

Legislative Updates of interest for Higher Education Week of June 18 – June 22, 2007

The House and Senate convened under provisions of a concurrent resolution ([S.787](#))

Budget: The conference reports for the budget bills including the appropriations bill (H.3620), Capital Reserve Fund Bill (H.3621) and Contingency Reserve Fund (H.3471) were adopted and ratified as of June 21. These bills currently await action of the Governor. The General Assembly is scheduled to return on Thursday, June 28, at noon to consider any gubernatorial vetoes.

The adopted budget includes increased recurring funding for higher education institutions of just over \$46 million which will provide for increased education and general funds for institutions, nursing faculty salary enhancements, and other items across public institutions. This increase in recurring funding represents an approximate increase of 6.6% over the prior year's recurring funding. Additionally, there is increased and continued non-recurring funding (one-time funds) provided for higher education institutions totaling just under \$33 million and non-recurring funding provided for higher education institutions in the Capital Reserve Bill totaling just over \$19 million. As is the case for all state agencies including higher education, there is increased funding to provide for state employee raises (3%) and for health plan increases. Included across the funding for higher education is increased funding to account for growth and new initiatives for the state's scholarship programs including Palmetto Fellows, LIFE and HOPE Programs; the National Guard Loan Repayment and Scholarship programs; and the Tuition Grants program. A small increase is included for the Need-Based Grant program, and funding just under last year's level is included for the Lottery Tuition Assistance program. Other items of note include: continued funding for the Statewide Higher Education Library; continued funding for other lottery-funded programs including the Centers of Economic Excellence (Endowed Chairs), higher education technology, SC State, and the Higher Education Excellence Enhancement program; and enhanced funding for EEDA initiatives, the University Center of Greenville, the Lowcountry Graduate Center, EPSCOR, and SREB programs and services. A provision is also included in the budget to create a task force to study and develop recommendations for a higher education strategic plan by February 1, 2008.

As indicated, before the budget is finalized for the year, it awaits action of the Governor and subsequent action by the General Assembly in the event of vetoes. Consequently, a more detailed report will be provided at a later date once the appropriation bills have been enacted.

Updates On Other Legislation Considered During The Week:

The conference report on [S.656](#) which had been amended to include among other items provisions related to the state's scholarship programs was passed by the House and Senate. The legislation currently awaits action by the Governor. Under this legislation, if enacted, scholarship provisions include: enhancements to Palmetto Fellows (up to \$3300) and LIFE (up to \$2500) for math and science majors beginning at the sophomore level; enhancements (up to \$800) for Palmetto Fellows recipients who are not math/science majors beginning in the sophomore year; and an increased book allowance from \$150 to \$300 to the HOPE scholarship recipients.

During the week, several pieces of legislation were signed into law including: [H.3476](#), the Teacher Recruitment and Retention Improvement Act, and [S.213](#), "Prevention of Underage Drinking and Access to Alcohol Act of 2007." After the House and Senate overrode the Governor's vetoes the following items became law: [H.3034](#), S.C. Energy Efficiency Act; [H.3481](#) relating to fire sprinkler contractors; and [S.243](#), the Hydrogen Infrastructure Development Fund Act. A Conference Committee that had been appointed for [S.282](#), relating to alternative construction delivery, did not submit a report during the week.

Reminder: Additional information on legislation referenced above and other legislation relating to higher education is available on CHE's website at http://www.che.sc.gov/CHE_Docs/InfoCntr/Legis/HigherEd_Legis_List.xls Links to SC's

Legislative Website and other relevant information is also available on CHE's website at
<http://www.che.sc.gov/Home/CHELegislativeUpdates/LegislativeSession2007.aspx>