

7-2-2017

Georgia's Senior Citizen Tuition Waiver Program: Literature Review, Pilot Study, Evaluation Proposal, and Recommendations for Future Research

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Recommended Citation

Ariail, Donald L. (2017) "Georgia's Senior Citizen Tuition Waiver Program: Literature Review, Pilot Study, Evaluation Proposal, and Recommendations for Future Research," *Georgia Educational Researcher*. Vol. 14 : Iss. 1 , Article 5.

DOI: 10.20429/ger.2017.140105

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/gerjournal/vol14/iss1/5>

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Georgia's Senior Citizen Tuition Waiver Program: Literature Review, Pilot Study, Evaluation Proposal, and Recommendations for Future Research

Abstract

Georgia's Senior Citizen Tuition Waiver Program (SCTWP) became law in 1976. This program allows senior citizens age 62 and older to attend University System of Georgia (USG) institutions tuition free. With the ultimate aim of improving the current program, the purpose of the proposed evaluation of the SCTWP is to determine the ongoing implementation of the program including the status of the promotion of the program, the assistance being provided to seniors aimed at facilitating entry into the program, and the level of satisfaction of program participants. Preliminary research indicates that information about the program may be difficult to obtain or misleading, that the program is not actively promoted, that there is a relatively low rate of participation and graduation, and that USG institutions differ in the way they administer the program. Suggestions are provided for conducting a more thorough investigation of the SCTWP's current implementation and efficacy: e.g., by acquiring data through individual interviews, surveys, and/or focus group sessions with current and former program participants and admissions officers; by reviewing the SCTWP content of all USG Web sites and catalogues; and, by determining the awareness by Georgia's senior citizens of the availability of the SCTWP.

Keywords

senior citizen, tuition waiver, intergenerational education, adult education, disenfranchised, ageing workforce, empowerment

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**Georgia's Senior Citizen Tuition Waiver Program:
Literature Review, Pilot Study, Evaluation Proposal,
and Recommendations for Future Research**

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Abstract: Georgia's Senior Citizen Tuition Waiver Program (SCTWP) became law in 1976. This program allows senior citizens age 62 and older to attend University System of Georgia (USG) institutions tuition free. With the ultimate aim of improving the current program, the purpose of the proposed evaluation of the SCTWP is to determine the ongoing implementation of the program including the status of the promotion of the program, the assistance being provided to seniors aimed at facilitating entry into the program, and the level of satisfaction of program participants. Preliminary research indicates that information about the program may be difficult to obtain or misleading, that the program is not actively promoted, that there is a relatively low rate of participation and graduation, and that USG institutions differ in the way they administer the program. Suggestions are provided for conducting a more thorough investigation of the SCTWP's current implementation and efficacy: e.g., by acquiring data through individual interviews, surveys, and/or focus group sessions with current and former program participants and admissions officers; by reviewing the SCTWP content of all USG Web sites and catalogues; and, by determining the awareness by Georgia's senior citizens of the availability of the SCTWP.

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Introduction

In addition to the state of Georgia, 46 other states ("A Senior Citizen Guide", n.d.) offer some form of tuition assistance to senior citizens who are taking courses or pursuing a degree at public institutions of higher education. The author suggests that, considering the aging of the population in the United States and the economic stresses that can result in delayed retirements, states that are offering tuition assistance to senior citizens may need to evaluate the effectiveness of their current programs. In this paper the author (who is a current participant in the program for which an evaluation is proposed) supports, with a literature review and the results of a pilot study, the need for a formal evaluation of Georgia's Senior Citizen Tuition Waiver Program (SCTWP). The author suggests that such an evaluation will provide useful input to Georgia's Board of Regents (BOR), to other Georgia SCTWP stakeholders, and to evaluators of similar programs in other states. Guidance is also provided for future research.

Background

Origin and Aims of the Program

Georgia's SCTWP was originally enacted into law in 1976. It was modified in 1983 (Article 8, Section 7, para. 1), and again in 1993 (O.C.G.A. Sec. 20-3-31.1). This law directs Georgia's BOR ". . . to establish a program whereby citizens of this state who are 62 years of age or older may attend units of the University System of Georgia without payment of fees. . . ." The term "fees" encompasses a waiver of tuition and other fees with the exception of ". . . supplies

and laboratory or shop fees” The law further specifies that the BOR “. . . shall adopt and promulgate rules and regulations . . . to carry out the provisions of this Code section” (Sec. 20-3-31.1(a)). While the aims of the program were not specified in the law, the legislative intent appears to have been to provide senior citizens with the ability to pursue higher education opportunities and to encourage them to do so.

Need for the Program

There is a trend for senior citizens to remain in the workforce past retirement age. From 2010-2013, the percentage of workers age 65 and older who continued to work increased by three percent—the only age group that showed an increase. The number of workers age 18-29 and 30-49 decreased by two percent and one percent respectively, while the number of workers age 50-64 showed no change (Moore, 2013). According to Moore (2013), “older Americans’ desire to replenish their retirement savings may partly explain the three-point increase in the percentage of seniors in the workforce, as more postpone retirement or former retirees re-enter it” (Moore, 2013, p. 1, para. 3). Another motive for staying in the workforce may be a desire to remain productive (Taylor, 2009). The long-term trend for workers to remain in the workforce past retirement age is indicated by U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics data which shows that from 1977-2007 the percentage of workers age 65 and older increased by 101%: 75% for men and 147% for women (U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008).

Since senior citizens are staying longer in the workforce or returning to the workforce after retirement, they may need to improve or develop their work skills. The SCTWP gives seniors, who often have limited budgets, the ability to return to college without experiencing a financial burden. The SCTWP, therefore, provides an important benefit to Georgia’s senior

citizens—a group that may benefit from the empowerment provided by higher education opportunities (Fetterman, 1997).

Stakeholders

The stakeholders of Georgia's SCTWP include, but are not limited to, senior citizens who are 62 years of age or older, students attending classes that include senior citizen students (intergenerational education), University System of Georgia (USG) administrators, the USG BOR, and present and future employers of senior citizens. The citizens of Georgia also have a stake in workers remaining in the workforce past retirement age. According to Kesselman (2004) the cost to society of early retirement include the reduction of tax revenues, increased public expenditures on health costs, and reduced economic growth. Moreover, research suggests that lifelong learning, which is encouraged and facilitated by the SCTWP, enables older workers to “. . . be just as productive and up-to-date as their younger counterparts” (Znidarsic, 2012, p. 917), and “. . . that lifelong learning has positive outcomes for communities and the economy” (Hyde & Phillipson, 2014, p. 4).

Literature Review

As previously indicated, prior research has shown that retaining workers in the workforce past the normal retirement age positively impacts society and the economy (Kesselman, 2004; Hyde & Phillipson, 2014), and that lifelong learning can keep older employees productive. Since space does not permit a review of the extensive research regarding the various benefits of adult education, this limited literature review is focused on only two of the many SCTWP related topics: workforce training and the benefits of intergenerational education.

Workforce Training

A growing phenomenon is for baby boomers to change careers (recareering) rather than retiring at the traditional age (Rice, 2015). The results of a study conducted by Valencia (2015) of adults who had earned a graduate degree (masters and doctorate degrees) after the age of 60 indicated a dedication to lifelong learning, a non-retirement mindset, and a desire to remain productive: employed, engaged in charitable work, or engaged in creative activities. A related finding by Boone (2015) indicated that older adults are remaining in the workforce longer and enrolling in college in order to improve their workplace skills. Boone's (2015) study was conducted with students enrolled in a program for older adults offered by community colleges in Texas. The results indicated that the program had not been updated to adequately meet the needs of older students, and that older adults require dedicated support services that minimize the educational barriers they may encounter: e.g., barriers in the admissions process and psychological barriers that impede program completion.

Evidence suggests that returning to school later in life has a positive effect on the economic prospects of older adults. Clayton (2009) studied the long-term outcomes of adult education. Adults in a depressed area of Scotland, who had participated in adult education five to six years previously, were interviewed regarding their motivation for returning to school and whether or not their expectations at the time of completing their education had subsequently been met. The results indicated that 72% had successful economic outcomes, 86% were currently employed, and 62% had returned to school for labor market reasons.

Intergenerational Education

Anecdotal evidence supports the idea that younger students benefit from sharing college classes with older adults. A former SCTWP participant indicated that inexperienced students

with whom he had class contact, told him that they valued his practical input and mentorship (Roger Wolff, personal communication, September 3, 2015). The older adults in Valencia's (2015) study also perceived that their work experience provided value to the students in their graduate cohorts.

Intergenerational education is defined by Saez as “an educational process in which people from diverse generations participate merely by dint of belonging to those generation” (as cited in Castro, Gonzalez, Aguayo, & Fernandez, 2014, p. 139). In a study conducted in a class composed of both old and young adults (34% at ages of 50-71 and 66% at ages of 18-30), Castro et al. (2014) found the following: (1) the two groups participated in the class about equally, (2) 95% indicated that they would take the course again, (3) 74.5% reported that the class had provided a meaningful experience, and (4) 76.6% of the students had satisfactory or effective intergenerational experiences.

While Castro et al. (2014) found that intergenerational education had positive outcomes for both the younger and older adults, their study was conducted in a gerontology specific class. Conversely, Stone (2008) conducted her experiment on intergenerational attitude change in general college classes with older (over 54 years of age) and younger (18-54 years of age) adults. While she did not find a significant change in intergenerational attitudes from the beginning to the end of the courses, she did note that there was no increase “. . . in negative attitudes towards those of other age groups” (Stone, 2008, p. 23). However, she also noted that the total sample size of 38 students was too small for statistical comparison—a major study limitation.

Pilot Study

In order to ascertain the current status of Georgia's SCTWP and thereby determine the potential need for a program evaluation, a pilot study was conducted. The pilot study included

obtaining Georgia BOR data regarding program participation, a search of the web sites and online catalogues of three USG institutions, an informal telephone interview with a USG institution admissions officer, a review of guidance provided in the BOR's Policy Manual, the conduct of an in-depth interview with a former SCTWP participant, and the collection of anecdotal data.

Program Participation

The data for Tables 1-3 was supplied by Angela Bell, USG BOR Associate Vice Chancellor for Research and Policy Analysis. The number of SCTWP participants for the 11 fiscal years (FY; 2006-2016) are presented in Table 1. In FY 2016, 1,050 students used the SCTWP at one of 29 USG institutions. SCTWP participants were enrolled at each of the four types of institutions that comprise Georgia's public higher education system: 360 (34.3%) at research institutions, 244 (23.2%) at comprehensive universities, 324 (30.9%) at state universities, and 122 (11.6%) at state colleges. The institutions with the highest SCTWP participation in FY 2016 were the University of Georgia, a research university, with 257 participants, Kennesaw State University, a comprehensive university, with 144 participants, and Armstrong State University, a state university, with 101 participants (USG BOR, Angela Bell, personal communication, March 2, 2017).

The FY 2016 enrollment of 1,050 SCTWP students (Table 1) represented a 12.3% increase over FY 2015, the fiscal year which, with a total of 935 students, had the lowest SCTWP participation since 2008. SCTWP participation for the past 11 FYs has varied from a low of 762 in 2006 to a high of 1,285 in 2014. From FY 2006-2014, state colleges had the highest percentage of SCTWP participants: from a high of 533 (49.9%) of 1,083 total program participants in 2010, to a low of 498 (38.8%) of 1,286 total program participants in 2014. For the

past two FYs, research institutions have had the largest number of program participants: 318 (34.0%) of 935 total participants in FY 2015, and 360 (34.3%) of 1,050 total participants in FY 2016 (USG BOR, Angela Bell, personal communication, March 2, 2017).

Table 1
Georgia SCTWP Participants
For the Fiscal Years 2006-2016

Type of Institution	FY 2006	FY 2007	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016
Research Univ.	171	175	209	227	251	280	319	340	313	318	360
Comprehensive Univ.	76	84	87	101	114	136	170	182	198	216	244
State Univ.	159	150	137	169	185	204	195	237	276	293	324
State Colleges	356	356	386	445	533	525	518	488	498	108	122
System Totals	762	765	819	942	1,083	1,145	1,202	1,247	1,285	935	1,050

Source: USG BOR (Angela Bell, personal communication, March 2, 2017)

As presented in Table 2, beginning with fiscal year 2008, the majority (78.4-89.0%) of SCTWP participants were enrolled as degree-seeking students. The data indicates that the number of degree-seeking students substantially increased after 2007. However, according to Angela Bell, “. . . the change in numbers likely does not reflect a change in [the] actual number of degree-seeking students but is an artifact of tighter data validation” (USG BOR, Angela Bell, personal communication, February 24, 2017).

Table 2
Degree Seeking Versus Non-Degree Seeking
Georgia SCTWP Participants
For the Fiscal Years 2006-2016

Fiscal Year	Degree Seeking No.	%	Non-Degree Seeking No.	%	Total No.
2006	381	50.0	381	50.0	762
2007	397	51.9	368	48.1	765
2008	716	87.4	103	12.6	819
2009	804	85.4	138	14.6	942
2010	942	87.0	141	13.0	1,083
2011	975	85.2	170	14.8	1,145
2012	986	82.0	216	18.0	1,202
2013	1,038	83.2	209	16.8	1,247
2014	1,083	84.3	202	15.7	1,285
2015	748	89.0	187	20.0	935
2016	823	78.4	227	21.6	1,050
Totals	8,893	79.2	2,342	20.8	11,235

Source: USG BOR (Angela Bell, personal communication, March 2, 2017)

During the period from FY 2008 (the earliest year for which data is available) through FY 2016, a total of 849 SCTWP participants had earned degrees (Table 3): 415 (48.9%) at comprehensive universities; 209 (24.6%) at research universities; 162 (19.1%) at state universities; and 63 (7.4%) at state colleges. In FY 2016, only three USG institutions conferred degrees in double digits: Georgia State University, a research institution, with 35 degrees; Kennesaw State University, a comprehensive university, with 29 degrees, and the University of North Georgia, a state university, with 13 degrees. On the other hand, 12 (41.4%) of the 29 USG

institutions in FY 2016 conferred 0-1 degrees (Angela Bell, personal communication, March 2, 2017).

Table 3
Number of Degrees Earned By
Georgia SCTWP Participants
Fiscal Years 2008-2016

Type of Institution	FY 2008	FY 2009	FY 2010	FY 2011	FY 2012	FY 2013	FY 2014	FY 2015	FY 2016	Totals	%
Research Univ.	5	19	20	18	23	15	24	30	55	209	24.6
Comprehensive Univ.	25	89	67	48	59	30	27	27	43	415	48.9
State Univ.	10	11	8	18	24	18	15	25	33	162	19.1
State Colleges	5	10	4	2	6	6	7	8	15	63	7.4
System Totals	45	129	99	86	112	69	73	90	146	849	100.0

Source: USG BOR (Angela Bell, personal communication, March 2, 2017)

Web sites and Catalogues

Internet searches of the web sites of three USG institutions (two comprehensive universities and one state university) identified differing levels of difficulty in finding information about the SCTWP. At the first comprehensive university, three key term searches (*senior citizens*, *senior citizen tuition waiver*, and *tuition waiver*) were unproductive. However, the term *senior citizen students* included a category of *special admissions for students age 62* and provided a link to the required waiver application. The same three searches of the web site at the second comprehensive were also unproductive. Again, the search term *senior citizen students* provided a link to the required waiver application but did not provide an explanation of the program. Under the category of *tuition, expenses, and financial aid*, the applicable SCTWP law is summarized and link to the Office of the Bursar is provided, which in turn provides a link to the required waiver application. In contrast, a search of the state university's web site using the term *senior citizen students* (the same search term that was applicable at the other two universities) led to incorrect/misleading information. In addition, a search using the term *tuition*

waiver produced a seven page list of waivers, none of which were readily identifiable as related to the SCTWP.

Admissions Guidance

In an informal telephone interview, a USG institution admissions officer (who asked to remain anonymous) indicated the following: (1) no query is made on the application form regarding potential SCTWP eligibility; (2) the program is not advertised or promoted; (3) applicants are not informed about the program unless they specifically ask about it; (4) a notice regarding their potential eligibility for the program is not sent to applicants age 62 and over; and, (5) prior SCTWP participants are not being surveyed regarding their experiences/satisfaction with the program.

USG BOR Guidance

As previously indicated, the laws that established the SCTWP requires “the Board of Regents [to] . . . adopt and promulgate rules and regulations . . . to carry out the provisions of this Code section” (Sec. 20-3-31.1(a)). In accordance with this section of the Georgia Constitution, the USG BOR Policy Manual (n.d.) does provide guidance on the enrollment of persons over aged 62 and over. Nevertheless, an email from Dr. S. B. Donoff, a BOR, a USG BOR research associate, indicated that “there is no standard guidance as to how to administer the program; it is left up to each individual institution” (Donoff, personal communication, October 12, 2015). A lack of BOR administrative guidance regarding the SCTWP was also indicated by the admissions officer who gave his anonymous input.

In-Depth Interview with a Former SCTWP Participant

An in-depth interview was conducted with Roger Wolff, a 68-year-old graduate of the Master of Science in Accounting degree program at Southern Polytechnic State University

(SPSU; now Kennesaw State University). In this interview, closed-ended questions were utilized to obtain demographic information and open-ended questions were used to obtain information regarding the interviewee's experiences with the SCTWP and with earning a degree as a senior citizen. Mr. Wolff gave the following response to an interview question regarding how he had learned about the SCTWP:

It was really quite difficult. . . . Though I had done a lot of research on the internet to find, and googled such things as free tuition, or senior tuition, or senior tuition rebate, or reduction, I hadn't found anything, and I continued to research and I contacted the University of Georgia System and finally was given a cite of the code, the legal code, that said hey you do get tuition waiver. . . . So I contacted several people, many of the people in the system didn't even know about it. So it was extremely difficult, but I found it.

(Personal communication, September 3, 2015)

Anecdotal Evidence

Anecdotal evidence regarding the lack of knowledge by senior citizens of the SCTW was provided by the author's personal experience with the program and by input from convenience samples of USG colleagues and senior citizens. Even though the author had been a USG professor for a number of years, he was unaware of the SCTWP until one of his graduate students told him about it. The author is currently a program participant. In addition, informal inquiries of a number of the author's USG colleagues and over 20 of his SCTWP eligible friends found a uniform lack of knowledge of the program's existence.

Evaluation Proposal

Need for the Evaluation

As of July 1, 2014, the United States Census Bureau (n.d.) estimated Georgia's population at 10,097,343. This number included 1,792,655 (17.8%) citizens who were 60 years of age or older and thus qualified, or were soon to be qualified, to participate in the SCTWP; and, 1,251,538 (12.4%) citizens who were 65 years of age or older. Some seniors, such as 84-year-old Robert Brennan who recently graduated *summa cum laude* from Georgia State University (Galbraith, Gillett, & Inman, 2014), pursue a degree as lifelong learners past the age of 79. However, if seniors age 65-79 are assumed to be the primary age group that will participate in the SCTWP, the total population of eligible seniors is still almost a million (980,120; 9.7%). Despite this large number of potential beneficiaries, the USG BOR reported for 2016 that 1,050 (.107%) senior citizens received tuition waivers (Table 1) and that despite more than 78% of SCTWP participants since 2008 being enrolled as degree-seeking students (Table 2), only 146 program participants earned a degree in 2016 (Table 3), which is 15.6% of the five-year average (FYs 2012-2016) of 936 degree-seeking SCTWP participants. The 849 total degrees conferred during FYs 2008-2016 (Table 3) is 10.5% of the total of 8,115 SWCTP participants who sought degrees during this nine year period (Table 2).

The low participation and graduation rates of SCTWP enrollees may be indicative of a low demand for the program or of a lack of motivation on the part of program participants. Alternately, as posited by the author, these results may be evidence that Georgia senior citizens, age 62 and older, lack knowledge of the lifelong learning benefit afforded by the SCTWP, and that program participants may need to be provided with "older adult dedicated services" aimed at improving retention and degree completion (Boone, 2015). Therefore, an evaluation is needed to

determine the overall effectiveness of the SCTWP: specifically whether or not the delivery of program information and services need to be improved in order to meet the hypothesized pent up demand for this program.

Purpose of the Evaluation

The purpose of the proposed evaluation will be to determine the ongoing implementation of the program including the status of the promotion of the program, the assistance being provided to seniors aimed at facilitating entry into the program, and the level of satisfaction of program participants. That is, are seniors being adequately informed and is feedback being received and utilized to improve program delivery and outcomes?

Evaluation Design and Orientation

The proposed evaluation will be primarily formative in that it will be designed to provide feedback aimed at improving the current program. As stated by Wholey (1996) “[a] . . . formative evaluation can be used to—and often is used—to assist in the more frequent policy and management decisions that result in incremental changes designed to improve existing policies and management decisions that result in incremental changes designed to improve existing programs” (Wholey, 1996, p. 147). In addition, this evaluation will be implementation oriented. However, it will include a situational component in that the aims of the evaluation include receiving participant feedback regarding problems and successes with the SCTWP.

Data Collection Procedures

Feedback from stakeholders will be obtained using a qualitative methodology. Data collection will be conducted using individual interviews with a number of former and/or current participants in Georgia’s SCTWP. These interviews will be aimed at eliciting the level of

program participant satisfaction and/or problems with the program including any difficulties encountered in obtaining program information.

In order to facilitate the asking of uniform questions, a standard script will be utilized. However, follow-up questions will allow for flexibility. Each interview will be recorded with two recording devices. The interviews will begin with the interviewer asking the interviewee for their informed consent. It is anticipated that each interview will last approximately 30 minutes.

Data Analysis Procedures

The interviews will be transcribed and each line of the text will be consecutively numbered. As described by Merriam (2009) the analysis process will include construction of categories, sorting of categories and data, naming of categories, and the development of codes for each category. The transcripts will then be individually coded. A frequency count of the coded categories will provide data regarding the importance given by the interviewees to the various categories. The frequency of the coded categories will inform the study results (Merriam, 2009).

Anticipated Uses of the Evaluation Results

It is hoped that the findings of this evaluation will provide the USG BOR and administrators at individual units of the USG with insights regarding ways the SCTWP can be improved. The findings should also provide the basis for suggestions aimed at assisting the BOR in fulfilling both the letter and the spirit of their legally stated charge of promulgating rules and regulations—that they are also fulfilling a posited implied duty of effectively administering the program. Most importantly, it is hoped that the results of this evaluation will provide the BOR with information that will enable them to better serve the educational needs of Georgia's growing population of senior citizens.

Relevance of the Evaluation to Education

As previously indicated, evidence seems to indicate that the SCTWP has low utilization: There were only 1,050 program participants in 2016 (Table 2) despite Georgia having approximately 980,120 eligible senior citizens (United States Census Bureau, n.d.)—about a tenth of one percent of Georgia’s SCTWP eligible population. Moreover, based on one measure of success (graduation rates), the program also seems to have a low level of student success. Participant satisfaction, another measure of program success, may be derived from the qualitatively obtained data.

Considering that many senior citizens have limited financial means (often fixed incomes), one might assume that free college level courses and degrees (which would facilitate job advancement and/or job acquisition) would be in great demand. Since this does not appear to be the case, it is posited that the SCTWP is not being adequately promoted and supported. Thus, the proposed evaluation may be highly relevant to the educational needs and opportunities of a large segment of Georgian’s population.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future researchers may want to consider using an empowerment evaluation approach which would take the perspective of senior citizens as a disenfranchised group that have needs for capacity and self-determination—empowerment which is afforded by higher education (Fetterman, 1997; Patton, 1996; Scriven, 1997). The empowerment evaluation approach seems consistent with the educational approach advocated by Solomon, Bowman and Palmer (2015). They “. . . posit that adult educators must move towards an emancipatory and transformative educational approach in interacting with older students” (Solomon et al., 2015, p. 4, para. 3).

Based on the preliminary information gained through the limited review of web sites and online catalogues, it appears that online available information about the program may be difficult to obtain. A detailed review of the SCTWP content of the web sites and catalogues of all USG institutions will provide a more complete understanding of how well SCTWP eligible students are being informed about the program and about the degree to which the program is promoted and supported.

The amount of SCTWP information and guidance provided by admissions personnel, and whether or not application forms include a query concerning potential SCTWP applicability could also be investigated. Such an investigation might include a survey of all USG institution admissions personnel and/or focus group sessions with admissions personnel from several USG institutions.

Preliminary evidence suggests that the BOR may not be providing USG guidance that insures the uniform application of the program. Future researchers could seek to determine whether or not the USG BOR has adequately promulgated rules and regulations that comply with the legislative intent of the 1976, 1983, and 1993 SCTWP laws: That is, is the BOR complying with both the letter and the spirit of their legislative charge; are such BOR established rules and rules and regulations being adequately and uniformly communicated to program administrators; and, is the program being adequately communicated to all potential stakeholders?

Valuable information regarding the SCTWP may also be obtained by focus group interviews. A selected group of prior program participants could be asked various opened ended questions during focus group sessions. Some applicable questions might include the following: What were your experiences with the program? What hurdles did you encounter in gaining this senior citizen benefit? What impact has the education gained using this program had on your

life? And, what experiences and interactions did you have with younger students with whom you shared classes?

Analysis of the pilot study data suggests that the SCTWP has relatively low participation. Is the supposed low level of participation due to a lack of awareness by senior citizens of the existence of this program—a lack of awareness of the availability of a tuition free education? Anecdotal evidence indicates that this may be the case. Focus group sessions with Georgia senior citizens age 62 and older might be utilized to gain information about program awareness. These focus group sessions could serve the secondary purpose of delivering information about the SCTWP. A survey of a sample of randomly selected Georgia seniors age 62 and older could also be used to gain information about program awareness and to ascertain whether or not the surveyed seniors are interested in taking college level courses or in earning a degree.

The BOR provided information regarding the number of senior citizens who have participated in the SCTWP. In the pilot study, information was not obtained regarding the number of SCTWP eligible seniors who are currently taking courses, or who have taken courses or earned degrees at USG institutions, without using the available tuition waiver. Considering the suggested difficulties involved in obtaining information about the program and the confusing information that may be available at some university web sites, it is possible that some number of eligible senior citizens may have needlessly paid tuition. If the BOR can provide data regarding the age of students enrolled for fiscal years 2006-2016, the number of eligible senior citizens who did not participate in the SCTWP can be estimated. A follow-up survey of these former students could then be used to determine the reason they did not utilize the program provided free tuition.

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