



Week TWO

Week Two of the 2008 Legislative Session was dominated by two very important issues, the budget and governance. In addition, committee hearings brought to the front the issues of remediation reform and dual enrollment.

BUDGET CUTS

As expected, the 2007-08 budget cuts ([HB 7009](#)) were passed and sent to the Governor for action. HB 7009 passed on March 12, as expected and was immediately sent to the Governor for action. On March 14, the Governor signed HB 7009 into law. No changes were made, and the **Community College System allocation was cut \$20 million, with \$4.7 million coming from lottery funds, \$300,000 from Performance Based Budgeting, and \$14.5 million from the Community College Program Fund (CCPF).** To view the budget, including the individual college reductions:

(See also 2007- 08 Budget cuts at www.facc.org/cuts.)

Unfortunately, the budget news went from bad to worse in Week Two. On the day before the Legislature passed the 2007-08 budget cuts, the Revenue Estimating Conference met and delivered more bad news. The State's economists met on March 11, and reported that Florida will collect \$1 Billion less in taxes than anticipated this year. While that could result in a third round of budget cuts, the FACC team believes the State will use reserves to cover the difference between the cuts approved on March 12, and the \$1 billion expected shortfall. Next year's revenue is estimated to be \$24.6 billion, not the \$29.2 billion predicted last year. It is important to note that this is the fourth consecutive time since last March that the estimated revenue report has declined. The downturn is expected to continue for quite some time, with reports now coming out that suggest a reversal may not occur until 2010-11. As may be obvious, the downturn is impacted by decreases in consumer spending, slowdowns in construction and lower housing prices, all resulting in lower tax revenues on investments, property transactions and corporate income.

Needless to say, additional cuts in the 2008-09 budget on top of those in the 2007-08 year, especially with huge growth in enrollment, could cause significant problems for the Community College System.

Governance

CS SJR 2308 is the Senate's version of a governance bill. This is a Joint Resolution, which is the framework for putting a constitutional amendment on the November ballot for approval by the citizens of Florida. As mentioned in Week One's report, [SJR 2308](#) includes the changes outlined by **Senator Pruitt** in his opening remarks— **an elected Commissioner with a cabinet level State Board of Education (instead of the current Board appointed by the Governor), and university trustees all appointed by the Governor (instead of half appointed by the State Board.)**



Sen. Pruitt

SJR 2308 was heard by the Senate Higher Education Appropriations Committee on March 13. The Committee amended the bill to be consistent with the House version, **HB 7025**, which includes a State Board of Colleges, for the 2 and 4 year colleges. While the bills do not provide details of the new Board, it will “oversee and coordinate” the system. The Board would be made up of six members, appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate, plus the Commissioner of Education. The Senate Committee did make one change that is not in the House Bill, to require the elected Commissioner of Education to possess a baccalaureate or higher degree. **SJR 2308** appears to be “fast tracked” as it was already placed on the Senate Calendar, and will most likely pass the Senate in Week Three.

The On March 7, the **House Schools and Learning Council**, chaired by **Representative Joe Pickens**, approved their proposed committee bill; which will also be a Joint Resolution. On March 11, the Committee Bill was filed and has now been renamed to **HB 7025**. It is expected that this bill to be heard on the House floor in Week Three.



Rep. Pickens

REMEDICATION AND DUAL ENROLLMENT

The House Committee on Postsecondary Education, held a workshop on the issues of **remediation** and **dual enrollment**. The link to the **Committee packet** is provided below, and includes a report on both issues, and draft legislation. The **remediation** issue focuses on the high percentage of recent high school graduates who require remediation when enrolling in college. The Committee heard a presentation a few weeks ago by Seminole Community College, on a pilot project with their school district, which has significantly improved the success of students in math. Draft legislation would replicate that project.

The **Dual Enrollment** issue is one area that the community college legislative team has focused on during committee weeks. The report of this Committee provides suggestions to equate dual enrollment with AP courses, for university admissions, to improve reporting of different early college programs on the diploma, and encourages every high school to offer multiple early college instructional modes.

SB 2418 (Lynn) also addresses the **dual enrollment** issues.

Other Issues of interest to FACC

Financial Aid

A bill that amends tuition assistance programs for private and proprietary postsecondary schools, **SB 2210**, is a **Senate Higher Education Committee** Bill. Committee Bills are usually considered to be priorities of the leadership. This bill amends the Florida Resident Access Grant Program (FRAG) and the Access to Better Learning and Education Grant Program (ABLE) to make these programs *financial aid* programs rather than tuition assistance. The bill would require student recipients to maintain a certain GPA and number of hours and to complete financial aid applications. While no

House Companion is noted yet, it appears that this bill may be a priority bill to pass. **SB 2210** passed out of the Senate Higher Education committee March 12, and will be heard in the Senate Commerce Committee next.

Bright Futures

While significant changes to the Bright Futures program are not expected this year due in large part to the commitment of **Senate President Pruitt** to keep the program in its current format, there is consensus that change is on the horizon. As such, bills filed this year are being closely monitored, as they may be a sign of the changes to come. As of March 10, nine bills have been filed that would amend the Bright Futures statutes. **SB 1320 (Ring)** and its companion bill, **HB 813 (Atkisson)** would provide the biggest changes by limiting the amounts of the standard awards while allowing higher awards for students majoring in high demand areas. In Week Two, neither bill was heard, and some consider them “dead” already. However, *Perception* will track these bills.

Textbook Affordability

HB 603, (Flores) and SB 2350, (Atwater) are identical bills seeking to find methods to contain the high cost of textbooks. The bills prohibit college or university employees from receiving anything of value in exchange for textbook selection, with exceptions for sample copies, royalties, honoraria, compensation for reviewing, and training. The bill also requires posting of required books at least 30 days before the first day of class. The State Board of Education and Board of Governors are to adopt policies, procedures and guidelines to help minimize the cost of textbooks. The House bill was heard on March 14.

FACC will continue to make the case that the textbook publishers are more responsible for rising cost of textbooks than are college bookstores and faculty. FACC will also continue to support the faculty’s Academic Freedom to select textbooks.

Firefighting

HB 1041 (Garcia) and SB 2388 (Saunders) not only amend the statutes relating the work of College fire inspectors, they create a new ‘apprenticeship’ program that can offered in high schools. Colleges are concerned that the apprenticeship concept will have significant liability issues related to students under the age of 18.

Excess Hours

The Excess Hours bill has been filed again as anticipated. **Senator Constantine** filed **SB 2614** after working with the community colleges to develop a plan that is less punitive, while still addressing his concerns. As of Week Two, no House companion bill has been filed, but Senator Constantine has been successful in passing this bill without a companion before. FACC expects this bill to see action soon.

Bond Finance

Representative Heller has filed **HB 235** and **Senator Oelrich** has filed **SB 696**, both of which will provide clarity to the Bond Finance laws for community colleges. Both bills are slated for hearings in Week Three.



Rep. Heller

Cosmetology

HB 415 (Carroll) and **SB 996** (Wise) amend the licensure requirements related to cosmetology. Colleges with cosmetology programs have supported this legislation which will allow students to be trained in specific, shorter programs and enter the workforce quickly.

Radiology

HB 1233 (Garcia) and **SB 2642** (Peaden) would amend the statutes regulating schools of radiology. These bills, opposed by the national certification association, would allow a school accredited by an alternative association to offer training.



Sen. Wise