECTION 5.(c)** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the NCGRADE
43 Grant Fund established by G.S. 116-302, as enacted by Section 3 of this act, the sum of three
44 million eight hundred sixty thousand dollars (\$3,860,000) for the 2018-2019 fiscal year.

45 **SECTION 5.(d)** There is appropriated from the General Fund to the Board of
46 Governors of The University of North Carolina the sum of nine million dollars (\$9,000,000) for
47 the 2017-2018 fiscal year and the sum of nine million dollars (\$9,000,000) for the 2018-2019
48 fiscal year to be used for the support of NCGRADE.

49 **SECTION 6.** This act does not apply to the North Carolina School of Science and
50 Mathematics or to the University of North Carolina School of the Arts.

1 **SECTION 7.** Section 5 of this act becomes effective July 1, 2017. The remainder
2 of this act is effective when it becomes law.