

Our Way of Saying, "Thanks"

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Financial aid is a serious subject among the more than 175,000 students in South Carolina who depend on this aid to attend college. The Lottery Tuition Assistance Program funds the majority of the aid given to technical students around the state. For this reason, we students felt the need to assemble and show our gratitude to the legislators that have made this tuition assistance program possible.

I am a Lottery Tuition Assistance aide recipient. I know that without this assistance going to school would be next to impossible for me. School loans are available, but the problems with loans are that at the end of my college experience I will have a large amount of loan money due back. The stress that accompanies paying back such a large balance and all the interest piled on top is not what any student looks forward to after college. The Lottery Tuition Assistance Program here at Midlands Technical College allows me to have a little more control over the amount of money that I will need to repay after college. The Lottery Tuition Assistance Program would not be possible without the help of our legislators. This is why I chose to be a part of the student rally at the State House on January 15th.

Students from countless Technical Colleges from all parts of South Carolina were in attendance of this event. Many students wore T-shirts that read, "1 of 175,000". The main objective of this event was to show the legislators just how much of an impact the Lottery Tuition Assistance Program has had on the students of South Carolina. Several hundred students assembled on the State House steps to show their gratitude and support of the program. Later, all were invited into the State House. Select students from each school were given the opportunity to sit in on the House of Representatives or Senate meetings.

Fortunately, I was able to enter the House of Representatives meeting along with the other students from other technical colleges in S.C. The experience is definitely one that I will never forget. The legislators went about their usual business. We witnessed the usual hustle and bustle of the meeting in the House of Representatives. As we waited for the meeting to begin we noticed a large screen on which were all the names of the Representatives. As the Representatives arrived they would each come to their desk and press their "attendance" button. This would change their name on the screen from orange to green, indicating that the individual was there and ready to begin. After the majority of the Representatives were in attendance, the meeting commenced.

The Speaker of the House began the meeting. After a few issues were taken care of, the Speaker of the House announced to the entire House of Representatives that students from technical schools all around S.C. were there to show their support of the Lottery Tuition Assistance Program. We all stood up and made our presence known. The legislators all turned around and acknowledged us. This concluded our appearance in the House of Representatives.

Although our moment in the spotlight was brief, I know that we successfully conveyed our message. What better way to say, “thank you”, to the people who make our college experiences possible than to come in person. I really think this rally was an excellent idea and a great opportunity for those who don’t get to see the State House often to come to the capital city. It was more than just a meeting of a bunch of students. This was a moment in history that will never be duplicated. This rally was the first of many. In the future I hope that the rallies will continue. These rallies have the potential to become an annual event. This would give many more students the chance to express their gratitude, and it would also keep the importance of education and financial aid fresh in the mind of the legislators that make it all possible.