



Now that the budgets have passed out of their respective houses, the rumors are rampant that this legislative session is well on its way to closing a week early. Having been in this process a few years, I've certainly heard that one before! Even so, this week, only the fifth of the session, the conference process will begin. Conferees are expected to be announced today. As most of you know, the conference committee is where a select few members of the legislature meld the House and Senate budgets into one final product. It is an important time of the session.

Other bills important to the SUS are passing out of committees as well. The Management Efficiency bill passed a Senate committee last week, for only the third year in a row (see Spotlight on Bills). Revisions to the Bright Futures statute continue to be discussed, although nothing has passed yet. A bill pertaining to an expansion of our PIMS program will be heard later this week (see related story) and a bill naming an FSU-owned recording studio in Gadsden County is up for a vote in a House committee today.

Remember that the Florida Channel (local cable channel 47) carries live coverage of the House and Senate deliberations daily. Also, every weekday at 5:30 p.m., the Florida Channel airs *Capitol Update*, a live, half-hour recap of the day's legislative events.

Please feel free to contact me if you need copies of bills and their analysis, or if you have questions about issues which may concern you. I can be reached at 644-4453 or by e-mail, kdaly@govrel.fsu.edu.

Kathleen Daly

Current Proposals

Two legislative proposals pertaining to Florida State University are grabbing the attention of lawmakers, the press and the Board of Regents this session. One bill would authorize a four-year medical program at Florida State, while the other would place in statute the existence of the FSU/OU Production Center. Neither was requested by Florida State University.

MEDICAL SCHOOL

Representative Durell Peaden's bill (R, Crestview) would set up a two-year academic program in medicine at FSU, which would be followed by two years of off-site hospital training. Students can already take their first year of medical courses at Florida State before transferring to the University of Florida medical school. **House Bill 4175** would expand our Program in Medical Sciences (PIMS) to the second year. Representative Peaden, a physician, says this program will be different than the state's other medical schools because it would focus on training physicians to treat senior citizens. Peaden also said the proposal would not require building a costly hospital because students would train elsewhere. A \$1.45 million appropriation is traveling with the bill, to be used for the expansion of the PIMS program. Representatives Jim King and John Thrasher (FSU alumni) publicly support the bill. Senator W.D. Childers (R, Pensacola, FSU alumna) is sponsoring the companion bill in the Senate, **Senate Bill 2022**. HB 4175 will be debated before the House Education Innovation Committee on Thursday, April 2.

FSU/OPEN UNIVERSITY PROPOSAL

Early last month, Representative Jerry Melvin (R, Ft. Walton Beach) visited the FSU/OU Resource and Production Center on the campus of FSU. He was so taken with the efforts of the center that he went back to the Capitol and wrote a bill, establishing the center in statute. Senator John Grant (R, Tampa, FSU alumnus), also impressed by our program, filed the companion proposal, **Senate Bill 1886**. The House proposal was heard in Representative Melvin's Education Innovation Committee earlier this month, but will not have further discussion this session. The Senate Bill will not receive a hearing.

Session Schedule March 30-April 3, 1998

Senate:	
Wednesday, April 1	9:00am-11:00am
Thursday, April 2	2:00pm-5:00pm
House:	
Tuesday, March 31	8:30am-12:00pm
Wednesday, April 1	8:30am-12:00pm



Spotlight on Bills

University Presidents' Management Efficiency

Committee Substitute to Senate Bills 1358 & 160, by Senator John Grant (FSU alumnus) and Senator George Kirkpatrick, passed out of the Senate Education Committee last week. This bill is the University Presidents' Management Efficiency Bill, which has passed out of this committee for the past three years. This year is different, however, as the committee has reached an agreement on both flexibility and accountability issues addressed in this legislation. The proposed Committee Substitute does several things, including:

1. Deletes obsolete or redundant rule-making, record-keeping and reporting requirements by the BOR and universities, and
2. Reduces current bureaucratic impediments to our university presidents' effective management of our universities. At the same time, accountability to the Legislature is maintained through language linking the accountability process to Performance Based Budgeting and by tightening current law on placement of funds outside the state treasury.

It is completely consistent with our new chancellor's goal of delegating authority to the presidents while instituting processes to insure their responsibility for each university's performance. House Bill 755, sponsored by Representative Lee Constantine, is similar to **CS/SB's 1358 & 160**. **This week CS/SB's 1358 & 160** will be heard in the Senate Governmental Reform and Oversight Committee.

State University Board of Regents Terms

Representative Bob Casey is sponsoring House Bill 4195 which clarifies that membership of the Board of Regents (BOR) is composed of 13 citizens and the Commissioner of Education. The bill reduces the length of the term of office from 6 years to 4 years for members of the BOR appointed after the effective date of the act. **HB 4195** requires that activities of the search committee for selection of the Chancellor of the State University System be conducted in the sunshine. The bill repeals the restriction that prohibits the BOR from granting a tenured faculty appointment to any university president the board had removed from office. Also included in **HB 4195** is language allowing universities to raise tuition 10 percent higher than the level set by the Legislature, above the 7 percent tuition increase that is already proposed in the House and Senate Budgets. **HB 4195** passed favorably out of the House Committee on Colleges and Universities last Thursday. There is an identical bill in the Senate, **Committee Substitute to Senate Bill 758** sponsored by the Senate Education Committee and Senator John Grant (FSU alumnus). **CS/SB 758** is now in the Senate Ways and Means Committee. **HB 4195** has been referred to the House Committee on Governmental Operations.

Deferred Retirement Options Program (DROP)

The 1997 Legislature passed legislation which established a new benefit program for all eligible FRS members which allows them to have their retirement benefits deposited monthly into their DROP account, earning interest, while simultaneously continuing to work. The purpose of this program was to provide a way for retirees to accumulate additional savings while continuing employment. This year, the House Committee on General Government Appropriations is sponsoring **Committee Substitute to Committee Substitute to House Bill 3131** to clarify several provisions of the DROP bill. Chief among the proposed changes: members who have already worked past their normal retirement age or date will be allowed to participate for a minimum of 36 (and up to 60) months, as of the effective date of this law. **CS/CS/HB 3131** passed out of the House Committee on General Government Appropriations and is now on the calendar to be heard on the House floor. There is a similar bill moving through the Senate, **Committee Substitute to Senate Bill 216** by the Senate Governmental Reform & Oversight Committee and Senator Alberto Gutman. **CS/SB 216** has been placed on the Senate calendar and is waiting to be heard on the Senate floor.

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