The ENLACE FLORIDA network provides information and analysis to policy makers and education stakeholders throughout Florida’s education system. Our objective is to promote policies and best practices that will enhance college readiness, access, and success for Latino students and other underrepresented groups. The ENLACE FLORIDA network is monitoring several issues currently under consideration in the Florida legislature. Here, in bullet form, are a few urgent items. We urge all ENLACE friends and interested parties to review the issues, contact their representatives, and express their views on these important items.

**FIRST GENERATION MATCHING GRANTS**

House Bill 287, co-sponsored by Representatives Anitere Flores, Curtis Richardson, and Trey Traviesa, provides $10 million for the First Generation Matching Grant program. A similar bill, Senate Bill 848 sponsored by Senator Al Lawson, provides $13 million for the program. The 2006 Legislature created this need-based financial aid program with a $6.4 million appropriation for resident undergraduate students whose parents have not earned a baccalaureate degree. The program funded nearly 9,000 students, who received an average award of $1,333. According to the Board of Governors, over 20,000 additional students met the state’s minimum eligibility requirements for these grants but received no funding from this source. The House Schools and Learning Council approved it with amendments on April 4 that restore the 1:1 matching requirements of last year’s bill. The Senate Higher Education Committee has not yet considered SB 848. Given the financial need of Florida’s low-income, first-generation students, ENLACE FLORIDA endorses the First Generation Matching Grant Program.

**FLORIDA PARTNERSHIP FOR MINORITY AND UNDERREPRESENTED STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT**

On April 4, 2007, the House Schools and Learning Council passed a Committee Substitute for H 403, co-sponsored by Representatives Betty Reed and Ari Abraham Porth. CS/ HB 403 directs the Florida Partnership for Minority and Underrepresented Student Achievement to “cooperate with school districts to identify minority and underrepresented students for participation in AP or other advanced courses.” This new bill removes the provision in the original bill that would have created a Minority or Underrepresented Student Achievement Council. Instead, it aims to strengthen Florida’s partnership with The College Board by directing the partnership to work with school districts, students, and parents to recruit more minority and underrepresented students into the AP program. The Senate has not yet taken up consideration of CS/HB 403. Given the success of the AP program in Florida, and the challenge of recruiting more African American students into the AP Program (analyzed in Enlace Florida’s previous Policy Brief) ENLACE FLORIDA endorses the effort to recruit more underrepresented students into the AP Program.

**READINESS/ACCESS FOR UNDERREPRESENTED GROUPS**

ENLACE FLORIDA has been working with the Board of Governors and the legislature to expand the Enlace network and broaden its mission to include all underrepresented students. The House General Appropriations Act for 2007-08 (PCB PBC 07-06) includes an appropriation of $1,215,350 for the Readiness and Access for Underrepresented Groups (RAUG) initiative. Representatives Trey Traviesa and Anitere Flores worked hard to get this appropriation approved by the House. Senate Bill 2790, the General Bill by Higher Education Appropriations, does not provide funding for the RAUG initiative in Specific Appropriation 156. We urge the entire ENLACE FLORIDA network to contact their senators and encourage them to adopt the specific appropriation for the Readiness and Access for Underrepresented Groups initiative in Specific Appropriation 156. For copies of the budget go to: www.myfloridahouse.gov, click on 2007-2008 Appropriations, and click on PDF files of the Senate and House Proposed Committee Bills (PCBs).

You can contact your Representatives by email or track legislation through www.myfloridahouse.gov. The Senate provides contact information and legislative tracking at: www.floridasenate.gov.

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