



As we enter the last week of session, ending this Friday night May 4, very little remains to be decided for higher education. The biggest issue of the session, **property tax**, however, remains unresolved. **Governor Charlie Crist** weighed in on the issue in week eight, following a heavily attended town hall meeting on the issue held at **Palm Beach Community College**. **Governor Crist** held a second town hall meeting at **Valencia Community College** and **Lt. Governor Kottkamp** held a town hall meeting at **Edison College**. Colleges were certainly pleased to host the town hall meetings.



Governor Charlie Crist

In spite of lengthy meetings of a conference committee made up of Senators and Representatives, progress has been very limited. It appears that the **House** and **Senate** are so far apart that agreement on that issue may be a long-shot. From the very beginning of negotiations, the **House** has set a goal of \$1,200 in savings for homestead properties, \$750 for non-homestead properties, and \$3,300 for commercial and industrial real estate. The **House** is still sticking to their proposal for a constitutional amendment that would allow voters to decide whether to **abolish property taxes in favor of a 2.5 cent sales tax increase**. No conference committee meetings were held on April 26 or 27, leading many to speculate about the potential of a Special Session this summer.

Budget

The only “must pass” piece of legislation is the **Appropriations Act**, and it appears that it is nearly completed. While the final document won’t be seen until Tuesday, May 1, the budget figures for all of education have been released. The colleges should be pleased with an increase in state funding of 4.9% for the system through the funding formulas, and while it always hurts to have students pay more, a 5% increase in student tuition will help Colleges tremendously.

On Friday April 27, the **Division of Community Colleges** provided the first look at the impact of the funding on individual community colleges. As a reminder, four funding formulas cause differences in funding per college as does funding provided when new facilities become operational. Consequently, increases are expected to range from 3.3% to 6.2 % by college. Check the FACC website on May 1 for the college-by-college funding, for more information. <http://www.facc.org/legisact.htm>

In addition to the operating dollars from state funds and tuition, the legislature fully endorsed the concept of **Educator Prep Institutes**, by funding them at \$3.8 million, divided equally by the colleges. These Institutes focus on providing baccalaureate degree holders with the training needed to become a teacher. The **Phil Benjamin Matching Program** was fully funded and **SUCCEED** grants were funded at the same level as last year, \$20 million.



Sen. Lisa Carlton, D-District 23

College-by-college funding for facilities is unknown as of publication time. This funding is usually referred to as “PECO,” which stands for **Public Education Capital Outlay**. **Sen. Lisa Carlton** and **Rep. Ray Sansom**, met April 28, to resolve several unresolved issues that had been “bumped” to the appropriations chairs. While they did indicate that the **House** and **Senate** had agreed on the total funding for **PECO** at \$1.9 billion, they did not share how that number would be distributed to the K-12, SUS, and community college sectors. However, they did specify that they had reached agreement on fully funding the **Facilities Matching Program** at the amount approved by the **State Board of Education**. That translates to \$52 million for our colleges.

Also unknown as of publication time are the restrictions that could be added to the bill via “proviso” language. Proviso language reflects the spending conditions that are placed on most allocations. Sometimes this language can, in essence, create a whole new law by restricting the use of funds in the same way that a bill would. Even though only in effect for one year, proviso language can sometimes have a significant impact.



Rep. Ray Sansom, R-Fort Walton Beach

Responsibility for the appropriations act rotates each year between the **House** and the **Senate**. This year, the **Senate** Bill will become the final Appropriations Act. Therefore, **SB 2800** is the 2007 Appropriations Bill. As soon as the bill becomes available on May 1, FACC will provide additional conference report information on the website.

Substantive Issues:

Bills that Passed and are Going to the Governor

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. The bill passed the **Senate**, and was taken up by the **House** and passed on April 24. The bill was ordered enrolled, meaning it is ready to be sent to the Governor.



Rep. Aaron Bean, R-Fernandina Beach

Financial Aid

Also ordered enrolled on April 27, is **HB 343** (Bean) which 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 allow PSAV students to participate in the **Florida Student Access Grants** (FSAG). Funding for both the CWEP and the FSAG was provided in the appropriations conference. **SB 918** (Wise) was the companion bill.

Bills Likely to Pass During the Final Week

Articulation

SB 1190 (Lynn) has made it to the **Senate** Special Order Calendar on April 27. As amended this bill, creates, in statute, the **Articulation Coordinating Committee (ACC)**. 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 the bill was amended onto the **Baccalaureate Bill**, as indicated below.

Baccalaureate

HB 7147 has become the **House** vehicle by which clarification of the language regarding the process for community colleges to obtain approval to offer **baccalaureate degrees** may pass. The **Senate** took up their bill, **SB 1570** (Lynn) April 27, but then took up **HB 7147** which had passed the **House** and was in **Senate** messages. (The term *messages* means that the bill has physically been delivered to the other **House** for action, once passed.) The **Senate** then amended their language on the **HB 7147**, along with the ACC language in **SB 1190**. **HB 7147** should be heard on ‘third reading’ early in week nine, and then will be sent back to the **House**.

The **Senate** amended out **House** language that would have required studies related to enrollment forecasting and **Common Course Numbering**. It is unclear if the loss of the two studies is enough to cause a problem. Hopefully, the **House** will accept the amended bill. There is enough time remaining, though, for the **House** to amend the bill and send it back to the **Senate** once again.

Cosmetology

HB 117 (Carroll) and **SB 920** (Wise), 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. **SB 920** ran into some trouble on April 24, in the **Senate General Appropriations Committee**. Last second maneuvering helped get the bill through the committee. Then, **SB 970** had no trouble once it made it to the **Senate** floor passing 38-to-1 on April 27, and was sent to the **House**. **HB 117** is on the Calendar, and once it is heard, the **House** can simply take-up the **Senate** Bill, and send the bill on to the Governor.



Rep. Jennifer Carroll, R-Jacksonville

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**. Although the bill was thought to be permanently stalled, **HB 965** was heard and passed at the final meeting of the Policy and Budget Committee on April 25, and then put on the **House Calendar**. Since **SB 1232** passed the **Senate** on March 22, the **House** can pass the bill and send it to the Governor.

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” is that the State should raise the standards as to what is expected of K-12 students. The Bill was put on the House Calendar in week eight, had been heard and approved on second reading, and was temporarily postponed on third reading on April 26. The **Senate** companion, **SB 1238**, was discussed in the **Education PreK-12 Appropriations Committee**, but temporarily postponed. These actions could be an insurmountable challenge for the bill.



Sen. Don Gaetz, R-District 4

Bills Not Likely to Pass During the Final Week

Excess Hours

Senator Lee Constantine’s “excess hours” bill, **SB 2862** appears to have failed. The bill would require students to pay an additional 50% tuition when they exceed 120% of credit hours required by their declared degree.

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 to whom this could apply without creating unintended consequences to other groups of students.

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 would give a sales tax exemption for college textbooks. **HB 289** (Flores) originally included the sales tax exemption. However, amendments in the **House Schools and Learning Council** removed the exemption. The bill requires a study regarding textbook prices, and the identification of policies and practices that might help reduce the costs. The bill also restricts postsecondary employees from benefiting from textbook selection. **HB 289** actually passed the **House** on April 27, but the **Senate** companions are still in committee. **SB 254** (Wise) and **SB 2492** (Haridopolos) are the companions. Even though one bill has passed, it is not likely that this bill will be heard again.

Half Cent Sales Tax for Miami Dade County

HB 185 (Garcia) and **SB 552** (Margolis) would have allowed 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 would support scholarships, program enhancements, student retention efforts, and capital outlay. The bills are still in committees, which are not meeting again.

Financial Aid

HB 1443 (Thompson) also addressed 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**, but also stated that within FSAG, community college students are not required to receive PELL grants in order to obtain FSAG. The SB also addressed 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. Lobbyists do not believe the bills will pass, but do continue to try to amend some portions onto other bills.

Transportation Fee

HB 207 (Chestnut) and **SB 684** (Oelrich) would have authorized 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. Both bills still have committees of reference to clear and passage is not likely. HB 207- <http://www.flsenate.gov/session>

Retirement/FRS Benefits

SB 0008 (Lawson) and **HB 0087** (Allen) both were filed to increase the health insurance subsidy to employees under the Florida Retirement System. Both bills had 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. As with the other retirement bills, they have not had much action.

Fulltime Faculty Ratios

HB 1279 (Fitzgerald) and **SB 2652** (Geller) proposed to require that 75% of college faculty be full time employees. Neither was ever heard.

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:
Rep. Marco
Rubio
R-Miami



Rep. Marco Rubio is serving a two-year term (2006-2008) as Speaker of the House in the Florida Legislature. In one of his first actions in that leadership role, he announced a set of bold ideas that will serve as the House agenda during his term. Rep. Rubio gathered these concepts, that he calls "100 Innovative Ideas for Florida's Future," from the input of Florida voters and other ideas similar to those initiated by Gov. Jeb Bush. Of the 100 ideas, a full one-third are related to education, including number fourteen that commits to, "Develop fiscal policies that address the scope of the programs for which each state university and community college will receive state support to permit these programs to excel, reduce unnecessary duplication, and maximize the return on investment to our citizens from this support." Rep. Rubio represents District 111 in the Coral Gables (South Florida) area. He was first elected to the House in 2000 and was re-elected subsequently, serving on the Procedures & Policy Committee from 2004-2006. Away from Tallahassee, he is Counsel in the Real Estate and Land Use Practice Group for Broad and Cassel, and is a Board member of the Miami Performing Arts Center. He attended the University of Florida where he earned a Bachelor's Degree in 1993 and later received his J.D. from the University of Miami in 1996. Born on May 28, 1971 in Miami, Rep. Rubio is married to the former Jeanette Dousdebès. The couple has three children, Amanda Loren, Daniella and Anthony.