



Three weeks remain until the end of session. Week seven should be the last week that committees will meet. Consequently, bills that have not been heard in a committee or still have more than one committee left are not likely to pass. However, the community college legislative team will pay close attention for amendments on any bill, as the parts or all of some of those “dead” bills can appear on other bills.

Budget

The budget is always the highest priority of all, as the Legislature must pass an appropriations bill. In week six, both the House and the Senate passed their bills as expected. Neither side passed amendments of concern to the community college legislative team. The House passed their version ([HB 5001](#)), on April 12, and requested the Senate to concur or appoint Conference Committee members. April 13, the Senate refused to concur and appointed Conference Committee members. The Senate Higher Education Conference Committee members include: Sen. Lynn (chair), Sen. Justice, Sen. King, Sen. Oerlich, and Sen. Ring. The House should announce their members on Monday, April 16.

Now, the conference process is set to begin. Responsibility for the appropriations act rotates each year between the House and the Senate. This year, the Senate bill will become the appropriations act. Therefore, [SB 2800](#) is the 2007 Appropriations Bill and the Conference Committee made up of members from both the House and Senate will work out the details.



*Sen. Evelyn J. Lynn
R-Daytona Beach*

The Conference Schedule has been announced as follows:

- Tuesday, April 17, Conference committees start meeting, and continue through the weekends through April 24.
- April 25 and 26, unresolved issues will be given to the Council Chairs to be resolved.
- April 27-29, still unresolved issues will be given to the Speaker of the House and President of the Senate for final decisions.
- May 1, Conference report released to member (and the public).
- May 4, last day of regular session and final vote on the budget.

The House and Senate are, in total, fairly far apart in relation to community college funding, with the Senate approximately \$30 million higher. However, they are relatively close on the operating funds for the system, with about a 4.4% increase. The major difference is the funding for matching programs; the Phil Benjamin Academic Improvement Fund and the Facilities Matching Program. The House came in very low and the Senate came in fully funded.

The Council of Presidents Chair, Dr. Charles Mojock of Lake-Sumter Community College, the Policy and Advocacy Chair, Dr. Ed Massey of Indian River Community College and FACC’s contract lobbyists, will be actively lobbying the leadership to not only take the top of each side’s recommendation, but add to the funding. College lobbyists will be busy trying to meet with key conference members, and the leadership of the House and Senate, as well. Hopefully, week seven’s Perception will provide clues as to the final budget.

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>

American Association of Community Colleges Conference in Tampa

Many of Florida's FACC members and college presidents are in Tampa April 12 – 16, attending the national meeting of the American Association of Community Colleges. Governor Bush was awarded the Harry Truman Award at the opening session of the 87th Annual American Association of Community Colleges Conference on Saturday, April 14, in Tampa. Interestingly enough, Barbara Bush, Gov. Bush's mother, received this honor in 1989.

Given to someone outside the field of education, the Truman Award recognizes an individual who has had a major, positive impact on community colleges. The term "community college" first appeared in a 1947 higher education study commissioned by President Truman. His administration created the mechanisms that helped grow two-year institutions across the country.

Among the many sessions, one discussion entitled "Delivering the Dream: 21st Century Challenges and Opportunities" will highlight Florida's colleges. Chancellor David Armstrong will lead the discussion. Presidents Ed Massey (IRCC,) Ann McGee (Seminole Community College,) and Chuck Mojock (LSCC) will also participate.

Substantive issues of interest that had action in week six are as follows:

Excess Hours

One of the more contentious meetings happened in week six, when Senator Lee Constantine's "excess hours" bill, [SB 2862](#) was heard in the Higher Education Committee on April 10. The bill would impose a 50% tuition penalty for students who take more than 120% of credit hours required by their declared degree. Dr. Ed Massey testified against the bill and about twenty college lobbyists were also in attendance to oppose the bill. Senator Constantine expressed frustration with the opposition, and the Committee Chair, Senator Oelrich sought to better understand the opposing views. The Committee, with Constantine's agreement, decided to TP (temporarily pass) the bill.

Dr. Massey led the community college legislative team in drafting alternative language for Sen. Constantine's bill. A small team met with Sen. Constantine on April 12, to present the new language, but did not reach agreement with the senator.

[HB 1507](#) (Altman) was scheduled to be heard in the House Schools and Learning Council also on April 10. That Council, chaired by Rep. Pickens, had a very full agenda and was not able to take up the bill. The Schools and Learning Council is not expected to meet again; therefore passage of the House bill appears to be very unlikely.

Articulation

[SB 1190](#) (Lynn) was heard in the Higher Education Committee on April 10 and passed. The bill was amended to create the Articulation Coordinating Committee. While there is currently such a committee, the statutory authority for the Committee was repealed several years ago. This bill puts language back in the statutes that support articulation. There is no House companion; however [SB 1190](#) is scheduled to be heard again on April 17, in the Senate Higher Education Appropriations Committee.



Rep. Thad Altman, R-Melbourne

Baccalaureate

[SB 1570](#) (Lynn) 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 leading to teacher certification. [SB 1570](#) was passed by the Higher Education committee in the Senate on April 10, and is scheduled to be heard in the Higher Education Appropriations Committee on April 17.

A proposed House Bill ([SLC 07-05](#)) relating to Post Secondary Education Enhancements included language that implements the settlement between the State Board of Education (SBE) and the Board of Governors (BOG) 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. [SCL 07-05](#) was approved was filed and has been renamed [HB 7147](#) was heard in the House Policy and Budget Council on April 10. Amendments to the Bill included the language of the [SB 1570](#) relating to math and science baccalaureates leading to teacher certification. HB 7147 is now ready to be heard on the floor, and also requires studies of higher education issues of enrollment forecasting and Common Course Numbering.

Board of Governors

Legislation that clarifies the responsibilities of the Board of Governors versus the State Board of Education continues to progress. [SB 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. [SB 1270](#) passed out of the Senate Higher Education Appropriations Committee on April 13, and is set to be heard on the Senate floor.

The House Schools and Learning Council adopted committee bill, [SLC 07-16](#), which has been renamed to [HB 7149](#). The bill was approved by the Policy and Budget Council on April 13, and is set to go to the House floor. These bills appear to be on a course for final passage.



Sen. Steve Oerlich, R-Gainesville

Financial Aid /residency

Two bills amend the College Work Experience Program to allow Adult Vocational (PSAV) students and Educator Preparation Institute (EPI) participants to be included in the program and allow PSAV students to participate in the Florida Student Access Grants (FSAG). [SB 918](#) (Wise), passed out of the Higher Education Appropriations Committee in the Senate on April 13, and is now set to go to the Senate floor. [HB 343](#) (Bean) was last heard by the House Schools and Learning Council on April 4.

[HB 1443](#) (Thompson) 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](#) (Lawson) was the companion to [HB 1443](#), and passed out of the Higher Education Committee in the Senate on April 10. The bill was changed to state that within FSAG, community college students are not required to receive PELL grants in order to obtain FSAG. Another amendment was adopted to address student residency issues. The changes would allow 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.

Textbook Affordability (formerly Textbook Sales Tax Exemption)

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. [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 polices 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.

[SB 254](#) (Wise) also addressed the exemption, and limits it to degree seeking students who are able to show a syllabus that indicates the textbook. This bill was heard by the Senate Finance and Tax Committee on April 13. The committee took up a proposed committee substitute which made the bill a companion to the House Bill, without reference to the tax exemption.

FCAT changes

The House Schools and Learning Council bill on K-12 standards, [SLC 07-02](#) has been renamed [HB 7151](#). 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 Policy and Budget Council heard the bill on April 13, and removed the language which would have allowed high scores on the FCAT to serve as criteria to access Dual Enrollment and to exempt from College Placement Testing (CPT.) The Council did add a requirement that civics instruction be included in the FCAT. The bill passed the Council and is now ready to be heard on the House floor. There is no Senate companion.

Property Tax

After a couple of weeks on the back burner, property tax reform came back in week six. The Senate finally unveiled their proposal, which includes the following components:

- Rolling back taxes rates to the 2005 level
- Caps on local tax collections by cities and counties.
- A first time home buyer homestead exemption.
- Portability of ‘save our homes’ tax savings to new homes, but with 10-year catch-up plan
- An exemption for property taxes on equipment for businesses.

[HB 7001](#) (Attkisson) offers \$5.5 Billion property tax relief for Florida homeowners and small business owners. The House plan:

- Rolls taxes back to 2000 levels.
- Has a ballot initiative for a property-for-sales-tax-swap.
- Suggests that property taxes be eliminated as long as a 2.5 cent sales tax was implemented.



Rep. Frank Attkisson, R-Kissimmee

[HB 7001](#) was placed on the Special Order calendar in the House for Tuesday, April 17. Once passed by the House, the two sides can agree to “conference” on the bill

BILLS SEEING NO ACTION

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.

The Senate bill passed the Senate on March 28, and remains in Messages in the House. [HB 965](#) passed out of the Schools and Learning Council on April 4, and will need to be heard in the Policy and Budget Council in week seven or passage this session will be very difficult.



Sen. Don Gaetz, R-Fort Walton Beach

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. [HB 1301](#) passed the Economic Expansion and Infrastructure Council on April 4, and is now on the Special Order calendar for floor action on April 17.

[SB 1926](#) was scheduled to be heard on April 10, in the Children, Families and Elder Affairs Committee but was temporarily postponed.

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 week six, the bills are expected to be heard in their final committees of reference in week seven.

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. Both bills must be heard in their final committees of reference in week seven in order to secure passage in the 2007 Session.

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.



Rep. Bob Allen, R-Merritt Island

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 have not been heard in any committees since.

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 a committee agenda.

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

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/>

Meet your legislators...

A weekly feature of Perception



This week:
Sen. Ken Pruitt
R-District 28



Ken Pruitt was elected to the Florida House of Representatives in November, 1990, culminating in his appointment as Chairman of the House Appropriations committee from 1999-2000. In November 2000, Ken was elected the Florida Senate representing District 28, which includes Martin, Indian River, Okeechobee, Palm Beach and St. Lucie counties. Ken served as Chairman of the Senate Appropriations Committee from 2002 - 2004. He recently completed his term as Chairman of the Rules Committee and he serves as Senate President for the 2007-2008 legislative session.

Senator Pruitt's legislative accomplishments include passage of the Bright Futures Act, which rewards achieving students with college scholarships and has been extremely important for higher education; passage of the Bert Harris Property Rights Act, which protects the sanctity of an individual's property rights; and the landmark Lake Okeechobee Protection Plan, which earmarks tens of millions of dollars to the restoration and protection of Lake Okeechobee, St Lucie River and Indian River Lagoon.

Locally, Senator Pruitt has spearheaded establishing the Treasure Coast as a premier Education, Research and Technology region in the state. Based on a recommendation from the Urban Land Institute, Ken helped organize a regional commission, the Committee for a Sustainable Treasure Coast. Its main objective is to provide local governments the tools to encourage and create sustainable communities.

Senator Pruitt and his wife, Aileen, live in Port St. Lucie. They are the proud parents of five children: Kenneth, Jr., Steven, Ashley, Michelle and Mark; and grandparents to beautiful Chloe.

Among the numerous award received by Ken Pruitt for his dedication to public service, is the Rotary International Paul Harris Fellow Award.