

# 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 1190

SPONSOR: Appropriations Subcommittee on Education and Senator Sullivan

SUBJECT: St. Petersburg College

DATE: April 4, 2001                      REVISED: \_\_\_\_\_

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

## I. Summary:

This bill renames St. Petersburg Junior College as “St. Petersburg College.” It requires the college to seek accreditation to grant baccalaureate degrees and provides a mission that combines the traditional functions of a community college with those of a baccalaureate-degree-level college. Funding and employment policies also will share some characteristics with community colleges and some with universities. Authority is granted for a specific list of baccalaureate-degree programs; additions are allowed after 4 years but must be approved by a coordinating board composed of the Presidents and chairpersons of the boards of the college, Pasco-Hernando Community College, and the University of South Florida. The coordinating board will also assist the Board of Trustees of the college in its deliberations about upper-division issues; the Commissioner of Education is authorized to resolve disputes.

This bill creates eight new sections of the Florida Statutes, as yet undesignated. The Division of Statutory Revision will decide whether each section will be a separate statute or part of a single statute.

## II. Present Situation:

### Role of Community Colleges in Florida

Florida’s postsecondary education system consists of 10 state universities, 28 community colleges, and 41 technical career centers operated by public school districts or by a charter agreement. The community colleges have an “open-door” admissions policy, and a statewide articulation agreement guarantees university admission to any student who earns an Associate in Arts degree from a community college.

This two-plus-two structure is central to the design of Florida's system; Florida relies on community colleges for the lower division work of most students. This articulation design is unique in the nation. A 2000 Senate Education Committee Interim Project recommended that the state policy should "maintain and increase the role of public community colleges as an open door to every Florida resident who wishes to pursue a baccalaureate degree."<sup>1</sup>

### **The Common Course Numbering System**

The Department of Education coordinates an on-going project to designate college courses with a common number. Committees of faculty members oversee the commonality of course content, faculty credentials, and other factors that accrediting associations use to set standards for courses. A student who takes a course with a common course number from any Florida public postsecondary education institution may transfer the credit without penalty to any other regionally or nationally accredited institution that has a course with the same number. The 1995 Legislature, in ch. 95-243, amended s. 240.115, F.S., to require the common course numbers to designate whether courses are at the upper-division-level or lower-division-level. A student must be able to complete all required lower division coursework at a community college, including any prerequisites to specific baccalaureate-degree programs.

### **Analysis of Baccalaureate Degree Access in Florida**

The Postsecondary Education Planning Commission projects an increase of 150,000 new undergraduate students between now and 2010. The number of occupations that require 4-year degrees is increasing so much that the number needed will increase by 31 percent by 2005. This statistic means that the state should add to its current graduation rate an additional 240,000 people with baccalaureate degrees.

Yet, Florida lags behind the rest of the nation in percent of the population with baccalaureate degrees, ranking 38<sup>th</sup> among all states and eighth among the ten largest states.<sup>2</sup> Its universities are among the largest in the nation -- on average, over twice as large as those in the other 49 states. Five of our universities have over 30,000 students each.<sup>3</sup>

Compared to other states, Florida has a lower rate of students enrolling in baccalaureate-level colleges right out of high school (43<sup>rd</sup> in the nation), a lower rate of students who continue after the first 2 years of college, and a lower capacity in universities at the upper division.<sup>4</sup> Seventy-five percent of students who earn the Associate in Arts degree enroll in a state university, but only 20 percent of students who enroll in an Associate in Arts program complete it within 5 years. This is a lower completion rate than is typical of students who start out in 4-year colleges.

### **Recommendations**

In a January 2001 conference on Access to Baccalaureate Education, the Postsecondary Education Planning Commission provided the following recommendations:

- Increase enrollment at existing universities

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<sup>1</sup> Florida Senate Education Committee, *Postsecondary Education Issues*, Interim Project Report 2001-012, p. 8.

<sup>2</sup> Postsecondary Education Planning Commission, *Study of the Need for Baccalaureate Degree Opportunities in Five Florida Counties*, January 2001.

<sup>3</sup> National Center for Education Statistics, *Digest of Education Statistics*, 1999.

<sup>4</sup> National Center for Higher Education Management Systems, *A Brief Analysis of Baccalaureate Degree Production in Florida* (December 1999).

- Increase state subsidy for private institutions
- Increase use of distance learning technology
- Increase number of joint-use facilities at community colleges and state universities
- Authorize selected community colleges to award a limited number of baccalaureate degrees

Policy analysts agree that Florida is continuing to pursue the first four of these recommendations. The state's rapid growth and the shortage of essential services – especially for teachers, health care professionals, and qualified managers – raises the potential of expanding the offerings of some community colleges to include a limited number of baccalaureate programs.

Issues that affect that option include assuring that authorized programs meet a community need and distinguishing between the mission of any new 4-year college and that of a research university.

#### **Pinellas County's Need for Teachers**

Pinellas County is the most densely populated in the state. Its school system is the 21<sup>st</sup> largest in the nation. In 2000, Pinellas County schools employed 900 new teachers and still had vacancies. Most of the new teachers were recruited from out of state.

The University of South Florida's branch campus in St. Petersburg offers the only public teacher preparation program in Pinellas County. Clearwater Christian College has the only other state-approved teacher preparation program in the county. Eckerd College terminated its program in 1995.

#### **St. Petersburg Junior College and University Center**

St. Petersburg Junior College operates four campuses, at Clearwater, St. Petersburg/Gibbs, Seminole, and Tarpon Springs. The student enrollment totals over 17,137. In addition to associate in arts degree programs, it conducts workforce development programs including associate in science degree programs, associate in applied science degree programs, applied technology diploma programs, occupational certificate programs, and adult general education programs.

In 1999, St. Petersburg Junior College initiated its College University Center, a partnership of six state universities and three private colleges that conduct programs at the Seminole campus. In its year of operation, the center has enrolled over 750 students. The students enroll in a degree program at a selected college or university, and that institution conducts the program using a variety of innovative on-site and web-based course options. Currently available are 21 undergraduate programs and seven graduate-level programs.

### **III. Effect of Proposed Changes:**

#### **Mission**

The legislation under consideration renames St. Petersburg Junior College as "St. Petersburg College." It requires the college to seek accreditation to grant baccalaureate degrees, but it combines the traditional functions of a community college with those of a baccalaureate-degree-

level college. The college will retain the open-door admissions policy and continue its authority to offer all the programs that are associated with community colleges.

Students are expected to enroll in the upper division for the first time in fall of 2002.

### **Degrees**

The baccalaureate-degree programs are to promote economic development by preparing people for occupations that require a bachelor's degree and are in demand by employers in Florida. Although the University Center may continue to offer postgraduate degrees from other public and private colleges, St. Petersburg College will not. The bill authorizes the college to conduct courses to enable teachers to be certified and re-certified.

The authorized baccalaureate degrees are listed in the bill and include nursing and three education degrees -- elementary education, special education, and secondary education. In addition, the college may offer Bachelor of Applied Science degrees selected by the Board of Trustees. The bill prohibits the Board of Trustees from offering any additional baccalaureate-degree-level programs for at least 4 years.

The college may continue to award degrees, diplomas, and certificates as authorized for community colleges. Until the college is accredited as a baccalaureate degree level institution, the board will use the name and authority of St. Petersburg Junior College to award credentials to its students.

### **Articulation**

Each Bachelor of Applied Science degree program must articulate with at least one of the college's associate-degree programs. The bill encourages articulation with Associate in Applied Science degree programs, which are the same as Associate in Science degree programs except that some of the courses may not meet accreditation standards required for college level courses. This encouragement is consistent with the Legislature's efforts to increase articulation from Associate in Science to Bachelor of Science. The articulation path may be easier for students to move into Bachelor of Applied Science degree programs.

### **Academic Policy and Student Fees**

The academic policies of the upper division will be in accordance with policies of the State University System. Using the Common Course Numbering system, the college will record students separately for enrollment in the upper division, and matriculation and tuition fees will be higher. The college may charge upper-division students more than is authorized for a community college, but the fees must be in a lower range than for students at a university. All lower division students will pay the same level of mandatory fees and local fees, and all mandatory fees and local fees for upper division students must be less than those charged by the University of South Florida. Fee exemptions authorized for students in community college workforce education courses will continue.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The fee exemptions are listed in s. 239.117, F.S., subsections (3) and (4), and include most students in literacy or adult high school programs, dual enrollment students, and welfare recipients.

**Boards**

The bill will not affect the status of the Board of Trustees of St. Petersburg Junior College. The Governor will appoint its members as required in s. 240.313, F.S.,<sup>6</sup> and the board retains its duties and authorities granted in sections 240.315<sup>7</sup> and 240.319,<sup>8</sup> F.S. These statutes govern all community college boards of trustees.

The bill creates a coordinating board to assist the Board of Trustees in its deliberations concerning issues that affect the upper division of the college. The coordinating board consists of the President of the University of South Florida, the President of St. Petersburg College, the President of Pasco-Hernando Community College, and the chairpersons of the boards of trustees of those institutions. This board's main authority is that it must approve any new degree programs offered by the college.

The Coordinating Board meets only if requested by either president.

If the Board of Trustees and the Coordinating Board cannot decide an issue of importance to programs designed for students in the upper division, the Commissioner of Education will resolve the issue.

**Employment Policies**

Employment at the college will continue to be governed by laws and rules that apply to community colleges, with one exception: the bill stipulates that faculty who teach upper-division courses are eligible for continuing contract upon completion of the fifth year of teaching.

The bill specifies that the personnel records of all employees will be kept as required by community college law. Section 240.337, F.S., stipulates that records that contain information reflecting evaluations of employee performance are limited-access records open to inspection only by the employee and by officials of the college who are responsible for supervision of the employee.

**Funding**

The state will fund the college through a combination of mechanisms that apply to community colleges and universities. These provisions will allow the state to take into consideration the fact that the college will not incur the costs of major research institutions.

Programs at the lower division, including college credit programs and workforce development programs, will be funded as a community college, through the Community College Program Fund and the Workforce Development Education Fund. Students will be recorded separately for their enrollment in courses in the upper division, and only upper-division students will generate state funding at a higher rate. The upper division programs will generate funding as programs of a "baccalaureate-degree-level institution."

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<sup>6</sup> Community college districts; establishment and organization of boards of trustees.

<sup>7</sup> Community college district board of trustees; board to constitute a corporation.

<sup>8</sup> Community college district boards of trustees; duties and powers

The bill does not address the issue of which budget or program fund will be used for the upper division. To date, the term “baccalaureate-degree-level institution” has not been used in a General Appropriations Act.

To arrive at an appropriate funding level, the college will conduct a cost study and report a proposal for cost accounting and legislative budget requests designed to reflect its unique classification. The study will indicate actual costs projected for the first 4 years of operation as a baccalaureate-level institution. The due date for the report and request is March 1, 2002.

### **Operations**

By reference to s. 240.293, F.S., the bill authorizes the college to contract for supplies, utility services, and building construction without regulation or restriction by municipal or county charter. By reference to s. 240.2945, F.S., the bill exempts the college from local amendments to the Florida Building Code and the Fire Prevention Code. These two statutes apply to the State University System.

The bill specifies that the Board of Trustees may authorize direct-support organizations as authorized for both a community college and a university, by reference to s. 240.299, F.S.,<sup>9</sup> for universities, and to s. 240.331, F.S.,<sup>10</sup> for community colleges.

### **Facilities**

The college may request funding from the Public Education Capital Outlay and Debt Service (PECO) as a community college and as a university. Local governmental agencies and municipalities are authorized to exercise the power of eminent domain; any acquisition or donation of lands, buildings, and equipment for its use are authorized as for a public purpose. Designation as a community redevelopment area will not prohibit the exercise of the power of eminent domain.

## **IV. Constitutional Issues:**

### **A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:**

None.

### **B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:**

None.

### **C. Trust Funds Restrictions:**

None.

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<sup>9</sup> Direct-support organizations; use of property; board of directors; activities; audit; facilities; this statute applies to the state university system.

<sup>10</sup> Community college direct-support organizations.

**V. Economic Impact and Fiscal Note:****A. Tax/Fee Issues:**

None.

**B. Private Sector Impact:**

Beginning in 2002, students will have an opportunity for increased access to a bachelor's degree program in Pinellas County. Student fees will be less than at a state university.

**C. Government Sector Impact:**

To become accredited to grant baccalaureate degrees, St. Petersburg Junior College will need to make improvements, particularly in its library and faculty. As of March 17, 2001, the Senate's proposal for the General Appropriations Act contains an appropriation of \$1 million for St. Petersburg College. An additional \$5 million is in the Senate's proposed budget for "Targeted Baccalaureate Degrees." Funds could be allocated from either of these appropriations for these improvements.

Recurring expenses will increase after 2002, when students enroll in the upper division. These expenses can better be estimated after the college completes the required cost study.

**VI. Technical Deficiencies:**

None.

**VII. Related Issues:**

None.

**VIII. Amendments:**

None.