



House Budget and Research Office

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2025 SESSION: HIGHER EDUCATION BUDGET AND LEGISLATIVE HIGHLIGHTS

The University System of Georgia (USG) serves as the state's public higher education agency and is comprised of 26 institutions throughout the state. The USG is overseen by the Board of Regents which is appointed by the governor and governed by a chancellor. The Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) oversees the state's technical colleges, adult literacy programs, and various economic and workforce development programs. TCSG is comprised of 22 institutions with 88 campuses throughout the state. The state also provides financial assistance and aid to students at 33 eligible independent and private colleges and universities.

Budget Highlights

- House Bill 67, the Amended FY 2025 budget, includes \$20 million in one-time funds for the University System of Georgia (USG) for major repairs and rehabilitation at properties throughout the state.
- House Bill 68, the FY 2026 budget, includes \$169.5 million in formula funds for the University System of Georgia to reflect a 2.7% increase in enrollment and a 0.5% increase in square footage.
- In the Agricultural Experiment Station, \$450,000 is provided in the FY 2026 budget for a peach/citrus breeder technician, a blueberry breeder technician, a turfgrass breeder technician, a turfgrass extension specialist technician, and a soybean/corn/small grains extension specialist technician. Also funded through the Agricultural Experiment Station, \$70,000 is provided to match private funding for bulb plant disease research. Within the Cooperative Extension Service, \$150,000 is provided for a North Georgia Hay and Forage Extension Specialist to compliment work that is being done by a similar specialist in South Georgia. Additionally, \$350,000 is provided to the Georgia Tech Research Institute (GTRI) to support post-harvest technology research for the peanut industry.
- The FY 2026 budget includes an additional \$33 million in formula funds for the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG) to reflect a 10.6% increase in enrollment. The budget also includes \$15.8 million in additional targeted funding, bringing the total appropriation to TCSG to offset the increased cost of providing high-demand and high-cost programming in aviation, commercial truck driving, and nursing to \$31 million.
- The Amended FY 2025 budget provides the Georgia Student Finance Commission (GSFC) with an additional \$21.3 million to fund the growing participation in the Dual Enrollment program. These additional funds bring the Amended FY 2025 total appropriation to \$112.6 million. The FY 2026

budget includes an additional \$17 million for the program, bringing the total FY 2026 appropriation to \$108 million. The program served over 63,000 students in FY 2024 and is continuing to grow.

- House Bill 67 provides an additional \$2 million to GSFC for the HOPE Grant program in order to fund the increased usage and expanded eligibility of those grants.
- The Amended FY 2025 budget includes an additional \$6 million to fund HOPE Scholarships at public institutions. This additional funding brings the total appropriation to \$852 million, which will provide more than 300,000 awards to students across the state. The FY 2026 budget includes an additional \$49.9 million for the HOPE Scholarships at public institutions, bringing the total appropriation to \$895.8 million. The scholarship, first awarded during the 1993-1994 academic year, serves over 100,000 students each year.
- The Conference version of the FY 2026 budget includes \$10 million to increase the HOPE Private award amount to match the Zell Private award amount in order to offer parity in HOPE Public and HOPE Private award policies. This addition brings the total appropriation to \$88 million for FY 2026, which will support approximately 15,000 students in private institutions throughout the state.
- HB 68 recognizes the use of existing funds to establish the Public School Employee Memorial Grant program. These postsecondary education grants will be provided to the surviving spouse or children of public school teachers or employees who are killed in the line of duty.
- The Conference version of the FY 2026 budget includes \$100,000 within the Georgia Student Finance Commission for student loan repayment for eligible veterinarians who practice at pet sterilization clinics or pet shelters.
- House Bill 68 provides \$141 million to fully fund the Promise Scholarship (SB 233, 2024 Session). The Georgia Promise Scholarship provides eligible students with grants for private school tuition, tutoring services, and other qualified education expenses.
- House Bill 67 provides \$45,000 to the Nonpublic Postsecondary Education Commission (NPEC) to fund start-up costs associated with a transcript processing service. This service will allow NPEC to more-efficiently process transcript requests from students impacted by an institution closure.

Legislative Highlights

- [HB 38](#) (Rep. Chuck Martin, 49th) expands Georgia College Completion Grant (GCCG) eligibility to students who have completed 70 percent of a four-year program or 45 percent of a two-year program. The sunset date for the GCCG program is extended from June 30, 2025, to June 30, 2029.
- [HB 150](#) (Rep. Tim Fleming, 114th) creates the 'Combating Threats from Foreign Countries of Concern Act of 2025 - Higher Education.' The bill requires the university system to submit a semiannual report to the governor and the chairs of the House and Senate higher education committees detailing the funding received by the system from a foreign country of concern, a foreign entity of concern, or a foreign individual of concern.
- [HB 172](#) (Rep. David Huddleston, 72nd) clarifies eligibility for the Veterinary Education Loan Repayment Program to include former students and specifies that applicants must have practiced in the required specialty for 10 years or less. The maximum award amount for repayment is increased from \$80,000 to \$90,000, to be paid in increments of \$30,000 per 12 months of service.

- [HB 217](#) (Rep. Soo Hong, 103rd) updates provisions related to local school system enrollment counts as they relate to local board of education elections. The bill authorizes the Education Savings Authority to submit the income information of Promise Scholarship applicants to the Department of Revenue for verification.

The bill extends the Dual Achievement pilot program sunset date to July 1, 2031. It also provides for the distribution of QBE formula earnings from the State Board of Education to the TCSG board based on the number of eligible students participating in the program.

- [SB 20](#) (Sen. Kay Kirkpatrick, 32nd) expands eligibility for the Public Safety Memorial Grant to include spouses of law enforcement officers, firefighters, prison guards, emergency medical technicians, or highway response operators who have died or been permanently disabled in the line of duty. The bill increases the maximum award amount from \$2,000 per academic year to \$18,000 per academic year, and increases the lifetime award amount from \$8,000 to \$72,000.

The bill provides for the distribution of grants to the child or spouse of a public school teacher or public school employee who has been killed or permanently disabled by an act of violence in the line of duty. Eligible students attending an approved school will receive no more than \$18,000 per academic year, with a maximum total award amount of \$72,000.

The bill expands membership of the State Veterinary Education Board to include: an executive director of an animal shelter or a nonprofit pet sterilization clinic in this state and a veterinarian employed full time in the practice of shelter medicine or pet sterilization services in this state, both to be appointed by the governor.

The bill provides for a loan repayment program for veterinarians who have been practicing for less than 10 years and who practice shelter medicine or practice full time at a nonprofit pet sterilization clinic. The maximum award amount for repayment is \$75,000, to be paid in increments of \$25,000 per 12 months of service.

- [SB 85](#) (Sen. Matt Brass, 6th) creates the 'Georgia Foster Care Scholarship Act.' The Act provides grants to eligible students who are current or former foster care children. The total award amount per semester is not to exceed the costs of the eligible student's tuition, room, board, meal plan, and books associated with matriculation at an eligible postsecondary institution, minus any amount covered by federal or other state grants or scholarships. The maximum award per year will not exceed \$30,000. Students will remain eligible for such awards until one of the following events occurs: the student earns a bachelor's degree, a maximum amount of hours has been attempted, or the student has received the scholarship for 10 years.
- [SB 149](#) (Sen. Billy Hickman, 4th) revises the institution eligibility for tuition equalization grants to require classification as a Level VI institution by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges.
- [SB 180](#) (Sen. Clint Dixon, 45th) allows apprenticeship sponsors to perform specified tasks related to conducting an apprenticeship program.
- [SB 193](#) (Sen. Matt Brass, 6th) authorizes the Technical College System of Georgia to establish the adult workforce high school diploma program, which has a sunset date of July 1, 2031.