Legislative Update
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OUTREACH
Owls in Washington, D.C.

On Monday, January 28, 2013, Student Body President Robert Huffman, Vice President April Turner and Chief Justice Ryan Quinn, participated in the Florida Student Association’s (FSA) DC Fly-in. The FSA Fly-in was attended by student leaders from each of the public universities in the state. During their visit to our nation’s capital, the students were able to meet with Senator Nelson and Senator Rubio, the Obama Administration’s Community Engagement Liaison, leaders from other national student organizations, and staff members in a number of congressional offices. The students focused their advocacy efforts around three main topics, which included maintaining low interest rates for student loans, in-state tuition for military veterans, and increases in loan subsidization for graduate students.

After a productive three days in Washington, D.C., our Student Government is now turning its attention to the Rally in Tally, which will take place on April 3, 2013.

COMMITTEE WEEK ROUNDUP

Residency for Tuition Purposes

On Wednesday, February 6, 2013, the House Higher Education and Workforce Subcommittee engaged in a discussion with Vickie Shirley, General Counsel for the Board of Governors. The discussion centered on the federal court ruling which prohibited Florida from charging higher tuition rates to students whose parents cannot prove their residency status. The Court’s

GOING FORWARD

Center for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD) Advocacy in Tallahassee

Next week, on February 12, 2013, representatives from Florida Atlantic University’s Center for Autism and Related Disabilities (CARD) will be in Tallahassee to take part in CARD Advocacy Day. FAU’s CARD Center is one of seven CARD facilities located at universities throughout the state. These Centers currently serve over 28,000 families in every county, city and locality in Florida.
rationale in reaching their decision focused on the fact that a student’s parents were not receiving the benefit of in-state tuition and that the parents were not being conferred a degree. Therefore, the parents’ residency status should not be taken into consideration when determining a student’s tuition rate.

The Court’s decision does not impact Florida’s current residency requirements, which asks students to provide documentation that they have resided in the state for at least 12 months prior to entering their postsecondary education. Students of undocumented parents would still have to provide proof of living in Florida for the preceding year in order to qualify for in-state tuition.

This year, at least five bills have been filed that address the residency status and in-state tuition issue. Similar bills have been filed in previous legislative sessions but have failed to gain much support. Last year’s court ruling will likely force the Legislature to act.

**Veterans Qualifying as Residents for In-state Tuition Purposes**

On Wednesday, February 6, 2013, the Senate Committee on Military Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security considered SB 260. The legislation allows a veteran of the U.S. Armed Services who physically attends a public college, university or institution of higher learning in Florida to be automatically classified as a resident of the state for tuition purposes. The bill essentially waives the current one year requirement for veterans to establish residency in the state before they can qualify for in-state tuition rates.

The legislation passed unanimously out of committee with broad support, but several Senators raised concerns about the bill potentially allowing an out-of-state veteran to gain acceptance to a state university and by doing so, exclude a veteran who has lived in Florida for an extended period of time. These issues will likely be addressed as the bill moves through the Senate. SB 260 now moves to the Senate Education Committee.

**College Credit for Military Training and Education Courses**

On Wednesday, February 6, 2013, the Senate Committee on Military Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security heard a presentation about the implementation of a law that passed in 2012 (HB 347) that directed the Board of Governors to adopt regulations and the State Board of Education to adopt rules that enabled members of the U.S. Armed Services to earn academic credit for college-level training and education acquired in the military.

The SUS and State College System have adopted rules to award academic credit for military training that
specify the use of military credit toward degree program requirements, and allows for the transfer of credit when possible. The American Council on Education collaborates with the U.S. Department of Defense to review military training and experiences and recommend appropriate college credit. A veteran can go to: www.acenet.edu/higher-education/Pages/Military-Students-and-Veterans.aspx, enter their basic military skills and information, and receive a print-out of the recommended college credits based on the information provided.

Florida colleges and universities have been awarding academic credit for military training and experience for many years, but this legislation has served to standardize this process and provide more flexibility to veteran students.

- Meeting Packet

Governor Rick Scott’s Budget Proposal

Throughout the week of February 4-8, 2013, the Governor’s staff presented his “Florida Families First” budget proposal to several committees, including the House and Senate Appropriations Committees and their respective Education Appropriations Subcommittees. These budget presentations highlighted several aspects of the Governor’s higher education priorities, including increases in base and performance funding, the allocation of fixed capital outlay dollars, and initiatives like the $10,000 Degree Challenge and the Finish in Four program (guaranteed tuition rates for incoming freshman).

During the question and answer periods following the budget presentations Members in each committee raised several questions about the Governor’s priorities. Among the most questioned aspects of the Governor’s budget were:

- The University of Florida’s $15 million allocation to assist the institution in becoming a Top 10 public institution;
- The limiting of funds to certain institutions;
- The implementation of the Finish in Four guaranteed tuition program and how it would impact nontraditional students; and
- How the Governor’s budget would likely impact tuition rates.

The Governor’s budget proposal will continue to be analyzed in the coming weeks and months. You can view the entire budget presentation in the meeting packet listed below.

-House Appropriations Committee Meeting Packet
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