



The third week of session was the week of Community College Students. Several hundred students from around the state convened in Tallahassee for two amazing events. Leaders from **FJCCSGA** paid a visit to Tallahassee in order to raise interest and awareness about the needs of community college students. Under the stellar leadership of Audrey Couprie, SGA State President (and SFeCC student), the students held the **2007 “Rally in Tally”** on Wednesday, March 21st, on the historic steps of the old Capitol.

Senators Wise and **Haridopolos**, and **Representatives Traviesa, Altman, and Thompson** addressed the students at the Friday morning rally. Several community college presidents also were there to support the students, including **Dr. Mojock** (LSCC,) **Dr. Johnson** (PHCC,) **Dr. Hall** (LCCC,) and **Dr. Holden** (PCC.)

The students were impressive with their one-on-one lobbying abilities and their passion for the issues. Awareness of the need for financial aid to support our students was enhanced by the rally. Being able to put a “face with a cause” is always important in persuading legislators. **Representative Joe Pickens** was still talking about the Rally on Friday during his remarks at the **Council of Presidents** business meeting.

In addition to the **FJCCSGA** activities, the **Phi Theta Kappa “All Florida Academic Team”** awards luncheon was also held on Thursday, March 22. This event honors community college students with excellent academic records and community involvement. The students not only received awards, but were recruited as transfer students by the universities. All awardees were offered scholarships to the universities, some offering full tuition coverage.

To hear more about the FJCCSGA “Rally in Tally” at the Florida Public Radio *Capitol Reports* archives, click on the link below:

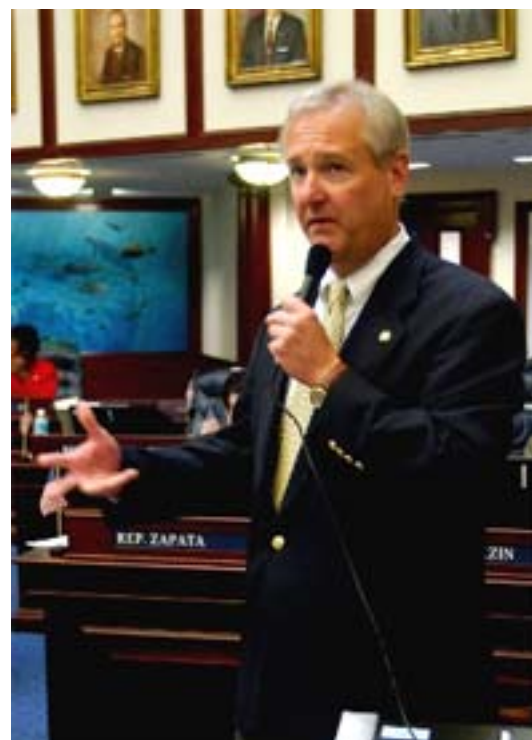
[March 22, 2007 Edition](#)

Budget

The budget made surprising advances in week 3, with both chambers releasing either a revised or a new budget. The **House** revised allocation for community colleges included \$48 million in new operating funds, or 4.4% over the 2006 -2007 appropriation.

In contrast, the **Senate’s** proposed total allocation is higher than the **House** proposal. However, operating funds were approximately \$1.7 million lower (4.2%) than the House. The **Senate** recommended full funding of the matching program (versus the House’s 50%). By doing so, the **Senate’s** overall increase in state funds recommended is about 5.2%.

There are significant differences in what each side has proposed to fund and it is too early to predict the final outcome. The only issue that seems to be agreed to is the tuition increase. Both sides have now recommended a 5% increase. The **Governor** recommended no increase. Some speculate that the **Governor** may try to convince the Legislature to reduce the increase, but the prevailing thought is that the 5% will probably be the end result.



Rep. Joe Pickens, R-Palatka

Other significant differences between the two budgets are:

- The **House** proposes to fund **Educator Preparation Institutes** at \$4.2 million; the Senate does not include any funding for these institutes.
- The **House** proposes to fund only half of the **Phil Benjamin matching program**; the **Senate** proposes to fully fund the program at \$48.6 million.
- The **Senate** proposes to increase **SUCCEED** grants by \$13 million; the House level funds the program.
- Neither chamber proposed funding for the new **SPIRIT** grant program.

A detailed analysis of the community college budget can be found on the FACC web site at the following address:

<http://www.facc.org/legisact.htm>

In week three, there was not a great deal of activity concerning other proposed legislation that would be of interest to FACC members, mostly due to the high level of activity related to the budget. A few bills that may interest members are:

Textbook Sales Tax Exemption

Several bills have been filed to address the SGA generated sales tax exemption for college textbooks. [SB 254](#) (Wise) and [SB 2492](#) (Haridopolos), as well as [HB 289](#) (Flores) all support the exemption. In week two, **Senator Wise's** bill [SB 254](#), passed out of the **Senate Higher Education Committee**.

On March 20th, [HB 289](#) (Flores) was heard in the **Postsecondary Education Committee** and several **FJCCSGA** representatives testified in favor of the bill. [HB 289](#) supports the sales tax exemption, but also attempts to address the larger issue of the cost of textbooks. The bill requires a study to be completed regarding textbook prices, and to identify policies and practices that might help reduce the costs. The bill also restricts postsecondary employees from benefiting from textbook selection. [HB 289](#) will be heard in the **Schools and Learning Council** in the **House** on March 27th.



Rep. Anitere Flores, R-Miami

Unfortunately, the fiscal impact of these bills is so high in terms of lost revenue, passage is still thought to be difficult. I know that FACC members will be pleased with the attention given to the rising costs of textbooks. There is a good chance that *something* will pass that addresses the issue.

To hear more about the Textbook Sales Tax Exemption at the Florida Public Radio *Capitol Reports* archives, click on the link below:

[March 22, 2007 Edition](#)

Articulation

Articulation between sectors, from high school to college, and among postsecondary sectors, appears to be of interest, and several bills offer suggestions to enhance the process. [HB 965](#) (Kendrick) passed its first committee of reference, the **House Committee on 21st Century Competitiveness**, on March 20th. An amendment made the bill identical to [SB 1232](#) (Gaetz), which was heard on the floor of the **Senate** and passed on March 22nd. The bills focus on career programs in high schools, establishing the requirement that school districts develop strategic plans to meet local workforce needs. All school districts are required to establish career academies. The **State Board of Education** is then to establish a process to review new secondary career courses, and such courses are to lead to “industry certification.” The certification process is to be defined by the **Agency for Workforce Innovation**.

Other filed bills include [SB 1190](#) (Lynn), which attempts to improve articulation between public and non-public institutions, and reduce excess hours as a result. This avenue is a much friendlier mechanism for dealing with the “excess hours” issue than the bill that addresses that issue alone.

Several other bills dealing with articulation, mostly between postsecondary institutions have been filed, but not heard.



Rep. Aaron Beach, R-Fernandina Beach

Cosmetology

[HB 117](#) (Carroll) and [SB 920](#) (Wise) amends the licensure requirements related to cosmetology, so that licensure is available for specialties, including hair technician, esthetician and nail technician. Colleges with cosmetology programs have supported this legislation which will allow students to be trained in specific, shorter programs and enter the workforce quickly. [SB 920](#) passed out of the **Regulated Industries Committee** on March 20th, while [HB 117](#) passed its first committee in week two and now waits to be heard by the **Jobs and Entrepreneurship Council**. As expected, the bill was amended to address issues related to body wrapping.

Financial Aid

Financial aid bills have not received action since the first week of session, but are expected to start moving in week three. [SB 918](#) (Wise) will be heard on March 27th in the **Senate Higher Education Committee**. The bill amends the **College Work Experience Program** to allow Adult Vocational (PSAV) students and **Educator Preparation Institute (EPI)** participants to be included in the program and allows PSAV students to participate in the **Florida Student Access Grants (FSAG)**. [HB 343](#) (Bean) is the companion. It passed out of the **Education Innovation and Career Preparation Committee** on March 16th and is expected to be placed on the agenda in the **Schools & Learning Council**.

[HB 1443](#) (Thompson) and [SB 2698](#) (Lawson) also addresses **FSAG**, addressing the issue of the expected family contribution for community college students, and also creates a new “working student” financial aid program, to address those students who can only qualify for student loans.

Neither [HB 1443](#) nor [SB 2698](#) saw action in week two.

The interest in financial aid for community college students has escalated due to these bills. College presidents and lobbyists were especially pleased to hear **Rep. Joe Pickens**, chair of the **Schools and Learning Council** in the **House**, express his desire to find funds to serve our students, especially working students.

Excess Hours

Senator Lee Constantine sponsored the “excess hours” bill in 2005 when it passed the Legislature. FACC members were pleased that Governor Bush vetoed the bill. Unfortunately, the Senator has re-filed the legislation, [SB 2862](#). The bill would impose a 50% tuition tax for students who take more than 120% of credit hours required by their declared degree.

The **House** companion bill, [HB 1507](#) (Altman) is scheduled to be heard March 27, in the **Postsecondary Education Committee** of the House. Steps are being taken to persuade **Representative Altman** to remove community colleges from the bill.

BILLS SEEING NO ACTION

Property Tax

[HB 7001](#) (Attkisson) offers \$5.5 Billion property tax relief for Florida homeowners and small business owners. [HB 7001](#) was approved by the **Policy & Budget Council** March 16th.

Retirement/FRS Benefits

[SB 0008](#) (Lawson) and [HB 0087](#) (Allen) have both been filed to increase the health insurance subsidy to employees under the **Florida Retirement System**. Both bills have a long list of co-sponsors. However, given that there appears to be no staff analysis on either bill and the \$1 billion decrease in revenues, we do not expect that either bill will be heard in a committee of reference.



Rep. Dan Gelber, D-Miami Beach

Three bills have been filed to increase the retirement multiplier of a regular class employee from 1.6 percent of the employee’s average final compensation. [HB 657](#) (Gelber) and [SB 2210](#) (Villalobos) proposes to raise the multiplier to 3.0 percent. [SB 568](#) (Jones) proposes to increase it to 1.8 percent.

As with the other retirement bills, revenue shortfalls make it unlikely that these bills will become law.

Baccalaureate

[SB 244](#) and [SB 1570](#) have both been filed by **Senator Lynn** to address the process for community colleges to obtain approval to offer baccalaureate degrees. A house bill was filed, although subsequently withdrawn. Lobbyists expect a house bill connected to the “100 ideas” to include similar language to Lynn’s. The College System wants to ensure that all publicly funded community colleges continue to report to the **State Board of Education**, including those which offer baccalaureate degrees, and that the approval process is simple, yet accountable.

[SB 244](#) and [SB 1570](#) have not had a hearing yet.

Half Cent Sales Tax for Miami Dade County

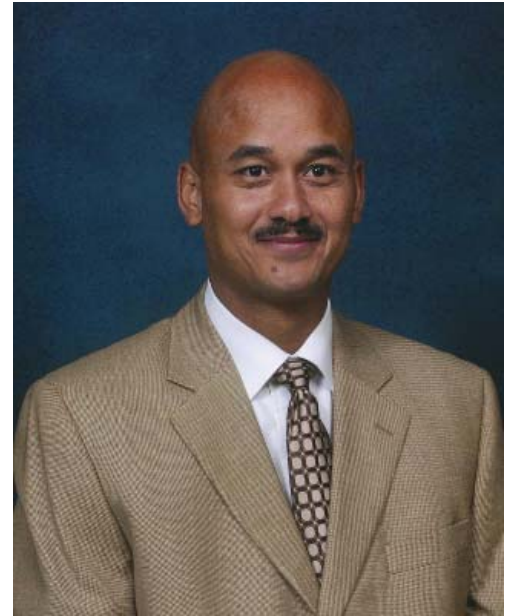
HB 185 (Garcia) and **SB 552** (Margolis) allow the Miami Dade County Commission to place a local referendum for Miami Dade College. If passed locally, a half penny sales tax increase for five years will support scholarships, program enhancements, student retention efforts, and capital outlay. The HB passed out of **Urban and Local Affairs** on March 14th and the SB passed out of **Higher Education** on March 14th.

Transportation Fee

HB 207 (Chestnut) and **SB 684** (Oelrich) would authorize a transportation user fee for community college students. **Santa Fe Community College** has a unique agreement for public transportation that would be well served by this legislation. Since the fee is not limited to SFeCC, other institutions could replicate the initiative. **SB 684** passed out of the **Senate Higher Education Committee** on February 21st. The **House** bill passed out of its first committee, **Postsecondary Education**, on Tuesday, March 13.

Fulltime Faculty Ratios

HB 1279 (Fitzgerald) and **SB 2652** (Geller) propose to require that 75% of college faculty be full time. Neither bill has been placed on a committee agenda.



Rep. Charles "Chuck" Chestnut, D-Gainesville

Other Resources

The Division of Community Colleges has made available on their website a video copy of **Chancellor Armstrong's** recent interview on **Face to Face** that aired on the **Florida Channel** on February 28th:

<http://www.fldoe.org/CC/meetings/2007/02-28.asp>

Also available online is a video copy of a presentation on the Pappas report to the **Senate Higher Education Appropriations Committee** on February 8th:

<http://www.fldoe.org/CC/meetings/>

Florida Public Radio Capitol Update archives

http://wwwt.fsu.edu/~wfsu_fm/listen/index.htm

We are working on obtaining permission to post more videos of presentations made to **House** and **Senate** committees on the FACC web site. Stay tuned.