

Making College More Affordable

Governor Scott's Proposed Legislation For the 2015 Session

1. Textbook Sales Tax Exemption

A 2012 survey found that 54 percent of students spent more than \$300 on textbooks during the Spring 2012 term, and 19 percent spent over \$500. The same study showed that 63 percent of students reported not having purchased the required textbook because of the high cost. A textbook sales tax exemption would provide students a real upfront cost savings at the beginning of each semester. For example, assuming a student spends \$500 on textbooks per semester and a sales tax rate of 6 percent, it is estimated that a student will save at a minimum \$60 per year.

- Exempts required textbooks, for courses offered by public or certain nonpublic postsecondary institutions, from sales tax. To obtain the exemption, students must show their student identification and applicable course syllabus.

2. College Affordability

- ★ *The base tuition rate at state universities and state colleges has risen 54 and 58 percent respectively over the past ten years.*
- ★ *Over half of Florida's graduates have student loans, with the average debt being \$23,000.*

- Allows workforce education programs, state colleges, and state universities to charge any amount below the standard tuition rates.
- Requires the governing boards for state universities and state colleges to research options to reduce the cost of higher education, including:
 - Textbooks and instructional materials, for all students;
 - The impact of tuition and fee increases at state colleges and universities (including graduate, professional, medical, and law schools);
 - The total cost of fees, including orientation fees, to students and families at state colleges and universities; and
 - Other methods relating to textbook and college affordability.

3. Hold the Line on Graduate and Professional Tuition

Since FY 2011-12:

- ★ *The average resident graduate tuition rate has increased over 12 percent;*
- ★ *The average resident law school tuition rate has increased 19 percent; and*
- ★ *The average resident medical school tuition has increased over 12 percent.*

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- Prohibits state universities from increasing resident tuition for graduate and professional programs above the amount set on July 1, 2015.
- Removes language allowing the Board of Governors to delegate graduate and professional tuition authority to a designee.

4. College Transparency

★ *Students should be made aware of any potential increases in tuition or fees while they are attending college, as this directly impacts their finances.*

- Requires state colleges and universities to publicly notice any potential tuition or fee increases 30 days prior to the board of trustees meeting taking place.

5. Textbook Affordability

★ *College textbook prices have increased by 82 percent from 2002 to 2012, while the overall consumer prices increased by just 28 percent over the same time period.*

★ *Academically, 31 percent of students in a 2012 survey reported not registering for a course because of the high cost of college textbooks. Another 35 percent took fewer courses and 24 have either dropped or withdrew from a course because of high textbook costs.*

- Applies the current textbook affordability law, s. 1004.085, F.S., to required and *recommended* textbooks and *instructional materials* (such as course packets, etc.).
- Requires state colleges and universities to specify the cost of recommended and required textbooks and other instructional materials in the institution's course registration system 14 days prior to student registration for 90 percent of classes offered at the institution.
- Requires public colleges and universities to use textbooks for a minimum of three years in undergraduate courses, unless an exception is granted by the institution's president or designee or available at a lower cost.
- Requires state colleges and universities to consult with school districts to identify practices that impact the cost of dual enrollment textbooks and instructional materials to school districts.
- Requires state colleges and universities to regularly conduct a cost-benefit analysis in comparing options for textbooks and instructional materials to ensure students get the highest quality product at the lowest available price.

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- Requires state colleges and universities to annually report to the State Board of Education (SBE) and the Board of Governors (BOG) the following:
 - Cost of undergraduate textbooks and instructional materials, by course and section;
 - Textbook and instructional material selection process for high-enrollment courses;
 - Any institution specific initiatives that reduce the cost of textbooks and instructional materials,
 - The number of courses and course sections that were not able to meet the 14 day textbook and instructional material posting deadline, and
 - Any additional criteria determined by the chancellors.

The state college and state university Chancellors will compile these reports and submit a comprehensive report to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of Representatives.