

Governmental Relations

2016 Legislative Session Closeout Report

(Information Only)

For the 2016 Legislative session there were 1,638 bills and proposed constitutional amendments filed for the 60-day legislative session, only 272 passed and were sent to the Governor Rick Scott, and only 242 of them eventually became law.

Budget

The Legislature also passed an \$82.4 billion state budget, which begins on July 1, which included \$500 million in university-based performance funding of which Florida A&M University will receive \$11.5 million.

FAMU was able to hold on to its \$1.5 million appropriation for the Crestview Pharmacy program. Funding for Senate education budget writers had zeroed Crestview out, we were successful in getting these funds restored.

Four public universities saw their base budgets reduced; FAMU was fortunate this year not to be one of them.

The budget also included \$6.5 million in PECO dollars toward the construction of a new student affairs building at FAMU. These funds will be added to the \$6.1 million the university received last year for this building. We requested a total of \$26.5 million to begin construction on the new Student Affairs Building this year.

Of the \$168 million in PECO dollars the Legislature appropriated to universities this year, roughly \$42 million went to UCF, with another \$22.5 going to USF. The rest was divided up between the remaining 10 public universities.

FAMU DRS will get a share of \$5,293,588 in PECO funds designated for the states four lab schools. The distribution to each will be based on the full-time equivalent headcount.

Policy Issues

Among the policy issues that past this session, both FAMU and the University of Florida were granted the ability to conduct **cannabis research** (effective March 25) in accordance with state and federal law. Research is permitted on whole plant cannabis, without the requirement of a certain composition of cannabinoids.

Other policy issues, which passed, include changes to ways **University Board of Trustees (UBOTs)** operate. Effective July 1, the Chair & Vice Chair of UBOTs can only be selected from appointed members; UBOT Chairs must notify the Governor or the BoG, in writing, anytime a board member has three consecutive unexcused absences from regular board meetings in a fiscal year; and UBOTs are required to keep and post meeting minutes prominently on the

university's website within 2 weeks after each meeting, along with vote the history and attendance of each trustee.

Several changes with respect to **university "access & affordability"** take effect on July 1:

- Universities will be required to publicly notice any proposal to increase tuition or fees 28 days prior to consideration by the UBOT;
- The ability of UBOTs to set tuition for graduate and professional programs and out-of-state fees, will shift to the BoG;
- The Legislature limited the maximum amount a state university can charge for distance learning fees to \$30 per credit hour;
- Expanded the current textbook affordability law to include "instructional materials".

The Legislature also enhanced the state's benefits to **military veterans**, which take effect on July 1. They are:

- Waived the out-of-state fee for all active duty military personnel; and
- Provides mechanisms for active duty military personnel and honorably discharge vets to earn college credit for college-level training and education acquired in the military.

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