

Session Ends on Time

At about 11:41 pm, April 30, the 2004 Session came to an end—just minutes before the midnight deadline. This session became more about which bills died than which passed. Below is a brief overview of the most critical issues that passed. After the dust settles in the coming weeks, a complete analysis of the legislative session will be produced by FEA Government Relations Department and UFF.

Both community colleges and universities received an increase of over 7%. But this increase comes after two years of under-funding enrollment. Additional funds will be available through tuition increases of 5% at community colleges, 7.5% at universities for in-state undergraduates and between 12.5% and 15% (set by the university board of trustees) for out-of-state and graduate students. Bright Futures scholarships were increased to reflect the tuition changes.

State University employees' salaries and benefits: Group Health premiums and deductibles remain the same as last year. Each eligible employee shall receive a non-recurring, one-time lump sum bonus payment of \$1,000 which includes applicable taxes and withholding. Each eligible part-time employee shall receive a bonus payment prorated based on the full-time equivalency of his or her position.

Community College Baccalaureate programs received \$7,767,160 from General Revenue. The maximum Resident Baccalaureate technology fee and the tuition for baccalaureate programs per credit hour for 2004-2005 is \$57.94, with out of state fees for baccalaureate courses to be no more than 85% of the cost of the tuition and out of state fees at the nearest public university. Salary increases will be bargained at union campuses and set by the administration at non-bargaining campuses.

Several community colleges were renamed (*Chipola College, Miami Dade College, Okaloosa-Walton College, and Edison College*) to align with SACS requirements for colleges awarding baccalaureate degrees.

The total FRS rate is unchanged for 2004-05 at 7.39% as passed in SB 2230.

The component parts are different:

- FRS benefit - 6.20% was 6.18%
- Health Insurance Subsidy - unchanged at 1.11%
- Administrative Fee/Education Services - 0.08% was 0.10%

The ORP rate is tied to the level of the FRS rate by law.

Retirement bills did not fair well this session. FEA and UFF are seeking interim studies of the Florida Retirement System, the intention being future legislation.

UFF thanks FEA's lobbying team (*Marshall Ogletree, Kevin Watson, and Michael Monroe*); and all of our members whose lobbying efforts, at home and in Tallahassee, helped us shepherd through the good bills and stop some of the bad ideas from becoming law. A successful legislative effort greatly depends upon the relationships our members build with their representatives on the home front. **Good work!**