

GUIDELINES FOR APPEAL

Academic year 2024-25



South Carolina
Commission on Higher Education

Access | Affordability | Excellence



SC HOPE, LIFE, AND PALMETTO FELLOWS SCHOLARSHIP APPEALS GUIDELINES

SC HOPE AND LIFE SCHOLARSHIP

The student is notified through the established institutional notification process that they are not eligible to receive the SC HOPE/LIFE Scholarship.

PALMETTO FELLOWS SCHOLARSHIP

The student is notified through the established institutional notification process that they are not eligible to receive the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship.

Between May 2024 - February 2025 during the term of re-enrollment after the loss of the scholarship, student submits an Application for Appeal from the Commission on Higher Education's Web Site

Student must submit the following:

1. Completed Online Application for Appeal;
2. Upload a detailed letter of request for appeal, written and signed by student, that describes the extenuating circumstance(s);
3. Upload Supporting documentation (see page 7);
4. Upload official transcript(s) from current and any previous institutions attended (to include any dual enrollment);
5. All documentation must be submitted by the established deadlines for the appeal to be considered. CHE staff is NOT obligated to contact students to notify them of missing documentation.

The Commission on Higher Education will only review COMPLETE SC HOPE, LIFE, and Palmetto Fellows Scholarship appeals received by the established September or February deadline. All incomplete appeal and appeal documentation submitted after the February deadline will not be considered. CHE is NOT obligated to contact students to inform them of missing materials from their appeal. CHE will notify the student via e-mail of the rendered decision and, if approved, the institution will also be notified.

Upon delivery of a denial decision via the email address provided in the appeal application, the student will have 5 calendar days from delivery of the e-mail to submit in writing a request to have the Appeals Committee reconsider their appeal. Please note that no new information will be accepted with a student's request for reconsideration.

It is not the responsibility of CHE staff to ensure delivery or receipt of emails concerning notification of missing materials or appeal decisions. Please be sure to check your e-mail regularly, including your SPAM folder.

Questions? Contact us at
appeals@che.sc.gov

If submitted by September 13, 2024, decisions will be rendered by January 1, 2025.
If submitted between September 13, 2024 - February 14, 2025, decisions will be rendered by April 4, 2025.

The decision rendered by the Appeals Committee is final.

DEFINITION OF TERMS

An **appeal** shall be defined as the complete and timely documentation of an extenuating circumstance(s) that causes a student enrolled in college to fail to meet the academic requirements (cumulative grade point average and/or credit hours) for regaining or renewing a LIFE Scholarship or renewing a Palmetto Fellows Scholarship. An **appeal** is also defined as the complete and timely documentation of an extenuating circumstance(s) that causes a SC HOPE Scholarship recipient to not receive the maximum available terms of funding. **Students who fail to meet the initial eligibility criteria or who were never eligible to receive the SC HOPE, LIFE, or Palmetto Fellows Scholarship are not eligible to submit an appeal. In addition, students must be enrolled at an eligible SC institution to appeal the loss of their scholarship. Students who fail to appeal by the established September or February deadline upon the term of re-enrollment after the loss of their scholarship at an eligible South Carolina institution are not eligible to submit an appeal. Students cannot file an appeal after they have graduated college.**

- An **extenuating circumstance** shall be defined as a situation that involves a serious health condition of the student, death or serious health condition of an immediate family member, or a traumatic/extraordinary event. (see below)
- An **immediate family member** shall be defined as the spouse, great-grandparents, grandparents, parents or legal guardians, brothers, sisters (including step-brothers/sisters), or children of either the student or the student's spouse.
- A **serious health condition** shall be defined as an illness, injury, impairment, or physical or mental condition that involves:(1) any period of incapacity or treatment in connection with or consequent to inpatient care in a hospital, hospice, or residential medical care facility; or (2) any period of incapacity requiring absence from classes for more than five consecutive class days that also involves continuing treatment by (or under the supervision of) a health care provider; or (3) continuing treatment by (or under the supervision of) a health care provider for a chronic or long-term health condition that is incurable or so serious that, if not treated, would likely result in a period of incapacity that would adversely affect the academic performance of the student.
- A **traumatic/extraordinary event** shall be defined as a sudden, uncontrollable event which adversely affects the student's academic performance, such as a natural disaster (earthquake, hurricane, tornado, etc.), divorce, sexual assault, required missionary duty, active military duty, death of a significant non-immediate family member, or any other events deemed traumatic/extraordinary by the Commission.

EXTENUATING CIRCUMSTANCE

Extenuating circumstances are the following situations:

- Serious health condition of the student; or
- Death or serious health condition of an immediate family member; or
- Traumatic / Extraordinary event

In order to determine if a particular situation is an eligible extenuating circumstance, refer to the above "Definition of Terms." Please be aware that poor academic performance prior to the documented extenuating circumstance will impact the outcome of an appeal. **A student cannot appeal the loss of scholarship due to:**

- An institution's lack of or failure to provide adequate accommodations (i.e.: note taker, extended test taking time, attendance flexibility).
- Never been awarded or received the LIFE, SC HOPE or Palmetto Fellows Scholarships.

A traumatic event DOES NOT include:

College adjustment issues, homesickness, problems with roommates, problems with the faculty or staff at the college or university, difficult course-load, misunderstanding of scholarship requirements, misadvisement by financial aid officers or advisors, problems following institutional policies/procedures, problems completing the proper institutional paperwork/forms, dependent care issues, transportation problems, financial issues, exceptions to scholarship regulation (initial eligibility, transfer issues, exceeding terms of eligibility), sport schedule conflicts, etc.

This is not an exhaustive list. Other issues may be deemed as inappropriate for appeal.

NOTIFICATION OF SCHOLARSHIP ELIGIBILITY

SC HOPE AND LIFE SCHOLARSHIP

Each institution is responsible for notifying students about financial aid awards through normal institutional notification procedures, such as personal financial award accounts within the institutional system available for all students to review, telephone notification, award letters, and student bill statements. Therefore, each student awarded the SC HOPE or LIFE Scholarship must make themselves aware of the institutional notification process and their SC HOPE or LIFE Scholarship eligibility. If a SC HOPE or LIFE Scholarship recipient finds that they are ineligible and would like to file an appeal, appeal applications are available on page 10 of this document. If a student wishes to submit an appeal, then they must follow the approved appeals process.

PALMETTO FELLOWS SCHOLARSHIP

Each institution is responsible for notifying students about financial aid awards through normal institutional notification procedures, such as personal financial award accounts within the institutional system available for all students to review, telephone notification, award letters, and student bill statements. Therefore, each student awarded the Palmetto Fellows Scholarship must make themselves aware of the institutional notification process and their Palmetto Fellows Scholarship eligibility. If a Palmetto Fellows Scholarship recipient finds that they are ineligible and would like to file an appeal, appeal applications are available on page 10 of this document.

The student's home institution will notify each Palmetto Fellow of the discontinuation of their Palmetto Fellows Scholarship and provide information about the opportunity to appeal. If a student wishes to submit an appeal, then they must follow the approved appeals process.

TIME LIMITATION FOR FILING AN APPEAL

The regulations governing each scholarship program allows for students to appeal the loss of their scholarship and request reinstatement should they have a legitimate extenuating circumstance as defined in these guidelines that prevented them from meeting the continued eligibility criteria. Appeals solely pertaining to either LIFE or Palmetto Fellows Scholarship Enhancements will not be considered. Only one appeal is allowed to be submitted each academic year. Appeals must be submitted by the established deadline upon the term of re-enrollment at an eligible South Carolina institution after losing eligibility for a state scholarship. Appeals information must be received by the Commission no later than 5:00 pm on Friday, February 14, 2025. No appeals applications will be accepted AFTER 5:00 pm on February 14, 2025.

Students who submit an appeal after the deadline will NOT have their appeal heard. Please note that students who have never been awarded or received the LIFE, SC HOPE or Palmetto Fellows Scholarships, or who failed to meet the continued eligibility requirements to regain a previously lost scholarship are not eligible to file an appeal.

A student MUST be currently enrolled in order to file an appeal. A student cannot file an appeal after they have graduated from the institution.

APPEAL APPLICATION TIMELINE

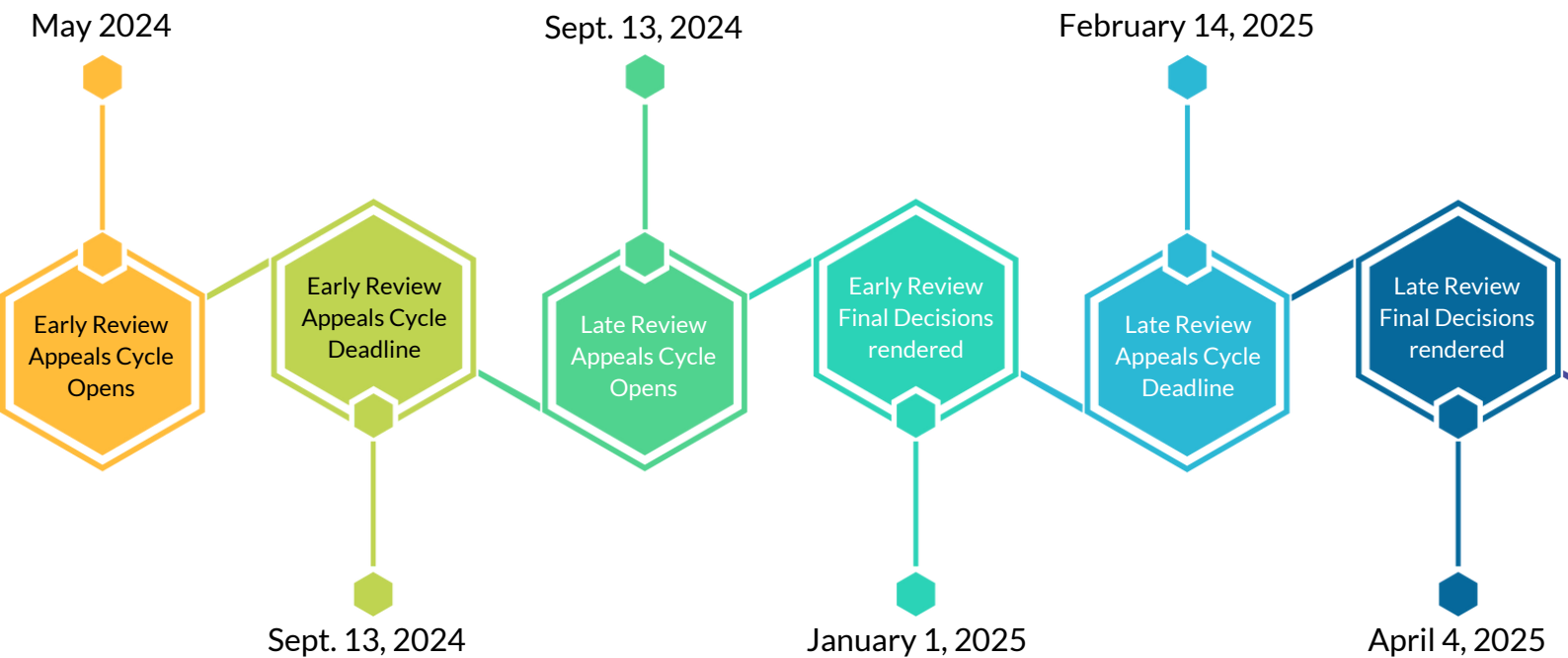
EARLY APPEAL REVIEW: DEADLINE SEPTEMBER 13, 2024

Complete Appeal packets that are received between May 1, 2024 - September 13, 2024 will be reviewed during the Early Appeal Review process. Students will be notified no later than January 1, 2025 regarding the final decision of their appeal.

LATE APPEAL REVIEW: DEADLINE FEBRUARY 14, 2025

Complete Appeal packets that are received between September 14, 2024 - February 14, 2025 will be reviewed during the Late Appeal Review process. Students will be notified no later than April 4, 2025 regarding the final decision of their appeal.

APPEAL REVIEW TIMELINE



FILING AN APPEAL

The following is a checklist of the appeals documentation the student must submit to be considered. A student may submit any of the documentation electronically, provided all necessary signatures are included. If submitting electronically, please submit all materials in ONE email in PDF format.

1

ONLINE APPLICATION FOR APPEAL

1. The online application must be completed by the student. It is not the responsibility of Commission staff to inform appellants if the application or portions thereof, are incomplete. Therefore, the incomplete appeal will not be considered.

**If the application remains incomplete by the close of the February deadline, CHE will notify the student within 15 business days after the deadline via email that the appeal will not be considered. Students will not be able to submit the missing documentation or be considered for re-appeal if they have an incomplete appeal application.*

2

LETTER OF REQUEST (MUST BE WRITTEN/TYPED AND SIGNED BY STUDENT)

1. The student must state the reason for appealing and describe the extenuating circumstance(s) as defined in these guidelines that prevented them from renewing the scholarship. A student should specify the term and academic year for which they are appealing.
2. The student must provide an explanation as to why they did not attend any and all terms during the academic year in question, including Maymester and summer school (Sessions I & II). A student must receive permission from a medical provider (see below under "supporting documentation") in order to take a reduced course load for the academic year in question. The reduced course load would need to be approved and the documentation of the reduced course load on file at the home institution's Disability/Accessibility Office and the financial aid office prior to the start of each term.
3. **Summer school provides an additional opportunity for students to increase their LIFE GPA or Institutional GPA, and/or earn additional credit hours for continued scholarship eligibility. It is expected that students will attend Maymester and summer school to meet continued eligibility requirements (credit hours and/or LIFE GPA) for the LIFE and (credit hours and/or institutional GPA) for the Palmetto Fellows Scholarships.** A student may wish to provide an excuse from a medical provider if they are unable to earn the credits and GPA to regain their scholarship during Maymester and summer school for medical reasons. Financial situations will not be taken into consideration for not attending Maymester and summer school. Students who do not attend Maymester and summer school must provide an explanation as to why they did not attend.
4. The hours and grades earned during summer school will be considered in the appeals deliberation and can affect the outcome of the appeal.
5. If the student is appealing because of poor academic performance, the student must explain to the Committee whether they used the institutional appeals process to have the grades changed due to an extenuating circumstance each term. The student must also explain each term of poor academic performance.
6. If the student is appealing due to a death of an immediate or a non-immediate family member, the student must provide documentation of the death (i.e.: obituary, funeral program, death certificate) as well as explain in detail (1) the extent of the relationship; (2) how this situation affected their inability to meet academic requirements to renew the scholarship; and (3) how the situation meets the definition of a traumatic /extraordinary event. The student must also provide a letter from a professional counselor detailing how the traumatic or extraordinary event affected the student's academic performance during the academic year in question.
7. If the student is appealing due to a chronic or long-term health condition, the student must be registered with the Institutional/Campus Disability/Accessibility Office prior to the start of each academic term, and the student should address this in their letter.



SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Students are ultimately responsible for providing sufficient supporting documentation with their appeal which satisfies the burden of proof of an extenuating circumstance. Self diagnosis or parental diagnosis of medical or mental health related conditions will not be considered for appeal. All appeals must include supporting documentation providing diagnosis from licensed professionals (i.e. medical provider, psychiatrist, etc.). Documentation shall include but is not limited to the following:

FOR MEDICAL-RELATED APPEALS

1. Signed letter from a medical provider on their office letterhead (medical provider, psychiatrist, and/or psychologist) detailing duration and extent of serious health condition (this letter must include specific details and time period regarding the health condition) and any recommendations made regarding school non-attendance (fall, spring, Maymester and summer);
2. For chronic or long-term health conditions, official letter from the Institutional/Campus Disabilities/Accessibilities Office verifying that the student is registered with their office. The letter must include specific details regarding all accommodations including any reduced course loads;
3. If the student served as a primary caregiver, documentation from a medical provider detailing time period in which student served in that capacity.

DO NOT submit any insurance statements, account information, list of charges/appointments, appointment notes, etc.

FOR DEATH-RELATED APPEALS

1. Signed letter from the professional counselor on their office letterhead (psychiatrist, and/or psychologist, minister, etc.) detailing duration and extent of grief period (this letter must include specific details and time period regarding the effect the loss had on academic performance) and any recommendations made regarding school non-attendance (fall, spring, Maymester and summer);
2. Death certificate;
3. Obituary; and
4. Funeral service program

FOR TRAUMATIC/EXTRAORDINARY APPEALS

1. Signed letter from the professional counselor on letterhead (psychiatrist, and/or psychologist, minister, etc.) detailing duration and extent of event (this letter must include specific details and time period regarding the effect the event had on academic performance) and any recommendations made regarding school non-attendance (fall, spring, Maymester and summer);
2. Police report;
3. Major medical documentation (excluding insurance statements and bill statements); and
4. Legal/Court documents.

OTHER RELEVANT DOCUMENTATION

1. For poor academic performance, official letter from the college or university verifying the outcome of the institutional appeal or a statement from the student to explain why he/she did not utilize the institutional appeals process; and/or
2. Any other documentation, which will substantiate the appeal.

4

ALL OFFICIAL ACADEMIC TRANSCRIPTS

The student must request an official transcript(s) from current and any/all previous post-secondary institutions attended, enrolled, and/or earned credit hours from, including dual enrollment coursework. If an institution is using courses for GPA/credit hours, then a transcript from the institution in which the credit hours were earned needs to be provided to the Commission. **Please note that grades and credits earned through dual enrollment must be presented on the official transcript from the institution through which they were earned** (high school transcripts will not be accepted). *Even though some institutions will place credits on their transcript if they are earned at a different institution, they may not list the grades earned, which could impact an appeal. For this reason, all official transcripts from every institution attended, even those institutions attended through dual credit programs, are required.*

Academic transcript(s) must be in an official order from the institutions on either Parchment or National Clearing House. Order the official transcripts electronically and have them emailed to yourself. You will upload your official transcripts on the online Scholarship Appeal Application dashboard.

If you cannot have the transcript emailed to yourself, you can have the official transcript emailed to the Commission on Higher Education. The official transcripts can be sent/emailed to appeals@che.sc.gov.

Please note that unofficial transcripts will not be considered. It is the student's responsibility to ensure that all transcripts are sent by the institution and uploaded to the Appeal Application dashboard no later than 5:00pm on the established deadlines. **EVEN IF YOU HAVE PREVIOUSLY APPEALED, NEW/UPDATED OFFICIAL TRANSCRIPTS MUST BE SUBMITTED IN ORDER FOR AN APPEAL TO BE HEARD.**

SUBMISSION OF APPEAL MATERIALS

The completed application and all other documentation must be uploaded and submitted online to the Commission on Higher Education by the established deadline of the academic year that scholarship aid is requested. Incomplete applications will not be considered.

It is the student's responsibility to ensure that all documents are uploaded and submitted to the Commission by the deadline including a detailed student letter, completed application, all necessary transcripts and supporting documentation. It is not the responsibility of CHE staff to ensure that the student's file is complete or that the information in the file is correct. Commission staff is NOT obligated to contact the student, parent/guardian or the institution to ensure the student's files are complete for review.

NOTIFICATION PROCESS FOR APPEALS DECISIONS

Once the decision regarding an appeal has been determined, the Commission on Higher Education will notify the student **via e-mail and it will be noted on their online Appeal Dashboard**, and, if approved, the institution will also be notified. Students who attend Maymester, Summer I or II should be aware that a decision on their appeal will be held until the student has completed all Summer work and has submitted updated official transcripts to reflect the summer grades/credit hours to the Commission by the established deadline. Students with “I” or Incomplete grades on the transcript at the appeals deadline will not have their appeal heard. All “I” grades must be resolved at the institutional level prior to submitting an appeal.

Upon delivery of a **denial decision e-mail**, the student will have **5 calendar days** from the delivery of the e-mail to submit in writing a request to have the Appeals Committee reconsider their appeal (this request can be made via email (appeals@che.sc.gov), or selected on the online Appeal Dashboard). All requests must be received within the 5-calendar day period. **PLEASE NOTE THAT NO ADDITIONAL INFORMATION/DOCUMENTATION WILL BE ACCEPTED WITH A RECONSIDERATION REQUEST.**

For re-appeals, the Appeals Committee will review only the information submitted with the student’s original appeal. No additional information will be accepted after a decision has been rendered regarding the student’s completed initial appeal. Re-appeal decisions should be rendered by January 1, 2025 or April 4, 2025 depending on when the original appeal was received. The Appeals Committee’s decision is final.

Students should understand that their appeal may not be granted. Therefore, they must take the necessary actions to secure funds to pay their tuition and fees during the time the appeal is being reviewed. If the appeal is granted, the scholarship funds may be awarded retroactively. In addition, CHE does not guarantee that a decision will be rendered prior to any institutional deadlines for tuition and fee payment. In these cases, it is up to the student to ensure that any financial obligation to the institution is fulfilled. If the appeal is granted, the scholarship funds may be awarded retroactively.

APPROVAL OF APPEALS

If an appeal is granted to a student who does not have the required cumulative 3.0 grade point average or the required number of credit hours, they may receive scholarship funding only for the academic year for which the appeal was granted. After the completion of that academic year, the student is expected to comply with all eligibility requirements as stipulated in the grant e-mail, in order to receive scholarship funding for each subsequent academic year.

APPEALS COMMITTEE

The Appeals Committee Membership may be comprised of the following at a minimum:

- One representative from the staff of the SC Commission on Higher Education;
- One representative from the board of the Commission on Higher Education;
- Three institutional representatives of which one will be from a public senior college, one from a private senior college, and one from a two-year/technical college;
- One public or private high school counselor;
- One business representative; and
- One representative from the General Assembly or legislative staff member.

Checklist for Appeals

In order to expedite the appeal's process, please complete the following checklist before mailing your appeal.

- Did you read the definition of a traumatic/extraordinary event? Please refer to page 3 of the Guidelines for Appeal to determine if your traumatic/extraordinary event is considered to be an appealable situation.
 - Did you attend Maymester and/or summer school to meet continued eligibility requirements, or at least to improve your standing in the eyes of the Appeals Committee? If not, please explain why you chose not to attend. If your reason for non-attendance was related to your extenuating circumstance, please provide the appropriate paperwork from a medical professional or counselor recommending/requiring your non-attendance.
 - Are you or will you be enrolled during the Fall 2024 or Spring 2025 term? (You must be enrolled at an eligible SC institution in order to appeal the loss of your scholarship.)
 - Did you complete, electronically sign/submit all application materials on the online portal? Have you provided a valid telephone number and email in case staff needs to contact you?
-

Letter

- Did you provide an explanation and documentation for any summer school sessions that you did not attend? *It is expected that students will attend Maymester and/or summer school to meet the continued eligibility requirements (credit hours and/or GPA) for the LIFE and Palmetto Fellows Scholarships. A student must receive permission from a doctor if they are unable to earn the credits and GPA to regain their scholarship during summer school. Financial situations will not be taken into consideration for not attending summer school.*
- Does your letter address whether or not you underwent the institutional appeals process?
- If suffering from a disability, chronic or long term illness, did you register with the Institutional/Campus Office of Disabilities? If you were registered, did you include this documentation in your appeal?

Doctor's Letter/Medical Documentation (if applicable)

Is your doctor's letter on official letterhead (not paper from a prescription pad) and is it signed by the doctor?

Does your doctor's letter describe?

- the specific time periods of your illness?
- the diagnosis and extent of your illness?
- the effect that your illness had on your academic performance?
- any recommendations regarding non-attendance?

If you withdrew from classes, does your doctor's letter state whether or not they recommended/required withdrawal? If your doctor did not recommend withdrawal, does your letter state your doctor's opinion regarding your ability to attend classes?

Does your medical documentation/doctor's letter cover the entire time period of poor academic performance and or non-attendance? (If the student is appealing because of poor academic performance, the student must explain to the Committee whether they used the institutional appeals process to have the grades changed due to an extenuating circumstance each term. The student must also explain each term of poor academic performance).

If you are appealing due to death of a family member/non-immediate family member, did you include a letter from the counselor explaining how this traumatic extenuating circumstance affected your academic performance? Did you include supporting documentation in regards to the death (Obituary, and/or death certificate, and/or funeral program)?

Transcripts

Electronic Transcripts
Did you request for transcripts to be sent to you for all of the colleges/universities you have attended (to include ANY dual enrollment transcripts)? Is each transcript sent from the institution or transcript company (**Transcript MUST be sent from institution or transcript company directly to you**). Have you uploaded all transcripts to the online Appeals dashboard? Even if you have previously appealed you will need to submit updated transcripts from all institutions you have attended.

If you completed dual enrollment coursework, did you request an official transcript from the institution through which the coursework was earned (excluding high school transcripts)? Have you uploaded it to the online Appeal Portal? (Even though some institutions will place credits on their transcript if they are earned at a different institution, they may not list the grades earned, which could impact an appeal. For this reason, all official transcripts from every institution attended, even those institutions attended through dual credit programs).

If CHE does not receive all transcripts, your application will be considered incomplete. Incomplete applications will not be considered.