

Legislative Updates of interest for Higher Education Week of May 14 – 18, 2007

Budget Update: The Conference Committee began meeting this week to work out differences on the state's FY 07-08 budget and capital reserve bills. The Committee is scheduled to meet next on Monday May 21. As a reminder, Senate conferees include Hugh Leatherman, Harvey Peeler, and John Land, and House conferees include Dan Cooper, Tracy Edge, and Denny Neilson. The committee appointed Senator Leatherman and Representative Cooper as co-chairs. To date, the committee has adopted budget lines and provisos that are the same in both the Senate and House versions of the budget. Once the Committee concludes its work, the bill will be returned to the House and Senate for approval before being sent to the Governor for consideration.

In the House –

By the end of the week, several of the higher education bills that had already passed the Senate had received House approval and were returned to the Senate including: S.657 which is a bill to enact the S.C. Critical Needs Nursing Initiative Act, S.322 that creates a college tuition assistance program for National Guard members and closes the National Guard Loan Repayment program to new participants, S.484 relating to the S.C. Tuition Grants program and the addition of Bob Jones University as an eligible institution, and S.282 relating to alternative construction delivery.

A subcommittee of House Judiciary continued its debate on H.3964 which would enable concealed weapon permit holders to carry concealed weapons on educational facilities. The subcommittee voted to report the bill to the full House Judiciary Committee which is scheduled to consider the bill on May 22. Another subcommittee of House Judiciary considered S.213 which is legislation to enact the "Prevention of Underage Drinking and Access to Alcohol Act of 2007." The subcommittee voted to add an amendment to S.213 which would remove an existing statutory provision that results in LIFE and HOPE scholarship recipients and Need-based grant recipients losing eligibility for one year for convictions of alcohol and drug-related misdemeanor offenses. Under the amendment, recipients would not lose eligibility for alcohol-related offenses but would continue to lose eligibility for drug-related offenses. S.459, "Jessica Horton Campus Crime Act" also received a favorable subcommittee report. S.213 and S.459 will also be considered next by House Judiciary at its meeting on May 22.

In the Senate –

The Senate concurred with S.484 as amended by the House, and the bill was enrolled for ratification. H.3495 relating to the Agency Head Salary Commission and inclusion of technical college presidents was reported out to the Senate with a favorable report. A bill, S.754, was introduced which would clarify that State Code Sections 59-116-10 and 59-116-20 relating to campus security departments apply only to private higher education institutions. The bill was referred to Senate Education.

The Senate Education Committee met on Wednesday. The Committee considered H.3170 which would provide incentives for state scholarship recipients pursuing math and science and voted to amend the bill by striking the language approved by the House and replacing it with language from S.291, a companion bill passed earlier by the Committee and full Senate. H.3170 will next go to the full Senate for the consideration before being returned to the House. Additionally, the Education Committee voted to report to the Senate favorably with amendment H.3379 relating to S.C. residents who have attended high schools in another state and eligibility for Palmetto Fellows and LIFE scholarship programs.

Other –

S.321 relating to use of bond funds posted by nonpublic postsecondary institutions was signed into law.

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/Legisl/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>