

SENATE STAFF ANALYSIS AND ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

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

BILL: CS/SB 118

SPONSOR: Appropriations Subcommittee on Education and Senator Sullivan

SUBJECT: College Fast Start Program

DATE: March 28, 2001

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>White</u>	<u>O'Farrell</u>	<u>ED</u>	<u>Fav/4 amendments</u>
2.	<u>Rhea</u>	<u>Wilson</u>	<u>GO</u>	<u>Favorable</u>
3.	<u>McKee</u>	<u>Hickam</u>	<u>AED</u>	<u>Fav/CS</u>
4.	_____	_____	<u>AP</u>	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____

I. Summary:

CS/SB 118 creates the College Fast Start Program to encourage middle and high school students with disabilities to successfully complete a postsecondary education or a workforce development program in order to increase their opportunities for employment. It is designed after the College Reach-Out Program.

This bill creates section 239.515, Florida Statutes.

II. Present Situation:

Three state programs currently assist middle and high school students to overcome barriers that prevent them from pursuing postsecondary educations:

The College Reach-Out Program - The College Reach-Out Program encourages college attendance by students who, in middle school, have a family history or who fit within demographic statistics that predict low rates of college attendance. It serves a similar population as does the federal TRIO program, but the law prohibits the same students from receiving services from both programs. College Reach-Out has clear goals and objectives and requires extensive data collection to evaluate its impact -- so extensive that the program has served as a model for a recent Harvard graduate's doctoral thesis.

For the past 8 years, the Postsecondary Education Planning Commission has analyzed detailed demographic information about all participants and a measurement of their attainment of the goals compared with a cohort of students who are not in the program. Even though the average expenditure per student is only \$318 per year, students in the reach-out program are absent from school for fewer days, receive more academic promotions, and have a higher high school graduation rate than students in the comparison group. Follow-up of former reach-out students

reveals a higher rate of enrollment in postsecondary education and better grades. These results are remarkable because the students in reach-out have more disadvantages than the comparison group, which is selected at random.

The Alliance for the Employment of Disabled Citizens - The 1990 Legislature created s. 413.615, F.S., the Able Trust, to fund programs to promote planning, research, and policy development for the employment and training of people with disabilities. In 1997, Governor Chiles designated the Able Trust to be the Florida Governor's Alliance for the Employment of Disabled Citizens. The alliance administers a national program in Florida called High School/High Tech Centers. The program works with public high schools, community colleges and local businesses to educate and train high school students with various types of disabilities in programs such as computer technology. Participating businesses may offer internships, on-the-job-training, and other outreach opportunities to students with disabilities.

The alliance also annually sponsors a Youth Leadership Forum for high school students with disabilities. The Alliance pays all expenses to bring up to 50 students with disabilities to Tallahassee for a week of vocational enrichment activities such as informational seminars, meetings with Legislators, career training, and social activities.

Governor Bush, in Executive Order 99-338, renewed the designation of the Able Trust and charged it with promoting initiatives designed to make Florida an innovative leader in employment of people with disabilities.

Scholarship Tuition for At-Risk Students - The 1988 Legislature created s. 240.552, F.S, to provide economically disadvantaged youth with prepaid postsecondary tuition scholarships. The program is operated by the Florida Prepaid Tuition Scholarship Program and is called STARS, for Scholarship Tuition for At-Risk Students. The program identifies students as early as middle school and promises them a prepaid college tuition scholarship for meeting certain school-related requirements and remaining drug and crime free. Since 1989, the program has awarded over 13,000 scholarships.

Section 228.041(18), F.S., defines the term "exceptional student" as follows:

. . . any child or youth who has been determined eligible for a special program in accordance with rules of the Commissioner of Education or the State Board of Education. The term "exceptional students" includes students who are gifted and *students with disabilities who are mentally handicapped, speech and language impaired, deaf or hard of hearing, visually impaired, dual sensory impaired, physically impaired, emotionally handicapped, specific learning disabled, hospital and homebound, autistic, developmentally delayed children, ages birth through 5 years, or children with established conditions, ages birth through 2 years (emphasis added).*

Chapter 6A-6, F.A.C., which is entitled "Special Programs," includes definitions for gifted students, as well as definitions for students with disabilities. Specifically, definitions are provided for the following:

Special Programs for Students Who Are Mentally Handicapped	Rule 6A-6.0311, F.A.C.
Special Programs for Student Who Are Speech and Language Impaired	Rule 6A-6.03012, F.A.C.
Special Programs for Students Who Are Deaf or Hard-of-Hearing	Rule 6A-6.03013, F.A.C.
Special Programs for Students Who Are Visually Impaired	Rule 6A-6.03014, F.A.C.
Special Programs for Students Who Are Physically Impaired	Rule 6A-6.03015, F.A.C.
Special Programs for Students Who Are Emotionally Handicapped	Rule 6A-6.03016, F.A.C.
Special Programs for Students With Specific Learning Disabilities	Rule 6A-6.03018, F.A.C.
Special Programs for Students Who Are Homebound or Hospitalized	Rule 6A-6.03020, F.A.C.
Special Programs for Students Who Are Profoundly Handicapped	Rule 6A-6.03021, F.A.C.
Special Programs for Students Who Are Dual-Sensory Impaired	Rule 6A-6.03022, F.A.C.
Special Programs for Students Who Are Autistic	Rule 6A-6.03023, F.A.C.
Special Programs for Students Who Require Physical Therapy	Rule 6A-6.03024, F.A.C.
Special Programs for Exceptional Students Who Require Occupational Therapy	Rule 6A-6.03025, F.A.C.
Special Programs for Prekindergarten Children with Disabilities	Rule 6A-6.03026, F.A.C.
Special Programs for Children Three Through Five Years Old Who Are Developmentally Delayed	Rule 6A-6.03027, F.A.C.
Special Programs for Children Birth Through Two Years Old Who Are Developmentally Delayed	Rule 6A-6.03029, F.A.C.
Special Programs for Children Birth Through Two Years Old Who Have Established Conditions	Rule 6A-6.03030, F.A.C.
Special Programs for Children Birth Through Two Years Old Who Are Developmentally Delayed	Rule 6A-6.03031, F.A.C.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The bill creates the College Fast Start Program for students with disabilities and is modeled closely after the College Reach-Out Program which is for students with economic and demographic disadvantages. A competitive grant system is established in which participants identify the students and design activities and services to assist them. The program is to be administered by the Florida Governor's Alliance for the Employment of Disabled Citizens.

Objective

The objective of the program is to increase the number of students with disabilities in grades 6 through 12 who graduate from high school, enroll in, and complete a postsecondary education program at the associate-degree level or who complete a workforce development program.

Goals

The program has three goals:

- < To motivate students to pursue a postsecondary education;
- < To develop students' basic learning and leadership skills; and
- < To collaborate with the STARS program.

Eligible Students

Eligible students have disabilities identified before their senior year in high school. At least 40 percent of the students participating in any year must be in grades 6 through 9. The disabilities listed in ch. 6A-6, F.A.C., include the:

- < mentally handicapped,
- < speech or language impaired,
- < deaf or hard-of-hearing,
- < visually impaired,
- < physically impaired,
- < emotionally handicapped,
- < specific learning disabilities,
- < homebound or hospitalized,
- < profoundly handicapped,
- < dual sensory impaired,
- < or autistic.

A student who is in a similar program under another administration is not eligible.

Eligible Participants

A community college, public university, public technical center, independent postsecondary institution, high school, or another agency serving youth with disabilities may be a program participant. A consortium of participants is eligible.

Program Design

The program must be designed to provide students with disabilities consistent contact in activities from the time of selection until enrollment in a postsecondary education institution. The types of activities encouraged are help to select courses, occupational forecasting, academic or job training activities, job profiling and career counseling, as well as opportunities for the students to interact with business leaders, employers, mentors, tutors, or role models. The participant must establish an advisory committee of high school and middle school personnel and business leaders.

Program Proposal

Program participants may submit a proposal to the alliance. Each proposal must contain a detailed list of information, including:

- < Identification of existing programs that provide employment training for people with disabilities.
- < A description of the proposed training and modifications needed to accommodate students who are to participate in the program.
- < A description of program activities.

- < An evaluation component that provides for the collection, maintenance, retrieval, and analysis of data from the program.

The alliance must give priority to proposals that:

- < Are submitted by a postsecondary institution and a business.
- < Supplement state funds with institutional, federal or private resources.
- < Agree to match grant funds equally in cash or services.
- < Demonstrate interest in cultural diversity.
- < Identify students not already enrolled in similar programs; and
- < Include a parental involvement component.

Advisory Council

The bill requires an advisory council to review program participant proposal applications. Members will serve three year, staggered terms and may serve for no more than two consecutive terms. The council includes:

- < Three members with disabilities, appointed by the Governor.
- < Two representatives of private or community organizations, one each appointed by the Speaker of the House and President of the Senate.
- < Two representatives of public school districts, appointed by the Commissioner of Education. One member shall represent postsecondary technical centers.
- < A representative of each of the following: the State University System, the Community College System, the Independent Colleges and Universities of Florida, and the Postsecondary Education Planning Commission.

Funding

Approved programs must be funded competitively according to the following methodology:

- < Eighty percent of the annual funds appropriated must be distributed as grants to projects that include summer business internships and a minimum number of hours of academic instructional and developmental activities, career counseling, and personal counseling.
- < Twenty percent of the annual funds appropriated may be used for college preparatory leadership training programs.
- < Subject to legislative appropriations, funds for the continuation of projects that satisfy the minimum requirements must increase each year by the same percentage as the rate of inflation. Projects that have been funded for three consecutive years must have an institutional cash match of at least 50 percent of the total cost of the project over the three-year period; otherwise, funding will cease.

Reports

The bill requires interim reports to the alliance by February 15 of each year and final reports by October 15. The Postsecondary Education Planning Commission is responsible for developing specifications and procedures for collecting and transmitting data. End-of-the-year reports must include the same type of data as required by the reach-out program:

- < A list of program expenditures;
- < The number of students participating by grade level, gender, race, and disability;
- < The student identification number, social security number, the name of the school attended, the gender, ethnicity, grade level, and GPA of each student participant at the time of entry into the program;

- < The grade point average, grade, and promotion status of each student participant at the end of the academic year and notification of any suspension or expulsion;
- < The number and percentage of high school participants who satisfactorily complete 2 sequential years of foreign language and Levels 2 and 3 of mathematics and science courses;
- < The number and percentage of participants eligible for high school graduation who receive a standard high school diploma or a high school equivalency diploma;
- < The number and percentage of 12th grade participants who are accepted for enrollment and who enroll in a postsecondary institution and the program in which they are enrolled;
- < The number of student participants who receive scholarships, grant aid, and work-study awards;
- < The number and percentage of participants who enroll in a public postsecondary institution and fail college placement tests;
- < The number and percentage of participants who enroll in a postsecondary institution and have a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.0 on a 4.0 scale, or its equivalent, by the end of the second semester;
- < A statement of how the program met the goals;
- < An analysis of program characteristics and activities critical to program success;
- < A description of the cooperation received from other units, organizations, businesses, or agencies; and
- < An explanation of the program's outcomes.

Finally, the bill requires the alliance to submit an annual report to the Governor, President of the Senate, Speaker of the House of Representatives, and Commissioner of Education. The report is based upon information provided by program participants, the Board of Regents, the State Board of Community Colleges, and the Division of Workforce Development. To the extent feasible, the performance of Fast Start participants must be compared to the performance of non-participating students in public schools and postsecondary institutions.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

V. Economic Impact and Fiscal Note:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

Depending upon funding, a number of middle school and high school students with disabilities may benefit from services provided by the program. Under the College Reach-Out Program, about \$400 is expended on each student annually.

C. Government Sector Impact:

The Florida Department of Education estimates that the recurring cost of administering this program will be \$102,163, which includes salaries, benefits, and expenses for two positions.

According to staff of the Department of Education, the number of students who might be eligible for the College Fast Start Program can not be accurately predicted. Some students within some of the major categories of disability, such as “autistic” or “specific learning disabled,” either may not be appropriate candidates for college or would be better served by a program such as College Reach-Out or STARS. Approximately 294,000 or 12.6 percent of the students enrolled in Florida public schools are classified as students with a disability. Over half of those are classified as “specific learning disabled.”

The Senate General Appropriations Bill for FY 2001-02 includes \$4 million for the College Fast Start Program.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

Some clarification of the term “students with disabilities” may be appropriate. The bill establishes the College Fast Start Program to encourage “students with disabilities” to successfully complete a postsecondary education or a workforce development program. The term “students with disabilities” is not defined in the bill, but reference is made to Rule 6A-6, F.A.C. That administrative rule chapter, however, does not contain a definition of the term “students with disabilities” either but provides individual definitions for specified disabilities that are enumerated in s. 228.041(18) F.S. This statutory section defines the term “exceptional student” to include not only “students with disabilities” but “gifted students.” Section 228.041(18), F.S., does list a number of disabilities that are defined in ch. 6.A-6, F.A.C., but the rule chapter also includes a few definitions that are not listed in s. 228.041(18), F.S. Specifically, the chapter includes students who are profoundly handicapped, students who require physical therapy, and students who require occupational therapy.

VII. Related Issues:

The bill gives additional duties to the Postsecondary Education Planning Commission, the Board of Regents and the State Board of Community Colleges. Chapter 2000-321, L.O.F., however, eliminates those entities effective January 7, 2003. As a result, future statutory modifications will be necessary to reflect the successors to these entities.

VIII. Amendments:

None.

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