

**You Will Teach Civics!**

When the legislature is in town, we become acutely aware of the need for a more informed electorate... but there must be a better way to educate our citizens than dictating what courses are taught in our community colleges.

**SB 1670 by Sen. Argenziano** passed the Senate Education Committee. In a somewhat embarrassing moment for FACC, Senator Argenziano pointed out that she had not heard from any of the community colleges, which oppose the bill. (*The only higher education association her office heard from was UFF!*) The bill provides that required credit hours in general education courses for students in community colleges must include Civics instruction that focuses on American National Government. An identical bill, **HB 709 by Rep. Bilirakis**, was filed in the House but has not been heard in committee. Although the Senator is well intentioned, UFF opposes both bills because they infringe on the academic freedom of community college faculty to set curriculum standards, and the bills create problems in the articulation of community courses to the State University System since course contents could be different from those prescribed in the Common Course Numbering System. Similar bills were filed a few years ago, but died before going to the Floor. The Senate bill has been placed on the Senate calendar for second reading. **Now is the time to let your legislators know how you feel about this bill.**

The House **Higher Education Finance Policy bill (PCB EDK 04-07A)** was heard in the House Committee on K-20 Education on Monday. The bill, which passed along party lines, is primarily focused on requiring state universities to develop policies and procedures to ensure timely completion of baccalaureate degrees but is packed with new fees and requirements. One of UFF's concerns is the provision that certain hours in excess of 115% of the hours required for a degree will not be funded, and permits universities to assess students a surcharge for taking excess hours.

The bill's creators would like universities, and eventually community colleges to return to block tuition, which was the standard some 30 years ago. In theory this would encourage students to complete their baccalaureate in 4 years. The bill allows universities to establish block tuition for undergraduate full-time students taking at least 12 credit hours of classes. They would be charged tuition based on a course load of 15 credit hours, regardless of whether they took fewer or more credit hours. The block tuition provides a financial incentive to finish faster by charging the same tuition for 18 credit hours as is charged for 15 credit hours. Our lawmakers see this as a way to increase production of baccalaureate degrees and make room for more students.

The bill also creates an annual reporting requirement that each state university and community college compile information for the preceding fall, spring, and summer semesters that examine the affordability and access of the institution. It requires state universities to provide students a billing statement, provides funding for targeted degree production at state universities, and revises the Major Gifts program.

The bill revises provisions relative to the determination of a student's residency status for tuition purposes, tying the statutorily-required 12-month residency period to a student's initial enrollment in a Florida postsecondary institution and includes references to residency determination for purposes of determining eligibility to participate in certain financial aid programs.

The bill authorizes increases to the financial aid fee and capital improvement fee for community colleges, and authorizes a technology fee at state universities. Notably, the technology fee is not covered by Bright Futures.

*(more on page 2)*

## Governor Releases Supplemental Budget Request

As reported earlier, the state's Revenue Estimating Conference has projected an increase in General Revenues of \$1.1 billion. Approximately half the funds are non-recurring and are an increase to the 2003-04 fiscal year. The remainder is for the 2004-05 fiscal year. Governor Bush, in his supplemental budget earlier this week, proposed spending these funds in 2004-05 but no additional funding was added to operations in any of the pre-K-20 delivery systems. Here's an overview of the major parts of his supplemental spending plan.

### Education

- \$332 million cash for education construction projects
- \$9.4 million for Florida Resident Access Grants, giving tuition assistance for students attending private colleges

### Health Care

- \$294 million for deficits in Medicaid

### Environment

- \$260 million cash for Florida Forever environmental land purchases

### Tax Breaks

- \$137.8 million for corporate tax incentives

### Criminal Justice

- \$9.6 million for increased prison capacity
- \$7.2 million for juvenile detention services

## Governor's Initial 2004-05 Budget for Higher Education

- Universities - 5.7% increase
- CCs – 7.6% increase

**Update on the Standardized Testing Of University Students** – on Thursday the Board of Governors bumped this idea down to the Boards of Trustees. Please let us know what is happening with this issue on your campus.

***For lobbying tips and additional information, members may email us at [UFF1@aol.com](mailto:UFF1@aol.com), or call the Tallahassee office (850)224-8220.***