Committee on Higher Education

CS/HB 7019 — Education Access and Affordability

by Education Committee; Higher Education and Workforce Subcommittee; and Reps. Porter and others (CS/SB 984 by Higher Education Committee and Senator Legg)

The bill modifies requirements related to higher education textbooks and instructional materials affordability and promotes public awareness on higher education costs.

Regarding textbook and instructional materials affordability, the bill expands textbook affordability provisions to include instructional materials and defines "instructional materials" as educational materials, in either printed or digital format, for use within a course.

The bill also specifies duties and responsibilities regarding textbook and instructional materials affordability for the Florida College System (FCS) institutions and state universities, FCS institution and state university boards of trustees, Chancellor of the FCS and the Chancellor of the State University System (SUS), and the State Board of Education (state board) and the Board of Governors for the State University System of Florida (BOG). Specifically, the bill:

- Requires each FCS institution and state university to post prominently in the course registration system and on its website, at least 45 days before the first day of class for each term, a hyperlink to lists of required and recommended textbooks and instructional materials for at least 95 percent of all courses and course sections offered at the institution during the upcoming term.
- Authorizes each board of trustees to adopt policies, in consultation with providers, including bookstores, which allow for the use of innovative pricing techniques and payment options for textbooks and instructional materials. Such techniques and options must include an opt-in provision for students and may be approved only if there is evidence that the options reduce the cost of textbooks and instructional materials for students.
- Requires each board of trustees to:
  - Examine each semester the cost of textbooks and instructional materials by course and course section for all general education course offerings to identify variance in the cost of textbooks and instructional materials among different sections of the same course and the percentage of textbooks and instructional materials that remain in use for more than one term; and specifies a July 1, 2018 deadline for repeal of such provisions.
  - Annually report, by September 30, to the Chancellor of the FCS or the Chancellor of the SUS, as applicable, specified information including, but not limited to, the textbook and instructional materials selection process for general education courses with a wide cost variance and specific institutional initiatives to reduce the cost of textbooks and instructional materials.
- Requires each chancellor to annually submit, by November 1, a summary of information provided by the institutions to the state board and the BOG, as applicable.
- Requires the state board and the BOG to receive input from students, faculty, bookstores, and publishers before adopting textbook and instructional materials affordability policies, procedures, and guidelines to minimize the cost of textbooks and instructional materials

to students; and modifies existing policies, procedures, and guidelines adopted by the state board and the BOG to include new issues addressing:

- The establishment of deadlines for instructors or departments to notify the college or university bookstore, as applicable, of the required and recommended textbooks and instructional materials so that the bookstore may verify availability, source explore lower cost options, explore alternatives with faculty when academically appropriate, and maximize the availability of used textbooks and instructional materials.
- Consultation with school districts to identify practices that impact the cost of dual enrollment textbooks and instructional materials to the school districts, including, but not limited to, the length of time that such textbooks and instructional materials remain in use.
- Selection of textbooks and instructional materials through cost-benefit analyses that help students obtain the highest quality product at the lowest available price by considering specified options (e.g., purchasing digital textbooks in bulk; providing rental options for textbook and instructional materials; developing mechanisms to assist in buying, renting, selling, and sharing textbooks and instructional materials; evaluation of cost savings to students if the students opt-in to participate in innovative pricing techniques and payment options for textbooks and instructional materials).

Regarding college affordability, the bill establishes provisions to:

- Require the BOG and the state board to:
  - Identify strategies and initiatives to promote college affordability by evaluating the impact of tuition and fees on students; federal, state, and institutional financial aid on the actual cost of attendance for students and their families; and the costs of textbooks and instructional materials.
  - Annually submit, by December 31, a report on their college affordability initiatives to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.
- Require each FCS institution and state university to publicly notice and notify all enrolled students of any proposal to increase tuition and fees at least 28 days before its consideration at a board of trustees meeting; and requires that the notice must:
  - Include the date and time of the meeting at which the proposal will be considered.
  - Specifically outline the details of existing tuition and fees, the rationale for the proposed increase, and how the funds from the proposed increase will be used.
  - Be posted on the institution's website and issued in a press release.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect July 1, 2016.
Vote: Senate 36-0; House 114-0