



Welcome to Session '99

At 10:30 a.m. on Tuesday, March 2, the gavel will sound, officially opening the 1999 Legislative Session. Since they organized themselves in mid-November, shortly after the elections, the legislators have been busy filing and hearing legislation in committee, as well as beginning their work on the budget.

Again this year, legislators are preparing to deliberate on their spending plans by the third week of the nine week session.

The overall budget picture looks good again this year, due to a continuing strong economy and the \$11 billion tobacco settlement. The Governor released his \$46.8 billion budget recommendations last month. He dedicated 55.60 percent of statewide general revenue dollars to education funding, which results in a \$454.5 million dollar increase over last year's expenditures (see related story). School readiness (age 0-3), education, opportunity scholarships (formerly known as school vouchers), tort reform, Florida Retirement System reform and a \$1.2 billion tax cut package have been identified by the Republican leadership as priority issues for this session.

Florida State University should have an active and hopefully fruitful session. As you may know by now, the current Speaker of the Florida House, Representative John Thrasher, is an FSU alumnus. In fact, through the elections last fall, Florida State now has a total of 20 alumni in the Legislature, a gain of four over last year. Recently Governor Bush appointed several legislators to agency positions, leaving their seats vacant. Special elections will be held statewide on March 9 to fill those vacancies. Florida State may very well pick up another alum. I will let you know!

We are finalizing our plans for another FSU Day at the Capitol on April 6. It will be a day of honoring our legislative alumni, while promoting our magnificent institution of higher learning. In short, it will be a "garnet and golden" day. If you would like to attend or participate, please let me know.

Throughout this 9-week Legislative Session, from March 2 to April 30, I will attempt to keep you informed via this weekly Legisletter. As always, I welcome your comments, questions and concerns, and value your insight and knowledge. Please feel free to contact me at **644-4453** or e-mail kdaly@govrel.fsu.edu.

Kathleen Daly

Session Schedule March 2-5, 1999

House

Tuesday, March 2	10:20 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.
* Joint Session	11:00 a.m.– 12:00 Noon
	2:30 p.m. – 6:00 p.m.
Thursday, March 4	8:50 a.m. – 12:00 Noon
Friday, March 5	8:50 a.m. – 12:00 Noon

Senate

Tuesday, March 2	10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.
* Joint Session	11:00 a.m.– 12:00 Noon
	2:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.
Thursday, March 4	9:00 a.m. – 12:00 Noon
Friday, March 5	9:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Gavel to Gavel Coverage

On March 2, 1999, The Florida Channel, a service of WFSU-TV and the Florida Legislature, begins its **Gavel-to Gavel Coverage** of the Florida House and Senate. Live coverage of the session and committee meetings begins at 8:00 a.m. and lasts until 6:00 p.m. ET, Monday through Friday until April 30, 1999.

Included in the gavel-to-gavel coverage is the nightly news program **Capitol Update**, a live, half-hour program offering clear, concise reports on the impact of bills being debated by members of the Florida House and Senate. **Capitol Update** airs from 5:30 - 6:00 p.m. ET, Monday through Friday and can be seen statewide on the Sunshine Network (local cable channel 23), The Florida Channel (local cable channel 47), and public television affiliates around the state. Also, The Florida Channel will broadcast Governor Bush's **State of the State Address** live at 11:00 a.m. ET on Tuesday, March 2, 1999. A pre-taped Democratic response will immediately follow upon conclusion of the address (at approximately 12:00 noon).



Spotlight on Bills

Site-Determined Baccalaureate Degree Program

State University System

Enrollment in institutions of higher education is projected to increase by more than 200,000 students by the year 2010, due to increases in the number of high school graduates and a greater demand for highly trained workers in the market place. Florida's 28 community colleges are the primary entry point for post-secondary students, and several already have arrangements with public and/or private postsecondary institutions for the delivery of upper-level courses. **Senate Bill 664**, sponsored by Senator Donald Sullivan, creates a site based baccalaureate degree access program that encourages community colleges to partner with public and independent, Florida and non-Florida post secondary institutions to increase access to baccalaureate programs. The bill provides for approved community colleges to receive start up funds to contract with 4-year institutions that will deliver upper level courses and specifies conditions that must be met before funds are released. It requires community colleges to collaborate with local interests to identify local academic and economic development needs. The proposed degree programs and agreements between institutions will be reviewed and approved by PEPC, the Postsecondary Education Planning Commission, which will consult with the BOR and the State Board of Community Colleges before approving programs. This bill has passed out of the Senate Education Committee and will next be heard by the Committee on Fiscal Policy.

PCB CU 99-05 is a proposed committee bill from the House Colleges and Universities Committee that directly affects the State University System. The bill expands eligibility for participation in the Optional Retirement Program to all A&P positions; revises provisions regarding approval for the issuance of bonds by university direct support organizations to require legislative approval for those projects where the state will be asked for operating funds or funds to purchase a facility; modifies the thresholds that are applicable to state universities for "continuing contracts" under the "Consultants Competitive Negotiation Act"; permits acceptance of credit and/or debit cards for payment of tuition and fees without the imposition of a convenience fee for such card services; revises provisions regarding approval for the leasing, purchasing or operating of facilities by university direct support organizations to require legislative approval for those projects where the state will be asked for operating funds or funds to purchase a facility; repeals statutory provisions relating to the Women's Athletic Trust Fund, which has never received any funding from the legislature; and requires an annual report of research activities and findings from universities receiving funding pursuant to s.413.613, F.S., the Brain and Spinal Cord Injury Rehabilitation Trust Fund. **The bill will be heard on Wednesday, March 3 at 3:30p.m.** Several amendments to the bill have already been filed.

BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS

During its 60 day session, the Legislature is required by the state constitution to pass an annual balanced budget. The budget process and its outcome is of great interest and importance to Florida State University. The Chancellor submitted his budget recommendations to the Governor last fall, and the Governor released his recommended spending plan to the Legislature last month. Members of the House and Senate have started crafting their own versions of the budget. The following is a summary of both the Governor's and the Chancellor's budget recommendations:

GOVERNOR'S BUDGET

- *The \$46.8 billion budget represents a 3.1 percent increase over last year's plan.
- *55.6 percent of General Revenue is dedicated to education funding, \$454.5 million above FY 1998- 99 expenditures.
- *Recommended funding for the SUS totals over \$2 billion.
- *A total of \$57.2 million may be used to implement mission differentiation or other initiatives that support the 1998-2003 Strategic Plan.
- *Recommends a 6.5 percent tuition increase for the SUS.
- *A 2.6 percent employee pay increase is recommended, effective July 1, 1999.
- *Non-recurring funds for the Challenge Grant Program are recommended in the amount of \$11.9 million.
- *Allocates \$4.3 million for the state employee free course program.
- *Provides \$7.8 million for Plant, Operations and Maintenance restoration.
- *Restores PECO funds previously reduced

CHANCELLOR'S BUDGET RECOMMENDATIONS

- *Allows for system enrollment growth of approximately 3000 FTE, \$25.2 million, with distribution determined by the BOR based on university mission.
- *Recommends \$17 million to cover the costs of state employee free courses.
- *\$7.8 million for Plant, Operations and Maintenance restoration.
- *Provides \$36.3 million for the Challenge Grant Program.
- *\$72 million for Undergraduate and Graduate enhancement funds.
- *Provides \$7.5 million for Distance Learning Programs and administration
- *Includes \$1.3 million for Americans with Disabilities compliance.

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