

THE FLORIDA SENATE  
2012 SUMMARY OF LEGISLATION PASSED  
**Committee on Higher Education**

**CS/SB 198 — State University System Optional Retirement Program**  
by Government Oversight and Accountability Committee; and Senator Thrasher

This bill increases retirement options for state university employees. Under the bill, the number of providers that the Department of Management Services is authorized to contract with for optional retirement services is increased from five to six companies. Like the other five selections, the additional company must be chosen from among the group of companies recommended by the Board of Governors. Selection of an additional provider would require participation in the competitive bid process. The contract term of an additional provider would be effective until December 31, 2014, after which time all companies seeking a designation would participate together in competitive procurement.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect upon becoming law.

*Vote: Senate 40-0; House 109-0*

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**SB 878 — Florida College System Personnel Records**

by Senator Benacquisto

The bill narrows the public records exemption for employee records maintained by a Florida College System institution. The definition of limited-access records includes only academic evaluations of employee performance, records of investigations of employee misconduct, disciplinary proceedings, and grievance proceedings. The bill requires that records relating to a complaint, investigation, or disciplinary proceeding must be made public after a final decision has been made in the investigation or proceeding. While the bill makes academic evaluations of employee performance exempt from public records requirements, it does not exempt other types of employee performance evaluations. Thus, evaluations of employee performance, other than academic performance, would be public.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect July 1, 2012.

*Vote: Senate 39-0; House 117-0*

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## Committee on Higher Education

### **CS/HJR 931 — Board of Governors/Student Member Selection Process**

by Education Committee and Rep. Gaetz and others (CS/SJR 1508 by Judiciary Committee and Senators Montford and Ring)

This Joint Resolution proposes an amendment to Art. IX, s. 7, State Constitution to change the process for selecting the student member of the Board of Governors of the state university system. Under the change proposed in the joint resolution, the student member of the Board of Governors would not be the president of the Florida Student Association, but, rather, would be the chair of a council comprised of all state university student body presidents which must be organized by the Board of Governors.

To take effect upon approval by the electors of this state.

*Vote: Senate 37-3; House 114-0*

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**Committee on Higher Education**

**HB 7017 — OGSR/Donor Information/Historic Preservation of City of St. Augustine.**

by State Affairs Subcommittee on Government Operations; Rep. Broxson and others (CS/SB 832 by Governmental Oversight and Accountability Committee and Higher Education Committee)

This bill reenacts the public records exemptions for information held by the University of Florida's direct support organization that supports the university's historic preservation and historic preservation education responsibilities for the City of St. Augustine. The exemption applies to the identities of donors or prospective donors who wish to remain anonymous.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect October 1, 2012.

*Vote: Senate 40-0; House 114-0*

## Committee on Higher Education

### **HB 7129— State Universities of Academic and Research Excellence and National Preeminence**

by Education Committee and Rep. Proctor and others (CS/CS/SB 1752 by Budget Subcommittee on Higher Education Appropriations; Higher Education Committee; and Senators Oelrich and Lynn)

This bill provides tuition and academic flexibility to research universities that meet standards established in the bill for a state university of national preeminence. The standards include selectivity of admissions, student retention, graduation rates, size of endowment, amount of annual giving, faculty membership in a national academy, number of patents awarded, number of doctoral degrees awarded, number of postdoctoral appointees, two categories of research expenditures, and three types of national rankings.

After approval by the university board of trustees and the Board of Governors, a university that meets at least 11 of the 14 criteria in the bill may:

- Charge differentiated or market-rate tuition and fees beginning with the 2012-2013 academic year, notwithstanding the statutory percentages and dollar amount limitations on university fees; and
- Require incoming freshmen students to take from nine to twelve credits in a set of courses specifically determined by the university.

An increase in fees may take place no more than once each year and must be implemented in the fall term.

Florida Prepaid College contracts purchased prior to a university's becoming authorized to charge market-rate tuition must be honored and the beneficiaries will be exempt from paying the tuition increases. Beneficiaries of prepaid contracts purchased in the first year a university receives authority to charge market-rate tuition and thereafter, will have to pay the difference between the highest rate of tuition and fees covered by the contract and the university's tuition.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect upon becoming law.

*Vote: Senate 36-3; House 85-28*

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2012 SUMMARY OF LEGISLATION PASSED

## Committee on Higher Education

### **HB 7135 — Higher Education/Economic Security Report**

by Education Committee and Rep. Proctor and others (CS/CS/SB 1366 by Budget Subcommittee on Higher Education Appropriations; Education Pre-K-12 Committee; and Senators Gaetz and Lynn)

#### *Economic Security Report*

This bill requires changes in educational reporting to better inform students and their parents of the employment and economic outcomes for certificates and degrees earned at Florida College System institutions and state universities. The bill requires:

- The Department of Economic Opportunity to prepare an economic security report on the employment and earnings of graduates of a degree or certificate program at a public postsecondary educational institution;
- Secondary schools, Florida College System institutions, and state universities to provide students electronic access to the economic security report beginning in 2014-2015; and
- The State Board of Education, in consultation with the Board of Governors and the Department of Economic Opportunity to adopt a unified state plan for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) to improve K-20 STEM education and prepare students for high-skill, high-wage, and high-demand employment in STEM and STEM-related fields.

#### *Performance Funding for State Universities*

The bill authorizes performance funding for state universities that are most successful in educating students who earn degrees in, and become employed in, technology fields. Up to \$15 million is authorized, as appropriated for that purpose.

#### *New Requirements for State Universities and Florida College System Institutions*

The bill requires the State Board of Education and the Board of Governors to identify performance metrics for Florida College System institutions and state universities, respectively. The metrics must include student retention, graduation, employment, licensure passage, excess hours, student loan burden and default rates, faculty awards, and other measures.

The bill revises procedures for a Florida College System institution's provision of a baccalaureate degree program by requiring:

- A Florida College System institution to receive State Board of Education approval for new baccalaureate degree programs;
- The State Board of Education to clarify the mission statements of each institution and its role within the Florida College System as a whole and to establish criteria for service delivery areas of Florida College System institutions authorized to grant baccalaureate degrees; and

- Each Florida College System institution offering baccalaureate degree programs to report its status annually using specific performance and compliance indicators related to the institution's baccalaureate degree programs.

### ***General Education Requirements for an Associate or Baccalaureate Degree***

Regarding the general education requirements for an associate or baccalaureate degree, the bill:

- Reduces the general education course requirements from 36 semester credit hours to 30 semester credit hours, beginning with students initially entering a Florida College System institution in 2014-2015;
- Requires general education core course options to consist of a maximum of five courses within the subject areas of communication, mathematics, social sciences, humanities, and natural sciences, and requires a student to complete one course in each of those areas;
- Requires that associate in arts degree students demonstrate competency in a foreign language; and
- Requires the chairs of the State Board of Education and the Board of Governors to jointly convene faculty committees to identify statewide general education core course options.

The bill gives the Commissioner of Education the authority to investigate or review practices, procedures, or actions at a Florida College System institution which appear to be inconsistent with sound financial, management, or academic practices.

### ***Universities' Use of the Tuition Differential Fee***

The bill authorizes the Board of Governors to waive or modify the requirements for the use of the tuition differential fee under s. 1009.24(16), F.S. The requirements for spending 70 percent of the tuition differential fee on undergraduate education and the remaining 30 percent, or the equivalent amount of revenues from private sources, on financial aid could be waived.

If approved by the Governor, these provisions take effect upon becoming law.

*Vote: Senate 40-0; House 115-0*