

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.)

Prepared By: Education Committee

BILL: SB 1252

SPONSOR: Senator Saunders et al

SUBJECT: Florida Gulf Coast University

DATE: April 7, 2005

REVISED: _____

| | ANALYST | STAFF DIRECTOR | REFERENCE | ACTION |
|----|-----------|----------------|-----------|------------------|
| 1. | O'Farrell | O'Farrell | ED | Favorable |
| 2. | _____ | _____ | RI | _____ |
| 3. | _____ | _____ | EA | _____ |
| 4. | _____ | _____ | RC | _____ |
| 5. | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |
| 6. | _____ | _____ | _____ | _____ |

I. Summary:

The legislation under consideration authorizes Florida Gulf Coast University to establish a School of Engineering that would offer Bachelor of Science degrees in bioengineering, environmental and civil engineering, and engineering management.

The bill creates an undesignated section of Florida Statutes.

II. Present Situation:

The Board of Governors of the State University System (BOG) adopted a resolution on January 7, 2003 authorizing each university to establish new bachelor's and master's degree programs in accordance with BOG criteria.

Section 1004.03(3), F.S., provides that state university establishment of new colleges, schools, or the functional equivalents of any program culminating in a degree that can be offered as a credential for a specific license granted under the Florida Statutes or the State Constitution is prohibited without specific approval of the Legislature.

Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) conducted an assessment in Southwest Florida, the region of the state the university serves, to determine the need for an accredited engineering program. The assessment analysis revealed:

- o No university in the region was offering an accredited engineering program.
- o Students were leaving Southwest Florida to attend engineering programs in other parts of the state or country.

- Too few engineering graduates were returning to the Southwest Florida area to meet the needs of local engineering firms.
- A potential student base of a magnitude necessary to support a school of engineering.

The availability of an engineering program in the area would also benefit local residents interested in pursuing an engineering degree, but denied the opportunity because family or economic considerations have prevented them from leaving Southwest Florida to attend a university where an engineering program is available.

On January 18, 2005 the Florida Gulf Coast University Board of Trustees adopted a strategic plan including a 2005-2006 goal of establishing bachelor degree programs in bioengineering, civil and environmental engineering, and engineering management.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The legislation under consideration would authorize Florida Gulf Coast University to establish a School of Engineering and offer Bachelor of Science degrees in bioengineering, environmental and civil engineering, and engineering management.

The university estimates initial enrollment will be 25 students with growth to 300 students by the 2008-2009 academic year. Plans are to hire up to 13 new faculty members during the first year to work in conjunction with properly credentialed current staff members to offer the engineering curriculum. Additional faculty will be employed only when there is sufficient student enrollment to support them.

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:

Southwest Florida residents will realize an economic benefit by having access to engineering degree programs without having to leave their home area. Local firms may also benefit from the increased availability of engineers.

C. Government Sector Impact:

Florida Gulf Coast University estimates the cost of implementing the engineering program to be \$8.8 million spread out over four years. The university requested start-up funding of \$1.1 million in the 2005-2006 legislative budget request. Since that time the university has increased its request for state funding to \$2.2 million in anticipation of an accelerated phase-in of the program. The State Board of Education 2005-2006 Legislative Budget Request for Academic Enhancements – University Initiatives contains \$906,681 for Florida Gulf Coast University projects, including the engineering school. The university has also received a significant amount of private funding in support of the new degree programs.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Summary of Amendments:

None.

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