Governor Scott’s 2015 Budget Recommendations

The Governor released his $76.93 billion budget recommendations to the legislature last month. His recommendations for higher education include:

1. Repeal of the sales tax on textbooks; a 41.4 million tax break, saving the average student about $60.00 per year.

2. Extending Bright Futures scholarships into the summer session (currently not covered). The Governor proposed $23.5 million for this extension, but acknowledges that it’s probably not enough.

3. No tuition increases – including tuition differential

4. $400 million for State University System performance funding; $200 million new money and $200 million from the universities base

5. $470 million reduction in taxes on cell phone and television services. This proposal reduces the communications services tax rates which are now 9.17. The Governor states this recommendation will save the average family $40 per year.

Keep in mind the Governor makes budget recommendations to the legislature, but only the legislature has the authority to appropriate.
Employee Guidelines for Legislative Session

The 2015 Session of the Florida Legislature begins tomorrow. Please note the following Florida State University policies:

- Associate Vice President Kathleen Daly for Governmental Relations is the chief lobbyist for Florida State University.

- No one on campus other than Ms. Daly and Ms. Laura Brock, College of Medicine, are authorized to lobby for Florida State University or the State University System.

However, the Legislature periodically requests faculty and/or staff to attend committee meetings or to formally respond to questions about certain issues. FSU employees asked to appear before committee must notify Kathleen Daly at 644-4453 and submit a legislative contact form prior to making an appearance.

The form can be found on govrel.fsu.edu. If you have trouble accessing this form please contact Governmental Relations at 644-4453 for a hard copy.

Nothing here is intended to discourage FSU employees from exercising their individual rights as citizens or as members of groups or organizations not affiliated with the University. Such rights include the freedom to express their views on legislation, provided that the views are not presented as those of FSU, the SUS, or a subunit of these.

State University Board opts to keep FAMU/FSU College of Engineering

The Florida Board of Governors voted unanimously Feb. 19, 2015, to keep intact the joint Florida A&M University and Florida State University engineering school, with the caveat that organizational changes be implemented, reports Karl Etters of The Tallahassee Democrat.

The BOG indicated last week the school should remain together and made several recommendations including: a 12-member joint council of university officials from FAMU and FSU; a new budget entity that will manage funding for the school as a whole instead of separately as in the past; a multiyear plan to address updating facilities; and integrating academic and student affairs activities traditionally split between the universities.

The council would need to provide semiannual updates on recruiting, enrollment and graduation by gender and ethnicity, budget and expenditures, research funding and activities and on hiring, promotion, tenure and integration.

The move came after reviewing a state-commissioned report which said it could cost $1 billion to split the program between the two schools. Following is a summary of the report:

Commitment to Guiding Principles and a Plan of Action for the FAMU-FSU Joint College of Engineering

The FAMU-FSU College of Engineering should remain a Joint College.

Significant administrative and organizational changes will be implemented over the next year within a renewed Joint College of Engineering Governance Council, including, but not limited to, the following:

- By April 1, 2015, a 12-member permanent Joint College Governance Council will be established, comprised of the Presidents (or their designees), the Provosts, the Vice Presidents for Research, and the Chief Financial Officers of FAMU and FSU. The Dean of the Joint College of Engineering and two student representatives, appointed by the respective Student Government Association presidents of the two universities, will be included as ex-officio non-voting members. The Chancellor will be a voting member of the Governance Council. The Chancellor may also designate a representative.

- The Joint Council shall meet at least quarterly.

- The Joint Council shall receive reports at least semi-annually on the following topics, and may require additional reports at its discretion:
FAMU/FSU College of Engineering, continued

- Recruiting, enrollment and graduation by gender and ethnicity
- Adequacy and consistency in academic preparation and achievement
- Budget and expenditures
- Research funding and activities
- Faculty hiring, promotion, tenure, and integration

- Technology transfer and commercialization activities
- The creation of a new budget entity for the Joint College will be pursued during the 2015 legislative session, to include all operating funds for the Joint College, including the appropriate amount of plant operation and maintenance funds.
- A multi-year plan must be developed and presented to the Board of Governors by June 1, 2015, to address the renovations and repairs for Buildings A and B, and the completion of Building C.
- The Joint College should integrate academic and student affairs activities that have been separately administered by FAMU and FSU so that a true Joint College of Engineering is established.
- By March 1, 2016, the Joint College must submit a report to the Board of Governors documenting the completion of the above activities.

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**SPOTLIGHT ON BILLS**

**HB 63 – Public Private Partnerships by Representative Greg Steube (R – Sarasota)**, defines that public-private partnerships (P3s) are contractual agreements formed between public entities and private sector entities that allow for greater private sector participation in the delivery and financing of public buildings and infrastructure projects. The bill clarifies that the P3 process must be construed as cumulative and supplemental to any other authority or power vested in the governing body of a county, municipality, district, or municipal hospital or health care system. It also provides that the P3 process is an alternative method that may be used.

The bill expands the list of entities authorized to conduct P3s to include state universities. It clarifies that the list includes special districts, school districts rather than school boards, & Florida College System institutions.

The bill provides increased flexibility to the responsible public entity by permitting a responsible public entity to deviate from the provided procurement timeframes if approved by majority vote of the entity’s governing body.

The bill provides that an unsolicited proposal must be submitted concurrently with an initial application fee, which may be established by the responsible public entity. The bill authorizes a responsible public entity to request additional funds if the initial fee does not cover the costs to evaluate the unsolicited proposal. It also requires the responsible public entity to return the initial application fee if the responsible public entity does not review the unsolicited proposal.

The bill authorizes the Department of Management Services to accept and maintain copies of comprehensive agreements received from responsible public entities. The bill reported favorably in the Governmental Operations Subcommittee during interim committee meetings last month. The identical bill in the Senate, **SB 824 by Senator Greg Evers (R – Pensacola)** has been filed.

**SB 176 – Licenses to Carry Concealed Weapons or Firearms, by Senator Greg Evers (R – Pensacola)**, eliminates the statutory prohibition against carrying a concealed weapon or firearm by concealed carry license-holders into any college or university facilities. The bill reported favorably in the Criminal Justice Committee and is now in the Higher Education Committee. The identical bill in the House, **HB 4005 by Representative Greg Steube (R – Sarasota)** reported favorably in the Criminal Justice Subcommittee and is now in the Higher Education and Workforce Committee.
SB 938 – Postsecondary Education Affordability by Senator Anitere Flores (R – Miami), exempts textbooks required for a course offered by a public or nonpublic postsecondary educational institution from the sales and use tax. The bill requires the Board of Governors and the State Board of Education to identify strategies and initiatives to reduce the cost of higher education and prohibits Universities Boards of Trustees from recommending graduate and professional program tuition increases. The bill prohibits resident tuition at a Florida College System institution from exceeding a specified amount per credit hour and prohibits resident undergraduate tuition at a state university from exceeding a specified amount per credit hour, etc. There is no House companion at this time.

SB 742 – Ticket Sales by Senator Wilton Simpson (R – New Port Richey), prohibits a person from selling, using, or causing to be used specified means to bypass portions of the ticket-buying process or disguise the identity of the ticket purchaser under certain circumstances. The bill deletes a civil penalty and upgrading the severity of a certain offense to a misdemeanor of the second degree. Additionally, the bill establishes registration requirements for a ticket broker. The bill has been referred to the Governmental Oversight and Accountability Committee. The identical bill in the Senate, SB 696 by Senator Miguel Diaz de la Portilla (R – Miami), has been referred to the Governmental Oversight and Accountability and Appropriations Committees.

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HB 333 – Reemployment After Retirement, by Representative Larry Lee (D – Ft. Pierce), provides that members of the Florida Retirement System may be reemployed by an employer that participates in a state-administered retirement system and receive retirement benefits and compensation from that employer. The bill is now in the Government Operations Subcommittee. The identical bill in the Senate, SB 696 by Senator Miguel Diaz de la Portilla (R – Miami), has been referred to the Governmental Oversight and Accountability Committee. The identical bill in the Senate, SB 130 by Senator Alan Hays (R- Umatilla), is now in the Community Affairs Committee.

HB 45 – Student Loans by Representative Dave Kerner (D – Palm Springs), requires the Justice Administrative Commission & the Office of Attorney General to implement a student loan assistance program to assist attorneys in specified positions in repayment of eligible student loans. The bill establishes requirements and requires payments based on length of employment of eligible attorney & availability of funds. Additionally, the bill provides for funding and requires employers to develop procedures. The bill is now in the Civil Justice Subcommittee. A similar bill in the Senate, SB 150 by Senator Jeremy Ring (D – Margate) is now in the Appropriations Subcommittee on Criminal and Civil Justice.

SESSION SCHEDULE

SENATE SESSION
TUESDAY, MARCH 3, 10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m. and 2:00 p.m. to 3:30 p.m.

HOUSE SESSION
TUESDAY, MARCH 3, 9:30 a.m. until completion
WEDNESDAY, MARCH 4, 4:00 p.m. until completion
THURSDAY, MARCH 5, 2:30 p.m. until completion

JOINT SESSION
TUESDAY, MARCH 3, 11:00 a.m. until completion