



# The Florida Senate

*Interim Project Report 98-19*

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Committee on Education

Senator John Grant, Chairman

## **INCREASING ACCESS TO BACCALAUREATE DEGREES: EVALUATION OF HIGHER EDUCATION JOINT-USE FACILITIES**

### **SUMMARY**

This joint-use project was initiated to encourage discussion about how to increase access to the baccalaureate degree in Florida. During the 1998 Legislative Session, the focus for providing greater access had been to construct facilities on community college campuses. Little discussion occurred about the type of degree to be provided, how it should be delivered, or who should decide which institution would deliver the degree.

In addition to a review of the statutes, this project included personal and telephone interviews with postsecondary educators throughout the state, site visits to joint-use facilities and campuses, a questionnaire survey of community college presidents coordinated through the Division of Community Colleges, and a public meeting in Pinellas County to receive input from the various educational sectors.

This study:

- documents the current level of access to the baccalaureate degree in each county of the state;
- identifies the widespread involvement of private sector educational institutions in delivering bachelor's degrees using public community college facilities;
- shows that different approaches to delivering both access and instruction are currently available and that accreditation standards do not require great start-up costs; and
- discovers that Florida is not the only state attempting to expand access to the baccalaureate degree for its population.

The major recommendations include:

- An independent agency such as the Postsecondary Education Planning Commission should verify the need for new degrees before programs are initiated.
- The local educational site should conduct the necessary surveys to determine the need for degree programs and then request the degree programs that are to be validated.
- The public postsecondary system should provide articulation of the Associate of Science Degree from the community colleges to the university system. If that articulation cannot be accomplished, then private sector institutions and, possibly, the community colleges should be asked to deliver degrees that would articulate from the appropriate Associate of Science Degree programs.

### **BACKGROUND**

The proposed 1998 House of Representatives General Appropriations Act contained provisions to provide funding to construct a joint-use facility on the campus of each community college within the University of Central Florida's service area that did not currently have such a facility. The intended use of the facilities was to offer university junior and senior level courses on the campuses of the community colleges.

The co-location of the facilities would address three educational issues that relate to the increased demand for baccalaureate degrees in Florida. These are:

- The anticipated increase or "bubble" of students coming out of secondary schools.

- The demand for greater access to the baccalaureate degree by place-bound citizens.
- The state's need to have a college-trained workforce for economic development.

Some members of the Legislature expressed concern that such an ambitious joint-use building plan would signal a move away from the traditional two-plus-two community college/ university relationship. Those members wanted a wider discussion about alternative ways to provide access to the baccalaureate degree before deciding to construct facilities on each community college campus.

As a result, the General Appropriations Act as it passed the Legislature provided construction funding for only two of the UCF projects, one with Lake-Sumter Community College, and one with Valencia Community College.

Legislators' concerns about the initial House proposal were addressed by Specific Appropriation 57 of the General Appropriations Act, which provided an additional \$15 million for joint-use projects. Proviso language accompanying the appropriation made release of the funds contingent upon the completion of three studies that must include specific recommendations for the approval of projects specified in the proviso. These studies are:

- The Postsecondary Education Planning Commission is to develop a feasibility plan outlining the actions necessary to create a 'middle tier' postsecondary educational system for the state, including its governance structure.
- The State Board of Community Colleges is to develop a methodology to determine the need for and costs of offering limited baccalaureate programs at selected community colleges.
- The Board of Regents of the State University System is to prepare a detailed plan for expanding the joint-use model with specific issues to be addressed and included in the plan.

Two current Florida Statutes provide the primary basis for cooperative approaches to the delivery of postsecondary education in the state. The laws are:

1. Section 235.195, Florida Statutes, provides a funding mechanism to pay for the construction of

common educational facilities to accommodate students for public educational entities.

2. Subsections (1) and (2) of s. 240.125, Florida Statutes.

(a) Subsection 240.125(1), Florida Statutes, states that "community colleges and universities serving the same students in a geographic and service area are encouraged to establish appropriate inter-institutional mechanisms to achieve cooperative planning and delivery of academic programs and related services, share a high cost instructional facility and equipment, coordinate credit and non-credit outreach activities, have access to each other's library and media holdings, and services, and provide . . . consultative relationships for the discussion and resolution of inter-institutional issues and problems which discourage student access and transfer."

(b) Subsection 240.125(2), Florida Statutes, states that "public community colleges and universities are encouraged to include independent colleges and universities and industries within their service areas in mutual planning of a comprehensive, complementary, cost-effective array of undergraduate and beginning graduate programs of study to serve that geographic area."

## METHODOLOGY

To understand the need for greater access to the baccalaureate degree, staff first identified the extent to which students currently have access to the degree beyond the main and branch campuses of the four-year institutions within the state. In addition, because joint-use facilities already exist on community college campuses, staff visited some of those sites to determine if and how well they were working and why they were or were not successful.

Visits were made to the existing joint-use facilities located in Ft. Walton Beach operated by Okaloosa-Walton Community College and the University of West Florida, to Cocoa to the joint facility of Brevard Community College and the University of Central Florida, and to the Seminole Campus of St. Petersburg Junior College and the Bayboro Campus of the University of South Florida. Here, joint use of the facilities on both sites by the two institutions is just beginning.

Telephone interviews were conducted with all community college presidents and state university provosts, or their designees, and with the President of St. Leo College. In most interviews, other staff of the institutions were involved at the request of the President or Provost.

The first objective was to determine for the current year the number of baccalaureate degree programs being offered in community college facilities.

Information was also collected about:

- the financial relationships between the community colleges and the institution providing the bachelor’s degree, including the charge (if any) for use of space;
- arrangements for the provision of academic advising and other student support services;
- administrative support services;
- whether faculty met the proper standards of the accrediting agencies; and
- whether the community college had to make special adjustments or experienced extra costs to meet the accreditation requirements when the programs were offered using the college’s facilities (i.e. library holdings, computer equipment and laboratory space).

Information was requested from the Division of Community College’s integrated data base and from the Board of Regents data base to determine the 1997 Fall Term utilization of classroom and laboratory space for each institution by hour of the day and day of the week. The information was then used to identify whether existing community college space was available that could be used to expand baccalaureate degree offerings.

In a final question, institutions were asked to identify high demand bachelor’s degree programs that should be initiated in each of the community college service regions of the state.

## FINDINGS

### 1. Private Sector involvement is significant:

- (a) Private sector colleges and universities provide degree programs on community college sites in much greater numbers than staff had anticipated. Among the private institutions, St. Leo College has

the most agreements with community colleges to offer the bachelor’s degree using college sites and facilities.

- (b) The private institutions that have currently entered into agreements to offer degree programs on community college sites are all accredited. Most are accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS). The degree programs being offered meet the accreditation standards of the degree-granting institution.
  - (c) In general, the private institutions have shown greater willingness to offer degree programs involving a small student cohort or market.
  - (d) In general, private institutions have been more willing to go to community college campuses to offer degree programs.
  - (e) In general, private institutions have also shown a greater willingness or ability to respond quickly to a community’s need for degree programs.
  - (f) Most students do not necessarily incur higher costs to attend joint-use facilities provided by private institutions. The Florida Resident Access Grant is largely responsible for equalizing out-of-pocket costs for students.
2. The offering of degree programs on community college sites brings greater access to baccalaureate degrees to place-bound students.
3. Six bachelor’s degree program areas are most often offered and were identified by the institutional leadership as being most in demand. These degree areas were:
- Elementary education
  - Allied health -- primarily nursing
  - Criminal justice
  - Business -- specific majors vary
  - Computer science -- specific majors vary
  - Psychology

These degree programs generally match student choices of majors on the main campuses of the universities.

4. Public and private universities may offer degree programs on community college campuses without changes in current law.
5. Library and other accreditation costs associated with offering additional baccalaureate degree programs on community college campuses appear to require minimal additional expenses. The main costs reported were the additional faculty, equipment, and -- depending on the choice for delivery of instruction -- any distance learning technology that would be required.
6. Where public community colleges and universities have a joint-use agreement to share a site and the institutions work well together, it is because of the attitudes and personalities of the personnel involved and not because of any provision of law. Both entities appear to concentrate on the student's well-being and have a desire to make the arrangement work.
7. It does not appear that the Legislature can successfully mandate such cooperation. Even though many personnel wish to make successful use of joint-use sites, their efforts can be undermined by others -- especially if the dean, provost, or faculty of either institution is unwilling to support the efforts or to consider what is best for the students.
8. The geographic areas of the state most in need of ready access to baccalaureate programs include the southwest coastal, south central, and northwest coastal counties.
9. A major issue and a main force behind the desire of some community colleges to offer baccalaureate degrees is the difficulty Associate in Science degree recipients have in articulating into bachelor's degree programs at public institutions.
10. Using community college campuses and facilities to increase public access to baccalaureate degrees is not just a Florida issue. Other states are attempting to deal with this issue also.
 

Illinois, Michigan, Ohio, and Texas are among the states using a concept called a university center to increase access to baccalaureate programs. The university center concept enables a community college to broker the offering of baccalaureate programs among public and private universities and to identify the degrees needed.

Oklahoma is developing a statewide plan to increase baccalaureate program access on the basis of local site-determined need.
11. Community college instructional classroom and laboratory space appears to be available to accommodate baccalaureate degree programs. With the exception of Lake-Sumter Community College, this space appears to be available at every community college, every hour of the day, and every day of the week. (Lake-Sumter was funded for a new facility by the 1998 Legislature.)
12. If the primary concern for the state is simply increasing access to the baccalaureate degree, additional baccalaureate programs can be offered with only minor changes in current resources.
13. If new facilities are required before some institutions will participate, or if specialized facilities are required in which to offer certain degrees, it would take 2 to 3 years to construct the needed facilities.
14. Community colleges and universities have no agreement on how to identify and validate local community need for baccalaureate degree programs, or which institution or agency should control that process.
15. Although several community colleges and state universities have initiated, within existing resources, agreements that provide bachelor's degree programs on college campuses, they said they would need additional state funds to expand.
16. The university center concept of allowing a delivery site to determine which institution will provide a bachelor's degree, and the degrees that will be offered, appears to conflict with the current policy of the Board of Regents. The Board currently assigns specific universities the responsibility to deliver degrees in a geographic region.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Procedures need to be developed and put in place to validate the need for new degree programs before the state should provide special funding for start-up or additional facilities.
2. If start-up funding or other incentive funds are made available by the state to initiate bachelor's degree programs on community college sites, the Postsecondary Education Planning Commission should be responsible for the review of information to determine the need for the new programs, the need for additional facilities, and the funding level required.
3. The purpose of increasing access to the baccalaureate degree should be to meet student needs and to improve economic development, not to construct new facilities for an institution.
4. To encourage greater use of existing facilities, it may be necessary to provide differentiated tuition and fees for attendance at off-peak times and for taking upper level courses on community college campuses. Fees could be reduced for parking, health, capital improvement and other university main campus fees.
5. The institution delivering the bachelor's degree should determine the methodology used for instruction. The state should insist that the blend of instructional techniques chosen should meet the needs of the students and be cost effective in approach.
6. The State Board of Community Colleges, the Board of Regents and the Postsecondary Education Planning Commission should work together to determine specific Associate of Science degree programs that should articulate with bachelor's degrees. The recommendations of these groups should be completed and presented to the Legislature before the 1999 Legislative Session.
7. If the State University System and the Florida System of Community Colleges fail to reach agreement regarding the articulation of specific Associate in Science degrees, community colleges should be authorized to offer the appropriate bachelor's degrees if the following conditions are met:
  - The Postsecondary Education Planning Commission has verified the need for the specific degree program to be offered at the community college site,
  - No accredited private institution is willing to come to the community college to offer the bachelor's degree program, and
  - The community college can meet the appropriate accreditation standards required by the degree program within a reasonable period of time and expense.

Implementing this action would require a change in statute.
8. Any policy decisions regarding the increase of public access to the bachelor's degree should take into account the resources that can be provided by the state's private colleges and universities.
9. The Postsecondary Education Planning Commission should review community college-based bachelor's degree programs that receive special funding and should determine if the community continues to have a need for that program. This is the role the Commission assumes for state contracts with private institutions for selected bachelor's degree programs. Programs that have become self-supporting and do not require special assistance such as differentiated tuition should not be subject to review by PEPC. These programs should be subject only to the regular performance based evaluation of the degree granting institution.

**COMMITTEE(S) INVOLVED IN REPORT** (*Contact first committee for more information.*)

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**MEMBER OVERSIGHT**

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