



*April 12, 2010*

## ***PERCEPTIONS E-zine #6***

### **A Legislative Update**

for members of the Florida Association of Community Colleges

#### ***ONLY TWO ISSUES REMAIN ON PROPOSED CHANGES TO RETIREMENT***

Last week, the action in the Legislature was marked by a turn into the backstretch toward the finish line. With only three weeks remaining in the 2010 Legislative session, there was shift from focus on individual bills to figuring out how to wrestle the state budget to the ground.

As a result, the collective advocacy efforts of many organizations including the FACC seem to be paying off. We saw some significant pushback on many of the bills that proposed changes to the Florida Retirement System. Many legislators have told us on the lobbying team that they are being undated with letters, phone calls, emails, and faxes in opposition to the bills and the concepts.

[HB 1319](#) by Grady has not been heard in any committee. [SB 1902](#) by Bennett was not considered in Community Affairs on April 7. [HB 1543](#) by Zapata was withdrawn on March 24. None of these bills is scheduled to be heard.

#### ***WHAT IS STILL IN PLAY?***

[HB 5701](#) by the Full Appropriations Council on Education and Economic Development was passed on the floor of the House by close vote on April 1. This bill remains in play and will be considered in the budget conference since there is a \$250M cash savings to the State attached to it. If it were to move any further, it would have to be included in the final conference appropriations bill passed by the House, and would then have to be passed in the Senate. This bill contains a provision that would **eliminate the health insurance subsidy for current retirees. This could cost individual retirees up to \$1800 annually.** An article in today's Tallahassee Democrat by long time Capitol reporter Bill Cotterell covers the issue very well. (<http://www.tallahassee.com/article/20100412/COLUMNIST03/4120305/-1/columnists>)

[SB 2022](#) by Alexander also remains in play. It is the bill that will require you to make a "co-pay" toward your state retirement effective January 1, 2011. This includes all employee classes and DROP. The proposed amount of the co-pay is .25% of your salary (one quarter of one percent). For a \$50,000 salary, that would equate to \$125 annually. Similarly, if this were to pass through the budget conference, the House would have to approve it.

We urge you to continue to contact you local legislators in opposition to these bills. Please follow the "rules of engagement" posted the FACC web site [Retirement Information](#) page. **DO NOT USE COLLEGE RESOURCES OF ANY KIND WHEN CONTACTING YOUR LOCAL LEGISLATORS!**

**UPDATE ON OTHER SUBSTANTIVE LEGISLATION (Special thanks to Erin McColskey (PBSC), FACC Legislative Committee Chair)**

#### **Funding**

Appropriations bills and the related conforming bills are **ready for budget conference, which could start this week, or next.** The Senate Appropriations bill increases funding to the College System by 7.8%, plus an 8% tuition increase. The

House Appropriations bill decreases funding by 4.5%, but also increases tuition by 8%. The difference is about \$100M on program funding. The Senate's PECO funding is also considerably higher than the House. **The two chambers' State budgets are significantly apart in total spending, with the Senate over \$1B higher. However, with the announcement of the Seminole gaming compact an additional \$425M is now available to spend.**

In addition to funding, the conforming bills and other appropriations bills being monitored, activity of other substantive issues is described below:

**Bright Futures:** The Senate proposes several changes to eligibility, etc. The House proposes continued flat awards for another year.

**College and Workforce Fees:** The Senate proposes that Continuing Workforce Education be supported by fees only.

**Open Access Textbooks:** The Senate proposes "encouraging open access" textbooks.

**Possible Merger study:** The Senate proposes an OPPAGA study of the pros and cons of a merger of Adult Public School Workforce into College System.

**Library Automation:** Both Senate and House encourage consolidated purchasing and universal search.

**College System Baccalaureates:** The Senate proposes new baccalaureates not be funded with CCPF, only with specific baccalaureate funds, foundation funds or other revenue. The Senate did not roll the baccalaureate funds into the CCPF. The House did roll the funds in to the CCPF, which is the position of the Council of Presidents.

**Residency.** As amended, students determined to be residents at another Florida institution could carry that determination with them to another. **[HB 1243](#) passed it's first committee, and withdrawn from a second. There is one more committee before floor action. [SB 2398](#) was heard in Senate Higher Ed today.**

**Strategic Plan for Higher Education.** There some action to create a **Higher Education Coordinating Council**. The Colleges do not want any coordinating council to impinge on the ability of local Boards of Trustees to make wise decisions on operational and programmatic issues. Legislation is expected and will be closely monitored.

**Fire Code.** Legislation would provide cost efficiencies, eliminate unnecessary reports, eliminate duplicative inspections, and more. **[HB 531](#)** by Weinstein and **[SB 1074](#)** by Wise. The Senate Bill has moved along well, but the House bill yet to be heard. **Efforts to merge key components into other bills are being worked on.**

**Transportation Fee.** Would allow colleges to assess a transportation fee to provide free bus service for students to and from campus. **[SB 208](#)** by Oelrich is ready for floor action and **[HB 255](#)** by Chestnut passed the House on 3/24.

**Nursing.** The Colleges have worked closely with other providers to address "glitch" issues from last year's bills. **[HB 1337](#)** by Grimsley and **[SB 2530](#)** by Alexander have moved through several committees and are looking like they might pass.

**College Name Changes.** **[HB 245](#)** by Bernard and **[SB 436](#)** by Baker, now including Palm Beach State College, Seminole State College, College of Central Florida (formerly CFCC), and Florida Gateway College (formerly LCCC) are **on special order and should pass this week.**