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## DIGEST

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### CONFERENCE COMMITTEE REPORT DIGEST

**HB 77**

**2025 Regular Session**

**Turner**

#### **Keyword and oneliner of the instrument as it left the House**

TOPS: Adds the Excellence award level for students who score 31 or higher on the ACT, allows award qualification based on the Classic Learning Test, revises eligibility requirements for TOPS-Tech, and allows application of unused award amounts to medical or dental school

#### **Report adopts Senate amendments to:**

1. Remove authority of certain students to apply unused award amounts to medical or dental school and the requirement for repayment unless certain conditions are met.
2. Remove qualification for a TOPS-Tech award based on the attainment of certain early college credits.
3. Add Excellence Award eligibility for students attending institutions that are members of the La. Assoc. of Independent Colleges and Universities (LAICU).

#### **Report rejects Senate amendments which would have:**

1. Increased Opportunity Award amount for students attending certain institutions.

#### **Report amends the bill to:**

1. Provide that proposed law relative to qualification for an Excellence Award shall apply to students graduating from high school during or after the 2024-2025 school year instead of those enrolling in college as first-time freshmen during the 2025-2026 award year.

2. Broaden application of proposed law relative to qualification for an award based on scores attained on the Classic Learning Test to all students, not just graduates of approved nonpublic high schools and approved home study programs, and specify that proposed law applies to students graduating from high school during or after the 2024-2025 school year.
3. Provide that certain provisions of House Bill No. 378 of this 2025 Regular Session of the Legislature relative to home study students supercede the corresponding provisions of proposed law.

## **Digest of the bill as proposed by the Conference Committee**

### **TOPS award levels**

Present law provides for the Taylor Opportunity Program for Students (TOPS), a merit scholarship program. Provides for four award levels based on high school academic criteria, including completion of a specific core curriculum, a minimum GPA on that core curriculum, and a minimum ACT score: TOPS-Tech, Opportunity, Performance, and Honors, which is the highest award level for students who score a 27 or higher on the ACT. Proposed law creates Excellence, a new award level, for students who score 31 or higher on the ACT and enroll in a public college or university or an institution that is a member of the La. Association of Independent Colleges and Universities (LAICU). Provides that qualification for an Excellence Award applies to students graduating from high school during or after the 2024-2025 school year.

### **Award amounts**

Present law ties the calculation of award amounts to the amount of tuition charged at a given institution during the 2016-2017 academic year. Proposed law retains present law except provides that for the Excellence award, the award amount is \$12,000 or the amount of tuition and mandatory fees, whichever is less, at a public institution and \$8,500 or the amount of tuition and mandatory fees, whichever is less, at a LAICU institution.

### **Classic Learning Test**

Present law sets a minimum ACT score for each award level and allows qualification upon attainment of an equivalent concordant score on the SAT. Proposed law also allows this upon the attainment of an equivalent concordant score on the Classic Learning Test for students graduating from high school during or after the 2024-2025 school year.

### **National Guard stipends**

Present law provides that students who qualify for both TOPS and a National Guard tuition exemption as provided in present law receive the latter tuition exemption but also receive a stipend based on the TOPS award level for which they qualify. Proposed law adds a higher stipend for these students who qualify for an Excellence award.

(Amends R.S. 17:5002(A), (E)(1) and (3), and (G), 5024(B)(1), 5025(intro. para.), 5029(B)(3)(b)(ii) and (iii) and (D)(1)(intro. para.), 5041(intro. para.), (1)(c), and (4), and 5043(1); Adds R.S. 17:5002(I) and 5024(A)(1)(e))