



FLORIDA ASSOCIATION OF COMMUNITY COLLEGES
P E R C E P T I O N
A WEEKLY LEGISLATIVE UPDATE FOR FACC MEMBERS

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

Issue 7 ■ 2007 LEGISLATIVE SESSION ■ April 20, 2007

Two more weeks remain in the 2007 Legislative Session, ending Friday night May 4. The lists of bills that have a chance at passage is getting shorter, as those still waiting to be heard in a non-budget committee will be challenged to make it to the floor of the **House** and **Senate**.

Legislators and other State leaders were shocked as all of us about the devastating **massacre at Virginia Tech**. There was immediate discussion on every higher education campus in Florida about safety and security, as there was in Tallahassee. Both the university and the community college systems are acting quickly to identify the costs of potential safeguards, in the hopes that legislative help might be available. Senator Oelrich has announced plans for a workshop on college safety, and **Santa Fe Community College's** Police Chief will discuss the model they developed after a tragedy on their campus. Also on the agenda will be a student communications system used by **Santa Fe called "mobile campus."** This system provides college to student cell phone communications. **E2Campus** and other systems used by the colleges will also be discussed.

While this was happening, there was also much concern expressed in Tallahassee and by all college employees and students about their counterparts in Virginia. Vigils, moments of silence, wearing of "maroon and orange" occurred throughout the state. **FACC** joins in the sense of overwhelming sadness that all share.

Of interest related to the tragedy, mid week found discussion regarding gun control in a new light. The **Florida Chamber of Commerce** had been actively opposing legislation which would have prohibited employers from restricting possession of guns in cars on the employer's property. The **Chamber** represented that employers wanted to be able to prohibit guns on property. The bill had been thought to be on a path to passage, but was quickly voted down on Wednesday.

This is week eight of the 2007 Legislative Session. Tuesday, April 24, is the fiftieth day of Session and the last day that regularly scheduled committees can meet. Bills needing to be heard in those committees must be heard by the end of the day on Tuesday.

Budget

Budget conference committees started their work in week seven. The **Senate Higher Education Conference Committee** members include: Sen. Lynn (chair), Sen. Justice, Sen. King, Sen. Oelrich, and Sen. Ring. House members are Pickens (chair), Traviesa (Vice Chair), and Representatives Altman, Coley, Flores, Legg, McKeel, Meador, Proctor, Simmons, Bendross-Mindingall, Heller, Kiar, Long, Richardson, Vana and Waldman. The Committees started meeting at 5:00 p.m. on Thursday, April 19, evening and continued through the weekend.

The **Committee** meets again at 5:00 p.m. on Monday, April 23, and it is expected that most of the community college budget will be complete then. Differences with **PECO** and facilities matching will be resolved by the **House Policy and Budget Council Chair**, Ray Sansom and the **Senate Fiscal Policy and Calendar Committee Chair**, Lisa Carlton. The Council chairs have through April 26 to resolve their issues. The **House Speaker** and **Senate President** resolve the last remaining issues April 29. The final budget must be resolved and printed by May 1st in order to be voted on May 4th.



Sen. Lisa Carlton, D-District 23

The 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** to track.

At press time, it appeared that the House and Senate were getting close to agreement on the Community College System budget. They have agreed to an increase in operating funds of 4.9% for the System that will be distributed through the System's funding formulas. As a reminder, however, the funding formulas affect each college differently and the percentage increase for each college will vary from the 4.9% System increase in operating funds.

Both sides have also agreed to a 5% increase in student tuition. **The total increase in operating funds looks to be \$77,960,833.**

Categorical funding for other individual projects has not been fully resolved. Among the resolved projects are: **Succeed grants at \$20 million, Educator Prep Institutes at \$4.2 million, and the 2+2 Public Private Partnerships at \$2.455 million.** We remain optimistic that the **Phil Benjamin Matching Program will be fully funded at \$48.7 million.** It is not currently clear how the **First Generation program** will be resolved.



Rep. Ray Sansom, R-Fort Walton Beach, FL

The detailed analysis of the community college budget as of April 23, 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 in week seven are as follows:

Excess Hours

Following the contentious **Senate Higher Education Committee** meeting in week six, Dr. Ed Massey, (IRCC President and Policy and Advocacy Chair), FACC CEO Mike Comins, contract lobbyists and Division staff met several times with Senator Constantine and his staff. Significant progress was made in these meetings. We have a better understanding of the Senator's intent with the bill and he and his staff have a better understanding of the adverse impact on college operations and several student populations. Senator Constantine has agreed not to advance the bill beyond the **Senate Higher Education Committee** until we have reached an agreement. We have agreed to continue to work with the Senator and his staff to work out a solution that can be implemented and supported by the colleges.

SB 2862 was heard in the **Higher Education Committee** on April 19. Senator Constantine presented an amendment which provided a few more exemptions to the bill, and also allowed the college boards of trustees to have an option to implement the bill. Mike Comins then testified that the colleges would withhold opposition to the bill as a gesture of our commitment to continue working with Sen. Constantine.

While the bill passed out of the Committee April 19, it is not anticipated to be heard again, nor is **HB 1507** (Altman). However, a community college task force will be working in the interim to develop a means of identifying a very specific group of students without creating unintended consequences to other groups of students.

Articulation

[SB 1190](#) (Lynn) was heard in the **Higher Education Appropriations Committee** on April 17 and passed. The bill, as amended, creates, in statute, 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, but this bill is now on the **Senate Calendar**. It is anticipated that the substance of this bill will likely appear in a compromise bill.

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 **Higher Education Appropriations Committee** on April 17, and is now on the **Senate Calendar**.



Sen. Evelyn J. Lynn, R-District 7

[HB 7147](#) relating to **Post Secondary Education Enhancements** includes language that implements the settlement between the State Board of Education (SBE) and the **Board of Governors (BOG)** regarding **community colleges baccalaureate degrees**. On April 19, the bill was heard on the floor and amended to address some of the long-standing concerns with the process of approving baccalaureate degrees, and also requires studies of higher education issues of enrollment forecasting and common course numbering.

It is expected that a bill will pass this year that addresses the baccalaureate issue, probably a bill that combines the intent of both the Senate and the House bills.

Board of Governors

Legislation that clarifies the responsibilities of the **Board of Governors and 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**. The bill passed the **Senate** on April 19, and will need to be taken up by the **House** and passed.

Financial Aid

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)**. [HB 343](#) (Bean) is on the agenda of the **Policy and Budget Committee** for Tuesday, April 24. [SB 918](#) (Wise) is on the **Senate Calendar**. These bills appear to be in good shape for final passage.

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. Despite opposition from a newly formed beauty association, [SB 920](#) passed out of the **Senate Higher Education Committee** April 19. It is now scheduled for a hearing on April 24, in the **General Government Appropriations Committee**. [HB 117](#) will be heard April 23, in the **House Policy and Budget Committee**. This bill is also in good shape for final passage.

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 sales tax 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. [HB 185](#) passed out of the **House Government Efficiency and Accountability Council** April 19, and is now in the **Policy and Budget Council**. [SB 552](#) was withdrawn from **General Government Appropriations** on April 19, and is now in the **Senate Finance and Tax Committee**.

FCAT changes

The **House Schools and Learning Council** bill on K-12 standards is [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 for Florida’s Future” is that the State should raise the educational standards for K-12 students. The bill was put on the **House** Calendar on April 20. A **Senate** companion, [SB 1238](#), was amended to be a companion bill. The bill is scheduled to be heard on Tuesday, April 24, in the **Pre K-12 Appropriations Committee**.

Textbook Affordability (formerly Textbook Sales Tax Exemption)

The **FACC** legislative team and the **Florida Junior and Community College Student Government Association (FJCCSGA)** 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 policies and practices that might help reduce the costs. The bill also restricts postsecondary employees from benefiting from textbook selection. [HB 289](#) has been on the **House Calendar** since April 6.

[SB 2492](#) (Haridopolos) passed out of the **Higher Education Committee** on April 19, and is now in **Higher Education Appropriations**.

[SB 254](#) (Wise) had been amended to be the same as the house bill, but it has multiple committees of review still in the **Senate**.



Rep. Anitere Flores, R-Miami

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.

On April 20, a **Conference Committee** was designated, and the team will try to come to agreement on a plan that helps property owners, without breaking the budgets of the counties and cities.



Rep. Frank Attkisson, R-Kissimmee

BILLS SEEING NO ACTION

Financial Aid

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.

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**. Neither bill has been heard recently, so passage is not expected.

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. Neither bill has been heard recently, so passage is not likely.



Sen. Steve Oelrich, R-District 14

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, the bills have not been heard. Three bills were 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**.

Fulltime Faculty Ratios

HB 1279 (Fitzgerald) and **SB 2652** (Geller) propose to require that 75% of college faculty be full time employees. Neither bill has been heard recently, so passage is not likely.

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/>