

LegisLetter

FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY GOVERNMENTAL RELATIONS

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UNIVERSITY GOVERNANCE

Last Wednesday, the Senate Committee on Pre-K-12 Education unanimously approved a joint resolution that would again change the governance structure of the State University System. SJR 2308 passed its first committee of reference with one amendment. (The amendment simply leaves the terms of the current members of university boards

of trustees in place so their terms would not automatically expire on the effective date of the governance restructure, July 1, 2009.) The bill has one more committee hearing, in the Senate Committee on Higher Education Appropriations, before it goes to the full Senate for a vote. The proposal also mandates the Commissioner of Education

in Florida be an elected member of the State Cabinet.

On Friday, the House Schools & Learning Council took up, and passed, the House version of the Joint Resolution, which is now referred to as a Proposed Committee Bill or PCB SLC 08-02. It differs from the Senate version in that it includes a section that would create the Florida College System. This system would be comprised of two-year and four-year public postsecondary educational institutions that grant academic degrees at the undergraduate level (i.e., no graduate degree programs would be affected).

The House resolution also creates the Florida College Board, which would be comprised of 6 appointees by the Governor and the Commissioner of Education, who would oversee and coordinate the Florida college system.

Since the provisions in these proposals require a change to the Florida Constitution, the initiative must go before the voters in November (upon passage by the Legislature).

Summary of Proposed Changes:

- Commissioner of Education to be an elected member of the Cabinet.
- Governor and Cabinet to constitute the State Board of Education.
- Board of Governors to administer the state university system as provided by law (replacing "operate, regulate, control and be fully responsible for").
- Board of Governors to be comprised of 6 citizens appointed by the Governor (vs. 14) serving 4 years (vs. 7) plus the Education Commissioner, Chair of the Advisory Council of Faculty Senates, and President of the Florida Student Association for a total of 9 (vs. 17).
- University Boards of Trustees - all 11 citizen members to be appointed by the Governor (no split of appointments with BOG); maintain the present staggered 5 year terms; derive powers from the Legislature.
- House version: Creates a new Florida College System.

Legislators convened last Tuesday for the start of the 2008 session with their families in town to provide support, and flowers on the desks to brighten their day. If the first week of this year's 60-day session offered any insight, they're going to need a lot of both.

Last Thursday, day three of the session, legislators were on the floors of their respective chambers cutting the current fiscal year's budget once again. The SUS suffered another \$48 million hit, with \$7 million of that coming from FSU's budget. Since the state constitution mandates that any budget bill must "cool" for 72 hours prior to a vote being taken on its final passage, the bill won't pass until Wednesday, and then sent to Governor Crist for his signature.

Meanwhile, the Revenue Estimating Conference will meet tomorrow to release their projections for the 2008-09 fiscal year. Indications are that revenues will continue to be down substantially - potentially by billions of dollars - over this year's actual revenues. In addition, projections for Public Education Capital Outlay (PECO) revenues, which were expected to remain solid, came in last week at \$50 million below expectations.

The picture is not much rosier on the substantive-legislation side of the session. Last week, Senate President Pro-tempore Lisa Carlton (R — Sarasota) filed a bill that would reduce the Board of Governor's authority over the State University System. The bill passed its first committee of reference and is expected to be heard by the full Senate later this week or early next. A House committee passed a similar proposal last Friday (**see related story**). Several other proposals that would impact the university system were either heard in committee last week, or have been filed and will be heard soon (**see Spotlight on Bills**).

Whew! And that was just week one! Only eight more to go! You can catch all this important legislative action live on The Florida Channel, local cable channel 4. As always, feel free to contact me if you have questions, comments and/or concerns about budget items or bills. I can be reached at **(850) 644-4453** or **kdaly@fsu.edu**.

Kathleen

Spotlight on Bills

SB 1320 — Bright Futures Florida Scholarship Program, by Senator Jeremy Ring (D - Margate), revises the amounts of the awards available to a student qualifying as a Florida Academic Scholar, a Florida Medallion Scholar, or a Florida Gold Seal Vocational Scholar. The bill increases the amounts available to a qualifying student who pursues a major in the field of science, technology, engineering, mathematics, education, or nursing or another health profession while decreasing the amounts available to a qualifying student who pursues a major in another field. Under this bill, Florida Academic Scholar qualifying students in specific math, science, technology or education majors are awarded 110% of tuition and fees and \$660 for other college related expenses. Similarly qualifying students in fields other than those listed above are rewarded only 80% of tuition and fees and \$475 for expenses. Florida Medallion Scholars are awarded 85% and 55% of tuition and fees respectively, depending on field of study, under this legislation. The additional award given to the highest-ranking Florida Academic Scholar in each school district also changes from \$1,500 across the board to \$1,650 for qualifying math, science, technology and education majors and \$1,200 for all other qualifying students. The bill has been referred to the Higher Education, Education Pre-K – 12 and Higher Education Appropriations committees. The companion bill in the House, **HB 813 by Representative Frank Attkisson (R –**

Kissimmee) has been referred to the Schools & Learning and Policy & Budget councils.

HB 957 —Bright Futures Florida Scholarship Program, by Representative Will Kendrick (R – Carrabelle), revises the academic requirements for a Florida Medallion Scholars award that a student who has attended a home education program must meet. Under this legislation, students who attended a home education program during grades 11 and 12 must earn a combined SAT score 100 points higher than the SAT requirement set by the state Board of Education, or must meet the Board of Education combined SAT requirement and show documentation of successful completion of a college preparatory program with a 3.0 GPA. Currently, students who attend a home education program during grades 11 and 12 qualify for the Florida Medallion Scholars award with no other requirements. The bill has been referred to the Schools & Learning and Policy & Budget councils. The identical bill in the Senate, **SB 2262 by Senator Stephen Wise (R – Jacksonville)** has been filed.

SB 2674 — Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program, by Senator Ted Deutch (D – Delray Beach), requires Florida Bright Futures Scholarship recipients, beginning with the 2010-2011 class, to complete twenty unpaid community service or internship hours during the academic year in order to be eligible to renew that scholarship for the following year. The bill allows a student to restore eligibility if he/she did not complete the required service/ internship hours by completing those hours during the summer term. The identical bill in the House, **HB 1377 by Representative Kelly Skidmore (D – Boca Raton)**, has been filed.

SB 286 — Educators Teaching English/ In-service Requirements by Senator Stephen Wise (R – Jacksonville), requires that educators of English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) have in-service requirements that will ensure an conducive learning environment and the use of appropriate teaching strategies for students with limited English. The bill requires that primary English instructors have 300 in-service hours or the equivalent and, that instructors in basic subject areas have 60 in-service hours or the equivalent, etc. The bill has passed out of committee and is

waiting to be heard by the full Senate. A similar bill in the House, **HB 491 by Representative Jennifer Carroll (R – Jacksonville)** was heard in the Schools and Learning Council on Friday.

HB 457 — Student Financial Assistance, by Representative Dick Kravitz (R – Orange Park), requires state universities and community colleges to report information relating to state funds used to provide financial assistance to students holding F-1 or M-1 visas and need-based students classified as residents for tuition purposes during the 2006-2007 academic year, by December 31, 2008. This bill also bars state universities and community colleges from using state funds to provide financial assistance to any student holding an F-1 or M-1 visa (visas for all foreign nationals wishing to complete a course of study in the US) beginning in 2009-2010. The bill has been referred to referred the Policy and Budget Council, Schools & Learning Council and to the Postsecondary Education Committee. The identical bill in the Senate, **SB 1232 by Senator Ronda Storm (R - Brandon)** has been referred to the Higher Education, Judiciary and Higher Education Appropriations committees.

HB 1405 — Retirement by Representative Robert Schenck (R – Springhill), prohibits previously retired persons elected to public office or appointed to elective public office from receiving retirement benefits until after termination of such service. The Senate companion **SB 2830 by Senator Mike Fasano (R – New Port Richey)** has been filed.

SESSION SCHEDULE

SENATE SESSION

Wednesday, March 12, 2008
9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.

Thursday, March 13, 2008
1:50 p.m. to 2:50 p.m.

HOUSE SESSION

Wednesday, March 12, 2008
11:50 a.m. to 3:50 p.m.

Thursday, March 13, 2008
1:00 p.m. to 3:00 p.m.

Friday, March 14, 2008
9:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon



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