

Legislation in the South Carolina General Assembly might do away with the HOPE scholarship. Here is how the HOPE scholarship compares with its counterpart, the LIFE scholarship:

	Amount	Requirements
HOPE	Up to \$2,650	3.0 GPA or higher
LIFE	\$5,000	Must meet two of three requirements: 1. 3.0 GPA or higher 2. Top 20 percent of class 3. 1100 or better on SAT

Forum

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of one's class.

Huggins said education is better off than other state-funded programs that have suffered cuts. He said the struggle for education funding was a fistfight and that other programs, such as Medicaid and juvenile justice, have been murdered.

Pitts said this is a result of fiscally irresponsible spending done in the past, particularly the spending of non-recurring money on recurring expenses. Now some decisions must be made about what needs to be cut, which is difficult because "everything we're cutting is important stuff," Pitts said.

Many students at the forum, however, expressed the opinion that education should be at the top of the priority list. They also said an investment in education is an investment in the future of the state and that without proper educational funding, the state will be unable to attract bright students or keep students in state.

"If it weren't for scholarships and grants, I wouldn't be here at Columbia College," said Mintra Arthur, a first-year English and music student. "I can't afford more loans."

Alternative means of generating revenue, such as an increased cigarette or property tax, could help fund education; however, Huggins and Pitts agreed that this revenue would probably go toward Medicaid, not education.

Student questions also prompted the representatives to discuss the money spent on salaries for both former USC President John Palms and current President Andrew Sorensen, as well as the newly built Strom Thurmond Fitness and Wellness Center. Students expressed concern because, they said, that money could have gone toward scholarships. Huggins said the potential elimination of the scholarship is an issue that USC's Board of Trustees would have to deal with.

The proposed cut of the HOPE Scholarship will be debated in the House next week.

Jennifer Bolin, a first-year early-childhood-education student at Columbia College, said: "I would have to say scholarships are a way for me to be independent from my parents, and without them, I surely wouldn't be able to do that. I already have two loans, and to add another would just be very overwhelming."

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Ballroom

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volunteered myself."

The group meets every Sunday for two hours to learn new and review old dance steps. It averages 12 to 15 members, and many members hope the group will grow.

They have participated in many events around campus and beyond, such as a campus-ministries-sponsored swing night, joint dances with the United States Amateur Ballroom Dancers Association and competitions at other universities.

Abbie Ferrance, the group's vice president, said the group fluctuates from year to year.

"We seem to get a group together that's really wanting to dance at a higher level, they want to do competitions, they want to do exhibitions, they want to polish," said Ferrance, a first-year graduate student in earth- and environmental-science management. She said members will then graduate or leave and that the group starts over with beginners. "We're at one of those points right now — we've got a lot of new people," Ferrance said.

Because many members are new to dancing, the club is now mostly social dance. But some of the more advanced members still compete at local and national levels.

Andy Wilson, who has been in the club since the fall semester of 2001, and his partner Carrie Bacon, a third-year biology student, will be competing in the National Shag Dance Championships in Myrtle Beach this weekend. The pair practice for about an hour a day, but Wilson, a second-year computer-science student, said it's not enough.

"We're competing against people that have been dancing for about 11 years, so we're at a slight disadvantage," he said. "We're feeling confident that we'll do the



Andy Wilson, a third-year computer-science student, dances with Carrie Bacon, a third-year biology student, as instructor Tony Rodriguez directs a Gamecock Dance Sport club meeting. The pair will compete in the National Shag Dance Competition in Myrtle Beach this weekend.

PHOTO BY TRISHA SHADWELL/THE GAMECOCK

best that we'll have fun, but we don't expect much."

More than competing, though, most members agree that the club is about having fun.

Michelle Lueck, the club's president, said she's made some of her best friends in her four years with the club.

"The environment is really easygoing," said Lueck, a fourth year marine-science student. "It's really fun helping new people. When you see that they finally got the dance moves — the guys, when

they're actually leading, it makes it all worth it."

Ferrance agreed. "It's a lot of fun, that's the biggest thing," she said. "It's exercise, it's good team spirit, but that's totally beside the point. It's a lot of fun."

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