

1 AN ACT relating to higher education.

2 Be it enacted by the People of the State of Illinois,  
3 represented in the General Assembly:

4 Section 5. The Higher Education Student Assistance Act  
5 is amended by adding Section 45.5 as follows:

6 (110 ILCS 947/45.5 new)

7 Sec. 45.5. Firefighter and EMS provider grant program.

8 (a) As used in this Section:

9 "Active paid on-call firefighter" means a member of an  
10 active volunteer fire department who has had basic training  
11 as defined in subsection (f) of Section 2 of the Illinois  
12 Fire Protection Training Act and in the past 12 months has  
13 (i) participated in all required training exercises, (ii) has  
14 responded to a fire or other emergency call, and (iii) has  
15 received a form of monetary compensation for each emergency  
16 situation he or she has responded to.

17 "Active volunteer fire department" means a fire  
18 department that is staffed by volunteers for the purpose of  
19 combating fires.

20 "Active volunteer firefighter" means a member of an  
21 active volunteer fire department who has had basic training  
22 as defined in subsection (f) of Section 2 of the Illinois  
23 Fire Protection Training Act and in the past 12 months has  
24 (i) participated in all required training exercises and (ii)  
25 has responded to a fire or other emergency call.

26 "EMS provider" means a person who is certified or  
27 authorized under the Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Systems  
28 Act to provide emergency medical services and who provides  
29 those services as a participant in an EMS System.

30 "Fees" means matriculation, graduation, activity, term,  
31 or incidental fees. Exemption shall not be granted from any

1 other fees, including book rental, service, laboratory,  
2 supply, and union building fees, hospital and medical  
3 insurance fees, and any fees established for the operation  
4 and maintenance of buildings, the income of which is pledged  
5 to the payment of interest and principal on bonds issued by  
6 the governing board of any university or community college.

7 "State-controlled university or community college" means  
8 those institutions under the administration of the Chicago  
9 State University Board of Trustees, the Eastern Illinois  
10 University Board of Trustees, the Governors State University  
11 Board of Trustees, the Illinois State University Board of  
12 Trustees, the Northeastern Illinois University Board of  
13 Trustees, the Northern Illinois University Board of Trustees,  
14 the Western Illinois University Board of Trustees, the  
15 Southern Illinois University Board of Trustees, the  
16 University of Illinois Board of Trustees, or the Illinois  
17 Community College Board.

18 "Tuition and fees" does not include expenses for any  
19 sectarian or denominational instruction, the construction or  
20 maintenance of sectarian or denominational facilities, or any  
21 other sectarian or denominational purposes or activity.

22 (b) Subject to the limitations provided in this Section,  
23 any person who has served at least 3 years as (i) an active  
24 volunteer, paid on-call, or full-time firefighter with a fire  
25 department in a municipality with a population of less than  
26 10,000 or (ii) an EMS provider with an EMS System located in  
27 whole or in part in a municipality with a population of less  
28 than 10,000 and who possesses all necessary entrance  
29 requirements shall, upon application and proper proof, be  
30 awarded a grant to the State-controlled university or  
31 community college of his or her choice, consisting of  
32 exemption from tuition and fees for not more than the  
33 equivalent of 4 years of full-time enrollment in relation to  
34 his or her course of study at that State-controlled

1 university or community college while he or she serves as an  
2 active volunteer, paid on-call, or full-time firefighter with  
3 that fire department or while he or she serves as an EMS  
4 provider with that EMS System. However, not more than 2  
5 grants per year may be awarded to firefighters within the  
6 same fire department and not more than 2 grants per year may  
7 be awarded to EMS providers within the same EMS System.

8 If the recipient of any grant awarded under this Section  
9 for a firefighter ceases to serve as an active volunteer,  
10 paid on-call, or full-time firefighter with the fire  
11 department that he or she was with to qualify for the grant  
12 while enrolled in a course of study under that grant, the  
13 grant shall be terminated as of the date service as an active  
14 volunteer, paid on-call, or full-time firefighter with that  
15 fire department ended, and the recipient shall be permitted  
16 to complete the school term in which he or she is then  
17 enrolled only upon payment of tuition and other fees  
18 allocable to the part of the term then remaining. If the  
19 recipient of any grant awarded under this Section for an EMS  
20 provider ceases to serve as an EMS provider with the EMS  
21 System that he or she was with to qualify for the grant while  
22 enrolled in a course of study under that grant, the grant  
23 shall be terminated as of the date service as an EMS provider  
24 with that EMS System ended, and the recipient shall be  
25 permitted to complete the school term in which he or she is  
26 then enrolled only upon payment of tuition and other fees  
27 allocable to the part of the term then remaining.

28 Before receiving grant assistance under this Section for  
29 any academic year, each grant recipient shall be required by  
30 the Commission to sign an agreement under which the recipient  
31 pledges (i) for a firefighter, that he or she shall remain an  
32 active volunteer, paid on-call, or full-time firefighter with  
33 the fire department that he or she was with to qualify for  
34 the grant for a period of not less than one year for each

1 year of grant assistance that he or she receives under this  
2 Section or for an EMS provider, that he or she shall remain  
3 an EMS provider with the EMS System that he or she was with  
4 to qualify for the grant for a period of not less than one  
5 year for each year of grant assistance that he or she  
6 receives under this Section and (ii) that he or she shall,  
7 upon request by the Commission, provide the Commission with  
8 evidence that he or she is fulfilling or has fulfilled this  
9 obligation. If the recipient fails to fulfill this  
10 obligation, then the Commission shall require the recipient  
11 to repay the amount of the grant assistance received,  
12 prorated according to the fraction of the obligation not  
13 completed, at a rate of interest equal to 5%, and, if  
14 applicable, to pay reasonable collection fees. A recipient  
15 who is enrolled in an institution of higher learning shall  
16 not be required to commence repayment so long as he or she  
17 remains enrolled in an institution of higher learning on a  
18 full-time basis or if he or she can document for the  
19 Commission special circumstances that warrant extension of  
20 the time before repayment is required. The Commission is  
21 authorized to establish rules relating to its collection  
22 activities for repayment of grant assistance under this  
23 Section. All repayments collected under this Section shall be  
24 forwarded to the State Comptroller for deposit into the  
25 General Revenue Fund. A recipient shall not be considered in  
26 violation of the agreement entered into pursuant to this  
27 subsection (b) if the recipient (i) is serving as a member of  
28 the armed services of the United States, for a period of time  
29 not to exceed 3 years, (ii) is temporarily totally disabled,  
30 for a period of time not to exceed 3 years, as established by  
31 sworn affidavit of a qualified physician, or (iii) becomes  
32 permanently totally disabled, as established by sworn  
33 affidavit of a qualified physician.

34 A grant awarded under this Section shall be considered an

1 entitlement that the State-controlled university or community  
2 college in which the holder is enrolled shall honor without  
3 any condition other than the holder's maintenance of minimum  
4 grade levels and a satisfactory student loan repayment record  
5 pursuant to subsection (c) of Section 20 of this Act.

6 (c) Subject to a separate appropriation for such  
7 purposes, the Commission may reimburse the State-controlled  
8 university or community college for grants authorized by this  
9 Section.

10 Section 99. Effective date. This Act takes effect on  
11 July 1, 2003.