



## **For Immediate Release**

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### **Association of Florida Colleges Council of Presidents Recognizes its Legislator of the Year**

*Rep. Mel Ponder is awarded for his dedicated commitment and support for furthering the mission of the Florida College System*

TALLAHASSEE, FL – The Florida College System Council of Presidents (COP) and the Association of Florida Colleges (AFC) have named Representative Mel Ponder (R, 4) as its 2018 Legislator of the Year. The AFC/COP recognizes an exemplary legislator annually when his/her contributions during the legislative session significantly enhance and support the Florida College System (FCS).

Representative Ponder demonstrated a commitment to Florida's colleges through his role in sponsoring HB 75 which now allows FCS institutions to waive certain postsecondary fees not covered by the Department of Defense, for active duty members of U.S. Armed Forces using military tuition assistance. The COP has been promoting this legislation for several years. This new law will further open access to college for the men and women of the military to attend Florida's top-rated colleges in the nation.

"We are grateful for Representative Ponder's innovative vision and his dedication to championing legislation that further strengthens a college system that serves nearly 800,000 students across the state," said Dr. Tom LoBasso, President of Daytona State College and 2018 Chair of the Council of Presidents. "Legislators like Representative Ponder who value the importance of Florida's colleges are part of the reason the Florida College System is consistently recognized as the best in the nation."

Michael Brawer, CEO of the Association of Florida Colleges added, "Rep. Ponder saw a problem that needed a simple fix, and made it a priority. We are grateful for his focus and ushering through a clean bill for the Governor to sign."

"I am honored to have been selected as the Legislator of the Year by the Florida College System Council of Presidents," said Representative Mel Ponder. "As an advocate and staunch supporter of the Florida College System, it is my privilege to work on behalf of institutions that are dedicated to the improvement, expansion, and the addition of academic and career programming designed to meet both student interest and workforce demand. The college system plays a vital role in our communities and I am proud to support their vision and mission for Florida!"

The Legislator of the Year will be recognized at the Council of Presidents Annual Meeting in Tampa on June 11<sup>th</sup>.

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### **About the Florida College System**

The Association of Florida Colleges represents all employees, presidents, and trustees associated within the Florida College System. It has become the most inclusive higher education organization serving any college system in the nation. Today, all 28 of the state's colleges support the work of the Association through institutional dues as do nearly 8,500 regular and retired members through the sharing of their talents, time and energy.