



**Week Two Session Summary January 17-20  
January 23, 2012**

**PRESIDENT OF THE WEEK**

Each week during legislative session we ask our college Presidents to spend some time in Tallahassee. The “president of the week” helps overall with our lobbying and advocacy effort. We were pleased to have Dr. Eduardo Padron (MDC) who also brought along some MDC trustees. During their time here last week, they visited legislators and had a meeting with Governor Scott. Also in Tallahassee last week was Dr. Ed Massey (IRSC). We thank both the president and the trustees for their time here and dedication to the AFC and FCS advocacy effort.

**BUDGETS**

Last week we reported information on the FCS Legislative Budget Request (LBR). Neither chamber has released budgets yet, but it is expected that the House may this week. Higher education allocations from the House were released Jan. 19 and it appears the over reduction expected in the House will be less than expected.

**ON-LINE PROGRAM PUSH**

The Legislature is very focused on reducing costs for higher education while at the same time not limiting access. One strategy being considered is establishing a pilot program with four institutions which have established enrollments in on-line programs. The initiative will target students who have not been enrolled for a while and could be lured back to complete a degree via on-line delivery. UWF will lead the effort which will include USF, SPC and FSCJ.

**BILLS OF SIGNIFICANCE TO AFC**

**Baccalaureate Degrees**

**SB 492 By Brannon and HB 4041 by Burgin Regarding Sponsorships (identical)**

Until last week, this was a rather innocuous bill that would prevent colleges from “sponsoring” athletic activities or sports similar to sports for which public postsecondary educational institutions offer scholarships. However, last week we learned that Sen. Siplin (D, Orlando) expanded the scope of the bill and filed an amendment to repeal the provision that gives our institutions exemptions from getting SBE approval for baccalaureate degrees, after at least three years have passed since baccalaureate degrees were approved. Our lobbying team was

surprised by this but the amendment which was heard and passed in the Senate Higher Education committee on January 19 and is now moving forward. Efforts are underway to review the amendment and determine the official position we will take on it.

## **Retirement and Benefits**

### **[HB 525](#) by Workman and Abruzzo; [SB1334](#) by Oelrich and [SB 1280](#) by Latvala (identical)**

As reported last week, Rep. Ritch Workman (R, Melbourne), has filed a retirement system reform bill that addresses changes that would only impact new hires effective July 1, 2012. Those revisions were categorically summarized in last week's *Perception*. So far, no additional changes have been made to the bill nor has it begun moving through the committee process.

## **Facility Contracting**

### **[HB 719](#) by Van Zant and [SB 0794](#) by Hays regarding Public Contracting (identical)**

Also reported last week, HB 719 and SB 0794 provide definitions for terms "governmental unit" & "facility". Among other things the bill would prohibit contracts that require the use of contractors and subcontractors from collective bargaining units. Of most concern to our colleges is that the bill revises the period during which an agency must file a protest following certain contract solicitations or awards. The protest period is extended to seven days and excludes weekends and holidays. HB 719 has four committee stops and is now in the House Government Operations subcommittee but is not yet scheduled to be heard. SB 0794 is scheduled to be heard in the Senate Community Affairs committee on January 23.

## **Tuition for Returning Veterans**

### **[CS/SB 922](#) by Bennett; [HB 977](#) by Nelson; and [HB 755](#) by Holder regarding Current and Former Military Personnel (not identical)**

This is an omnibus veteran's bill to be voted out on the floor of the Senate on January 24 during Veterans and National Guard Day at the Capitol. The bill allows all veterans who physically attend a FCS or SUS institution to be deemed Florida residents for tuition purposes. The bill also provides a \$10k tax credit for hiring certain National Guardsmen. It also requires priority registration for veterans. A provision that provided for guaranteed acceptance at a state university was removed.

## **Postsecondary Funding**

### **HEAS 12-01 by O'Toole and the House Higher Education Subcommittee**

Each year there is a large "committee" bill that consolidates numerous issues into one bill. This bill does numerous things related to the funding for higher education. The major components in the bill include:

1. Renames South Florida Community College to South Florida State College
2. Repeals the Florida Distance Learning (DL) Catalog and Consortium
3. Creates the Florida Virtual Campus (FVC) as a clearinghouse for distance learning and gives the Chancellors of the SUS and FCS joint oversight and requests they establish a governance structure. The FVC shall:
  - o Develop and manage a library info portal for FCS and SUS
  - o Develop and I-Catalog of DL courses, degrees, and resources in FCS and SUS
  - o Provide streamlined, automated online admissions process for transient students, including admissions, financial aid, transfer credit, etc.

- Provide a statewide advising system (repeals the old FACTS.org) including supporting advising, registration, degree audits and advising, impact of changing majors and transferring.
  - Promote and provide recommendations for open-access textbooks and educational resources.
  - Creates Degree Completion Pilot Project plan by August 1, 2012 with UWF, USF, FSCJ, and SPC that focuses on degree completion for those with 30 plus hours and includes:
    - Single point of access
    - Partnerships with other institutions
    - Advising and student support system with degree completion specialists
    - Online admissions for transient students
    - A statewide marketing campaign
4. Includes FCS in Excess Hours statute to allow surcharges
  5. Revises Bright Futures to impact graduates beginning in 2012-13 including a two-year acceptance and a subsequent renewal to five years; covers 100% of credit hours for Florida Academic Scholars and Florida Medallion Scholars, and 60-72 hours for Florida Gold Seal;
  6. Revises FRAG and ABLE requirement for renewal of 2.5 GPA in lower division and 3.0 in upper division

## **FROM THE NEWS SERVICE OF FLORIDA WIRE...**

THE CAPITAL, TALLAHASSEE, January 20, 2012.....The Florida Senate isn't wasting time.

Senators this week tackled perhaps the most controversial issue of the legislative session, overwhelmingly approving plans to redraw boundaries for Senate and congressional districts. At the same time, Senate President Mike Haridopolos moved quickly to revive a controversial proposal that would privatize prisons across the southern half of the state. The House worked at a slower pace, maneuvering bills through committees without bothering to go to the House floor. But Speaker Dean Cannon gave the first clear indications of how the House wants to approach the budget, going along with Gov. Rick Scott's push for more education funding but rebuffing major Medicaid cuts for hospitals.

## **MAPPING THE FUTURE**

After months of hearings, the Senate voted 34-6 to approve new political boundaries for Senate and congressional districts. Perhaps the biggest surprise was the amount of bipartisan support for the plans, with seven of the Senate's 12 Democrats joining Republicans to vote in favor. But that didn't quiet opponents, who contend the maps are an incumbent-protection plan that will keep the GOP in firm control of Florida politics. The Senate votes are the first step in what likely will be a drawn-out process that will include legal challenges. The debate will shift across the Capitol in the coming week. The House Redistricting Committee is scheduled to vote on its proposals Jan. 27 with a floor vote coming as early as Feb. 2.

## **SENATE UNLOCKS PRISON PRIVATIZATION**

Haridopolos, Rules Chairman John Thrasher, R-St. Augustine, and Budget Chairman JD Alexander, R-

Lake Wales, were peeved when a Leon County circuit judge blocked a plan to privatize prison facilities in 18 counties. The judge said lawmakers improperly approved the plan in budget fine print, instead of in a regular law. That led this week to the Senate pushing forward with a bill that would revive the plan. On Friday, Haridopolos said he will send a controversial prison-privatization plan to another committee for review following concerns by Sen. Mike Fasano, R-New Port Richey, for closer review of the initiative which initially was scheduled only for a hearing in Thrasher's Rules Committee.

## HOUSE RELEASES BUDGET ALLOCATIONS

Two weeks into the 2012 session, House budget leaders followed through on promises to push forward with writing the new budget, despite sentiments in the Senate for going slow until more economic data is made available. In releasing budget allocations the determination of how much each part of the budget will include - House Speaker Dean Cannon said the chamber would honor Gov. Rick Scott's call to pump an additional \$1 billion into public education. But the Winter Park Republican chose not to commit to massive cuts to hospital reimbursement rates as proposed by Scott, a former health care executive.

In a memo, Cannon pointed to a plan that lawmakers passed last year to transform Medicaid into a statewide managed-care system. Though Cannon did not specifically mention Scott's proposal, the memo said the House wants to use the managed-care plan to change Medicaid funding for hospitals. The House plan sets aside \$100 million -- with three-quarters of that money recurring -- for lowering taxes. Scott proposed deducting \$23 million for tax cuts this year, with a constitutional amendment allowing for further reductions. The House blueprint would also set aside \$1 billion in reserves, a longstanding goal of both chambers.

## UNEMPLOYMENT

The state's economy continued to move in the right direction which is good news for possible appropriations. The state's unemployment rate in December fell 0.1 percentage points to 9.9 percent, the first time since April 2009 that the state's jobless rate fell below double digits. Gov. Scott was quick to point out that more than 140,000 jobs have been created since December 2010; an accolade the Democrats say ignores opportunities because of decisions made by Scott to refuse federal transportation money and plans to privatize prisons.

## INTERNET CAFES DRAW GOVERNOR'S IRE

Taking his strongest stand yet, the governor this week said he believed Internet Cafes were illegal or should be illegal and inserted himself into the high profile feud. With opposing factions jockeying for position on the issue of expanded gambling in the state, Scott defended the state's lottery program but said the store front cafes, which offer computerized slots and other sweepstakes games, are skirting the law. Meanwhile, the House and Senate continue to spar over whether to ban the storefront operations or heavily regulate the nearly 1,500 venues now operating across the state. The Senate Regulated Industries Committee on Thursday approved a bill to regulate the cafes.