

A Succinct History of the Florida Community College System

Written by: Dr. James L. Wattenbarger, Distinguished Service Professor Emeritus University of Florida; Dr. Harry T. Albertson, Chief Executive Officer, Florida Association of Community Colleges (1992-2004); Dr. Willis Holcombe, Former DFC Chancellor and President Emeritus, Broward Community College; Mr. Andrew Treadwell, Administrative Director of Legislative and Executive Communications, Indian River State College; Michael Brawer, Chief Executive Officer, Association of Florida Colleges

The community college is uniquely American. Its roots can be traced to William Rainey Harper, the president of the University of Chicago, and a few others who believed that the substantial academic resources of the nation's universities could be better utilized if they were not burdened with the tasks of teaching the basic learning and thinking skills taught during the freshman and sophomore years. Instead, these pioneers suggested that there should be a different kind of institution which could bridge the gap between high school and higher education. From these thoughts, the nation's first publicly supported junior college, Joliet Junior College in Joliet, Illinois, was born in the year 1901.

However, even before the birth of Joliet Junior College, there existed several private two-year colleges. Perhaps in response to financial pressures, or perhaps as a means to accommodate the flood of new high school graduates, many of these private two-year colleges were originally small four-year institutions that discontinued the junior- and senior-year programs.

Similarly, the birth of Florida's Community College System can be traced to the private sector. In 1927, St. Petersburg Junior College was founded as a private, two-year college on Florida's central, Gulf Coast. Shortly thereafter, several other private two-year colleges including Jacksonville Junior College, Orlando Junior College, Casements Junior College, and Edison Junior College were organized. All of these early private junior college efforts in Florida failed except for St. Petersburg Junior College.

Florida's first public junior college, Palm Beach Junior College, was established in 1933 by approval of the local Board of Public Instruction. In 1939, the legislature adopted a law which provided that a county or group of counties with a population of 50,000 or more could petition the State Board of Education for the establishment of public junior college. From 1933 until 1947, Palm Beach Junior College remained the only public two-year college in the state. However, in 1947, Dr. Edgar Morphet and Dr. R.L. Johns, who were consultants to the Florida Citizens Committee on Education, included a section on "junior colleges" in their report to the Florida Legislature. Mr. Howell Watkins, the principal of Palm Beach High School and dean of Palm Beach Junior College, was charged with the junior college section of the report, and he assigned the task to a graduate student from the University of Florida, James Wattenbarger, who was also a graduate of Palm Beach Junior College.

Among other things, the Florida Citizens Committee Report on Education to the 1947 Florida Legislature included Wattenbarger's recommendation that junior colleges should become an operational component of the local school systems provided that the County Boards of Public Instruction received approval from the State Board of Education to operate a junior college. This recommendation and many of the other provisions in the Florida Citizens Committee Report on Education were included in the Minimum Foundation Program Law supported by Senator LeRoy Collins and passed by the 1947 Legislature.

Upon passage of the Minimum Foundation Program in 1947, the Pinellas County Board of Public Instruction requested the State Board of Education's approval to make St. Petersburg Junior College a public junior college by incorporating the two-year college into its school system. Likewise, in 1948 the Jackson County School Board joined by the School Boards of Calhoun, Holmes, and Washington Counties received permission to take control of Chipola Junior College which had operated as a private junior college in Marianna for only one year. That same year, the Escambia County School Board (joined later by the Santa Rosa County School Board) requested and received authority to establish a new public junior college, Pensacola Junior College. Thus, by the end of 1948, Florida's emerging community college system included four publicly funded institutions — Palm Beach Junior College, St. Petersburg Junior College, Chipola Junior College, and Pensacola Junior College. These four junior colleges became the focus for Florida's new approach to postsecondary education.

In 1948, Dr. John I. Leonard, who served as both the superintendent of public instruction in Palm Beach County and as president of Palm Beach Junior College, met with Dr. Leon N. Henderson from the University of Florida's College of Education to plan a series of conferences for junior college administrators. The conferences were held in January, May, July, and October 1949 and included the presidents as well as faculty members from the state's four public junior colleges. At the October meeting, the participants formally organized as the Florida Association of Public Junior Colleges (FAPJC), the forerunner of the Florida Association of Community Colleges (FACC).

During the next few years, an increased interest in the expansion of junior colleges developed rapidly in Florida. In 1949, Washington Junior College was authorized as the state's fifth public junior college in connection with Booker T. Washington High School in Pensacola. The Junior College Steering Committee of the State Advisory Council on Education presented a study by Dr. C.C. Colvert and Dr. James W. Reynolds from the University of Texas in 1951 to the State Board of Education. The study recommended the establishment of new junior colleges, a position strongly supported by former Senator and now Governor LeRoy Collins, without specifying where or how many. In 1953, the legislature authorized the Board of Control (the operating/ coordinating board for the state's universities) to establish the Council for the Study of Higher Education, and in the same year the University of Florida Press published its first education-oriented book, *A State Plan for Public Junior Colleges*, by Dr. James L. Wattenbarger, now a faculty member at the University of Florida. In 1955, the Board of Control issued its initial report to the legislature which urged the establishment of a separate study for junior colleges in Florida.

As a result of the Board of Control's report, and at the urging of the members of FAPJC, the 1955 Legislature created the Community College Council to "formulate a long-range plan for the establishment and coordination of community colleges." During the same legislative session, the members of FAPJC also supported a bill that appropriated \$4.2 million for junior college construction funds during the 1955-57 biennium. The funds were appropriated by the legislature to Pensacola Junior College (\$1.25 million), Chipola Junior College (\$.6 million), Palm Beach Junior College (\$1.05 million), and St. Petersburg Junior College (\$1.3 million).

The Community College Council was organized in the fall of 1955, and Dr. James Wattenbarger was granted a leave of absence from the University of Florida to direct the study of the council. After nearly two years the Council issued its report to the 1957 Legislature. The report, titled *The Community Junior College in Florida's Future*, recommended a state plan that would provide twenty-eight junior colleges located within commuting distance of 99 percent of the state's population. The 1957 Legislature accepted the report as the master plan for Florida's community/junior colleges and at the same time approved six new community college districts to begin

implementing the master plan. The six colleges approved by the 1957 Legislature were Gulf Coast Community College, Central Florida Community College, Daytona Beach Community College, Manatee Junior College, North Florida Junior College, and St. Johns River Community College. The 1957 Legislature also approved statutory revisions that permitted the junior colleges to begin a separate existence apart from the K-12 programs, and the Division of Community Colleges was established as a separate division within the Florida Department of Education. Dr. James Wattenbarger was appointed as the Division Director.

During the next ten years, sixteen of the eighteen new public community/junior colleges visualized in the ten-year master plan were opened. They were Brevard Community College (1960), Broward Community College (1960), Indian River Community College (1960), Miami-Dade Community College (1960), Edison Community College (1962), Lake City Community College (1962), Lake-Sumter Junior College (1962), Okaloosa-Walton Community College (1964), Polk Community College (1965), Florida Keys Community College (1966), Florida Community College at Jacksonville (1966), Santa Fe Community College (1966), Seminole Community College (1966), South Florida Community College (1966), Valencia Community College (1967), and Tallahassee Community College (1967). In 1968, Hillsborough Community College was authorized by the legislature, and in 1972, twelve years after the Community College Council issued its report to the legislature, Pasco-Hernando Community College was opened to complete the twenty-eight community/junior college system in Florida.

In the mid 1960's, Florida faced a period of desegregation in all of education. As part of the state's desegregation plan, the state decided to merge the twelve black community colleges (which had been established in association with local formerly black high schools by their local school boards) with the newly created community/junior colleges in those twelve districts. This limited each district to one community college; but, permitted multiple centers to be created in order to serve the whole population of the district. As such, Booker T. Washington Junior College was merged with Pensacola Junior College, Carver Junior College was merged with Brevard Community College, Collier-Blocker Junior College was merged with St. Johns River Community College, Gibbs Junior College was merged with St. Petersburg Junior College, Hampton Junior College was merged with Central Florida Community College, Jackson College was merged with Chipola Junior College, Johnson College was merged with Lake-Sumter Junior College, Lincoln College was merged with Indian River Community College, Roosevelt College was merged with Palm Beach Community College, Rosenwald College was merged with Gulf Coast Community College, Suwannee River College was merged with North Florida Community College, and Volusia Community College was merged with Daytona Beach Community College.

Although the 1957 legislature approved the Master Plan for the orderly development of Florida's Community College System, as well as several statutory revisions which created the Division of Community Colleges as a separate entity within the Department of Education apart from the K-12 system, the colleges remained under the jurisdiction of local school boards. Many community college advocates questioned the efficacy of this arrangement, and in 1961-62 Dr. Samuel R. Neel, Jr., FAPJC president and president of Manatee Community College, reported on several FAPJC sponsored meetings designed to prepare the way for making community/junior colleges independent legal entities functioning under their own boards. Finally, during the 1967-68 fiscal year, the legislature approved measures which released the colleges from the jurisdiction of local boards of public instruction and established locally autonomous district boards of trustees to govern and operate each of the state's public community/junior colleges.

Dr. James Wattenbarger announced his resignation as Director of the Community/Junior College Division of the Florida Department of Education during the 1966-67 fiscal year. Dr. Lee G. Henderson, Wattenbarger's assistant, was named the new Director of the Department of Education's Division of Community Colleges. During

the 1969-70 academic year, FAPJC pushed for legislation that would make the terms “community” and “junior” college synonymous in state law. That same year, the FAPJC assembly of delegates, in an effort to represent more adequately the comprehensive nature of the state’s community/junior colleges, voted at their November Annual Convention to change the name of the Association from the Florida Association of Public Junior Colleges (FAPJC) to the Florida Association of Community Colleges (FACC). Similarly, in 1970 the Board of Trustees of Lake-Sumter Junior College changed the college’s name to Lake-Sumter Community College, and over the next few years several other colleges that used “junior” instead of “community” followed suit.

By 1971-72, the Florida Association of Community Colleges has grown to almost two-thousand members and continued to retain the institutional membership of all 28 community colleges in the state. As such, the Board of Directors hired the Association’s first full-time staff assistant, John B. “Jack” Armstrong, who became the Association’s Executive Director and perhaps the main lobbyist for Florida’s community colleges. The Association was provided offices at Tallahassee Community College. Mr. Armstrong continued to serve as the Association’s Executive Director until April 1, 1976, when he resigned to become a candidate for the State’s 2nd Congressional District. The Board of Directors appointed Dr. Jim Burnette, the Executive Vice President for Edison Community College, Interim Executive Director, and he served in that capacity until December of 1976 while the Board conducted a national search for a new Executive Director. At the 1976 Convention, the Board selected a former FACC President and Valencia Community College administrator as its second Executive Director, Dr. James Kellerman. Dr. Kellerman took office in January of 1977.

Through 1979, the Community College Council continued to function as the state-wide advisory council for the community college system. In 1979, however, the legislature created the Community College Coordinating Board in an effort to answer questions regarding the management and coordination of higher education in Florida. The Community College Coordinating Board functioned through 1983 when the legislature replaced the Coordinating Board with the State Board of Community Colleges. The State Board of Community Colleges was charged with “statewide leadership in overseeing and coordinating the individually governed public community colleges” while ensuring that “there shall continue to be maximum local autonomy in the governance and operation of individual community colleges.”

At the same time the Community College Coordinating Board was replaced by the State Board of Community Colleges, Dr. Henderson announced his retirement as director of the Division of Community Colleges. Mr. John Blue, Chairman of the Manatee Community College District Board of Trustees and a member of the Community College Coordinating Board, was appointed interim Director of the Division of Community Colleges while a national search was conducted to find a replacement for Dr. Henderson. In 1984, after an exhaustive search, the State Board of Community Colleges selected a former state senator and representative, Clark Maxwell, Jr., as the Board’s first Executive Director and the state’s first Executive Director of the Community College System.

In late 1981, Dr. James Kellerman announced his plans to resign as FACC’s Executive Director by January 1, 1982 to assume the role of Executive Director of the California Community and Junior College Association. By December of 1981, however, the FACC Board had already selected Dr. Kellerman’s replacement, Mr. L. Frank Casey, a former FACC President and an administrator from Daytona Beach Community College.

Under Mr. Casey’s dynamic leadership the Association grew to just over 4,000 members and embarked on an ambitious plan to build a home for FACC in Tallahassee. In 1991-92, land was purchased across the street from the Education Building. The address was 816 South Martin Luther King Boulevard. By 1993 the plans for the building were completed, and a massive fund raising drive was undertaken by Pasco-Hernando Community College

President, Dr. Milton O. Jones, to raise money to pay off the land and begin construction on the 4,000 square foot, two-story, red-brick building. In December of 1993, Mr. Casey resigned as FACC's Executive Director and the Board of Directors named Dr. William "Bill" Odom as the Interim Executive Director. Dr. Odom served in that capacity until April 1, 1994 when Dr. Harry T. Albertson, an Administrator from Pasco-Hernando Community College, was selected as the Association's fourth Executive Director. Dr. Albertson oversaw the completion of the construction of the new facilities and arranged financing to pay the remaining cost of construction in the amount of almost \$400,000 with the Miami-Dade Community College Foundation. The Association moved into its new home in July and August of 1994, and with the tremendous support of the Association's membership and the College presidents, FACC paid the fifteen-year mortgage off in five years.

Since 1984, the Florida Community College System has continued to evolve as the state's most effective and efficient educational delivery system. The mission of Florida's Community College System has also continued to evolve far beyond the vision of providing the first two years (two-plus-two) of the baccalaureate degree. The system provides over 750 associate in arts and associate in science degrees, and almost 500 certificate programs of varying lengths. It is a national model for the articulation agreement with the state's universities which provides that all community college associate in arts degree graduates can enter a state university at the junior level. In the early 1990's the legislature added economic development as a primary mission of the colleges, and the substantial role of the colleges in workforce development has been addressed by both the 1996 and the 1997 Legislatures. In 1996, the colleges became the first state agency in Florida to embrace performance-based budgeting. During 1996, the state's twenty-eight colleges served nearly one million students in credit and non-credit programs. Based on 1994-95 graduation data, Florida's community college system lead the nation in terms of the number of associate degree awards, seven of the nation's top ten liberal arts and sciences associate degree producers were Florida community colleges, and Florida's community colleges also ranked among the nation's best in terms of degrees awarded to minority and non-traditional students.

In December of 1997, Mr. Clark Maxwell retired as the Executive Director of the Florida Community College System. He was replaced on an interim basis by the Assistant Executive Director of the Florida Community College System, Mr. David Armstrong. Mr. Armstrong served in this capacity while a national search was conducted for a new Executive Director of the system. In May of 1998 the State Board of Community Colleges interviewed three finalists for the position who were recommended by a Search Committee. At the conclusion of the interviews, the Board decided that none of the finalists were as qualified as Mr. Armstrong to lead the system, and even though Mr. Armstrong was not in the applicant pool, the Board unanimously offered the position to Mr. Armstrong who accepted the offer.

In November of 1998, the voters of Florida approved Constitutional revisions reducing the number of elected members of the Florida Cabinet from seven to four effective January of 2003. Specifically, the revisions eliminated the Secretary of State and the Commissioner of Education from the Cabinet and combined the positions of Comptroller and Treasurer. The cabinet also served as the State Board of Education; however the revision approved by the voters eliminated the role of the Cabinet as the State Board of Education and instead established a new board to oversee education which includes seven members appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Senate.

Despite arguments by both the Community College System and the State University System that the Constitutional revision was aimed at a reorganization of the K-12 system, the 2000 Legislature adopted HB 2263 (the Florida Education Governance Reorganization Act of 2000) which reorganized the governance structure for all educational delivery systems in the State of Florida. The bill delineated that there will be a seven member

“super-board” called the Florida Board of Education” (FBE) appointed by the Governor to oversee all of education in Florida; a Commissioner of Education (Secretary of Education until January of 2003) appointed by the FBE; and, Chancellors for the K-12 System, the University System, and the Community College System appointed by the Commissioner. Pending the recommendations of a “Transition Task Force,” the bill also eliminated the State Board of Community Colleges and the Board of Regents in January of 2003, and very subtly merged the Division of Workforce Development under the Division of Community Colleges, renaming the Division of Community Colleges the Division of Community Colleges and Career Preparation.

The eleven member Transition Task Force, appointed in 2000, was charged with the duty “to identify issues, conduct research, develop necessary procedural and substantive framework, and make recommendations to the legislature for an orderly 3-year phase-in for a seamless education continuum and a single or coordinated kindergarten through graduate school budget in accordance with the policies and guiding principles of s. 229.002, so that the Florida Board of Education may immediately begin its work on January 7, 2003.” The task force was chaired by an Orlando businessman, Mr. Phil Handy, and its recommendations to the legislature were to be completed by March 1st, 2001.

As the work of the Transition Task Force commenced, arguments that the 1998 Constitutional Amendment was aimed at “free public education” and not the state’s system of higher education were pronounced. Nevertheless, most of the work of the Transition Task Force resulted in recommendations to the legislature that restructured the governance of higher education in Florida with few recommendations for the state’s system of “free public education.” Most of the recommendations of the Transition Task Force were incorporated into SB 1162 which was considered by the 2001 Legislature.

Though SB 1162 became the vehicle for the recommendations of the Transition Task Force, it also became a vehicle for some other initiatives which were driven by the proclivities of some powerful legislators, in particular Sen. Donald Sullivan, who Chaired the Senate Education Appropriations Committee in 2001. As a result of a push by the state university system to increase enrollment in undergraduate programs, the state university system began arguing in the late 1990’s that Florida ranked somewhere between 47th and 49th in the number of baccalaureate degrees produced per 100,000 residents. As a result of this argument, access to the baccalaureate degree became an issue for the legislature and a variety of different approaches to address access to the baccalaureate degree were proposed from increasing enrollment funding for undergraduate programs in the university system, to creating a middle-tier of colleges, to authorizing some community colleges to offer “site-determined, limited access, baccalaureate degrees.” Sen. Sullivan favored the later approach and amended onto SB 1162 language from a separate bill he had sponsored which set-up a process for community colleges to seek authority and funding for “site-determined baccalaureate degrees,” and also specifically authorized in statute the changing of the name of St. Petersburg Junior College to St. Petersburg College with specific authority to offer baccalaureate degrees in nursing, education, and applied science.

SB 1162 became a very controversial bill during the waning hours of the 2001 Legislative Session. In fact, it was the last Bill passed by the House during the 2001 Legislative Session partly because a logistical error had been made which did not allow the House to get to its own Education Governance Reorganization Bill. The version of SB 1162 that passed included Sen. Sullivan’s language related to the process for community colleges to seek authority to offer baccalaureate degrees and also included the language renaming St. Petersburg Junior College as St. Petersburg College with authority to offer baccalaureate degrees. However, the bill made it clear that St. Petersburg College and any other community college that received permission to offer the baccalaureate degree would still be considered a community college for funding purposes except for the baccalaureate degree programs. Importantly, SB 1162 also abolished the State Board of Community Colleges and the Board of Regents

effective July 1, 2001, created local boards of trustees for each of the state's universities similar to the community college system model, separated the Division of Community Colleges from the Division of Workforce Development as approved in the previous legislative session, and centralized all of education under one "super board" called the Florida Board of Education with the charge to create a student-centered, seamless, K-20 system of education in Florida. The bill also established the position of "Chancellor" for the state's community college system who would be appointed by the Florida Board of Education but report to the Secretary of Education, who would become the Commissioner of Education in January of 2003. The bill provided that the seven member Florida Board of Education and the Secretary (Commissioner) would be appointed by the Governor with ratification by the Senate. The appointment of the Secretary (Commissioner) by the Governor was a change from previous language passed in 2000 that provided the Florida Board of Education would appoint the Secretary.

For the period 2001 through 2003, the Governor appointed the long-time Chair of the Senate's Appropriations Committee, the Honorable Jim Horne, to serve as the Secretary of the Florida Board of Education. He also appointed a well-known Orlando businessman, Mr. Phil Handy, to serve as the Chair of the Florida Board of Education. In 2003, when the term of the elected Commissioner of Education (the Honorable Charlie Crist) expired, Jim Horne was appointed by Governor Bush as the appointed Commissioner of Education as provided in SB 1162. During 2001 and 2002, three additional Community Colleges petitioned CEPRI (the Council for Education Policy Research and Improvement that replaced PEPC under SB 1162) and the Florida Board of Education for permission to offer the baccalaureate degree. In addition to an appropriation for St. Petersburg College in the amount of \$1 million, an appropriation of \$5 million dollars had been provided in the 2001 Appropriations Act for use by community colleges which were granted authority to offer the baccalaureate degree. The colleges seeking this authority were Edison Community College, Chipola Junior College, and Miami-Dade Community College. The original recommendation from CEPRI in early 2002, denied the requests for all three institutions; however, the Florida Board of Education granted permission to Chipola Junior College and Miami-Dade Community College to offer Baccalaureate Degrees in the field of education and provided start-up dollars for these programs from the \$6 million appropriation included in the 2001 Budget. While not approving the request from Edison Community College to offer the baccalaureate degree, the Florida Board of Education approved a partnership between Edison Community College and Florida Gulf Coast University for baccalaureate degrees to be offered by Florida Gulf Coast University on the Edison Community College campus in Ft. Myers.

Perhaps even more significant than the passage of SB 1162 in 2011, was the passage of CS/SB 20-E in a special session of the legislature (2002-E) held in May of 2002. CS/SB 20-E eliminated all of the old statutes regarding education scattered throughout the volumes of Florida Statutes and created fourteen new chapters, FS 1000 through FS 1013 to address the laws governing a seamless K-20 system in Florida. The new statutes made many changes in the governance of higher education in Florida IN Fact, in the eyes of many , it increased local control for the state's community colleges and universities while delegating authority to the State Board of Education to set "policy and guiding principles for the Florida K-20 education system." The State Board of Community Colleges met for the last time at Indian River Community College in May of 2001. Mr. Armstrong was appointed Acting Chancellor of the Florida Community College System from July 1, 2001 until August of 2002. In August of 2002, after an exhaustive national search, Mr. Armstrong was named the first Chancellor of the Florida Community College System by the Florida Board of Education.

With the dissolution of the State Board of Community Colleges as required by SB 1162, and the establishment of the Department of Education, including the old Division of Community Colleges, as an agency of the Governor's office, it became apparent to the state's 28 community college presidents who sit as the Council of Community College Presidents, that changes needed to be made in the way the Council operated. It was

especially apparent that the 28 presidents would need to be much more proactive in terms of the advocacy effort and the community college system's legislative agenda. As such, the Council of Presidents began a national search in January of 2001 for a Director of Governmental Relations to serve at the will of the Council under the auspices of the Florida Association of Community Colleges. In July of 2001, the Council had still not reached consensus on an individual to serve as Director of Governmental Relations, nor could they reach consensus on the duties and responsibilities of the position. As such, the Council of Presidents and the FACC Board of Directors entered into a formal Memorandum of Understanding on July 27, 2001 for the Association and the Association's Executive Director, Dr. Harry Albertson, to assume many of the duties that would have been assigned to the Director of Governmental Relations, and for the Association to provide the staff support for the Council of Presidents. In September of 2001, the Council of Presidents revised their by-laws to reflect this relationship between the Council and the FACC, and also revised their by-laws to establish a Policy and Advocacy Committee under the umbrella of FACC which would include all community college presidents and some members of the FACC Board of Directors. At the Annual Meeting of the FACC in 2001, the Assembly of Delegates approved changes to the FACC By-laws also establishing the Policy and Advocacy Committee as a permanent standing committee of the Association.

Upset with the dissolution of the Board of Regents to govern the State University System, former Florida Governor and Florida's senior United States Senator, the Honorable Bob Graham, collaborated with a former Chair of the Board of Regents, Mr. E. T. York, and others to pass a Constitutional Amendment by voter referendum to re-establish a governing body for the state's university system in the form of a Board of Governors. The Constitutional Amendment was approved overwhelmingly by the voters of Florida in November of 2002 and left in doubt the authority of the boards of trustees at each of the state's universities. The passage of the amendment also left in doubt many of the provisions of SB 1162 passed by the 2000 Legislature and designed to create a seamless, student oriented, K-20 system of education in Florida under one super board, the Florida Board of Education. For Florida's community colleges, the passage of the amendment creating a separate board to govern the state's universities created other concerns with regard to the board's power to affect agreements and other rules and regulations which are the backbone of the nation's best two-plus-two system.

In March of 2003, Okaloosa-Walton Community College used the procedures outlined in SB 1162 to petition CEPRI for authority to offer a baccalaureate degree in nursing and in Project and Acquisition Management. At the March meeting CEPRI recommended a joint baccalaureate degree in nursing with the University of West Florida and tabled the request for a Baccalaureate Degree in Project and Acquisition Management. However, at the April meeting of CEPRI, the proposal for O-WCC to offer the Baccalaureate Degree in Project and Acquisition Management was approved. Subsequently, the State Board of Education approved both the joint project with the University of West Florida for the Baccalaureate Degree in Nursing and the limited access Baccalaureate Degree in Project and Acquisition Management to be offered by O-WCC. The programs were funded by the 2004 Legislature creating the fourth community college in the state with the authority to offer limited access baccalaureate degrees.

During the 2004 Legislative Session two other important events affecting community colleges also occurred. The community colleges sought legislation which would simplify the process for community colleges to gain authority to offer limited access baccalaureate degrees, and provide a consistent funding model for community college baccalaureate degrees (SB 2388 and HB 303). The bills also included language which changed the names of Okaloosa-Walton Community College to Okaloosa-Walton College, Chipola Junior College to Chipola College, and Miami-Dade Community College to Miami Dade College as required by SACS accreditation standards for institutions offering baccalaureate degree. The Senate Bill cleared the Senate unanimously; however, the companion house bill died on the calendar. Fortunately, an implementing bill (HB 1867) was passed by both

houses which included language changing the names of the three colleges to meet SACS accreditation standards. The bill also changed the name of Edison Community College to Edison College even though Edison Community College had not received authority to offer baccalaureate degrees.

It was also during the 2004 Legislative Session that SB 2986 cleared both houses of the legislature and was signed by the Governor. The bill was among the first in the country to provide accredited postsecondary institutions (including community colleges) to seek approval from the Department of Education to create Educator Preparation Institutes for the purpose of providing any or all of the following: professional development instruction to assist teachers in improving classroom instruction and in meeting certification or re-certification requirements; instruction to assist potential and existing substitute teachers in performing their duties; instruction to assist paraprofessionals in meeting education and training requirements; and, instruction for baccalaureate degree holders to become certified teachers in order to increase routes to the classroom for mid-career professionals who hold a baccalaureate degree and college graduates who were not education majors. The bill also requires that each approved Educator Preparation Institute that offers "alternative certification programs" for holders of baccalaureate degrees must "enable program participants to meet the educator certification requirements required in statutes, and that each of the programs authorized for this alternative certification must be "competency-based," provide field experience, and a certification ombudsman to facilitate the process and procedures required for eventual certification. Succinctly, the passage of the bill allowed community colleges for the first time in the state to provide programs of instruction for baccalaureate degree holders that lead to certification as a classroom teacher.

On August 17, 2004, The State Board of Education appointed Chief of Staff to Commissioner Horne, John Winn, to head Florida's K-20 Department of Education. Commissioner Jim Horne, who announced his resignation in early August 2004, stepped down August 31, 2004. Winn assumed the role of Commissioner effective September 1, 2004. In June of 2004, Dr. Harry T. Albertson, now the Chief Executive Officer of the Florida Association of Community Colleges, suffered a heart attack and earlier in the year had been diagnosed with what doctors believed to be Parkinson's disease. At the same time, Dr. Albertson and the Board of Directors of FACC had begun negotiations for a larger facility to house the growing needs of the Association and the Council of Presidents. Several properties were identified in downtown Tallahassee, across the street from the Capitol complex and Dr. Albertson began negotiations for the five-story (four-stories and a basement), 18,000 square foot Florida Medical Association Building and found a potential buyer for the Association's current facilities. However, in December of 2004, Dr. Albertson informed the Board that his doctor's thought it best if he retired and he submitted his resignation after twelve years of service to the Association. On February 28, 2005, Dr. Albertson left his duties as CEO inconspicuously and without any fanfare as he had requested, though he agreed to serve as consultant to the Council of Presidents for at least 18 months. The Board of Directors named Mr. Michael Comins, the newly hired Chief Operating Officer for the Association, as interim CEO effective March 1, 2005. Mr. Comins completed the work Dr. Albertson had started on the purchase of the Florida Medical Association Building and the sale of the Association's current facilities. Mr. Comins' final negotiations resulted in the sale of the current facilities, located at 816 South Martin Luther King Boulevard, to Okaloosa-Walton College Foundation for \$650,000. Mr. Comins also closed the deal on the Florida Medical Association building, located at 113 East College Avenue, on May 16, 2005 for a purchase price of \$2.1million, significantly less than the \$3.2 million the Florida Medical Association had invested in the building and property.

Florida's Community College System has become a national and international model for the orderly development of a community college system. Locally controlled by individual district boards of trustees, Florida's "Great 28" community colleges continue to make a notable contribution in assuring that all of the citizens of

Florida have access to higher education opportunities. As the community college transitions through the implementation of The Florida Education Governance Reorganization Act of 2000, HB 2263, SB 1162, and the most recent education governance bill, SB 20E passed by the 2002 Legislature and referred to as the School Code Rewrite Bill, the ability of Florida's twenty-eight community colleges to meet the higher education needs of local communities and the students within those communities will undoubtedly be impacted. Likewise, the mission and purpose of Florida's Community Colleges will be scrutinized by the new Florida Board of Education and, as already is evident by the Board's approval for baccalaureate degrees at four of the state's twenty-eight colleges, the result of this scrutiny will shape the future history of the Florida Community College System. Through all of the history of changes in the organization and governance of the Florida Community College System, there has remained only one constant, the Florida Association of Community Colleges (FACC). With a membership of nearly 8,000 community college faculty and staff and all 28 of the state's community colleges, it is the largest statebased community college organization in the country and one of the largest associations in the State of Florida.

In 2005-06, Florida's economy, fueled by strong real estate and construction industries, boomed. Employment was high and enrollment in Florida's community colleges flattened out, and in many colleges declined slightly. This counter-cyclical relationship between Florida's employment and enrollment in the system had been understood and anticipated by key decision-makers and the state legislature. State financial support for the system remained strong and, on a per student basis, reached record highs in the 2005 and 2006 legislative sessions. Programmatically, the colleges continued to expand. New technology-based associate degrees and certificates were introduced to keep up with the impact of the digital age on virtually every area of work and life. Florida's community colleges also responded to the state's need for teachers, particularly in the critical shortage areas of math, science, reading, and exceptional education in two new ways: 1) Educator Preparation Institutes (EPI's), established at our colleges, were providing teacher certification training for hundreds of people who already held bachelor's degrees and wanted to become K-12 teachers in Florida. 2) By the fall of 2007, the State Board of Education had approved six colleges for baccalaureate education degrees in high demand teaching fields.

Charlie Crist was elected Governor of Florida in November 2006, and 2007 became a year of change in the Department of Education. These changes began with Commissioner of Education John Wynn leaving his position in early March and Jeanine Blomberg becoming the interim Commissioner while the State Board of Education conducted a national search for a permanent successor. In July, David Armstrong left his position as Chancellor of the Community College System to accept the presidency of Broward Community College. Dr. Judith Bilsky served as acting chancellor until Dr. Willis Holcombe, former President of Broward Community College was appointed interim chancellor on Oct. 1 by Commissioner Blomberg. On Nov. 16, 2007, the State Board selected Dr. Eric Smith as Commissioner of Education, and in January 2008, Dr. Smith appointed Dr. Holcombe Chancellor of the Community College System.

Economically, Florida was changing also; the real estate, lending, and construction boom came to an abrupt halt near the end of 2007, and Florida, like the rest of the country, moved toward a deep and long recession. As a result, in the spring of 2008, the state legislature adopted a conservative budget which contained reductions for education as well as many other state agencies. On the policy front, the legislature also passed a bill that renamed and redefined the Florida Community College System. House Speaker designate, Representative Ray Sansom and Appropriations Chair, Representative Joe Pickens, spearheaded the passage of CS/SB 1716, which had four major provisions:

1. It established the Florida College System, defined as a system of colleges that grant two-year and four-year degrees to meet the employment needs of Florida in a more cost-effective manner to the state and the student than the state university system.

2. It provided criteria and a locally controlled process for the changing of an institution's name consistent with its degree-granting status.
3. It established the Florida College System Task Force to make recommendations regarding the implementation and funding of the new system.
4. It established the State College Pilot Project, consisting of nine colleges, also for the purpose of making recommendations on the implementation and funding of the new system.

The Task Force and the Pilot Project were to coordinate with each other, but submit their reports separately to the legislature and other decision-makers prior to the 2009 legislative session. The Task Force was chaired by Dr. Eric Smith, Commissioner of Education, and was composed of seven community college presidents, one state university president, one independent college and university (ICUF) president, one for-profit college president, and one at-large member. The final report from the Task Force made 27 recommendations on articulation, mission, governance, transition process, program approval criteria, and proposed funding. The report of the Pilot Project had similar recommendations. Both reports were well received by the legislature, and CS/SB 2682, which codified most of the recommendations, was passed in the 2009 session. Specifically, the legislature:

1. Confirmed the open access mission of the college system, to include approved, employment-related baccalaureate degrees
2. Stated the service districts for each of the colleges in the statutes
3. Affirmed the 2 + 2 articulation rights of students who possess associate degrees
4. Strengthened the approval process by requiring more employment needs data, better coordination with other colleges and universities, and a specific time frame for DOE action on proposal
5. Repealed the State College Pilot Project

Apart from the baccalaureate degree issue, the colleges in the new Florida College System came under tremendous enrollment pressure beginning with the 2007-08 academic year. As employment figures dropped around the state, college enrollments rose. At the same time, state revenues declined, and state appropriations to the system decreased as well. In order to provide resources needed by the colleges to serve the growing student body, the legislature authorized student tuition increases. The budget reductions, tuition increases, and enrollment increases continued through the 2008-09, 2009-10, and 2010-11 academic years. Between 2006-07 and 2010-11, credit enrollment grew by 31%, and state funding declined by 7%. During these same years, tuition increased by 34.5%. These tuition dollars partially replaced the missing state dollars and helped the colleges accommodate the increased student enrollment.

In 2010 the legislature established the Higher Education Coordinating Council (HECC) as a vehicle to help assure that all sectors of the higher education community, both public and private, were avoiding duplication and operating efficiently to meet the educational needs of the state. It is anticipated that this group's recommendations will be considered carefully by legislators and other policy makers. Articulation is a key concern of the Council as universities struggle to accommodate the increased numbers of associate degree graduates from the Florida College System.

The recession showed signs of easing in 2011 as the unemployment rate dropped and then hovered around 9% in Florida. Florida College System enrollments continued to grow, but at a slower rate. The combined effects of the recession, lower tuitions than the universities, the open-door admission policy, and expanded degree options had increase the percentage of high school graduates in Florida who enrolled in the Florida College

System to an all-time high. Two-thirds of the 2009-10 graduates who enrolled in higher education enrolled in an FCS institution.

During this same time period there were changes at FACC and the Department of Education that would also impact the Florida College System. In November 2010, the FACC board of directors and the membership adopted a new name for the organization that reflected the mission expansion that had been confirmed by the legislature. The name, "Association of Florida Colleges," (AFC) was unveiled at the annual meeting by CEO Michael Brawer. Mr. Brawer had assumed his office in November of 2008 after Michael Comins resigned. He led the organization through the name change process and conducted a very successful membership campaign, growing the AFC membership to over 7,000 college career and professional staff, and faculty.

At the DOE, Dr. Eric Smith resigned as Commissioner of Education in June 2011, and Mr. Gerard Robinson was selected as the new Commissioner on July 29 by the State Board of Education. In the fall the Council of Presidents appointed Dr. Charles (Chick) Dassance as their first Director of Government Relations to assist in the advocacy effort in Tallahassee. Dr. Dassance had recently retired as President of the College of Central Florida. In November 2011, Dr. Holcombe retired as Chancellor of the Florida College System, and Commissioner Robinson appointed Tallahassee attorney Mr. Randy Hanna as the new chancellor. Mr. Hanna was a former chair of the State Board of Community Colleges, a former college trustee, and an active leader of the Florida College System Foundation.

In December 2011, the first Aspen Prize was awarded to the best community college in the United States. Although the criteria were broad ranging, the data collection focused heavily on colleges that had high graduation rates while serving a diverse student population. Fourteen of the FCS colleges were judged to be in the top 10% of community colleges in the country. No other state had such a strong showing. The ultimate winner was Valencia College, followed closely by Miami-Dade College. This national recognition of the outstanding colleges in the Florida College System helped reaffirm that the system remains committed to its long-standing mission of service to Florida. It also indicates the system has successfully incorporated the baccalaureate degree into its broad array of degrees and certificates without compromising its commitment to open-access admissions.

By the end of 2011, 21 of the 28 colleges had been approved for at least one baccalaureate degree, and these degrees accounted for 2% of the credit enrollment system-wide. While the new mission of expanding access to four-year degrees drew most of the attention during this period of its history, the traditional Florida College System mission of providing access to a quality post-secondary education served Florida well during this turbulent economic time. Serious issues remained, such as: facility funding, tuition affordability, and the restoration of state support and matching money, but the Florida College System had emerged from the recession even more vibrant and important to the state of Florida than before.

In 2011, the Florida College System suffered challenging budget cuts, particularly due to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) no longer supplementing Florida's state funding. However, 2012 offered a glimmer of hope for funding increases. The Legislative session provided a modest 2.8 percent increase to the colleges amid slashing university budgets by nearly \$300 million and adding Florida Polytechnic University as the 12th institution in the State University System. More notably than the funding increase was the Florida Legislature's willingness to approve a five percent tuition increase in statute which would be the last one to date.

In 2012 policies also shifted as a result of numerous Higher Education Coordinating Council recommendations to lawmakers. Most of the language in the higher education omnibus bills (HB 5201 and HB

7135) related to collaborative strategic planning between the FCS and SUS, including a charge to revise system mission, goals, and process to meet regional needs. General Education requirements were also amended reducing semester hours from 36 to 30 and seeking appointment of joint faculty committees to oversee core course options in the areas of communication, mathematics, social sciences, humanities, and natural sciences. Lastly, the bills included several provisions that narrowed the scope of FCS baccalaureate authority, a philosophical shift from just three years earlier and a preview of the next few years ahead.

Over the course of the next year, Governor Rick Scott's interest in the higher education landscape increased. This was most evident in his public challenge to the Florida College System to create and offer baccalaureate degrees for \$10,000 or less. Despite the 22 FCS institutions offering baccalaureate degrees for approximately \$13,000, the Governor received universal support with all colleges creating at least one program tailored to the low-cost threshold. Lawmakers would codify the \$10,000 degree authority in the subsequent session. Around the time the Legislature would convene for session, the Florida College System Council of Presidents conducted an economic impact study in collaboration with EMSI. The final report revealed that, collectively, all 28 colleges contribute \$26.6 billion annually to Florida's economy, and offer a 9.4 percent rate of return on taxpayer investment. While the economic benefit of the FCS was evident, the state's budget once again only reflected modest increases for the system. Moreover, Governor Scott vetoed a three-percent increase in tuition, signaling a hardline stance that would be maintained through the remainder of his term, and through at least the first two years of his successor's tenure.

The 2013 session also came with some major policy additions. Public K-12 School Districts would now have to cover the standard tuition rate of their Dual Enrollment students. Meta-Majors and Pathways were written into statute as tools to improve academic metrics. Developmental Education was reduced greatly through the passage of Senate Bill 1720. High school graduates were empowered to 'opt-out' of developmental education courses and move straight into college credit, and colleges were encouraged to find co-requisite and modular alternative to help students remediate in areas of specific need.

By 2014, 24 of the 28 FCS institutions offered at least one baccalaureate degree, and the Florida State Board of Education (SBOE) had approved 151 proposals, only denying two. This escalated the dissenting noise surrounding FCS workforce baccalaureate authority, largely at the behest of Senate Appropriations Chair and future Senate President Joe Negron. Though the Senate attempted to pass more stringent restrictions, the legislative session only resulted in a "pause" – a 14-month moratorium in which no new proposals could be submitted and no programs could be approved.

The Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA), the legislative research arm, would also be charged with carrying out a comprehensive study of FCS baccalaureates. On the heels of the State University System implementing new funding tied to performance metrics, Senate Bill 1076 would ask the SBOE to recommend methodology for allocating performance funding to the colleges. Metrics would include graduates, employment and continuing education of graduates, average entry wages of graduates, and the average cost of a graduate to the State of Florida. The return of performance funding at the FCS level was imminent.

After more than three years as Chancellor, Mr. Randy Hanna stepped down from the leadership post in January 2015. Ms. Kathy Hebda was named the Acting Chancellor while a search could commence for Hanna's successor. The Division had a lot to celebrate early in the year as Indian River State College and Santa Fe College were both named as Top-Ten Finalists for the prestigious Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence. Santa Fe

College would go on to win the 2015 Aspen Prize, making Florida the first state in the nation to hold two of the pinnacle honors for public 2-year degree serving institutions. While the performance of Florida's colleges was being recognized on a national stage, it was also receiving attention as part of the annual budget process. As predicted, the Florida Legislature agreed to FCS performance funding metrics tied to a total of \$40 million in funding - \$20 million proportionately pulled from the 28 colleges operational base, and \$20 million in new funding to be allocated through a model yet to be determined by the Division and State Board of Education. This was settled in a mid-June special session as a result of gridlock during the regular session.

Not long after the dust had settled on the 2015 special sessions, the Florida College System had found its new Chancellor. Madeline Pumariega was appointed the 7th Chancellor of the FCS, and she was both the first woman and first Hispanic Chancellor to serve in the role. One of her first tasks was to work with the State Board of Education to pass performance funding methodology with the caveat that there be "winners and losers," an element the Governor had endorsed. This led to an iteration of performance funding with various tiers – colleges that would receive no new funding and have to re-earn their base funds with an improvement plan; colleges that would earn their base and new funding; and finally, colleges that would earn their base, their new funding, and the redistributed funding of those in the bottom tier. The punitive measures in the plan were met with criticism and multiple Presidents, including COP Chair, Dr. Ed Meadows, expressed to the State Board that all of the colleges in the bottom tier widely outperformed national averages in every metric, but were being penalized as a result of the Florida College System's overall strength. The tiered model would see minor adjustments each year from the SBOE, but the concept of "winners and losers" remained central through the end of the Scott Administration.

Over the course of the next two years, the Florida College System was on the defensive in the halls of the state capitol, from working to keep open and concealed carry of firearms off college campuses. Michael Brower, CEO of the Association of Florida Colleges was integral in battling the campus carry issue. As a result of his successful efforts during that time, he was recognized by the national Campaign to Keep Guns Off Campus as its national higher education awardee in 2016.

Other matters promoted by Negron included being placed under newly created, centralized governing boards. This was most apparent through the House and the Senate passing Senate Bill 374 in the 2017 legislative session. The bill included measures that would create a radically different system; it included provisions to change the system name back to the 'Florida Community College System'; it statutorily authorized the creation of a new governing body – the State Board of Community Colleges – a measure believed to erode the long-time local authority of each college's District Board of Trustees; and it implemented growth caps on baccalaureate programs based on ratios between upper-and lower-division FTE. The bill thankfully was never enacted as law. In June 2017 Governor Scott vetoed SB 374, stating:

"Each year, hundreds of thousands of students attend one of Florida's 28 state colleges, which are consistently rated amongst the best in the country for providing affordable access to higher education. For the last four years, we have held the line on tuition, keeping higher education affordable for all Florida families. Additionally, our State College System, as it currently functions, provides the flexibility and adaptability to respond to our communities' unique education and workforce needs. This legislation impedes the State College System's mission by capping the enrollment level of baccalaureate degrees and unnecessarily increasing red tape. This interference impedes the ability of state colleges to meet the needs of communities and families they serve."

Governor Scott's veto message revived a system-wide discussion about how to protect the local control of the District Boards of Trustees, and avoid centralized governance in Tallahassee regardless of what statewide Board maintains oversight of the FCS. One option to address the matter became the Constitutional Revision Commission (CRC), an appointed body convened every 20 years with the task of seeking public input and subsequently approving proposals for the general election ballot. Commissioner Nicole Washington led an effort to codify the Florida College System through a CRC endorsed Constitutional Amendment. The ballot language would preserve the local control of the District Boards and maintain oversight of the FCS under the State Board of Education. Amendment 7 – which included the FCS language along with two other items: Educational Expense Death Benefits for First Responders and Supermajority Approval to Raise University Fees – was approved by Florida at more than 66 percent of the vote. The Florida College System would join its counterparts in Pre-K – 12 Education and the State University System as part of Florida's Constitution, and local District Boards of Trustees would remain protected as the preferred governance over the 28 institutions. The 2018 General Election would also see the election of Ron DeSantis as the 46th Governor of the State of Florida.

Prior to the election, Florida was rocked by the most powerful Category 5 hurricane since Hurricane Andrew struck the state in 1992. Hurricane Michael made landfall near Mexico Beach on October 10, 2018 and decimated multiple panhandle colleges, particularly Gulf Coast State College which suffered more than \$50 million in damage as a result of the storm. Hurricane Michael made landfall only a year after Hurricane Irma battered the Florida Keys as a Category 4 and made landfall in southwest Florida near Marco Island as a Category 3.

With 2019 approaching and a new administration in the Governor's mansion, Chancellor Pumariega elected to step down from her post in December of 2018. Governor DeSantis quickly appointed former House Speaker Richard Corcoran as the new Education Commission. He then elevated the former Acting Commissioner of the FCS, Kathy Hebda, to become Chancellor in February of 2019. Shortly after being appointed to the role, the Florida College System and Division of Florida Colleges once again had Aspen Prize related news. Three Florida Colleges – Broward, Miami Dade, and Indian River State College – were selected as Top Ten Finalists for the Aspen Prize, a first for any state in the brief eight year history of the high honor. In April, Indian River State College and Miami Dade College were selected as winners of the 2019 Aspen Prize for Community College Excellence. The Aspen Prize had now been awarded to seven colleges around the United States, and four of them are located in Florida (Valencia 2011, Santa Fe 2015, IRSC and MDC 2019). Florida's public state and community colleges remain the bellwether system nationally.

Not long after securing the 2019 Aspen Prize, Dr. Eduardo Padron would announce his retirement from Miami Dade College in August of the same year; Dr. Ed Massey would also make a similar announcement that his 33 year presidency at IRSC would also conclude in August 2020. This maintained a trend of respected, long-term Presidents stepping down over the past half-decade – Dr. Jackson Sasser from Santa Fe in Feb. 2020; Ann McGee from Seminole in July 2018; David Armstrong from Broward in June 2018; Eileen Holden from Polk in July 2017; Bill Law from St. Pete in June 2017; Chuck Mojock from Lake-Sumter State College in Dec. 2015; Dennis Gallon from Palm Beach in June 2015; and Kathy Johnson from Pasco Hernando in June 2015. Since the beginning of 2010, 24 of 28 colleges have appointed at least one new President.

The 2020 Florida Legislative Session was relatively quiet from a policy standpoint, however, a new tiered allocation model made its debut as a way to pool colleges based on relative size, and distribute funding in areas of growth, compression, workforce, and base student allocations. The model was argued for its simplicity over the system's long-embraced funding formula, yet it still received a modest \$23 million investment, most of which was pre-determined in budget proviso language. By early March, there was universal agreement that the 2020-2021

state budget exercise may have been rendered moot by the widespread advancement of COVID-19, a novel coronavirus that commanded unprecedented shut downs of schools, colleges, businesses, and more. Governor DeSantis and Commissioner Corcoran encouraged the Florida College System to shift its instruction and services models to virtual formats, and the 800,000+ students of the FCS would complete their 2020 spring term online.

Updated June 2000

Updated September 2002

Updated October 2004

Updated November 2010 (Dr. Holcombe)

Updated May 2020 (Andrew Treadwell and Michael Brawer)