

2016

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

FINAL REPORT

SENATE



FAU

GOVERNMENT RELATIONS
Florida Atlantic University



GOVERNMENT RELATIONS
Florida Atlantic University

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FROM THE OFFICE OF GOVERNMENT RELATIONS

It is our pleasure to present the 2016 Legislative Session Final Report.

The Office of Government Relations produces this yearly report in an effort to provide our stakeholders with a comprehensive review of the Florida Legislature’s actions during the 2016 Regular Legislative Session and their subsequent impacts on FAU and the higher education community.

Unlike 2015, where an ongoing budget impasse brought the Regular Session to an unexpected early conclusion, the 2016 Session saw the chambers cooperate and complete their policy and budget work in a timely manner. However, Governor Scott’s top three legislative priorities, including \$1 billion in tax cuts over two years, \$250 million for an economic incentive fund and a gambling compact with the Seminole Tribe that would generate an estimated \$3 billion in tax revenue over the course of 7 years, all remained unresolved at the conclusion of the 2016 Session.

Earlier this year, the Legislature passed and Governor Scott signed the fiscal year 2016-2017 General Appropriations Act (GAA – HB5001) into law. The GAA totaled \$82.3 billion and contained several large scale budget priorities, including over \$400 million in tax cuts, a 1 percent increase in K-12 per student funding and increases in Public Education Capital Outlay (construction and maintenance) funding.

State legislators allocated approximately \$4.73 billion (general revenue, trust funds and tuition) to the State University System, which is a 5 percent increase over the previous year’s funding. The cornerstone of the higher education budget is a \$500 million (\$225 million in state dollars and \$275 in institutional contributions) performance funding pool that is allocated to qualifying institutions pursuant to the Board of Governor’s (BOG) performance funding model recommendations.

FAU continues to make great strides within the framework of the BOG’s performance funding model. This year, Florida Atlantic University ranked as the top-performing public university in the state. With 84 out of a possible 100 points earned, FAU tied with the University of Central Florida for first place among the 11 state universities that compete for performance-based funding. The University has risen from 10th place the first year the metrics were implemented, to 6th place last year, to 1st place this year. FAU’s first place finish will result in \$25.3 million in new performance funds for the University, which more than doubles the \$11.3 million FAU received in FY 2015-16.

Florida Atlantic University also continues to develop a consistent, University-wide presence in Tallahassee. In November 2015, the University celebrated another successful FAU Day at the Capitol. FAU Day saw a delegation of more than 40 students, faculty, staff and alumni travel to Tallahassee to engage lawmakers, share the University’s successes and increase awareness and understanding of our legislative priorities.

The Office of Government Relations is committed to further developing the connections between our elected officials and the wonderfully talented individuals within the University. We greatly appreciate your assistance and support over the past year and we look forward to building on our success in the years to come.

Go Owls!

The Office of Government Relations



2016 LEGISLATIVE SESSION EXECUTIVE BUDGET SUMMARY

★ GENERAL BUDGET

The fiscal year (FY) 2016-17 General Appropriations Act (GAA) totaled \$82.3 billion and contained several large scale budget priorities, including over \$400 million in tax cuts, a 1 percent increase in K-12 per student funding and increases in Public Education Capital Outlay (construction and maintenance) funding. This year's budget line-item vetoes totaled \$256.1 million, which is less than half of what Governor Scott eliminated in FY2015-16. The GAA allocates approximately \$4.7 billion to the State University System.

★ TUITION

This year's budget did not include a tuition increase for SUS institutions. Furthermore, one of Governor Scott's priorities, HB 7019 relating to college affordability, was signed into law and takes effect July 1, 2016. The bill modifies textbooks and instructional material affordability requirements and promotes public awareness of higher education costs. It also requires the Board of Governors (BOG) and the State Board of Education to identify strategies and initiatives to promote college affordability by evaluating the impact to students of tuition and fees; federal, state, and institutional financial aid and the actual costs of attendance.

★ PERFORMANCE FUNDING

The cornerstone of the higher education budget is a \$500 million (\$225 million in state dollars and \$275 in institutional contributions) performance funding pool that is allocated to qualifying institutions pursuant to the Board of Governor's performance funding model recommendations.

This year, Florida Atlantic University ranked as the top-performing public university in the state by the BOG. This No. 1 ranking is based on the BOG's performance-based funding model for the 2015-16 academic year. With 84 out of a possible 100 points earned, FAU tied with the University of Central Florida for first place among the 11 state universities that compete for performance-based funding. FAU's first place finish will result in \$25.3 million in new performance funds for the University in FY2016-17, which more than doubles the \$11.3 million FAU received in FY 2015-16.

★ CAPITAL FUNDS

The SUS received approximately \$265 million for fixed capital outlay. Within that total sum, the BOG will proportionately allocate \$96.8 million for improvements and maintenance at SUS institutions. The state's developmental research (lab) schools also received \$5,293,588 in millage equivalence funding that will be distributed to the six university lab schools, including FAU's Boca Raton and St. Lucie campuses.

★ FAU'S SPECIFIC BUDGET PROVISIONS

- The FAU STEM Life Sciences Initiative received \$1.5 million in recurring funding
- FAU Secondary Robotics Team Support received \$100,000 in recurring funding (this is a pass-through program that will provide support to robotics teams throughout southeast Florida)
- FAU's Tech Runway received \$750,000 in nonrecurring funding
- FAU received \$3,031,247 in nonrecurring Public Education Capital Outlay (PECO) funds for the 1st year planning and engineering of its Jupiter STEM Life Sciences Research Building
- FAU's Boca Raton-based Center for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD) received \$1,056,776 in recurring operational funding and an additional \$100,000 in nonrecurring funds for a pilot program related to missing persons with special needs.
- Harbor Branch Oceanographic Institutes's Indian River Lagoon Observatory Program received \$350,000 in recurring funding to maintain its water quality monitoring network.

★ **FAU's SPECIFIC PROVISO LANGUAGE**

Pursuant to section 1010.62 and section 1013.171, Florida Statutes, and section 11(d) and (f), Art. VII of the State Constitution, the following fixed capital outlay projects may be constructed, acquired, and financed by a university or university direct support organization. Financing mechanisms include any form of approved debt or bonds authorized by the Board of Governors.

No state appropriation of funds will be associated with these projects. The Legislature has provided the Board of Governors general authority to consider debt financing for most classes of projects. However, certain athletic and commercial facilities require specific Legislative authorization as a prerequisite condition for these projects. Legislative authorization does not supersede any of the requirements for Board of Governors review and approval of all projects to be financed from debt.

- Florida Atlantic University – Hotel and Conference Center



2016 LEGISLATIVE SESSION SUMMARY OF LEGISLATIVE ISSUES



★ **ACADEMIC ISSUES**

COMPUTER CODING

Currently, public schools are required to provide students in grades K-12 with opportunities for learning computer science, including computer coding and computer programming. SB 468 states that, beginning in the 2018-2019 academic year, high schools must create opportunities for students to take computer coding courses. The bill further states that two credits in coding courses, coupled with the earning of a related industry certification, satisfies the two credit sequential foreign language instruction requirement. In addition, the measure requires Florida College System institutions and state universities to recognize the computer coding course credits as foreign language credits. The bill also requires the student and the student's parent to sign a statement acknowledging and accepting that taking a computer coding course as a foreign language may not meet the foreign language requirements of out-of-state colleges and universities.

SB 468 failed to gain adequate support and died in House messages.

EDUCATIONAL OPTIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH UNIQUE ABILITIES

The Gardiner Scholarship (PLSA) program helps parents individualize the educational plans for their children with certain special needs. The program, previously called the Personal Learning Scholarship Account, was named the Gardiner Scholarship in January of 2016. The new name honors Florida Senate President Andy Gardiner, who led the legislative effort to create the program, and his family. This scholarship is different than other state scholarships in that it allows parents to individualize their child's educational needs by directing money toward a combination of programs and approved providers. The available options include schools, therapists, specialists, curriculum, technology and a college savings account. SB 672 codifies, renames, and expands the Gardiner Scholarship Program (formerly called the Florida Personal Learning Scholarship Accounts Program – PLSA), establishes additional Florida postsecondary education options and

revises Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program (FTC) accountability provisions.

The effective date of SB 672 is July 1, 2016.

The Governor approved SB 672 on January 21, 2016 (Chapter No. 2016-2).

➔ **Click here to learn more about educational options for students with unique abilities.**

MEDICAL FACULTY CERTIFICATES

Florida Atlantic University's Charles E. Schmidt College of Medicine became an independent medical school in May 2010, making it the 134th allopathic (M.D.) medical school in North America. The mission of the Charles E. Schmidt College of Medicine is to educate physicians and scientists to meet the healthcare needs of Florida, to conduct biomedical research to advance knowledge, which improves patient care, and to serve patients and communities with competence, compassion and respect. This year, HB 173 was introduced to add Florida Atlantic University College of Medicine (FAU COM) to the list of medical schools and teaching institutions where a physician who is not licensed to practice in Florida may be issued a medical faculty certificate. The medical faculty certificate is only issued in conjunction with a full-time faculty position and provides temporary authorization for the physician to practice medicine in Florida. A physician who receives a medical faculty certificate has all the rights and responsibilities of other licensed physicians, except the certificate holder may only practice in conjunction with a full-time faculty position at an accredited medical school and its affiliated clinical facilities or teaching hospitals.

The effective date of HB 173 is July 1, 2016.

The Governor approved HB 173 on March 10, 2016 (Chapter No. 2016-54).



ACTIVE DUTY SERVICE MEMBERS

In 2015, Governor Scott signed the Educational Opportunities Bill into law, which brought Florida into compliance with the federal law entitled the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act. Last year's legislation required institutions to offer in-state tuition rates to certain veterans and their dependents. This year, legislation was introduced to expand this benefit to all active duty members as well as veterans. HB 799 waives the out-of-state fee for active duty members of the United States Armed Forces who reside in stations outside Florida at the time of their enrollment.

The effective date of HB 799 is July 1, 2016.

The Governor approved HB 799 on March 28, 2016 (Chapter No. 2016-136).

▶▶▶ [Click here to learn more about active duty service members.](#)

★ TUITION & SCHOLARSHIP ISSUES FLORIDA BRIGHT FUTURES SCHOLARSHIPS

The Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program is a lottery-funded scholarship that rewards a Florida high school graduate who merits recognition for high academic achievement and who enrolls in a degree program, certificate program, or applied technology program at an eligible public or private postsecondary institution in Florida after graduating from high school. HB 793 creates the Florida Gold Seal CAPE Scholars award. The legislation also modifies the initial eligibility period for the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program granting the recipient the ability to defer the award for a specified period of time because of a religious or service obligation and modifies the Bright Futures community service requirement.

The effective date of HB 793 is July 1, 2016.

The Governor approved HB 793 on March 24, 2016 (Chapter No. 2016-91).

▶▶▶ [Click here to learn about Bright Futures.](#)

GRADUATE STUDENT FEE WAIVER

Graduate teaching and research assistants can be required to pay a number of different university fees. HB 1311 requires SUS institutions to waive financial aid fees; technology fees; security, access, or identification card fees; and any fees or fines relating to the use, late return, and loss or damage of facilities

and equipment. The waiver would apply to a graduate student who has a 0.25 or greater, full-time equivalent appointment as a graduate assistant, graduate research assistant, graduate teaching assistant, graduate research associate, or graduate teaching associate.

HB 1311 failed to gain adequate support and died in the House Education Appropriations Subcommittee.

STUDENT LOAN DEFAULT RATES

The United States Department of Education annually calculates student loan default rates. Defaulted federal student loans cost taxpayers money, and cohort default rate sanctions and benefits provide an incentive to schools to work with their borrowers to reduce default. Sanctions can prevent a school with a high percentage of defaulters from continuing to participate in the William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan (Direct Loan) Program and federal Pell Grant program. SB 146 utilizes federal student loan cohort default rates as an accountability measure for public and private postsecondary educational institutions.

SB 146 failed to gain adequate support and died in the Senate Appropriations Committee.

▶▶▶ [Click here to learn more about student loan default rates.](#)

COLLEGE AFFORDABILITY

In 2015, Governor Scott identified a number of higher education priorities that he hoped the Legislature would advance. HB7019 incorporated a number of the identified priorities and addressed higher education access and affordability mechanisms by modifying requirements for instructional materials as well as tuition and fees. HB 7019 modifies textbooks and instructional material affordability requirements and promotes public awareness of higher education costs. The measure seeks to promote public awareness of higher education costs to assist students and their parents in making informed decisions when evaluating higher education institutions.

In addition to HB7019, the Legislature also passed an additional law which combined a list of priorities regarding educational issues in Florida. SB7029 is comprised mostly of K-12 policy but the bill also included statutory authority for performance funding. SB7029 codifies performance funding for Florida's 12 public universities, adjusts standards for preeminent state research universities, and creates "emerging preeminent" designation for up-and-coming research

stars

universities, which makes them eligible for specified funding.

The effective date of HB 7019 is July 1, 2016.

The Governor approved HB 7019 on April 4, 2016 (Chapter No. 2016- 236).

Click here to learn more about college affordability.

★ **CAMPUS SAFETY**

CONCEALED CARRY ON CAMPUS

As of March 9, 2016, there are 19 states that banned carrying a concealed weapon or firearm on a college campus. In 23 states, the decision to ban or allow concealed carry on campuses is made by each college or university individually. Only eight states allow concealed carry on college campuses: Colorado, Idaho, Kansas, Texas, Mississippi, Oregon, Utah, and Wisconsin. Currently, Florida Statutes prohibit those with a valid concealed weapons or concealed firearms license from carrying a concealed weapon or firearm into any college or university facility unless the licensee is a registered student, employee, or faculty member of such college or university; the weapon is a stun gun or nonlethal electric weapon or device designed solely for defensive purposes; and the weapon does not fire a dart or projectile. HB 4001 repeals the section of the statute that bans this practice, and as a result allows valid concealed carry licensees to bring a weapon or firearm into any building on a university or college campus.

HB 4001 passed the House but failed to gain adequate support and died in the Senate Judiciary Committee

MISSING PERSONS WITH SPECIAL NEEDS

Each year, approximately 50% of children and adults with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder elope from a safe environment. The term “elopement” is used when someone with autism or other cognitive impairments wanders or bolts from home, school, work, or wherever they are supposed to be during their daily routines. The issue of elopement raises larger questions about what police and caregivers need to do to ensure the safety and dignity of someone with special needs who might or has eloped. SB 0230 creates the “Project Leo” pilot program to provide personal devices to aid search-and-rescue efforts for persons with special needs in the case of elopement. The pilot project will take place in three regions throughout the state: Alachua, Columbia, Hamilton, and Suwanee Counties, which is administered by the Center for Autism and Related Disabilities at the University of Florida; Palm Beach County, which is administered by the Center for Autism and Related Disabilities at the Florida Atlantic University; and Hillsborough County, which is administered by the Center for Autism and Related Disabilities at the University of South Florida.

The effective date of SB 0230 is July 1, 2016.

The Governor approved SB 0230 on April 6, 2016 (Chapter No. 2016-186).



★ ADMINISTRATIVE ISSUES

FLORIDA RETIREMENT SYSTEM

The Florida Retirement System (FRS) is a multiple employer, contributory plan that provides retirement income benefits to 622,089 active members, 363,034 retired members and beneficiaries, and 38,058 members of the Deferred Retirement Option Program. It is the primary retirement plan for employees of the state and county government agencies, district school boards, state colleges, and universities.

HB 7107 makes several changes to the Florida Retirement System. It authorizes renewed membership in the investment plan for retirees, establishes new survivor benefits for members of the investment plan who are killed in the line of duty and changes the statewide default program from the pension plan to the investment plan for members who do not affirmatively choose a plan.

HB 7107 passed the House but failed to gain adequate support and died in the Senate Government Oversight and Accountability Committee.

▶▶▶ [Click here to learn more about the Florida Retirement System.](#)

THE FLORIDA LEGISLATURE

The Florida State Legislature is a part-time body, meeting only for a 60 day regular session annually. Specifically, the Constitution provides that in odd numbered years, the Regular Session must begin on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in March.

However, the Constitution permits the Legislature to fix, by law, the date for convening the Regular Session in each even-numbered year. SB 7076 sets the date of the 2018 Regular Session and requires the Legislature to convene on January 9, 2018.

The effective date of SB 7076 is April 8, 2016.

The Governor approved SB 7076 on April 8, 2016 (Chapter No. 2016-218).

▶▶▶ [Click here to learn more about the Florida Legislature.](#)

OMNIBUS TAX PACKAGE

During the 2016 Legislative Session, the Legislature passed an omnibus tax package (HB 7099) that included recurring tax savings of \$79 million and \$50 million in one-time savings. Some of the provisions contained in HB 7099 include a three-day “back-to-school” sales tax holiday from August 5, 2016, to August 7, 2016, for clothing and footwear costing \$60 or less, and school supplies costing less than \$15. It also includes adoption of the Internal Revenue Code as of January 1, 2016, for purposes of corporate income tax, and its decoupling from certain federal bonus depreciation provisions, as well as changes to corporate income tax filing dates and estimated payment due dates to conform to those made to the federal corporate tax.

The effective date of HB 7099 is July 1, 2016.

The Governor approved HB 7099 on April 13, 2016 (Chapter 2016-220).





STUDENT LOAN DEFAULT RATES

The United States Department of Education (ED) annually calculates student loan default rates. Defaulted federal student loans cost taxpayers money, and cohort default rate sanctions and benefits provide an incentive to schools to work with their borrowers to reduce default. Sanctions can prevent a school with a high percentage of defaulters from continuing to participate in the William D. Ford Federal Direct Loan (Direct Loan) Program and federal Pell Grant programs.

SB 146 requires public and private postsecondary educational institutions to report on the federal student loan cohort default rate for their institutions, and makes the institutions' eligibility to receive certain state funds and retain licensure to operate in Florida contingent on the institutions maintain default rates at certain specified thresholds.

Specifically, the legislation impacts public postsecondary educational institutions by:

- Requiring performance funding for industry certifications for the Florida College System (FCS) institutions must factor-in the institutions' federal student loan default rate.
- Requiring a portion of a state university's performance funding score must include the university's federal student loan cohort default rate,

in addition to the factors determined by the Board of Governors of the State University System of Florida. The bill also impacts private postsecondary educational institutions by:

- Requiring the institutions to provide federal student loan default rate information as part of the fair consumer practices reporting requirements.
- Requiring the institutions to maintain a federal student loan cohort default rate below 30 percent for 3 consecutive years or at or below 40 percent for any given year.
- Deeming an institution that is eligible to receive the William L. Boyd, IV, Florida Resident Access Grant (FRAG) or the Access to Better Learning and Education (ABLE) Grant for incoming students ineligible to receive such funds until the institution's federal student loan cohort default rate falls below the threshold.

Additionally, the institution, if licensed by the Commission for Independent Education, will lose the license to operate in Florida.

SB 146 failed to gain adequate support and died in the Senate Appropriations Committee.





FLORIDA BRIGHT FUTURES SCHOLARSHIPS

The Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program (program) is a lottery-funded scholarship program to reward a Florida high school graduate who merits recognition for high academic achievement and who enrolls in a degree program, certificate program, or applied technology program at an eligible public or private postsecondary institution in Florida after graduating from high school. The Department of Education (DOE) administers the program in accordance with rules and procedures adopted by the State Board of Education. HB 793 creates the Florida Gold Seal CAPE Scholars award as an alternative to the current Florida Gold Seal Vocational Scholars award. A student may qualify for the Florida Gold Seal CAPE Scholars award if he or she meets the general eligibility requirements for the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship program and earns a minimum of five postsecondary credits through CAPE industry certifications which qualify for college credit. The new scholarship allows students to take additional credit hours upon completion of a technical degree. The bill also modifies the initial eligibility period for the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program for students who are unable to accept an award due to full-time religious or service obligations lasting at least 18 months. Eligible students can defer the 2-year initial award period and the 5-year renewal period until the student completes the religious or service obligation.

The bill modifies student community service work requirements for the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program awards and adds the requirement for the newly created Florida Gold Seal CAPE Scholars award.

The bill modifies the requirements by:

- Clarifying that community service work must be volunteer work;
- Expanding volunteer service work areas;
- Providing that volunteer work may include, but not be limited to, a business or government internship, employment with a nonprofit community service organization, or activity on behalf of a candidate for public office;
- Establishing accountability requirements for student volunteer work that includes documentation in writing by the student, the student's parent, and a representative of the organization for which the student worked.

The effective date of HB 793 is July 1, 2016.

The Governor approved HB 793 on March 24, 2016 (Chapter No. 2016-91).





EDUCATIONAL OPTIONS FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES

The Gardiner Scholarship (PLSA) program helps parents individualize the educational plans for their children with certain special needs. The program, previously called the Personal Learning Scholarship Account, was named the Gardiner Scholarship in January of 2016. The new name honors Florida Senate President Andy Gardiner, who led the legislative effort to create the program, and his family. This scholarship is different than other state scholarships in that it allows parents to individualize their child's future by directing money toward a combination of programs and approved providers. The available options include schools, therapists, specialists, curriculum, technology and a college savings account.

Florida Postsecondary Education Options

SB 230 establishes mechanisms for the statewide coordination of information about programs for students with disabilities, and for the approval of unique postsecondary education programs tailored to the needs of students with intellectual disabilities. Specifically the bill establishes a Florida Center for Students with Unique Abilities (center) at the University of Central Florida for statewide coordination of information regarding programs and services for students with disabilities and their parents and creates a scholarship to provide financial aid to students who meet the student eligibility requirements and are enrolled in a program.

Standard Student Attire Program

The bill awards incentive payments (\$10 per student) to school districts and charter schools that implement district-wide or school-wide, standard student attire policies applicable to students in kindergarten through grade 8. The bill requires each district school superintendent or charter school governing board to annually certify to the Commissioner of Education its implementation of a qualifying standard student attire policy, and provides immunity from civil liability to a district school board or a charter school governing board that implements such policy.

Florida Tax Credit Scholarship Program (FTC)

The bill provides for increased accountability and use for scholarship funds by Scholarship Funding Organizations (SFO). Specifically, the bill clarifies audit requirements for SFOs to be able to receive an administrative fee and prohibits SFOs from charging application fees. It also requires scholarship contributions that are not allowed to be carried forward to transfer to other SFOs. Requires funds held by a SFO that is closing to be transferred to another eligible SFO to provide scholarships.

The effective date of SB 0230 is July 1, 2016.

The Governor approved SB 0230 on April 6, 2016. (Chapter 2016-186).





THE FLORIDA LEGISLATURE

The Florida State Legislature is a part-time body, meeting only for a 60 day regular session annually. The Florida State Constitution mandates a bicameral state legislature with an upper house, the Florida State Senate, and a lower house, the Florida House of Representatives. Due to term limits, House members may be elected for up to four terms (eight years), while State Senators can be elected for up to two terms (eight years).

The two chambers convene within the Florida State Capitol in Tallahassee.

Article III of the Florida Constitution establishes when the Legislature is to be in session. Section 3 of Article

III states that the regular session of the Legislature is to convene on the first Tuesday after the first Monday in March of each year. Regular sessions of the Legislature are not to exceed sixty days, unless extended by a three-fifths vote of each house. However, the Constitution permits the Legislature to fix, by law, the date for convening the Regular Session in each even-numbered year. SB 7076 sets the date of the 2018 Regular Session and requires the Legislature to convene on January 9, 2018.

SB 7076 takes effect upon becoming law.

The Governor approved SB 7076 on April 8, 2016 (Chapter No. 2016-218).





THE FLORIDA RETIREMENT SYSTEM

The Florida Retirement System (FRS) is a multiple employer, contributory plan that provides retirement income benefits to 622,089 active members, 363,034 retired members and beneficiaries, and 38,058 members of the Deferred Retirement Option Program (DROP). It is the primary retirement plan for employees of the state and county government agencies, district school boards, state colleges, and universities. The FRS also serves as the retirement plan for participating employees of the 189 cities and 273 independent hospitals and special districts that have elected to join the system.

Members of the FRS have two plan options available for participation: the pension plan, which is a defined benefit plan, and the investment plan, which is a defined contribution plan. In addition to the two primary plans, some eligible members have the choice of participating in optional retirement plans, which

include the Senior Management Service Optional Annuity Program (SMSOAP), the State Community College System Optional Retirement Program (SCCSORP), and the State University System Optional Retirement Program (SUSORP).

HB 7107 renews membership in the investment plan for retirees of the investment plan, the SMSOAP, the SUSORP, or the SCCSORP. In addition, the measure establishes new survivor benefits for members of the investment plan who are killed in the line of duty. It provides the same survivor benefits to the spouse and children of such member as those currently provided for pension plan members who are killed in the line of duty.

HB 7107 passed the House but failed to gain adequate support and died in the Senate Government Oversight and Accountability Committee.





COLLEGE AFFORDABILITY

At the beginning of the 2015 Legislative Session, Governor Scott identified a number of higher education priorities that he hoped the Legislature would advance. The legislation introduced during the 2015 Legislative Session failed to gain adequate support. This year, HB 7019 incorporated a number of the previously identified priorities and addresses higher education access and affordability mechanisms by modifying requirements for instructional materials as well as tuition and fees. The measure also seeks to promote public awareness regarding higher education costs to assist students and their parents in making informed decisions. Specifically, the bill:

- Requires the Board of Governors (BOG) of the State University System of Florida and the State Board of Education (SBE) to identify strategies and initiatives to maintain college affordability for all Floridians and annually report on the boards' college affordability efforts to the Governor, President of the Senate, and Speaker of the House of Representatives.
- Modifies current law regarding a postsecondary educational institution's responsibility to post textbook information online by requiring each Florida College System (FCS) institution and state

university to prominently post on the institution's website for course registration, a hyperlink to lists of required and recommended textbooks and instructional materials for at least 90 percent of the courses and course sections offered by the institution. The bill also changes the deadline for posting the textbook information online from at least 30 days before the first day of class for each term to at least 14 days before the first day of student registration for each term.

- Establishes caps for tuition and out-of-state workforce education fees, FCS institution fees, and state university tuition per credit hour.
- Requires FCS institutions and state universities to notify students and the public about any institutional boards of trustees meeting where votes on proposed increases in tuition and fees would take place; and provides specifications and timelines for such notifications.

The effective date of HB 7019 is July 1, 2016.

The Governor approved HB 7019 on April 4, 2016 (Chapter No. 2016- 236).





ACTIVE DUTY SERVICE MEMBERS

In 2015, Governor Scott signed the Educational Opportunities Bill into law which brought Florida into compliance with the federal law entitled the Veterans Access, Choice, and Accountability Act. This Act requires the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (USDVA) to disapprove programs of education for payment of benefits under the Post-9/11 GI Bill and the Montgomery GI Bill-AD at public institutions if the schools charge qualifying veterans and dependents tuition and fees in excess of the rate for resident students. Public institutions must offer in-state tuition rates to certain veterans and their dependents by July 1, 2015, in order for the institution to be eligible to receive payments under the Post-9/11 GI Bill and the Montgomery GI Bill-Active Duty programs.

Last year's bill, SB 7028 amended the Congressman C.W. "Bill" Young Veteran Tuition Waiver Program to allow additional persons to be eligible for the out-of-state tuition fee waiver currently afforded to honorably discharged veterans residing in Florida and enrolled in a state university, Florida College System institution, career center operated by a school district, or charter

technical career center. The bill requires a state university, Florida College System institution, career center operated by a school district, or charter technical career center to waive out-of-state fees for any person who is receiving educational assistance through the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs and who physically resides in Florida while enrolled in the institution. This addition allows individuals, such as a spouse or child of a veteran or service member using GI Bill benefits, to qualify for in-state tuition rates.

This year, HB 799 was introduced to expand this benefit to all active duty members as well as veterans. HB 799 waives the out-of-state fee for active duty members of the United States Armed Forces who reside in stations outside Florida at the time of their enrollment.

The effective date of HB 799 is July 1, 2016.

The Governor approved HB 799 on March 28, 2016 (Chapter No. 2016-136).



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GOVERNMENT RELATIONS
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