

FULL ANALYSIS

I. SUBSTANTIVE ANALYSIS

A. HOUSE PRINCIPLES ANALYSIS:

Provide limited government—The bill authorizes a School of Engineering at Florida Gulf Coast University with certain Bachelor of Science degrees.

B. EFFECT OF PROPOSED CHANGES:

Background

State University System Academic Degree Program Approval

The resolution passed and adopted by the Board of Governors (BOG) on January 7, 2003 provides each university board of trustees with the responsibility to establish degree programs up to and including the master's degree level and approve new programs pursuant to criteria established by the BOG.

Section 1004.03, F.S. prohibits the establishment of new colleges, schools, or functional equivalents of any program leading to a degree that is offered as a credential for a specific license granted under the Florida Statutes or the State Constitution without the specific approval of the Legislature.

Requirements for Florida Licensure as an Engineer

Chapter 471, F.S., regulates engineering in the State of Florida and establishes the Board of Professional Engineers (the Board) within the Department of Business and Professional Regulation. Section 471.013, F.S., requires the Board to adopt rules providing for the review and approval of schools or colleges and the courses of study in engineering in such schools and colleges. Section 471.013, F.S., also sets forth the prerequisites for taking a qualification exam to practice engineering in Florida, which includes being a graduate of an approved school, college, or university. In order to receive a license to practice engineering in Florida, the Board must certify that an applicant has satisfied all the requirements of s. 471.013, F.S.

Florida Gulf Coast University

In 2003, Florida Gulf Coast University (FGCU) conducted a needs assessment and found that Southwest Florida did not have an accredited engineering program at a university within its region.¹ A further assessment on engineering needs found that the state is not graduating enough engineers from Southwest Florida, resulting in area firms importing engineers from all over the country.²

The assessment also reported that, due to the lack of an engineering program within the region, an estimated 24 students annually leave Southwest Florida to study engineering elsewhere around the state. Based upon the experiences of other universities, if FGCU were to offer an engineering program, there would be an additional prospective student base beyond the estimate of 24 students. These additional students would consist of people specifically waiting for an FGCU program who have been unable to leave the region to study engineering elsewhere. Such a program may be particularly attractive to minority and economically disadvantaged students.³

¹ FGCU Analysis, HB 817, February 25, 2005, at 2 and Engineering Needs Assessment Document received from David Mann, Interim Director, Governmental Relations, FGCU, March 1, 2005, at 3.

² Engineering Needs Assessment Document received from David Mann, Interim Director, Governmental Relations, FGCU, March 1, 2005, at 4.

³ *Id.* at 5-6.

FGCU also assessed the type of engineering degrees that would be most beneficial to the area. Currently, FGCU offers degree programs in nine disciplines that are related to the proposed engineering majors and provide a strong academic basis for building a carefully defined engineering program.⁴

Effects of the Bill

This bill authorizes FGCU to establish a School of Engineering and offer Bachelor of Science degrees in bioengineering, environmental and civil engineering, and engineering management within the School of Engineering.

According to FGCU estimates, enrollment in the program will be 25 students in the first year, increasing to 100 students in year five. Thirteen new faculty members will be hired and other existing faculty who are already teaching and have the credentials and experience required to offer the necessary courses for the School of Engineering will also contribute. Twenty members of the FGCU faculty have earned some type of engineering or technical degree. Additional faculty will be hired only when the FTE generates sufficient dollars to support them.⁵

C. SECTION DIRECTORY:

Section 1: Authorizes FGCU to establish a School of Engineering and to grant bachelor's degrees in specified fields.

Section 2: Provides an effective date.

II. FISCAL ANALYSIS & ECONOMIC IMPACT STATEMENT

A. FISCAL IMPACT ON STATE GOVERNMENT:

1. Revenues:

See FISCAL COMMENTS

2. Expenditures:

See FISCAL COMMENTS

B. FISCAL IMPACT ON LOCAL GOVERNMENTS:

1. Revenues:

None

2. Expenditures:

None

C. DIRECT ECONOMIC IMPACT ON PRIVATE SECTOR:

Residents of the service area of FGCU will have access to degree programs in engineering without having to leave their community. Additional engineers would be produced, which may help state critical needs in these fields.

⁴ *Id.* at 9.

⁵ FGCU Analysis, HB 817, February 25, 2005, at 3.

D. FISCAL COMMENTS:

According to FGCU, the total estimated cost for implementing the program will be \$8.8 million over four years; \$1.1 million has been requested for start-up funding in the 2005-2006 legislative budget request. The State Board of Education 2005-2006 Legislative Budget Request for Academic Enhancements – University Initiatives identifies \$906,681 for FGCU projects, including the School of Engineering.

FGCU reports that thirteen new and other current faculty members will provide the instruction for these new programs until the FTE generates sufficient dollars to support additional faculty. The labs and facilities required for the program will be made available through a current private gift of \$5 million from the Whitaker Foundation. In addition to this \$5 million, the 2005-2006 Alec P. Courtelis Facility Enhancement Challenge Grant Program list, a university matching donation program, requests a matching \$5 million for labs and facilities. Local engineering firms have already contributed in excess of \$300,000 for engineering scholarships. FGCU also reports that the School of Engineering Program is included in FGCU's enrollment plan and will not impact other current budgets. The bill also meets the criteria established for high-pay critical Florida job needs and has strong local support.

Specific Appropriation 146 of HB 1885 (the House General Appropriations Bill for Fiscal Year 2005-2006) includes \$2.2 million in start-up funding. It is anticipated that these funds will provide all library and other materials until FTE generation is sufficient to fund operations. HB 1885 also includes \$5 million in Specific Appropriation 26A to match the Whitaker Foundation facility donation.

III. COMMENTS

A. CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES:

1. Applicability of Municipality/County Mandates Provision:

None

2. Other:

None

B. RULE-MAKING AUTHORITY:

None

C. DRAFTING ISSUES OR OTHER COMMENTS:

None

IV. AMENDMENTS/COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE & COMBINED BILL CHANGES