

LegisLetter

FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

Volume Thirteen / Number One • March 3, 2003

A tight budget, revenue shortfalls, and the implementation of costly constitutional amendments are certain to be among the major themes of the 2003 Legislative Session, which begins tomorrow.

As Governor Bush prepares to deliver his State of the State address, the Republican-controlled Legislature looks to tackle these and other challenging issues during the next 60 days. Among these are the rising costs of medical malpractice insurance, the ailing Workers' Compensation system, and the increased K-20 education concerns. The budget, however, which is the only bill the Legislature is required to pass, promises to be central to all of these issues. There are those who speculate, even at this early juncture, that the Legislature will not conclude its work within the 60-day time frame, and predict an extended session.

The Class-Size Amendment issue is key to the budget fight. Governor Bush suggested cuts to the SUS budget in support of implementation of the class-size reduction amendment (**see related budget story**). Beyond that, School-Code-rewrite "glitch bills" have been filed, as have bills to change the Bright Futures Scholarship and Prepaid Tuition programs (**see Spotlight on Bills**).

Both the House and Senate budget panels began their deliberations in January, and are expected to release their budget allocations within the next few weeks. As well, the Revenue Estimating Conference, a panel of budget and legislative staffers, will release their quarterly budget projections and economic indicators in mid-March, which should prove useful to the budgeting process.

The Governor's address, opening-day ceremonies, as well as daily coverage of the session can be seen on WFSU-TV, local cable channel 4. As always, I will attempt to keep you informed via this newsletter, which will be distributed every Monday during the two-month session. And please, feel free to contact my staff or me if you need copies of bills and their analyses, or if you have questions or concerns about the legislative process. I can be reached at kdaly@govrel.fsu.edu, or at (850) 644-4453.

Kathleen

Governor's Budget Recommendations

The Governor released his budget recommendations in January. While the Legislature crafts the budget that becomes law, they often use the Governor's recommendations to guide their deliberations. Since the State University System does not fare well in the Governor's budget, a grass-roots e-mail campaign has been initiated, involving our alumni, boosters, friends and parents. This initiative asks legislators to adequately fund higher education in Florida. Provided in the column to the right is a summary of the primary components of the Governor's budget.

Governor's Budget Recommendations for State Universities 2003-2004

Allows for the following fee increases:

- Tuition increase of 7.5% across the board, plus 5% discretionary for in-state undergraduate students.
- Discretionary in-state graduate and professional tuition increase.
- Discretionary out-of-state tuition increase.

Does not fund enrollment growth.

Reduces General Revenue by \$37.3 million (offset by the 7.5% tuition increase).

Reduces State University System General Revenue by about 6.5%, or \$111.5 million, resulting in a cut to FSU of \$16.7 million

Deducts \$76 million from State University System PECO to fund K-12 class-size amendment. Provides no PECO funding for Florida State University.

Caps the Bright Futures Scholarship Program at \$232 million, not including any tuition increases. Requires each university to supplement each Bright Futures recipient for any shortfall, which would have an approximately \$30 million impact on the universities.

Recommends \$79 million for the Courtelis Facilities Match Program, but does not provide funding for the Challenge Grant Matching Gifts Program.

Offers \$4,256,264 for the FSU Medical School.

Cuts \$2.2 million in operating funds for the Ringling Museum of Fine Art.

Spotlight on Bills

HB 619, Postsecondary Student Fees by Representative Loranne Ausley (D-Tallahassee) Authorizes each University Board of Trustees to establish a nonrefundable admission deposit for students accepted to State University System institutions. **Senator Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-Wesson)** has filed the companion bill in the Senate.

HB 91, State University System Designations by Representative Ray Sansom (R-Ft. Walton Beach, FSU Alumnus), This year's State University System Naming bill includes five items for FSU: the "John E. Thrasher Building" at the Medical School, the "Sherrill Williams Ragans Residence Hall," the "Reubin O'D. Askew Student Life Center," the "Michael Allen McIntosh Track and Field Center," and the "John M. McKay Visitors' Pavilion" at the Ringling Museum. **Senator**

Durell Peaden (R-Crestview) will sponsor the Senate Companion.

SB 210, Foreign Student Visa Information by Senator Anna Cowin (R-Leesburg), Requires each university to report verified visa information to the Department of Law Enforcement on each foreign student 18 years or older. There is not a House companion at this time.

There are several bills proposed that repeal or revise the class-size amendment to the Constitution. Additionally, there are several bills that revise the Bright Futures Program and the Pre-paid Tuition Program. There are also bills proposed to change the DROP program for K-12 teachers to address class-size requirements. All of these issues will be closely tracked throughout the Legislative Session.

SESSION SCHEDULE

SENATE Full Session:

Tuesday, March 4
10:30 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Wednesday, March 5
10:00 am – 12:00 noon

HOUSE Full Session:

Tuesday, March 4
10:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.

Friday March 7
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon

Joint Opening Day Session:

Tuesday, March 4
11:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Staff Changes

Sarah Vaughan has left the office of Governmental Relations to pursue a degree at the University of North Florida. We wish her all the best. Lauren Larson has joined our staff and will coordinate Governmental Relations events, constituent requests, and the *LegisLetter*. She is a welcome addition to our office. At right is a complete list of members of the Governmental Relations staff. Please feel free to contact us at 644-4453 if you have any questions.



OFFICE OF GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

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