

STORAGE NAME: h3575a.cu

DATE: April 3, 1998

**HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON
COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES
BILL RESEARCH & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT**

BILL #: HB 3575

RELATING TO: Public Universities

SPONSOR(S): Representative Lynn

COMPANION BILL(S): CS/SB 2088

ORIGINATING COMMITTEE(S)/COMMITTEE(S) OF REFERENCE:

- (1) COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES YEAS 11 NAYS 0
 - (2) EDUCATION APPROPRIATIONS
 - (3)
 - (4)
 - (5)
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I. SUMMARY:

This bill requires state universities to include all grades earned in fine arts courses when they calculate grade point averages for university admission and for eligibility of Florida Bright Futures Scholarships and Florida Academic Scholars Awards. The fine arts courses are to be calculated with the same weight as core curriculum courses.

The fiscal impact of this bill is indeterminate at this time.

II. SUBSTANTIVE RESEARCH:

A. PRESENT SITUATION:

University Admission Requirements

Section 240.209, F.S., provides that the Board of Regents (BOR) is responsible for adopting system wide rules and policies for the State University System.

Section 240.233, F.S., authorizes each university within the State University System to govern admissions of students according to the section and rules of the BOR. The specific statutory requirements with regard to university admission criteria address only two areas: high school graduation and foreign language instruction. Other requirements are adopted in rule by the BOR and are listed in Rule 6C-6.002, F.A.C. That rule provides that a student must have 19 credits in the following academic units:

- English -- 4 credits
- Math -- 3 credits
- Natural Science -- 3 credits
- Social Science -- 3 credits
- Foreign Language -- 2 credits
- Academic Electives from the above 5 subject areas -- 4 credits
- Total -- 19 credits

A student applying for admission must have a GPA of at least a 3.0, on a 4.0 scale, in the required high school academic units. In computing the high school GPA for purposes of admission to a state university, additional weights are assigned to grades in Honors, International Baccalaureate, and Advanced Placement courses. If a student's GPA is less than 3.0, a sliding scale allows the opportunity for an applicant to balance a low GPA with a high score on an admissions test, or to balance a low test score with a high GPA. Rule 6C-6.002, F.A.C., further provides that a student applying for admission who does not meet the test score/GPA requirements may bring to the university other important attributes or special talents and may be admitted if, in the judgement of an appropriate faculty committee, it is determined from appropriate evidence that the student can be expected to do successful academic work as defined by the institution to which the student applies.

University representatives indicate that a student's GPA in core academic courses is generally a good predictor of how well a student will perform the first 2 years at the postsecondary level and suggest that the inclusion of non-academic courses in the GPA calculation could diminish the usefulness of GPA calculations for predicting academic success.

Representatives of the Florida Cultural Action Alliance report that in *Goals 2000: Educate America Act*, the arts are recognized as part of the core curriculum, along with English, mathematics, science, foreign language, and history. They also cite research from the College Board *1992 Profile of SAT and Achievement Test Takers* which finds that "Students with long-term arts study tend to score significantly higher on Scholastic Aptitude Test (SAT) than those with less coursework in the arts."

Bright Futures Scholarship

In 1997, the Florida Legislature created the Bright Futures Scholarship program to reward Florida high school graduates who merit recognition of high academic achievement. There are three scholarship programs: Florida Academic Scholars, Florida Merit Scholars, and Florida Vocational Gold Seal Scholars. The program is administered by the Department of Education who determines eligibility for the scholarships.

The eligibility requirements for a Florida Academic Scholars award are included in s. 240.40205, F.S. The eligibility requirements for the Florida Merit Scholars award are set forth in s. 240.40206, F.S. Current law requires that the GPA be calculated using "high school courses that are adopted by the Board of Regents and recommended by the State Board of Community Colleges as college-preparatory academic courses." For students graduating in or after 1998, the GPA calculated to determine Bright Futures eligibility is based on grades earned in the 15 required academic units described in the preceding section.

B. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

This bill requires public universities to include all grades earned in fine arts courses when they calculate grade point averages for university admissions. The bill does not, however, define the term "fine arts course."

Data on the number of fine arts courses taken by applicants for admission to an SUS institution and the grades awarded in those courses were not available at the time this analysis was prepared. Consequently, the impact of including an unlimited number of these courses in a GPA calculation is indeterminate. According to BOR staff, data from a limited review of student transcripts indicate that the average of grades awarded in fine arts courses runs higher than the average of grades awarded in courses in other disciplines such as mathematics, science, foreign languages, or English.

University representatives have expressed concern that grades in fine arts courses may not be valid indicators of how well a student may perform in the student's first two years of college. Requiring that such grades be included in a measure designed to predict a student's success in the first two years of college may diminish the predictive value of the measure.

This bill also requires universities to include all grades earned in fine arts courses in the grade point average calculations used to determine eligibility for a Bright Futures Scholarship. Eligibility determinations for Bright Futures awards are currently made by the Department of Education. The bill establishes a different process for determining eligibility for receipt of a Bright Futures award for students attending a state university than for students attending a community college or private institution. Including all grades earned in fine arts courses in the grade point averages calculated to determine eligibility for a Bright Futures award could increase the number of students eligible for participation in the Bright Futures Scholarship Program.

The bill has an effective date of July 1, 1998. The impact on university admissions and initial Bright Futures awards for Fall 1998 is not clear.

C. APPLICATION OF PRINCIPLES:

1. Less Government:

a. Does the bill create, increase or reduce, either directly or indirectly:

(1) any authority to make rules or adjudicate disputes?

No.

(2) any new responsibilities, obligations or work for other governmental or private organizations or individuals?

Yes. Public universities would be required to include all grades earned in fine arts courses in calculating the GPA for admissions decisions.

The bill references the role of public universities in calculating the grade point averages for purposes of awarding Bright Futures scholarships although this task is currently performed by the Department of Education.

(3) any entitlement to a government service or benefit?

No.

b. If an agency or program is eliminated or reduced:

(1) what responsibilities, costs and powers are passed on to another program, agency, level of government, or private entity?

N/A

(2) what is the cost of such responsibility at the new level/agency?

N/A

(3) how is the new agency accountable to the people governed?

N/A

2. Lower Taxes:

- a. Does the bill increase anyone's taxes?

No.

- b. Does the bill require or authorize an increase in any fees?

No.

- c. Does the bill reduce total taxes, both rates and revenues?

No.

- d. Does the bill reduce total fees, both rates and revenues?

No.

- e. Does the bill authorize any fee or tax increase by any local government?

No.

3. Personal Responsibility:

- a. Does the bill reduce or eliminate an entitlement to government services or subsidy?

No.

- b. Do the beneficiaries of the legislation directly pay any portion of the cost of implementation and operation?

No.

4. Individual Freedom:

- a. Does the bill increase the allowable options of individuals or private organizations/associations to conduct their own affairs?

N/A

- b. Does the bill prohibit, or create new government interference with, any presently lawful activity?

N/A

5. Family Empowerment:

a. If the bill purports to provide services to families or children:

(1) Who evaluates the family's needs?

N/A

(2) Who makes the decisions?

N/A

(3) Are private alternatives permitted?

N/A

(4) Are families required to participate in a program?

N/A

(5) Are families penalized for not participating in a program?

N/A

b. Does the bill directly affect the legal rights and obligations between family members?

N/A

c. If the bill creates or changes a program providing services to families or children, in which of the following does the bill vest control of the program, either through direct participation or appointment authority:

(1) parents and guardians?

N/A

(2) service providers?

N/A

(3) government employees/agencies?

N/A

D. STATUTE(S) AFFECTED:

Creates a new section.

E. SECTION-BY-SECTION RESEARCH:

This section need be completed only in the discretion of the Committee.

III. FISCAL RESEARCH & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT:

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE AGENCIES/STATE FUNDS:

1. Non-recurring Effects:

SEE FISCAL COMMENTS.

2. Recurring Effects:

SEE FISCAL COMMENTS.

3. Long Run Effects Other Than Normal Growth:

SEE FISCAL COMMENTS.

4. Total Revenues and Expenditures:

SEE FISCAL COMMENTS.

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS AS A WHOLE:

1. Non-recurring Effects:

SEE FISCAL COMMENTS.

2. Recurring Effects:

SEE FISCAL COMMENTS.

3. Long Run Effects Other Than Normal Growth:

SEE FISCAL COMMENTS.

C. **DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:**

1. Direct Private Sector Costs:

None.

2. Direct Private Sector Benefits:

Requiring that grade point average calculations include all grades earned in fine arts courses could increase the number of students eligible for admission to a state university or the number of students eligible to participate in the Bright Futures Scholarship Program.

3. Effects on Competition, Private Enterprise and Employment Markets:

None.

D. **FISCAL COMMENTS:**

Although the fiscal impact is indeterminate at this time, any increase in the number of students who qualify for Bright Futures Scholarships would increase the cost of the scholarship program.

IV. CONSEQUENCES OF ARTICLE VII, SECTION 18 OF THE FLORIDA CONSTITUTION:

A. **APPLICABILITY OF THE MANDATES PROVISION:**

This bill does not require counties or municipalities to spend funds or to take an action requiring the expenditure of funds.

B. **REDUCTION OF REVENUE RAISING AUTHORITY:**

This bill does not reduce the authority that municipalities or counties have to raise revenues in the aggregate.

C. **REDUCTION OF STATE TAX SHARED WITH COUNTIES AND MUNICIPALITIES:**

This bill does not reduce the percentage of a state tax shared with counties or municipalities.

V. COMMENTS:

This bill requires universities to make decisions regarding eligibility requirements for the Bright Futures Program. The Department of Education is the entity that evaluates a student and determines his or her eligibility for a Bright Futures Scholarship.

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Section 1 of the bill refers to “awarding Bright Futures Scholarships and Florida Academic Scholars Awards”. The Florida Academic Scholars Award is a component of the Bright Futures Program. The purpose of including “Florida Academic Scholars Award” is not clear.

VI. AMENDMENTS OR COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE CHANGES:

On April 2, 1998, the Committee on Colleges & Universities adopted a “strike everything” amendment which requires the Board of Regents to amend its rules to add fine arts courses to the core courses used in calculating student eligibility for admission; the fine arts courses are limited to advanced placement fine arts courses or fine arts courses taken in the third or fourth year of a fine arts curricular program.

For purposes of determining eligibility for a Bright Futures Scholarship, the amendment classifies fine arts courses, pursuant to s. 232.246(1)(h)2., as college-preparatory academic courses and requires that they be included when calculating the required grade point average. The courses are limited to advanced placement fine arts courses or fine arts courses taken in the third or fourth year of a fine arts curriculum.

VII. SIGNATURES:

COMMITTEE ON COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES:

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