



The predictions of a quiet week five did not come to pass, even though the Senate was in recess and the House only met two days. However, in those two days, eleven bills affecting community colleges saw action in House councils.

One unique factor in play this session has been **Speaker Marco Rubio's 100 Ideas for Florida's Future**. Prior to the beginning of session, the Speaker hosted public forums around the state, called 'idea-raisers.' At these forums, citizens were encouraged to give their thoughts about what the Legislature should do to improve Florida. At the conclusion of the hearings, 100 "top" ideas were identified as priority issues for the House of Representatives for the 2007 session. A hardback book of the 100 ideas was released and distributed to all the members of the House. Many lobbyists found it helpful to have their own copy too. The official website for **100 Ideas for Florida's Future** can be found at:

<http://www.100ideas.org/index.php>



*Rep. Marco Rubio, R-Miami*

While some of the "100 Ideas" have been heard in several committees and councils, especially the issues of property tax reduction and insurance cost reduction, many of the education 'ideas' had not been heard until week five when several of the Ideas surfaced in the **Schools and Learning Council**. A massive 752 page committee package included those proposals, several of which will be noted below. The packet included six committee bills which covered most of the education recommendations.

## Ready to Work Credential

At the end of the week, Representative Joe Pickens, a staunch advocate of Community Colleges, and chair of the **House Schools and Learning Council**, joined Lt. Governor Jeff Kottkamp and Interim Commissioner of Education Jeanine Blomberg in a press conference regarding the Ready to Work credential. Funded last year, and recommended for continued funding, this initiative creates a testing and instructional program to document ability in applied math, reading for information and locating information. Based on the test score, the potential employee receives a bronze, silver, or gold credential.

Florida businesses will find it easier to identify job applicants who possess the skills needed to be successful in the workforce. The Florida Ready to Work certificate will provide employers with information that will make it possible for them to match the skills of an individual applicant with the skills required for specific occupations.



*Rep. Joe Pickens, R-Palaska*

Participating community colleges will provide proctored testing services. In addition, they will assist in making employers aware of this new valuable credential.

FACC members interested in this initiative can find more information at:

<http://fldoe.org/ReadyToWork/> .

## Budget

As we mentioned last week, there was a lot of scrambling around to find sponsors for amendments to the appropriations bills, which have now been released. **SB 2800** is the Senate's Appropriations Bill, to be discussed on the floor on April 11. **HB 5001** is the House Appropriations Bill which will be discussed on the House floor on April 12. The stage will then be set for conference committees to begin soon thereafter. The final budget usually is not known until week eight of Session.

The detailed analysis of the community college budget presented in week three can be found on the FACC web site at the following address: <http://www.facc.org/legisact.htm>

*Substantive issues of interest that had action this week are as follows:*

## Financial Aid/residency

One of the System's major financial aid bills received action again. **HB 343** (Bean) was heard as part of the **House School and Learning Council's** marathon meeting. A committee substitute was adopted by the Council on April 4. The bill amends the **College Work Experience Program** to allow Adult Vocational (PSAV) students and **Educator Preparation Institute (EPI)** participants to be included in the program and allows PSAV students to participate in the **Florida Student Access Grants (FSAG)**. Action by the final committee, the **Policy and Budget Council** is expected soon. Next stop for the companion, **SB 918** (Wise), is the **Higher Education Appropriations Committee** in the **Senate**, and from there the bill will go to the **Senate** floor.



*Rep. Aaron Bean, R-Fernandina Beach*

**HB 1443** (Thompson) and **SB 2698** (Lawson) also addresses **FSAG**, addressing the issue of the expected family contribution for community college students, and also creates a new "working student" financial aid program, to address those students who can only qualify for student loans. **SB 2698** is scheduled for hearing next on April 10.

There is a strong possibility that long time concerns with **student residency** issues may be addressed in the bill as it passes out of committee. College lobbyists have participated in the drafting of that language, and support it. The changes do not address the "dream act" issues of students who come illegally to the United States with their parents, yet are served by public schools. However, upon entering the postsecondary system they then are subject to out of state fees. The

changes will address allowing recent high school graduates (who have legal status) to claim residency if they move on to higher education within a year, and allows step-parent residency to apply to a dependent student.

## Career Academies/Articulation

**HB 965** (Kendrick) and its companion **SB 1232** (Gaetz) focus on high school Career Academies. Both bills establish the requirement that school districts develop strategic plans to meet local workforce needs. All school districts are required to establish career academies. The **State Board of Education** is then to establish a process to review new secondary career courses, and such courses are to lead to "industry certification." The certification process is to be defined by the **Agency for Workforce Innovation**. K-12 lobbyists had been hoping to receive FTE funding at a higher level for academy participants. The House bill, however, changed the funding to performance funding based on

completers. The bills also require that postsecondary institutions participate in the planning, and that the courses articulate.

[HB 965](#) passed out of the Schools and Learning Council on April 4.

## Baccalaureate

A proposed **House Bill (SLC 07-05) relating to Post Secondary Education Enhancements** addresses several of the “100 ideas” discussed above. This bill also includes language that implements the settlement between the **State Board of Education** and the **Board of Governors** regarding community colleges baccalaureate degrees. The language simply allows community colleges to submit proposals to the State Board of Education to offer bachelors degrees in teaching, nursing, and applied sciences. The [SCL 07-05](#) was approved April 4, and has been filed. It is expected to be heard in the **House Policy and Budget Committee** soon.

[SB 1570 \(Lynn\)](#) also addresses baccalaureate degrees, but expands the language regarding the process for community colleges to obtain approval to offer baccalaureate degrees, and allows the colleges to offer degrees in Math and Science. [SB 1570](#) will be heard by the Higher Education committee in the Senate on April 10.

[SLC 07-05](#) also requires **studies of higher education issues of enrollment forecasting and Common Course Numbering**.

## Board of Governors

As noted week four, since the constitutional amendment creating a governing board for the universities passed, many sections of the Florida Statutes have required modifications to reflect the new Board’s authority. Legislation has been filed to clarify the responsibilities of the **Board of Governors** versus the **State Board of Education**. [Senate Bill 1270 \(Oerlich\)](#) is a 259-page bill that includes mostly technical changes to the law to reflect the **BOG**, but also touches on the baccalaureate degree issues. The **House Schools and Learning Council** adopted a committee bill which reflected the **Postsecondary Education Committees work**, [SLC 07-16](#), which is very similar to the Senate version.

## Transportation Fee

[HB 207](#) (Chestnut) and [SB 684](#) (Oelrich) would authorize a transportation user fee for community college students. **Santa Fe Community College** has a unique agreement for public transportation that would be well served by this legislation. Since the fee is not limited to Santa Fe Community College, district boards of trustees at other colleges would be permitted to implement the fee. [HB 207](#) passed out of the **House Schools and Learning Council** on April 4.

## Textbook Sales Tax Exemption—Cost of textbooks

The FACC legislative team and the Florida Junior and Community College Student Government Association (FJCCSGA) have joined forces to promote legislation that will give a sales tax exemption for college textbooks. [SB 254](#) (Wise) addresses the



*Rep. Charles S. Chestnut,  
D-Gainesville*



exemption, and limits it to degree seeking students who are able to show a syllabus that indicates the textbook. This bill has been heard by one committee and is now waiting to be heard in **Senate Finance and Tax Committee**.

**HB 289** (Flores) originally included the sales tax exemption. However, amendments in the **Schools and Learning Council** removed the exemption. The bill still requires a study regarding textbook prices, and to identify policies and practices that might help reduce the costs. The bill also restricts postsecondary employees from benefiting from textbook selection. **HB 289** was passed by the **Policy and Budget Council** on April 5, and is now on the **House Calendar**.

Rep. Flores can be seen presenting **HB 289** to the House Policy and Budget Council on the Florida Channel Archives. The program covers **HB 289** 15:00 into the program. The following link will be active until April 12:

<http://www.wfsu.org/rafiles/archives/tfc/cu/thursday-cu.ram>

**SB 2492** Haridopolos has not yet been heard.

## Workforce Development Boards-client services

**HB 1301** (Aubuchon) and **SB 1926 (Commerce)** amend Florida Statutes consistent with new Federal law. The bills define the services that clients may receive. While these two bills are considered non-controversial, they are possible “vehicles” for other changes that are not considered college-friendly.



*Sen. Mike Haridopolis, R-Melbourne*

**HB 1301** passed the **Economic Expansion and Infrastructure Council** on April 4.

**SB 1926** will be heard on April 10, in the **Children, Families and Elder Affairs Committee**.

## FCAT changes

On April 4, the **House Schools and Learning Council** heard **SLC 07-02**. This bill replaces the existing **Sunshine State Standards** (which identify what should be taught at each grade level) with “world class education standards.” One of the “100 Innovative Ideas” is that the State should raise the standards as to what is expected of K-12 students. The bill also allows high scores on the FCAT to serve as criteria to access Dual Enrollment and to exempt from College Placement Testing (CPT.) Level 5 scores would be required for those, and could be used to apply requirements for obtaining Bright Futures Scholarships.

## BILLS SEEING NO ACTION

### Property Tax

**HB 7001** (Attkisson) offers \$5.5 Billion property tax relief for Florida homeowners and small business owners. **HB 7001** was placed on the calendar in the House, signaling action will happen soon. Interesting activity came from the minority party, with Senator Geller’s announcement of a different plan. The issue will probably be at the top of the agenda for both houses to address with once the budgets have been passed.

## Cosmetology

**HB 117** (Carroll) and **SB 920** (Wise), as reported in earlier editions of *Perception*, amends the licensure requirements related to cosmetology, so that licensure is available for specialties, including hair technician, esthetician and nail technician. Colleges with cosmetology programs have supported this legislation which will allow students to be trained in specific, shorter programs and enter the workforce quickly. While not heard this week, the bills are well positioned to pass.

## Articulation

Filed bills include **SB 1190** (Lynn), which attempts to improve articulation between public and non-public institutions, and reduce excess hours as a result. Some of the articulation issues are included in the career academy bills, above, but this bill is much broader. There is no House companion, **however *SB 1190 is scheduled to be heard on April 10 in the Senate Higher Education Committee.***

## Excess Hours

As mentioned before, **Senator Lee Constantine** sponsored the “excess hours” bill in 2005, when it passed the Legislature. FACC members were pleased that Governor Bush vetoed the bill. Unfortunately, the Senator has re-filed the legislation, **SB 2862**. The bill would impose a 50% tuition tax for students who take more than 120% of credit hours required by their declared degree. **HB 1507** (Altman) was heard for the first time on March 27, in the **Postsecondary Education Committee** of the **House** where it was amended to be the same as the Senate bill. The FACC legislative team will continue to work with both sponsors in order to minimize the adverse consequences that this legislation would create. ***SB 2862 is scheduled for its first hearing on April 10.***



*Sen. Lee Constantine,  
R-Altamonte Springs*

## Workforce Development Boards and AWI

**SB 382** (Bennett) addresses the regional Workforce Development Boards functions. For many years, the local Boards have been restricted from providing services to clients. This bill would allow the Boards to provide services directly to clients, *except for training*. The companion bill **HB 675** (Heller) has not yet been heard.

A **proposed committee substitute** to **SB 870** (Diaz de la Portilla) dissolves the existing Workforce Florida, Inc, and instead, gives the Agency for Workforce Innovation the responsibilities of WFI. In lieu of WFI, the proposal would create a new Workforce Florida Board which will be an *advisory board* to AWI.

## Retirement/FRS Benefits

**SB 0008** (Lawson) and **HB 0087** (Allen) have both been filed to increase the health insurance subsidy to employees under the **Florida Retirement System**. Both bills have a long list of co-sponsors. However, given that there appears to be no staff analysis on either bill and the \$1 billion decrease in revenues, we do not expect that either bill will be heard in a committee of reference.

Three bills have been filed to increase the retirement multiplier of a regular class employee from 1.6 percent of the employee's average final compensation. [HB 657](#) (Gelber) and [SB 2210](#) (Villalobos) proposes to raise the multiplier to 3.0 percent. [SB 568](#) (Jones) proposes to increase it to 1.8 percent. As with the other retirement bills, revenue shortfalls make it unlikely that these bills will become law.

## Half Cent Sales Tax for Miami Dade County

[HB 185](#) (Garcia) and [SB 552](#) (Margolis) allow the Miami Dade County Commission to place a local referendum for Miami Dade College. If passed locally, a half penny sales tax increase for five years will support scholarships, program enhancements, student retention efforts, and capital outlay. Both bills have moved out of their first committees, but did not move again this week.



*Rep. Dan Gelber, D-Miami Beach*

## Fulltime Faculty Ratios

[HB 1279](#) (Fitzgerald) and [SB 2652](#) (Geller) propose to require that 75% of college faculty be full time employees. Both bills were filed on March 2, and both have each been referred to three committees. Neither has a completed staff analysis nor has either been put on an agenda.

## Week Six

Overall, the timing is now “crunch time” in that there are few remaining Legislative committee meetings. Consequently, there is tremendous pressure on committee and council chairs to hear bills in week six and seven. Otherwise, the possibilities of passing legislation become extremely remote if a bill is still “stuck” in committee. Week six is shaping up to be another busy week. So far, thirty-four bills affecting community colleges are scheduled to be heard in committees, councils and in session. Bills that may interest FACC members include:

### House Schools and Learning Council April 10

[HB 1507](#) Excess Hours

### Senate Higher Education Committee April 10

[SB 1570](#) Community College Baccalaureate degrees

[SB 2862](#) Excess Hours

## Other Resources

The Division of Community Colleges has made available on their website a video copy of **Chancellor Armstrong's** recent interview on *Face to Face* that aired on the **Florida Channel** on February 28:

<http://www.fldoe.org/CC/meetings/2007/02-28.asp>

Also available online is a video copy of a presentation on the Pappas report to the **Senate Higher Education Appropriations Committee** on February 8:

<http://www.fldoe.org/CC/meetings/>

**Florida Public Radio Capitol Update archives**

[http://wwwt.fsu.edu/~wfsu\\_fm/listen/index.htm](http://wwwt.fsu.edu/~wfsu_fm/listen/index.htm)

The official web site for **100 Ideas for Florida's Future** is:

<http://www.100ideas.org/>

The new Department of Education Ready to Work site is:

<http://www.fldoe.org/readytowork/>

A video archive of the bills that were heard in the Schools and Learning Council on April 4, can be found at:

[http://199.44.254.202/archive/MBR/H\\_2366\\_2007\\_04\\_04\\_4265.aspx](http://199.44.254.202/archive/MBR/H_2366_2007_04_04_4265.aspx)

**HB 965** relating to **Articulation** can be heard two minutes and forty-three seconds (2:43) into the meeting.

**HB 343** relating to the **Florida Work Experience Program** can be heard six minutes and nineteen seconds (6:19) into the meeting.

**HB 1501** relating to the **Commission for Independent Education** can be heard nine minutes and thirty-five seconds (9:35) into the meeting. Please note the extensive discussion pertaining to the Commission's interest in being removed from oversight by the Department of Education.

**HB 207** relating to the **Transportation Fee** can be heard two hours thirty-seven minutes and thirteen seconds (2:37:13) into the meeting.

## Meet your legislators...

*A weekly feature of Perception*



*This week:*  
Rep. Joe Pickens  
R-Palatka



Trained as an attorney, Rep. Pickens was elected to the Florida House in 2000 and re-elected subsequently. He works at the Putnam County School Board's General Counsel and takes a very involved role in issues relating to education. A good friend of community colleges in Florida, Rep. Pickens serves on the House's Schools & Learning Council (Chair), Legislative Budget Commission, Policy & Budget Council and the Rules & Calendar Council. It is his leadership as Chair of the Schools & Learning Council that has earned him support and recognition from FACC and other organizations in the field of education. He is championing the innovative "Ready to Work Certification Program" initiated by then-Governor Bush in 2006. This program is designed to train and certify workers by establishing standards and testing for comprehension (see article on page one). Rep. Pickens has been a presenter at FACC events on numerous occasions and always has welcomed input and ideas from our members. He resides in Palatka, Florida with his wife Linda and three children, Bailey, Ellis and Hill. A graduate of Wofford College, he went on to study at the University of Florida where he received his law degree in 1983.