



FLORIDA ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES PERCEPTION A WEEKLY LEGISLATIVE UPDATE FOR FACC MEMBERS

Please refer to the legislative issue of *Current* or to the FACC website at www.facc.org for an explanation of issues discussed in this report and for other legislative information.

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As the 2008 Legislative Session moves beyond the halfway point, it is becoming more clear which issues are likely to pass and which are not. Week FIVE provided additional clarity regarding issues that seem destined to pass, including governance, a new State College System, textbook costs, and fees. On the other hand, bills that would impact foundations and occupational programs, including changes to radiography, have not been heard and seem to have limited chances to pass.

In Week Six, several bills dealing with immigration issues will be discussed in a workshop of the House State Affairs Committee on April 8. The community college legislative team members are watching closely as the issues develop since several bills address employment issues related to immigrants which could impact the colleges.

Budget Issues

A summary of the two house budgets was included in Perception Week Four. No significant changes occurred in the amendatory processes. Consolidated appropriations bills are now available: [HB5001](#) in the House and [SB 2900](#) in the Senate. Final action in both houses is planned for Week Six, and conference committees should start meeting by the weekend. Hopefully, final budget activity will be completed shortly thereafter.

Governance

As discussed previously, governance bills have moved along rapidly in both houses. The bills establish:

- an elected Commissioner of Education
- a Cabinet level State Board of Education
- revised university trustees and Board of Governors
- a **State Board of Colleges** for the 2 and 4 year colleges that have no graduate degrees.

The Senate Bill, [SB 2308](#), passed the Full Senate on March 27 and on April 2 was sent on to the House for action. The [House Bill, 7025](#), has not been discussed since April 4, but is still expected to pass.



New Florida College System

Also discussed in prior issues of PERCEPTION, new “State College System” bills are moving in both houses. [CS/CS/SB 1716](#) passed out of the Senate Higher Education Appropriations Committee on April 2, and it is now on the Senate Calendar awaiting floor action. The House Bill was originally a committee proposal know as SLC 3. On April 4, the House filed the proposal as [HB 7071](#). The bills are very similar, and as reported before:

- 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.

- Creates a Task Force to develop a process for approving these state colleges and a funding model with some difference between the two bills as to the makeup of the Task Force.
- Provides for a “pilot program” where **designated colleges would become State Colleges** with some difference as to which colleges are named to the pilot.
- Allows for community colleges to change their name to “college” if offering baccalaureate degrees.

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 and are now available for review.

The **Distance Learning issue** is being discussed via [CS/SB 1762](#), and it was discussed and passed by the Senate Higher Education Appropriations Committee on April 2. The bill:

- Establishes the Florida Distance Learning Consortium.
- Establishes the Florida Higher Education Distance Learning Catalog
- Authorizes community colleges and state universities to assess a per credit hour distance learning course fee

The **House Bill, known as SLC 4**, is still in committee bill form and is on the **agenda for the Schools and Learning Council for April 8**.

More fee changes are in a separate bill and allow the community colleges to charge a *technology fee* that is similar to that charged by the universities. There are limits to the fee and a requirement for a *student referendum* in support before an institution can begin collecting the fee. **SB 1774 passed out of the Senate Higher Education Appropriations Committee on April 2, and it was placed on the Senate Special Order Calendar for April 9**. A House bill is not available yet.

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



Rep. Heller

The Senate Bill passed the full Senate on the March 27 and it is in House Messages awaiting further action.

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.

HB 603 was placed on the House Calendar on March 25. SB 2350 passed on April 8 and the Higher Education Appropriations Committee of the Senate and is ready to placed on the Senate Calendar. With identical bills on the Calendars, chances of passage are very likely.

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 recently, but the Senate Bill passed 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.**



Sen. Storms

Excess Hours

The Excess Hours bill language was amended into **SB 2614 into SB 320, 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 Five, but if heard, the Senate Higher Education Appropriations Committee would be next in line. Usually not having a companion bill in the other House would make it nearly impossible to pass a bill at this point in the Session.

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 and will be heard **next in the General Government Appropriations Committee**. **HB 415** has been waiting to be heard in the **House Policy and Budget Council**.

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.



Rep. Garcia