

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: SB 1794

SPONSOR: Senator Kirkpatrick

SUBJECT: College-prep Class/Student Funding

DATE: March 11, 1999 REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>White</u>	<u>O'Farrell</u>	<u>ED</u>	<u>Favorable</u>
2.	_____	_____	<u>FP</u>	_____
3.	_____	_____	_____	_____
4.	_____	_____	_____	_____
5.	_____	_____	_____	_____

I. Summary:

This bill will increase from once to twice the number of times state funding will support a student who repeats a college-preparatory course. It will authorize a fee reduction for a student with financial hardship who repeats a college-credit course for the third time.

The bill amends sections 239.117, 239.301, and 240.117 of the Florida Statutes.

II. Present Situation:

Under Florida's open door policy for community colleges, all students are admitted if they have a high school diploma or equivalent. Under this policy, many students are admitted who do not possess college level skills.

All 28 community colleges are required to assess the skills of their entering freshmen, using the same entry level placement test in mathematics, reading, and language. Most students require remediation, especially the large number who graduated from high school some years ago. The colleges offer non-credit college-preparatory courses in these areas, but allow students to enroll in up to 12 credit hours in a content area that does not require the lacking skills. A student must pass an exit test before continuing to enroll in college-credit courses.

The 1997 Legislature amended laws relating to student fees to impose a penalty on any student who enrolls more than once in a remedial college-preparatory course. State funding may not be provided for such a student, who must pay the full cost of instruction -- four times the amount of regular matriculation fees.

According to analyses by staff of the Division of Community Colleges, in 1997-1998, the penalty has resulted in a significant decline in students' retaking college-preparatory courses after having difficulty during their first attempt. Of students who failed on their initial attempt in the fall, only

9.53 percent repeated the course in the spring. This compares to 15.32 percent in 1996-1997 and 15.42 percent in 1997-1998.

Students in college-credit courses at public postsecondary education institutions may take them twice without a penalty. Before the fee penalty was created in 1997, about 2.2 percent of community college students repeated a course three times.

Community colleges may waive the fee penalty for students with financial hardship who take a college-preparatory course more than once. The law does not provide for a waiver for a student who wishes to take a college-credit course for the third time.

The 1999 Legislature is considering performance incentives for college-preparatory programs that succeed. Measures of success include the number and percent of students who complete college-preparatory courses and, of those, the number and percent who earn their community college degree and who succeed in the upper division of a university.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

The legislation under consideration will amend ss. 239.117, 239.301, and 240.117, F.S., to increase from once to twice the number of times state funding will support a student who repeats a remedial college-preparatory course. On the third attempt, a student will be required to pay the full cost.

The bill authorizes the universities and community colleges to reduce the fee penalty for a student with financial hardship who wants to take a college-credit course for a third time. The Board of Regents and the State Board of Community Colleges must adopt definitions and fee levels in rule, and each community college must establish a policy for granting exceptions.

The bill also says that the Legislature may provide performance incentive funds for effective remedial reduction plans. The Division of Community Colleges provided examples of such plans by Tallahassee Community College, Santa Fe Community College, and Miami-Dade Community College. Some of the plans are conducted with local high schools and some focus on successful teaching of college-preparatory students.

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:

Community college students who needed to take a college-preparatory course twice would not have to pay a fee penalty of about \$100 per credit hour. Full cost per credit hour for these courses (the fee penalty) averages \$131.93, compared to regular matriculation fees of \$32.98 per credit hour.

A student with financial hardship at a university or community college could have fees reduced for taking a college-credit course for the third time.

C. Government Sector Impact:

Under the bill, the state will return to its 1996 practice of providing funding for students who repeated a college-preparatory course one time. Before the fee penalty took effect, approximately 15.35 percent of total enrollments in college-preparatory classes were second attempts. In fall of 1997, 64,500 students were enrolled in a college-preparatory course. The state's share of the 15.2 percent who probably would repeat the course would be approximately \$9.0 million.

The cost to the state would not necessarily increase by that amount, however, because some students who repeat a college-preparatory course already receive a waiver of the penalty because of financial hardship. Colleges do not have a record of how many students were retaking courses under a waiver.

The cost of reducing fees for students who repeated college-credit courses three times will be small. Very few students request to take the same college-credit course three times -- only about 2.2 percent of community college students. Among those, some would be eligible for a reduction in fees, but only if they had financial hardship and were covered by the policies and definitions required by the bill. The community colleges and universities will pay the cost of any waivers with fee revenue because the law prohibits state funding for retaking these courses more than twice.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

Students are not required to attend college preparatory-courses to raise their skills to the college level. They may enroll in adult education courses or seek remediation in the private sector. Some

vendors assert that their remedial programs are less expensive for the student and the state, and just as successful as college-preparatory courses. This assertion cannot be proved because the sample of students who have used any one private provider is too small to allow for a comparative analysis.