

SENATE STAFF ANALYSIS AND ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based only on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

BILL: CS/SB 768

SPONSOR: Senator Clary

SUBJECT: Community College Enrollment

DATE: February 16, 1999 REVISED: _____

| | ANALYST | STAFF DIRECTOR | REFERENCE | ACTION |
|----|---------|----------------|-----------|--------|
| 1. | White | O'Farrell | ED | Fav/CS |
| 2. | | | FP | |
| 3. | | | | |
| 4. | | | | |
| 5. | | | | |

I. Summary:

This Committee Substitute requires each community college to classify as matriculated and degree-seeking students who complete any required remediation and pass the placement test. The classification is to be used in the community college accountability reports.

The bill creates a new section of the Florida Statutes, as yet undesignated.

II. Present Situation:

The Florida Community College System allows any student with a high school diploma or equivalent to enroll in college credit courses. If the student is not prepared for college level work, as identified by a placement test, the student is required to complete remediation and pass an exit examination before enrolling in more than 12 credit hours of college level courses.

Because of the interest in completion rates for accountability purposes, the definition of "enrollment" has become controversial. The completion rate is better if the definition of enrollment omits students who enroll without making a serious attempt to complete.

Section 240.324, F.S., requires a community college accountability process. This law requires the college system to define terms consistently. In 1991, staff of the Division of Community Colleges, in consultation with staff of the Governor's office and the Legislature, defined enrollment for accountability purposes to mean only those students who had declared an intent to earn a degree and had completed 18 credit hours toward it. Under this definition, most students who had difficulty with remediation, and most students who were not earnestly working toward a goal, were omitted from the cohort tracked for accountability purposes. The division has tracked the

1992 cohort for 5 years, and reports a success rate of almost 80 percent¹ and a graduation rate of 28 percent.

Because the community college data base contains student-level information, it is not difficult to calculate rates based on different definitions. The Senate Higher Education Committee did so in 1996 and the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability did so in 1998. When OPPAGA tracked all A.A. degree-seeking students from the time of their actual enrollment, rather than from the time they completed 18 hours, the graduation rate went down to 19 percent.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The legislation under consideration requires a new type of enrollment report of community college students. The report will be of enrolled students who are matriculated and degree-seeking. Those terms are defined to mean any student who has completed any required remedial coursework and passed any required placement test.

The report also excludes high school students enrolled in college programs through early admission or advanced placement.

The students classified as matriculated and degree-seeking are to be used for purposes of accountability, as provided in s. 240.324, F.S., and not for any other purpose. Thus, a student's status as degree-seeking for purposes of financial aid will not be affected if the community college has not yet reported the student as degree-seeking and matriculated.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

V. Economic Impact and Fiscal Note:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

¹"Success rate" means the percentage of those enrolled as defined for accountability purposes who left in good standing, remained in college, or graduated.

C. Government Sector Impact:

Community college funding will probably not be affected because, under performance-based budgeting, the cohort for accountability purposes does not generally include students who still need remediation. That cohort is used to calculate graduation rate for outcome funding, and students who require remediation generate additional funds for the college if they later graduate.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Amendments:

None.

This Senate staff analysis does not reflect the intent or official position of the bill's sponsor or the Florida Senate.
