OUTREACH

Owls in Tallahassee

On Wednesday, March 13, 2013, a delegation from FAU that included Board of Trustees Chair Anthony Barbar, Trustee/Student Body President Robert Huffman, and Student Body Vice President April Turner headed to Tallahassee to meet with legislators and discuss the importance of higher education. The group met with both House and Senate Members from across FAU’s service area. In addition to their conversations with legislators, the group attended a committee meeting, and watched the House in session from the gallery.

Representative MaryLynn Magar, Chair Anthony Barbar, Trustee/Student Body President Robert Huffman, and Vice President April Turner

On Tuesday, March 12, 2013, FAU Student Jad Khazem was invited by Representative Larry Lee, Jr. to give public testimony before the House Education Appropriations Subcommittee regarding the importance of dual enrollment programs for high school students. As a high school student at A.D. Henderson, Jad took advantage of the dual enrollment program and was able to graduate high school in 4 years and receive his bachelor’s degree within that same time frame. During his high school / undergraduate career Jad focused his research efforts on this subject and was asked to give testimony because of his expertise in the area. In addition to speaking before the committee, Jad also was able to meet Speaker of the House Will Weatherford.

GOING FORWARD

Owls in Tallahassee

Next week, Dr. Eliah Watlington, Associate Provost for the Jupiter Campus, and Dean Valerie Bristol from the College of Education will be among several others from FAU in Tallahassee to participate in Florida Association for Career and Technical Education (FACTE) “Day on the Hill.” FACTE is an organization designed to facilitate professional leadership and partnerships essential for the successful preparation of individuals to participate in a world class workforce.

â€œAlso next week, Dr. Kathleen Valentine, the Director of the Louis and Anne Green Memory and Wellness Center will be traveling to Tallahassee to meet with Members. Dr. Valentine will be discussing the impact of mental disorders on patients and families and the important work being done at the Memory and Wellness Center.

Bills in Brief

SB 546 – Targeted Economic Development (Ring)

Next week, Sen. Ring’s economic development bill will be heard in the Commerce and Tourism Committee.

The measure expands the purpose of the Institute for the Commercialization of Public Research to include the commercialization of products
Greater Ft. Lauderdale Alliance at FAU
On Friday, March 15, 2013, the Greater Ft. Lauderdale Alliance toured FAU’s Boca Campus. The Alliance is Greater Fort Lauderdale/Broward County’s official public/private partnership for economic development. While on campus, the group toured the University’s Research Park, Medical School, and College of Engineering. In addition to the areas visited on the tour, the group heard from President Saunders, Dr. O’Flannery-Anderson, Dean Somnath Bhattacharya, Dr. Kimberly Gramm and a number of other faculty and staff.

COMMITTEE WEEK ROUNDUP
Budget and Appropriations
Members are currently in the process of submitting their funding priorities and the Appropriation Chairs are beginning to compose their budgets. The proposed budget allocations are expected to be released next week.

Public Education Capital Outlay (PECO) Funding
On Wednesday, March 13, 2013, the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Education heard a brief presentation from the state’s chief economist, Amy Baker, who told the Members there will likely be no PECO funds available for allocation this year. Ms. Baker explained that a Florida Department of Education policy decision to build reserve funds and the resulting cuts from federal sequestration will likely consume the $80 million in cash expected to be available for Public Education Capital Outlay projects. PECO revenue has shriveled from a high of $1.2 billion in the 2007-2008 fiscal year to what is expected to be about $80 million for the 2013-2014 state budget. Baker said a Revenue Estimating Conference on the gross receipts tax will be held within the next two weeks to come up with a projection lawmakers will use during budget deliberations.

Florida Retirement System
This week, the House and Senate passed their
respective Florida Retirement System reform bills in committee. The House State Affairs Committee, along a party line vote, approved HB7011. This bill makes changes to the FRS, including, but not limited to:

- Closing the pension plan (defined benefit) to new enrollees, and requiring all new enrollees to participate in the investment plan (defined contribution), effective January 1, 2014;
- Eliminating the option for new enrollees to apply for disability benefits, effective January 1, 2014;
- Expanding the investment options available to investment plan members; and
- Closing the Senior Management Service Optional Annuity Program to new participants and prohibiting elected officials from joining the Senior Management Services Class, effective January 1, 2014.

The bill does not impact the ability of any current FRS enrollee to select participation in the pension plan or the investment plan. Changes included in the bill only pertain to new enrollees initially enrolled in the system on or after January 1, 2014.

The Senate Government Oversight Committee approved SB1392 unanimously, noting the bill was not as extensive as the House. The Senate bill for members initially enrolled in the FRS on or after January 1, 2014:

- Changes the vesting period in the pension plan from 8 to 10 years;
- Mandates that Elected Officers’ Class and Senior Management Service Class members may only join the investment plan;
- Changes the default for members who do not affirmatively choose a plan from the pension plan to the investment plan;
- Closes the Senior Management Service Optional Annuity Program to new members; and
- Changes the out of service disability retirement vesting period from 8 to 10 years.

The Senate bill also lowers the employee’s contribution rate from 3% to 2% for all members of the investment plan.

The overall actuarial impact of these pieces of legislation on the Florida Retirement System has not yet been determined.

Bills in Motion
On Tuesday, March 12, 2013, The Senate Education Committee considered several pieces of legislation related to higher education. Among the bills considered and passed by the committee was SB 920 (“Finish in Four”), which establishes a fixed tuition rate for
undergraduates who commit to finishing their degree in four years. In addition, SB 1720, which enacts several changes, including the establishment of a collaborative partnership between the Board of Governors and the Legislature to elevate the academic and research preeminence of this state’s highest performing state research universities.

- Meeting Packet

On Wednesday, March 13, 2013, The Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Education considered several bills including, SB 1076, The Career and Professional Education (CAPE) Act. Although the bill does not contain an appropriation it shifts around education money, increasing the cap for industry certification programs from $15 million to $60 million. It also authorizes up to $15 million in performance-based funding for adult education programs and the college system, and ties an unspecified amount of performance-based funding for universities awarding degrees in fields specified by the Board of Governors.

- Meeting Packet

Please Contact the University Relations staff with any questions and/or comments:
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