



Week Four of the 2008 Florida Legislative Session provided more information on the possible state of the Community College System's budget, and surprised many in the community college legislative team when word came that the cuts might not be as bad as predicted. In addition, Week Four provided more information regarding the major issues of focus on community colleges. More details were provided on the proposals to address governance as well as how a new State College System could develop.

BUDGET ISSUES

As hoped, because enrollment at the community colleges has increased rapidly as the economy declined and universities limit freshman admissions, both the House and the Senate looked favorably on the college system. The **House released its initial budget** that showed:

- Increase in tuition at 6%
- 2.2% reduction to total operating funds (**CCPF, Lottery, PBB**), but net increase in funding of \$17 million, or 1%, including the tuition increase
- All non-recurring money would be eliminated – including **SUCCEED/ Critical Jobs and Phil Benjamin Challenge grants**
- May be a very small amount of **facilities matching** funding in other areas of the budget
- **2+2 Partnership** funding would be eliminated
- 2.5% reduction to **financial aid**



Senate budget numbers showed:

- Increase in tuition at 6%
- A cut of approximately 5%, balanced by additional **lottery funds and the tuition increase**, resulting in a final cut of 1.6%.
- Shifting the **technology fee** to be on par with the SUS—which would enable a 5% fee rather than a set dollar amount at \$1.80 per credit hour
- Uncertainty about funding for **new baccalaureate programs**
- All non-recurring money eliminated – including **SUCCEED/Critical Jobs, Phil Benjamin Challenge grants**

In the Senate, committee hearings on the budget will begin on April 2, taking action on the bills released on March 28. The initial bill of interest to the colleges and FACC is **SB 7082**, which is the **Higher Education Appropriations Bill**. A combined appropriations bill is expected on April 3 and subsequently ready action by the full Senate.

In the House, the proposed budget bills were to be released on March 30. These bills will be discussed in the **House Policy and Budget Council** on April 3, with the final appropriations bill to be filed by April 4, and final action on April 9.

Governance

As discussed previously, [CS SJR 2308](#) is the Senate's version of a **governance bill**. It creates a constitutional amendment to re-establish an elected Commissioner of Education 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). The bill also includes a **State Board of Colleges** for the 2 and 4 year colleges that have no graduate degrees. The **Senate Bill passed the Full Senate on March 27**. The [House Bill, 7025](#), was not discussed in Week Four, but it is still expected to be heard soon. Sometimes when legislation of this magnitude moves quickly, the urgency diminishes mid-session. It is possible that the House will simply take up the Senate bill and pass it, sending it to the Governor. If that is the plan, it can occur at any time from now until the end of session. The proposals are virtually identical, so passage is still expected.

New Florida College System

Also discussed in Week Three, **new "College System" bills are moving in both houses**. [CS/SB 1716](#) is **scheduled to be heard again on April 2**. This bill creates a new type of college in addition to the existing associate and certificate granting community colleges and community colleges that have also been approved for limited baccalaureate degrees. The new "state colleges" would offer baccalaureate degrees that address regional and statewide workforce needs versus the local needs that are used to document the need for the limited baccalaureate degrees that some colleges offer now. This bill also creates a Task Force made up of 8 community college presidents and the Commissioner of Education to develop a process for approving these state colleges and a funding model.

SB 1716 also provides for a "pilot program" where **Indian River College, St. Petersburg College and Okaloosa Walton College would become State Colleges**. The Bill also allows for community colleges to change their name to "college" if offering baccalaureate degrees.

The House will release its version of a State College bill on April 1, in the **Schools and Learning Council**. Language that will be discussed is in the draft bill, [SLC 3](#). The language is very similar to the Senate language.

Other issues of interest to FACC members

Distance Learning and Technology Fees

Changes to the fees for Distance Learning and Technology have been under discussion, though they are not part of legislation yet. Action is expected in Week Five; however, as the Senate takes up two bills in the **Higher Education Appropriations Committee**. Under discussion:

- Separate technology and distance learning fees
- Allowing community colleges to charge same technology fee as universities at 5%



Sen. Oelrich

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 to include:

- Authorizes a Board to use any authorized available revenue to repay a debt for any loan, lease-purchase or other contract for a term of up to 5 years
- Authorizes a Board of Trustees to pledge capital improvement and parking fees to secure repayment of a debt for a term up to 7 years
- Maintains requirement that the Division of Bond Finance issue bonds up to 20 years
- Provides that revenue bonds may not be secured or paid from tuition, financial aid fees, CCPF, or other operating revenue
- Requires the Community College Board to authorize all debt incurred by its DSO

Both bills were heard in Week Four with the **House Bill passing the House Schools and Learning Council on March 25. The Senate Bill passed the full Senate on March 27.**

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 include:

- Prohibits 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.
- Requires posting of required books at least 30 days before the first day of class.
- Requires State Board of Education and Board of Governors to adopt policies, procedures and guidelines to help minimize the cost of textbooks.



Rep. Flores

The **HB 603 passed the Policy and Budget Council on March 25. SB 2350 passed on March 26**, the Higher Education Committee of the Senate.

Firefighting and Inspections

HB 1041 (Garcia) and SB 2388 (Saunders) amends the statutes relating to the work of college fire inspectors, which is causing concern to many colleges. FACC and the colleges are working to develop amendments to address those concerns. In addition, the bill creates a new ‘apprenticeship’ program that can be offered in high schools. Colleges are concerned that the apprenticeship concept will have significant liability issues related to students under the age of 18. **The House bill had no action in Week 4. The Senate Bill will be heard for the first time in the Banking and Insurance Committee on April 1.**

Foundation

HB 883 (Skidmore) and SB 1576 (Storms) would create the Public Employees’ Charitable Campaign for local public employers other than state or federal employees. It authorizes a public employer to conduct a charitable campaign as the sole fundraising drive conducted during work hours. Concern has been expressed by college foundations that the bill could

inadvertently disallow Foundation campaigns. Sponsors have been contacted to exempt CC foundations from bills. Neither bill has been heard to date.

Excess Hours

The Excess Hours bill language was amended into **SB 2614 (Constantine) into SB 320 (Constantine), which dealt with university fees.** The bill will be heard next in the **Higher Education Appropriations Committee.** **SB 2614** was subsequently withdrawn since **SB 320** will be the vehicle. Included in the excess hours part of **SB 2614**:

- Freshmen who exceed 150% of number of credit hours required to obtain degree to pay increase of 50% per credit hour above normal in-state tuition
- Applies to 1st time college students in Fall 2008 and thereafter
- Community college boards may require counseling and advising for students prior to completion of 24 credits
- Students with in excess of 120% of required hours will be required to meet with advisor to develop educational plan
- DOE to develop a performance based funding methodology to measure and reward policy goals
 - Increase percentage of students graduating with few than 120% of needed hours
 - Decrease number of unqualified withdrawals
 - Decrease number of students with more than 120 of the hours needed

No House bill has dealt with this issue to date. No action on SB 320 occurred during Week Four.

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. **SB 996 passed the Higher Education Committee on March 26.** **HB 415** has been waiting to be heard in the **House Policy and Budget Council.**



Sen. Wise

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. Neither bill has been heard by of committee yet.