

April 7, 2005

President John Cavanaugh
Office of the President
University of West Florida
Building 10, Room 225
11000 University Pkwy.
Pensacola, Florida 32514

Dear President Cavanaugh:

In response to the Board of Governors you asked that the Council of Academic Vice Presidents provide its recommendations to the State University Presidents regarding how the SUS institutions, working as a group, might achieve the Board of Governors' objectives concerning targeted degree production.

The universities are committed to achieving the goals outlined by the Board of Governors. Doing so requires that we prepare a logical, realistic, and planned approach that allows the time necessary for the appropriate tools and additional financial resources to be put in place by the Legislature and Board of Governors.

Achieving these goals will involve addressing a number of thorny issues. The Board's goals can only be accomplished by redirecting some existing students to other majors, by recruiting students into the targeted programs, by reducing access to certain educated citizenry programs, and by allowing universities to add additional targeted programs to their inventories. This may require curtailing the State's commitment to areas such as English, Fine Arts, Business, Social Science, Human Sciences, Social Work, and Criminology.

Shifting enrollment will require major changes in the operation of campuses, including the allocation of additional fixed costs to targeted areas with yet-to-be-determined student demand and the likely shifting of resources away from programs with established demand and existing national reputations. For example, the national trend has been a steady increase in students getting degrees in Business from 13.7% in 1970 to 21.8% in 2002 and a significant decline in Education degrees from 21% in 1970 to 8.2% in 2002. As the Board has already recognized, the percent of redirection will differ by institution and will need to be carefully monitored in order to maintain the mission and reputations of our universities.

Universities will need a variety of tools in order to accomplish this task, including the authority to:

- limit access and cap program enrollment for both FTIC students and community college transfers;

- vary tuition in accord with market demand and changing degree production modalities;
- be “held harmless” from excess credit hour provisions due to shifts in majors and while providing the necessary remediation to students who may be redirected into targeted degrees but do not have the required skills;
- be “held harmless” from enrollment corridor targets since the impacts of such shifts on student enrollment, in particular, minority student enrollment, in SUS institutions is not clear;
- modify state-mandated, excessive course requirements in teacher education programs (and others?) which serve as a disincentive for students to pursue this targeted area;
- utilize additional funds that must be provided by the legislature to expand or convert existing facilities and construct new facilities to accommodate the growth in the generally more costly targeted areas; and
- solicit support for resources in light of inadequate funding of enrollment growth by the legislature to establish more costly faculty positions in targeted program areas while maintaining faculty in non-targeted areas that generate significant student FTE in their service capacity (Universities must also be given the authority to allocate enrollment growth funds when provided by the legislature as deemed necessary to address these issues).

The application of these tools would require an enormous, coordinated effort on the part of the Legislature, Board of Governors and universities. Convincing students to change their majors from Business to Education, as one example, will require universities to overcome national trends.

Incentives will be necessary to help encourage students to move into targeted areas. In addition, students and parents must be told that some SUS institutions may have to cap or reduce enrollment in non-targeted areas, and that tuition costs will likely rise in the non-targeted disciplines. Many, if not most, of these proposed actions will require coordination with the Legislature, as differential tuition would have an impact on the Bright Futures program. High cost target areas will have to be funded appropriately by the State and new programs in such areas will have to be approved in a timely fashion by the Board. Since all state universities, with the possible exception of New College, must adhere to the strategic plan, existing students need time to consider shifting their academic interests from non-targeted to targeted areas. Those students that decide to shift to targeted areas will need time to take the prerequisite courses required by majors in the targeted areas without excess hour surcharges (if bill passes). Furthermore, all involved need to understand that new students who are unwilling or unable to make such changes will need to reconsider their college application plans, begin investigating

programs-of-study available at private universities or seek admission to an out-of-state school.

The list of targeted degree areas should be refined. For example, the law degree (JD) should be considered a high wage area. Elementary education should be classified critical need, not high wage field. We also recommend that degrees important to regional economies be afforded regionally targeted status and counted toward the goals.

Currently, approximately 40% of the degrees awarded state-wide are in targeted areas. Our first planning effort increased this number by 12.5%, an increase that assumes we have the tools and resources outlined above. We propose to reevaluate goals, targets, and targeted degree areas each year, with the hope of continuing to increase the percentage of degrees awarded in the targeted areas. Our ultimate success in this regard, however, will require that students at the K-12 and community college levels are motivated and prepared to enter targeted degree programs at the university level. We are committed to working with our K-14 educational partners to help make this happen.

We look forward to working with you to refine these plans. It is critical that all entities work together as this goal can not be achieved without the appropriate funding or tools identified in this letter.

Sincerely,

Council of Academic Vice Presidents