

Access and Diversity in Florida Higher Education



**Report of the Governor's Access and
Diversity Commission and the Board of
Governors Student Affairs Committee**

June 30, 2006

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Executive Summary

In light of America's – and particularly Florida's – changing demographics, the State needs to prepare a diverse and talented workforce that includes individuals from all socioeconomic and racial and ethnic backgrounds, as well as individuals who are the first in their families to obtain baccalaureate degrees. On January 11, 2006, Governor Jeb Bush issued an Executive Order in which he proposed several budget priorities to support Florida's efforts to improve college readiness and access for minority and other traditionally underrepresented students. He established a seventeen-member Access and Diversity Commission to assist with the endeavor. It was determined that the Commission would meet jointly with the Student Affairs Committee of the Board of Governors (BOG), which was working on the related objective of increasing the percentages of degrees earned in the State University System (SUS) by students from these populations.

Between January and June 2006, actions taken on the Governor's access and diversity initiatives resulted in approximately \$178 million in funding for these projects, which was more than 89% of the total amount recommended by the Governor, or about 60% of the recommended increase (for a \$31.5 million increase). Specific actions included the following:

- **Florida Student Assistance Grants:** An increase of \$21.7 million for a total \$120.5 million.
- **State University System Financial Aid:** Level funding at \$20.2 million.
- **Independent Historically Black Colleges and Universities:** An increase of \$1.1 million for a total \$12.1 million.
- **Minority and Underrepresented Student Achievement Partnership:** Level funding at \$7.1 million.
- **Stanley Tate Project STARS Program:** An increase of \$2 million for a total \$8 million.
- **College Reach-Out Program (CROP):** An increase of \$200,000 for a total \$3.4 million.

- **First Generation Matching Grant Program:** Substantive legislation was passed to develop a program that provides \$6.5 million in state funds to match private donations on a dollar-for-dollar basis for grants for undergraduate students who are Florida residents, meet “first generation” status – i.e., neither parent earned a baccalaureate or higher degree; are accepted into a state university; enroll on at least a part-time basis; demonstrate financial need; and meet other criteria established by the individual universities. Legislation also was passed that includes an appropriation of \$5 million in nonrecurring general revenue for the Philip Benjamin Matching Grant Program for community colleges to match donations for scholarships for first-generation students.
- **The President’s Focus on Achievement Mentoring Partnership:** A new mentoring program was created in partnership with Florida’s university presidents. The Volunteer Florida Foundation teamed with the Florida Campus Compact to train postsecondary student mentors to provide academic support to middle school students across the state. The program uses a ‘Focus on College’ curriculum in which the first 15 minutes of each mentoring session is spent talking about careers, the value of a college degree, college life, how to choose high school courses which prepare students for college, financial aid, etc.

Members of the Governor’s Access and Diversity Commission and the Board of Governors Student Affairs Committee met together on five occasions between January and June 2006. With assistance from an interinstitutional team of university professionals and other resource partners from various educational sectors, members of the Commission /Committee gained a greater understanding of the challenges faced by students from traditionally underrepresented populations. They also identified some of the common characteristics of policies, procedures, and programs that appear to be most successful in improving access, diversity, and retention in higher education.

Based on their findings, members of the Student Affairs Committee and the Governor’s Access and Diversity Commission present the following recommendations to the Governor, the Legislature, the Board of Governors, and Florida’s institutions of higher education:

- **Rigorous Academic Preparation and Early Intervention**
 1. Florida’s educators and policymakers should continue to advocate for increased rigor in Florida’s middle and high school curricula and for alignment between the K-12 standards and curricula and the skills needed for success in college and in the “high-performance workplace” and “knowledge economy.” Inherent in this recommendation is a need for representatives

from across the educational sectors to work together to make this goal a reality.

2. Institutions of higher education should develop sustainable, high-quality partnerships with middle and high schools. Coordinated intervention services, based on identified best practices (e.g., those with a focus on mentoring, advising, and early student exposure to college) should be strengthened to ensure that students have the information and support they need for college readiness, access, and success. Existing and new programs should have strong evaluation systems that assess program effectiveness and track program participants into and through postsecondary education.
 3. Targeted initiatives should involve parents, guardians, and supporters to educate the whole family on the value of higher education and the commitments necessary to achieve it.
 4. Additional funding should be sought for the College Reach-Out Program. However, personnel from the Department of Education (DOE) Office of Equity and Access should first work with an inter-sector group of representatives to recognize existing program achievements, as well as to develop guidelines to increase efficiencies and to gain more consistency, as appropriate, among the CROP consortia around the State. Then, based on an analysis of CROP, the DOE Office of Equity and Access should provide the Legislature with a request for the additional funding that would be necessary to address identified needs across Florida.
 5. Consistent communication strategies (e.g., advertising/marketing campaigns, public service announcements, etc.) should be developed to disseminate information about early intervention, college readiness, access, and support programs available to students from traditionally underrepresented populations.
- **Admissions and Financial Access**
 6. The Board of Governors and university personnel should monitor the levels of college readiness for students graduating from Florida's public schools relative to the selectivity of Florida's state universities. University Boards of Trustees should review admissions policies and procedures to identify and remove practices that might have a negative unintended impact on student access. Simultaneously, the Board of Governors and university personnel should continue conversations with the Legislature to garner sufficient enrollment funding to make university access an option for qualified students.

7. Educators and policymakers should work to simplify postsecondary and student financial aid application processes and related forms (at the national, state, and institutional levels). Additionally, they should review existing policies, procedures, and timelines to ensure that students from traditionally underrepresented groups have access to the financial resources needed for postsecondary attendance.
8. Additionally, Florida should extend its efforts to enhance public awareness about financial aid options, and to ensure that students and their families/supporters are provided with the assistance they need to complete application and financial aid forms in a timely manner. For instance, consideration should be given to scaling up and/or replicating the successful Jacksonville BEACON program, or developing a College Goal Sunday-type program which is offered earlier during the academic year to ensure that students apply for postsecondary education and financial aid in a timely manner.
9. Efforts should be made to continue to seek increases in federal, state, and institutional need-based financial aid (including specific support for first-generation students). In developing financial assistance programs, institutions and the State should take into consideration that, for many students, assistance with tuition and fees alone is insufficient to cover all of the expenses associated with collegiate study.
10. Because the future success of access and diversity initiatives and related scholarship programs is going to be highly dependent on public-private partnerships, with increased reliance on private support, Florida's institutions of higher education need to continue to work with their foundations to encourage individual and corporate donors and other philanthropists and related foundations to provide support for access, diversity, and retention initiatives. To position the State University System to take full advantage of assistance from the private sector, the Board of Governors should seek statutory authority for its Foundation to receive State matching funds for donations, particularly those designated for need-based aid and related support services.
11. The Board of Governors Student Affairs Committee, with members of the SUS Access and Diversity Team, should prepare a detailed Systemwide Legislative Budget Request and/or proposed legislation for Board consideration. The request should outline a plan for a State University System "financial aid commitment program" that guarantees financial assistance for economically disadvantaged students if they meet certain

requirements, including making appropriate academic progress in a rigorous college preparation curriculum. The plan should incorporate recommendations for coordinated academic and student support services for program participants, based on individual student needs.

- **Retention Support**

12. Institutions of higher education should seek needed funding via their Legislative Budget Requests and/or from private sources and take action to institute/strengthen proactive student advising, counseling, and tracking systems (including automated systems, as appropriate). Although tailored to the particular needs of each campus, these mechanisms should eliminate discretionary intervention and instead should provide more automatic and redundant early warning systems that identify and respond to students whose academic performance or other behaviors put them at risk of failure, dropping out, or not progressing through a program in a timely manner.
13. Institutions of higher education should continue to build a positive campus environment, as well as support both on campus and in the community, for enrolled students from underrepresented populations. Academic and student support services that demonstrate a positive impact on retention to graduation should be strengthened and coordinated to provide individual students with the assistance they need for collegiate success.

- **Review and Accountability**

14. Board of Governors staff should work with the Access and Diversity Team to develop recommended guidelines for full Board consideration that require universities to periodically review institutional access, diversity, and retention policies, procedures, and programs. University leaders should use the most current understanding of best practice to evaluate the effectiveness of policies and programs, to identify where efficiencies can be gained, and to leverage the best practices to improve the educational attainment of students from underrepresented populations. These actions might result in the elimination of some programs and activities, the consolidation of others, and the scaling up or replication of others. Any significant changes in policies, procedures, and programs, as well as any recommendations for statewide action, should be provided to the Office of the Chancellor.
15. The Board of Governors Student Affairs Committee, with members of the State University Access and Diversity Team, should continue efforts to improve access, diversity, and retention in the SUS and to incorporate best practices into existing programs.

Providing support for low-socioeconomic, first-generation, and students from traditionally underrepresented populations will improve Florida's economic health and social base. It is imperative that Florida make the financial commitment and put into place the mechanisms necessary to ensure that students from all backgrounds are prepared for success in the global marketplace and community. Members of the Governor's Access and Diversity Commission and the Board of Governors Student Affairs Committee believe that action on the recommendations outlined in this report will move Florida significantly toward that goal.

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Introduction

On January 11, 2006, Governor Jeb Bush issued an Executive Order in which he proposed several budget priorities to support Florida's efforts to improve college readiness and access for minority and other traditionally underrepresented students. He established a seventeen-member Access and Diversity Commission to assist with the endeavor. It was determined that the Commission would meet jointly with the Student Affairs Committee of the Board of Governors (BOG), which was working on the related objective of increasing the percentages of degrees earned in the State University System (SUS) by students from traditionally underrepresented populations. Governor Bush asked Ms. Sheila McDevitt, who was already serving as Chair for the BOG Student Affairs Committee, to also serve as the Chair of the Access and Diversity Commission.

The Governor's Commission was charged not only with advocating for the Governor's budget recommendations, but also with identifying and recommending enhanced enrollment strategies for these underrepresented students in Florida's institutions of higher education. The Commission was asked to present this final report of its findings and recommendations no later than June 30, 2006, to the Governor, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the House of Representatives, and the Board of Governors.

Background

Between fall 1999 and fall 2005, the number of Black, non-Hispanic undergraduate students enrolled in the State University System of Florida increased by 6,746 students (more than 25%). However, the proportion of all undergraduate students who were Black dropped from 15.5% to 15.1% during this time. The number of Hispanic undergraduate students increased by 13,058 (51%). The proportion of all undergraduate students who were Hispanic rose from 14.9% to 17.4%. The overall increase in undergraduate enrollment across all racial and ethnic groups during this time was 50,128 (29%).¹

The annual number of Black, non-Hispanic students receiving baccalaureate degrees increased by 1,410 (more than 33%) between 1999-2000 and 2004-2005. The

proportion of all baccalaureate degrees that were awarded to Blacks rose from 11.9% to 13.0%. The annual number of Hispanic students receiving baccalaureate degrees increased by 1,830 (almost 39%). This increase represented a change from 13.3% of all baccalaureate degrees awarded to 15.1% in five years. Across all racial and ethnic groups, the annual number of students receiving baccalaureate degrees in the State University System increased by 7,867 (slightly more than 22%).²

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, the percentages of adults (25 or older) in Florida within each racial/ethnic category who had attained at least a baccalaureate degree increased between the 1990 Census and the 2000 Census. The percentage of Black adults with a baccalaureate or higher rose from 9.8% to 12.4%, and the percentage of Hispanics adults rose from 14.2% to 17.5%. However, the percentage of White adults with the baccalaureate or higher grew faster. In 1990, the gap between Blacks and Whites was 9.5 percentage points, but had grown to 11.4 percentage points by 2000. The gap in 1990 between Hispanics and Whites was 5.1 percentage points, but had grown to 6.3 percentage points by 2000. Given the fact that the percentage of college-age Floridians who are Black or Hispanic is expected to continue to grow significantly in the coming years, the need to change these trends is critical.³

Although the State of Florida has made progress in increasing access and diversity in higher education, there is much left to do. Data indicate that undergraduate enrollments in the SUS increased from 213,551 students in fall 2004 to 222,498 students (or about 4.2%) in fall 2005. However, non-resident enrollments actually dropped by more than 8%, while in-state enrollments grew more than 5%. Hispanic undergraduate enrollments rose from 35,212 in fall 2004 to 38,667 in fall 2005 (almost a 10% increase), but the enrollment of undergraduate Black, Non-Hispanic students only rose from 33,173 in fall 2004 to 33,522 in fall 2005 (a little more than 1%). A more in-depth analysis of the data indicates that in-state Black, non-Hispanic undergraduate enrollments were up by 886 students (approximately 3%), but there was a decline of 537 out-of-state Black undergraduates (more than a 17% decrease). Among the Hispanics, out-of-state undergraduate enrollments dropped by 128 students (14%), whereas the in-state undergraduate enrollments rose by 3,593 students (almost 10.5%).⁴

The primary shifts in the enrollments of Black students were due to changes at Florida A&M University. Between fall 2004 and fall 2005, the number of Black, non-Hispanic undergraduates at FAMU dropped by 807 students from 11,940 to 11,133 (a 6.8% decrease). Out-of-state Black, non-Hispanic undergraduate enrollments at FAMU decreased by 506 students (more than a 23.6% drop), and Black, non-Hispanic undergraduate Florida residents at FAMU decreased by 301 students (more than a 3% drop) during this time. Excluding FAMU, the remainder of the State University System experienced an increase in Black, non-Hispanic

undergraduate enrollments, rising from 27,959 in fall 2004 to 29,192 in fall 2005. This increase included 1,293 more in-state Black students (almost a 5% increase), but 60 fewer out-of-state Black, non-Hispanic students (almost a 4% decrease).⁵

To summarize, for Florida residents, Black, non-Hispanic enrollments in the State University System have been increasing at rates comparable to other groups. However, there has been a big drop in non-resident Black enrollments, especially at FAMU, which historically has enrolled a significant proportion of the out-of-state Black students. This decrease has skewed the growth rates for total Black enrollments in the System.

One of the reported reasons for decreases in non-resident undergraduate enrollments in the State University System during the past several years is the significant increase in tuition and fees (from an average \$232.95 per credit hour in 1999-2000 to an average \$530.18 per credit hour in 2005-2006). Some university representatives report that out-of-state recruitment is also hindered by the fact that SUS institutions often are competing with colleges and universities with more resources to recruit qualified students from traditionally underrepresented groups. The situation has provided System and State policymakers with an opportunity to talk about the larger issues of access and diversity in the SUS and goals for the System in the coming years.

When Governor Bush became aware of the shifts in enrollments, particularly the decline in the number of African American students, he met with representatives of the FAMU Student Government Association to discuss reasons and to brainstorm about possible solutions to the situation. The Governor sought the students' perspective on enrollments and their ideas about financial aid. The students responded with a number of concrete suggestions, many of which the Governor incorporated into the access and diversity initiatives he presented on January 11, 2006.

Composition of the Governor's Access and Diversity Commission and the Florida Board of Governors Student Affairs Committee

The full roster of members of the Governor's Access and Diversity Commission included the following:

- **Ms. Sheila McDevitt (Chair)**, Member, Florida Board of Governors, and Chair of the Student Affairs Committee.
- **Dr. Oswald Bronson**, President, Edward Waters College.
- **Ms. Carmen Brown**, Director of Admissions, Florida International University.
- **Dr. Castell Bryant**, President, Florida A&M University.

- **Dr. Gordon Chavis**, Director of Admissions, University of Central Florida.
- **Dr. David Colburn**, Professor, University of Florida.
- **The Honorable Anitere Flores**, Florida House of Representatives.
- **Ms. Keneshia Grant**, Student, Florida A&M University.
- **The Honorable Al Lawson**, The Florida Senate.
- **Ms. Miriam Lopez**, Member, University Board of Trustees, Florida International University.
- **Dr. Bernie Machen**, President, University of Florida.
- **Ms. Jussara Madrid**, Student, Florida State University.
- **Mr. Darryl Marshall**, Director of Financial Aid, Florida State University.
- **Dr. Lawrence Morehouse**, President, Florida Education Fund, Inc.
- **Ms. Ava Parker**, Member, Florida Board of Governors.
- **Ms. Dee Dee Rassmussen**, Executive Director, Florida Campus Compact.
- **Mr. John Winn**, Commissioner of Education, Florida Department of Education.

In addition to Governors McDevitt and Parker and Commissioner Winn, other members of the Board of Governors Student Affairs Committee included **Ms. Ann Duncan**, **Mr. Joe Goldberg**, **Dr. J. Stanley Marshall**, **Mr. Frank Martin**, and **Dr. Martha Pelaez**. The Board of Governors Chair, **Ms. Carolyn Roberts**, and several other members of the Board also participated in the joint meetings of the Committee and Commission.

The Governor's Access and Diversity Initiatives

Governor Bush included a number of access and diversity initiatives in his proposed budget for the 2006-2007 Fiscal Year (FY). He recommended a \$52.4 million (approximately 36%) increase in funding for specified access and diversity projects, for a total recommendation of almost \$200 million. Specific items included the following:

- \$35.8 million for the Florida Student Assistance Grants (FSAG);
- \$1 million for financial assistance to support students attending State universities;
- \$1.1 million for need-based aid for students attending historically Black independent colleges and universities;
- \$3 million in funding for the Minority and Underrepresented Student Achievement Partnership;
- \$4 million for the Stanley Tate Project STARS (Scholarship Tuition for At-Risk Students) Program; and
- \$1 million for the College Reach-Out Program (CROP).

Governor Bush also recommended creating a matching grant program funded at \$6.5 million to match private donations for grants for students who have financial need and whose parents did not obtain a baccalaureate degree. Additionally, he proposed creating a new mentoring program in partnership with university presidents to provide academic support to middle school students across the state.

Relationship Between the Governor's Initiatives and the Board of Governors' Access and Diversity Project

In its 2005-2013 Strategic Plan, the Florida Board of Governors expressed a commitment to improving access and diversity in the State University System (SUS). One specific goal for the System is to increase the ratio of the percentage of all graduates from the SUS who are from underrepresented racial/ethnic minority groups (Black, Hispanic, and Native American) to the percentage of 18-44 year-old individuals in Florida from these same groups. In addition to addressing the broad issues of race and ethnic representation in the System, the Board agreed to investigate the degree to which there might be other diversity issues related to students' socioeconomic status, age, gender, disability status, and family educational background.

In September 2005, Board staff requested information from university representatives regarding outreach, recruitment, and/or support services that target first-generation, low income, and/or minority students. University representatives also were asked to submit information regarding institutional financial aid programs for these students. They were asked to identify some of the quantifiable outcomes and levels of success for the programs. In particular, because specific concerns existed regarding the fall 2005 enrollment data for African American students, university representatives were asked to identify some of the most successful efforts on the campuses for recruiting, retaining, and graduating African American students.

The information gathered from the universities showed that there are many different programs and activities in existence which are designed to enhance access and retention for students from traditionally underrepresented populations. Because there are so many programs, some members of the Board of Governors question whether services are being offered in the most efficient and effective manner. They are interested in identifying best practices that exist both within and outside the System, and working to replicate and scale up those practices for greater effectiveness throughout Florida.

At the request of Governor McDevitt, an interinstitutional team of university professionals was established in November 2005 to assist the Student Affairs

Committee, the full Board of Governors, and the State universities as they worked to increase access and diversity in the System. Initially, members of this State University System Access and Diversity Team were charged with focusing on undergraduate education. Members of this professional group were asked to:

- Gather and analyze data to determine patterns and trends regarding undergraduate access and diversity in the SUS within the context of State and national trends.
- Identify specific barriers to undergraduate access and diversity in the SUS.
- Identify and target areas where efficiencies might be gained in student services to increase undergraduate access and diversity in the SUS.
- Identify and target best practices that might be leveraged to improve undergraduate access and diversity in the SUS.
- Provide the Student Affairs Committee with a set of highly focused recommendations for systemic action, as well as recommendations for consideration by individual universities, in the areas of:
 - Academic and social preparation [e.g., student/family perception of value and possibility of higher education; college academic readiness].
 - Financial access [e.g., assistance with negotiating the financial aid application process; sufficient financial support for entrance into and progress through higher education].
 - Support for academic and social integration for enrolled students [e.g., academic and student support services; student perception of campus climate].
- Identify those recommendations that would require Board leadership, funding, State-level policies, and/or collaboration with other agencies.

In December 2005, based on their research and personal experiences at the campus level, members of the interinstitutional team compiled an initial list of potential challenges and barriers to improved access and diversity in the State University System. They also brainstormed about potential solutions. When Governor Bush presented his access and diversity initiatives in January 2006, the similarities were notable and encouraging.

Given the alignment between the work of the Student Affairs Committee and the objectives outlined by Governor Bush for his Access and Diversity Commission, the interinstitutional team of professionals was well positioned to provide assistance to both the Committee and the Commission during this “Phase I” of the Committee’s work to increase access and diversity in the State University System. In addition to academic and student affairs personnel from the institutions, university students and resource partners from middle and high schools; school district offices; community colleges; ACT, Inc.; and the Department of Education all provided input into the process during the next six months.

Topics Covered By the Governor's Access and Diversity Commission and the Board of Governors Student Affairs Committee

Members of the Governor's Access and Diversity Commission and the Board of Governors Student Affairs Committee met together on five occasions between January and June 2006. At the recommendation of the Commission and Committee, the full Board of Governors voted to support the Governor's initiatives as part of its 2006 legislative platform. Additionally, the Board voted to include in its Legislative Budget Request the recommended \$1 million (5 percent) increase in the financial assistance line item for the State University System.

Initially, members were provided with an overview of each of the programs included among the Governor's access and diversity initiatives. Then, in subsequent meetings, they were provided with more details about these programs, as well as other programs that serve to improve college readiness, access, and retention for students from traditionally underrepresented populations.

Board staff members worked with representatives from the SUS Access and Diversity Team and resource partners from other educational sectors to provide a framework for the Committee/Commission's discussions and deliberations. Presenters affirmed that, in light of America's – and particularly Florida's – changing demographics, the State needs to prepare a diverse and talented workforce which includes individuals from all socioeconomic and racial and ethnic backgrounds, as well as individuals who are the first in their families to obtain baccalaureate degrees.

Presenters reported that the participation of low-income youth in postsecondary education continues to lag far behind that of their middle- and upper income peers. Students whose parents did not attend college (i.e., first-generation college students) also enroll, persist, and graduate at lower rates than students whose parents did attend college. Additionally, students from certain racial/ethnic minority groups are more likely to be among the economically and/or educationally disadvantaged. Clearly, these students represent a vital component of the State's workforce and the future well-being of Florida's communities. Their participation in higher education at the same rates as their non-minority counterparts should be a priority.⁶

BOG staff, Access and Diversity Team members, and resource partners reported that students from these traditionally underrepresented groups often:

- are not challenged to take rigorous coursework in the K-12 schools and are not encouraged in their academic development;
- are less academically prepared for college;

- delay taking the SAT or ACT and have no resources to participate in test preparation services that might increase their chances of performing well on these examinations;
- are not encouraged to even consider higher education as a possibility, so it is difficult to get them to apply;
- know little about the price of attending college;
- have less knowledge of how to apply for college and for financial assistance;
- receive less family or community support;
- lack an understanding and have a subsequent fear of the systems (admission, financial aid, etc.) and the language of higher education;
- are often unwilling to go into debt;
- have such unmet financial need that, even if they do receive awards which cover tuition and fees, they still have insufficient funds to cover the rest of the expenses associated with attending college;
- apply late and complete financial aid forms late, decreasing their chances of enrolling;
- are more likely to delay enrollment in college after high school;
- attend four-year institutions at significantly lower rates than their comparably qualified high-income peers;
- come to the universities disadvantaged informationally and without declared majors;
- are more likely to enroll in postsecondary education on a part-time basis;
- are more likely to work full-time while enrolled;
- have difficulty in acclimating themselves to college once they enroll;
- encounter a perceived (or real) lack of on-campus role models (other students, mentors, advisors, faculty, administrators) from their racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds;
- experience additional challenges, because they have special needs (e.g., learning disabilities, physical or mental health concerns, etc.) or their first language is not English; and
- are more at risk for not completing a degree.

Research indicates that early intervention, beginning at least in middle school, and rigorous middle and high school curricula can help mitigate many of the challenges that first-generation and economically disadvantaged students face which normally might act as barriers to postsecondary access and success. Using a “pipeline” metaphor as an organizing principle, the Student Affairs Committee and the Governor’s Commission looked for ways to “widen the pipeline” by ensuring that more students are adequately prepared to pursue postsecondary studies and looked for ways to “plug the leaks” where students tend to fall off track in the preparation for, application to, and progression through postsecondary education.

Ms. Monica Hayes, the Director Equity and Access in the Department of Education, provided members with a state-level overview of the College Reach-Out Program and College Board activities, particularly ones that support middle school students. Ms. Katherine Spivey, an 8th grade teacher from Wakulla Middle School; Mr. Craig Fletcher, Administrator of CROP at Tallahassee Community College (TCC); Ms. Joy Marshall, from BelleVue Middle School; and Dr. Kirk Gavin, CROP Administrator at Florida A&M University (FAMU), spoke to members of the Student Affairs Committee and the Governor's Commission about their CROP consortium, focusing specifically on outreach to middle school students and their families and supporters. Ms. Kay Kammel from the Volunteer Florida Foundation, along with Commission members Ms. Dee Dee Rasmussen and Ms. Keneshia Grant, spoke with members about the newest mentoring efforts in middle schools.

The Committee/Commission then looked at successful student support services in the high schools. For instance, they heard from Dr. Ralph Wilcox, the Associate Provost from the University of South Florida, about ¡ENLACE Florida!, which is a statewide network supported by the Kellogg Foundation designed to improve college readiness, access, and success in higher education for Latino students and other underrepresented groups. Dr. Wilcox was joined by other members of the ¡ENLACE Florida! leadership team (UCF: Dr. Gloria Laureano, FAU: Dr. Nancy Poulson, FIU: Dr. Lidia Tuttle, USF: Ms. Donna Parrino and Dr. Paul Dosal), as well as Ms. Rose Tozzi, a Career Specialist from Dowdell Middle School in Tampa, and Ms. Carolina Leon, a pre-med senior who has participated with ENLACE since 2000. They reported that ENLACE's goals go beyond providing isolated access and diversity services to include promoting policy change, leveraging existing resources, and developing sustainable best practices with empirical benchmarks that improve college readiness, access, and success.

One issue that was raised often during the deliberations of the Committee/Commission was the complexity of the financial aid application process and how it served as a barrier for many students and their families/supporters. One program that members believe has tremendous merit is the BEACON program in Jacksonville. The Duval County Public Schools, with assistance from area colleges and universities, train and schedule volunteers from the community to conduct individual and small group advising sessions with all high school seniors on how to apply for financial aid. Members also heard about Florida's first efforts to participate in College Goal Sunday on February 19, 2006, when financial aid counselors were available at 23 sites in 18 urban and rural counties across Florida to assist students in every aspect of the federal financial aid application process.

Members of the Committee/Commission recognized that efforts to improve college preparation and access had to be accompanied with efforts to retain students once they enrolled in postsecondary education. Therefore, members looked at a number

of different university support and retention efforts. Dr. Larry Abele, Provost, and Dr. Karen Laughlin, Dean of Undergraduate Studies, at Florida State University (FSU), discussed pre-collegiate and collegiate access and diversity programs at their University. Dean Laughlin reported that FSU has been able to multiply success by bringing programs together under one umbrella – i.e., the University’s Center for Academic Retention and Enhancement (CARE). She reported that many of the pre-collegiate programs with demonstrated success include a summer residential experience for students; outreach to parents; mentoring; cultural enrichment activities; and workshops on topics such as test preparation, college skills, academic planning, and the college application process. She added that sufficient financial support is critical for the success of pre-collegiate and collegiate programs, and that she has found the programs are more successful when they support the students throughout their college careers.

University representatives Dr. Joe Glover (UF), Dr. Patricia Telles-Irvin (UF), Dr. Karen Laughlin (FSU), Dr. Glen Besterfield (USF), and Dr. David Dees (UCF) met with the Committee/Commission to discuss advising and automated auditing and tracking systems. They explained that the State universities are at various points in the process of developing such systems (some automated, some not) to clearly identify for students the specific sequence of courses needed and specific milestones for timely progression through a given undergraduate major. If a student gets off track, an advisor is able to contact the student, and the advisor can work with the student in a problem-solving venue, either to get the student back on track or, if that does not seem possible, to get the student to consider another major. Sufficient numbers of trained, proactive advisors, along with automated systems that alert advisors and students if students “get off track” can be valuable tools in supporting retention in postsecondary education. Tracking systems can work particularly well for students needing additional academic and student support services. Automated systems are particularly valuable if they also help enrollment planners conduct course demand analyses to ensure that sufficient seats and course sections are available when the students need them to stay on track in their academic programs.

Members of the Committee/Commission were provided with an overview of financial aid commitment programs in other states. Early commitment or “promise” programs (like Project STARS in Florida) are those which guarantee financial aid for students with need. They usually reach down into the elementary, middle, and high schools and identify for students and their families what they need to do early to qualify for assistance for postsecondary education. There also is a growing array of “promise” programs being set up at colleges and universities around the country that work to eliminate the need for students to incur loan debt while pursuing higher education. Most of these programs are going beyond paying for tuition and fees, recognizing that costs for room, board, books, etc., can often create unmanageable barriers for students.

The Committee and Commission were joined by a panel of representatives from university development offices to discuss how foundations are/can become more involved in access and diversity efforts on the campuses. Linda Lehtoma, the Director of Advancement and Alumni Affairs at Florida Gulf Coast University; Pierre Allaire, the Vice President of Institutional Advancement at the University of North Florida; Bob Conrad, the Vice President for Planned Giving at FSU; and Janine Welch, the Scholarship Coordinator for the FSU Foundation, talked about foundation efforts to raise scholarship dollars. They reported that, over the last 20 or so years, the trend has been for donors to place more restrictions on the use of the funds. They added that the major focus should be on securing endowments, and using the income from the endowments to support scholarships and related support services.

Guiding Principles for Best Practice in Programs Designed to Increase Access and Diversity in Higher Education

Given the enormous array of programs in existence to improve college readiness, access, and retention for students from traditionally underrepresented populations, Governor McDevitt asked the Access and Diversity Team to look at those programs that appeared to be the most successful and to identify the commonalities among them. Again, based on their own campus experiences, as well as available outcomes data and research in the field, the Team identified the characteristics listed below. The Committee and Commission members agreed that, as new access and diversity programs are developed and existing programs are reviewed and/or expanded, these guiding principles will provide a valuable lens through which policies and procedures, as well as program designs and processes, can be evaluated. They concurred that successful readiness, access, and retention programs should be:

- **Student-centered:** Successful efforts provide personalized attention through coordinated programs. These programs provide the levels and types of support needed by individual students to address the challenges faced at different points in their educational journeys.
- **Cost-effective:** Successful endeavors must include periodic analyses of effectiveness and efficiencies to identify opportunities for consolidation, elimination, replication, etc., as appropriate.
- **Collaborative/Coordinated:** Successful programs include the active involvement of students, as well as family, educational, and community partners at critical points in the process. Services are coordinated for each student in a manner that

ensures that the student receives the types and levels of support needed for success at each phase of the educational journey.

- **Sustainable:** Successful programs have dedicated recurring resources, sufficient infrastructure, and long-term partnerships with other educational sectors and communities. Successful programs also make long-term investments in students.
- **Replicable:** Successful programs are designed in a manner that allows for duplication of best practices in new settings.
- **Accountable/Measurable:** Successful programs include evidence of an institution-wide commitment to access and diversity, evidence of regular review to determine if articulated expected outcomes are achieved and principles of best practice are utilized, and evidence that evaluation results are used for continuous program and process improvement.

Throughout their joint meetings, members of the Student Affairs Committee and the Governor's Commission gained an understanding of the continuum of services that are needed to improve access and diversity in Florida's institutions of higher education. With the help of the Access and Diversity Team, they identified the following set of practices as being worthy of emulation for supporting improved access and successful retention to graduation:

- Early intervention and exposure to college, beginning at middle school, with a strong focus on mentoring and advising.
- Effective marketing and focused assistance to help students and their families/supporters understand the value and the possibility of higher education as an option.
- Academic intervention that encourages middle and high school students to take and pass rigorous courses which prepare them for collegiate studies.
- Assistance in preparing for college entrance examinations.
- Comprehensive financial support to make higher education financially accessible.
- Initiatives that help students and their families/supporters understand and successfully navigate college admissions and financial aid procedures.
- Transition programs that welcome and affirm newcomers (freshmen and transfer students).
- Redundant early warning systems that identify and respond to students whose academic performance or other behaviors put them at risk of failure or dropping out.
- Advising networks that respond effectively to the academic and related needs of students.

- Mentoring and other initiatives that help students understand and successfully navigate institutional policies and comply with procedures.
- An institution-wide commitment to access and diversity.
- Attention to the campus environment and providing academic, social, and cultural support for students from traditionally underrepresented populations.
- Support that exists both on campus and in the community for enrolled students from underrepresented populations; involving families and other supporters of the students, as appropriate.
- Learning support resources that are available and used by students when they need them.
- Strategically timed interventions.
- Peers who provide academic and social support in formal and informal ways.
- Residential living environments that provide academic and social support.
- Diverse faculty and staff members who are perceived by students as accessible and helpful.
- Program evaluation designs that attribute results to interventions.⁷

Outcomes of the 2006 Legislative Session

The 2006 Legislature included the majority of the Governor's access and diversity initiatives in its recommendations for funding through the General Appropriations Act. Additionally, funding for the First Generation Matching Grant Program was specified in substantive legislation. The Legislature approved approximately \$178 million for these projects, which was more than 89% of the total amount recommended by the Governor, or about 60% of the recommended increase (resulting in a \$31.5 million increase). Specific initiatives were handled as follows:

- **Florida Student Assistance Grants (FSAG):** Florida Student Assistance Grants provide need-based financial aid to Florida residents. For the 2005-2006 academic year, the minimum award amount was \$200, and the maximum was \$1,672. The Fiscal Year (FY) 2006-2007 General Appropriations Act (GAA) provided total funding of \$120.5 million for FSAG. This funding represents an increase of \$21.7 million (21.9 percent), the largest increase in the program's history. This funding will provide up to \$1,722 for a projected 116,800 students who have financial need.
- **State University System Financial Aid:** In 2003-2004 (the last year for which data were available), 18,882 students were served with an appropriation of \$19,729,207. By law, at least 71 % of the funds had to be designated for need-based financial aid. Although Governor Bush recommended a total of \$21.2 million this year for the SUS student financial assistance line item, the FY 2006-2007 GAA provided level funding at the prior year's rate of \$20.2 million.

- Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs):** Independent HBCUs (Bethune-Cookman College, Edward Waters College, and Florida Memorial University) received \$12.1 million. This funding represents an increase of \$1.1 million (10 percent). Since Governor Bush took office in 1999, HBCUs have received an increase of \$7.4 million (158 percent). The additional funds were not allocated specifically for need-based financial aid, as recommended by the Governor.
- Minority and Underrepresented Student Achievement Partnership:** With the passage of the “Florida Partnership for Minority and Underrepresented Student Achievement Act” in 2004, Florida entered into a special partnership with College Board “to prepare, inspire, and connect students to postsecondary success and opportunity, with a particular focus on minority students and students who are underrepresented in postsecondary education.”⁸ The partnership was designed to increase the pipeline of better prepared students, improve access to college, and increase success in college for all students. The partnership has worked to improve student achievement in middle and high schools and improve college readiness by encouraging early college preparation through participation in rigorous academics, particularly Advanced Placement courses, and familiarizing students with college admission tests such as the PSAT/NMSQT® and the SAT®. Although Governor Bush recommended a \$3 million increase for the College Board partnership, the program was level funded this year at \$7.1 million.
- Stanley Tate Project STARS Program:** Since its inception, the Project STARS Program has provided more than 15,400 tuition and local fee scholarships, totaling in excess of \$75 million. The program targets low-income students who are at risk of dropping out of school and gives them the incentive and opportunity to go to college. Scholarships have been provided for targeted students (primarily in middle school) who are Florida residents, eligible for the free and reduced lunch program, remain drug- and crime-free, and stay in school. Most program partners also require Project STARS students to sign an agreement to progress academically, meet school attendance requirements, abide by their school’s code of conduct, and meet with a mentor on a regular basis. More than half of Project STARS students are minorities, and more than half are from single-parent homes. Currently, more than 91% of Project STARS students are meeting the program’s requirements and are preparing for college. This year, the program received \$8 million, which represents an increase of \$2 million (33.5 percent), half of the increase requested by Governor Bush.
- College Reach-Out Program (CROP):** The College Reach-Out Program was established in 1983 to “increase the number of low-income, educationally

disadvantaged students in grades 6-12 who, upon high school graduation, are admitted to and successfully complete postsecondary education.”⁹ CROP sponsors tutoring classes (in school, after school, and on Saturdays), test preparation (PSAT, SAT, FCAT), college tours, summer residency programs, cultural events, and many other activities designed to improve college access and success. In program year 2004-2005, CROP enrolled 8,546 students, and 38 postsecondary institutions served 448 schools located across 53 Florida counties. Nine of the eleven State universities participated, as did twenty-five community colleges, and four private institutions. The College Reach-Out Program was funded at \$3.4 million (an increase of \$200,000 or 6.2 percent), or 20 percent of what was requested by the Governor. These funds will expand counseling and tutorial services to serve an additional 448 students for a total of 8,994 students served.

- **First Generation Matching Grant Program:** Senator Lawson and Representative Flores, both members of the Governor’s Access and Diversity Commission, were successful in getting HB 795 passed, which creates the program and provides \$6.5 million and, when coupled with private donations, will provide \$13 million for state universities. The program provides state funds to match private donations on a dollar-for-dollar basis to provide grants to undergraduate students who are Florida residents, meet “first generation” status – i.e., neither parent earned a baccalaureate or higher degree, are accepted into a state university, enroll at least part-time, demonstrate financial need, and meet other criteria established by the individual universities.

The Legislature also passed HB 1237, which includes an appropriation of \$5 million in nonrecurring general revenue to the Philip Benjamin Matching Grant Program for Community Colleges to match donations for scholarships for first-generation students.

The President’s Focus on Achievement Mentoring Partnership

On January 11, 2006, Governor Jeb Bush announced the creation of a new mentoring program in partnership with Florida’s university presidents. The Volunteer Florida Foundation teamed with the Florida Campus Compact to train collegiate mentors to work with middle school students traditionally underrepresented in college enrollment and completion. A new, 13-lesson “Focus on College” curriculum was developed in which the first 15 minutes of each mentoring session is spent talking about college life, academics, financial aid, etc.

Representatives from six State universities and one community college were trained to launch the pilot of the Presidents’ Focus on Achievement Mentoring Program.

Participating institutions included Florida A&M University, Florida Atlantic University, Florida State University, Tallahassee Community College, University of Central Florida, University of Florida, and University of South Florida. Although the program had a very short time-line for preparation and faced challenges because of the shortened spring semester (due to varying spring break schedules, FCAT testing, and the departure of college students by the end of April), approximately 100 college mentors were trained in the new curriculum. The program paired more than 100 students from seven middle schools around the state with collegiate mentors.

Program leaders report that, during the summer, a full assessment of the spring pilot program will take place. Interim feedback indicates that the curriculum was well received, and much was accomplished in a very short period of time. However, additional work is needed to develop sustainable programs with middle school partners, to remove potential obstacles to volunteer placements in the schools, and to address cost and time issues surrounding background checks for mentors. After-school program sites are going to be identified and incorporated into the program. More training sessions will be scheduled, and Florida Campus Compact will work with participating institutions to continue and enhance the program during the 2006-2007 academic year.

Recommendations from the Student Affairs Committee and the Governor's Commission

Based on their findings, members of the Student Affairs Committee and the Governor's Access and Diversity Commission present the following recommendations to the Governor, the Legislature, the Board of Governors, and Florida's institutions of higher education:

- **Rigorous Academic Preparation and Early Intervention**
 1. Florida's educators and policymakers should continue to advocate for increased rigor in Florida's middle and high school curricula and for alignment between the K-12 standards and curricula and the skills needed for success in college and in the "high-performance workplace" and "knowledge economy." Inherent in this recommendation is a need for representatives from across the educational sectors to work together to make this goal a reality.
 2. Institutions of higher education should develop sustainable, high-quality partnerships with middle and high schools. Coordinated intervention services, based on identified best practices (e.g., those with a focus on

- mentoring, advising, and early student exposure to college) should be strengthened to ensure that students have the information and support they need for college readiness, access, and success. Existing and new programs should have strong evaluation systems that assess program effectiveness and track program participants into and through postsecondary education.
3. Targeted initiatives should involve parents, guardians, and supporters to educate the whole family on the value of higher education and the commitments necessary to achieve it.
 4. Additional funding should be sought for the College Reach-Out Program. However, personnel from the Department of Education (DOE) Office of Equity and Access should first work with an inter-sector group of representatives to recognize existing program achievements, as well as to develop guidelines to increase efficiencies and to gain more consistency, as appropriate, among the CROP consortia around the State. Then, based on an analysis of CROP, the DOE Office of Equity and Access should provide the Legislature with a request for the additional funding that would be necessary to address identified needs across Florida.
 5. Consistent communication strategies (e.g., advertising/marketing campaigns, public service announcements, etc.) should be developed to disseminate information about early intervention, college readiness, access, and support programs available to students from traditionally underrepresented populations.
- **Admissions and Financial Access**
 6. The Board of Governors and university personnel should monitor the levels of college readiness for students graduating from Florida's public schools relative to the selectivity of Florida's state universities. University Boards of Trustees should review admissions policies and procedures to identify and remove practices that might have a negative unintended impact on student access. Simultaneously, the Board of Governors and university personnel should continue conversations with the Legislature to garner sufficient enrollment funding to make university access an option for qualified students.
 7. Educators and policymakers should work to simplify postsecondary and student financial aid application processes and related forms (at the national, state, and institutional levels). Additionally, they should review existing policies, procedures, and timelines to ensure that students from traditionally

underrepresented groups have access to the financial resources needed for postsecondary attendance.

8. Additionally, Florida should extend its efforts to enhance public awareness about financial aid options, and to ensure that students and their families/supporters are provided with the assistance they need to complete application and financial aid forms in a timely manner. For instance, consideration should be given to scaling up and/or replicating the successful Jacksonville BEACON program, or developing a College Goal Sunday-type program which is offered earlier during the academic year to ensure that students apply for postsecondary education and financial aid in a timely manner.
9. Efforts should be made to continue to seek increases in federal, state, and institutional need-based financial aid (including specific support for first-generation students). In developing financial assistance programs, institutions and the State should take into consideration that, for many students, assistance with tuition and fees alone is insufficient to cover all of the expenses associated with collegiate study.
10. Because the future success of access and diversity initiatives and related scholarship programs is going to be highly dependent on public-private partnerships, with increased reliance on private support, Florida's institutions of higher education need to continue to work with their foundations to encourage individual and corporate donors and other philanthropists and related foundations to provide support for access, diversity, and retention initiatives. To position the State University System to take full advantage of assistance from the private sector, the Board of Governors should seek statutory authority for its Foundation to receive State matching funds for donations, particularly those designated for need-based aid and related support services.
11. The Board of Governors Student Affairs Committee, with members of the SUS Access and Diversity Team, should prepare a detailed Systemwide Legislative Budget Request and/or proposed legislation for Board consideration. The request should outline a plan for a State University System "financial aid commitment program" that guarantees financial assistance for economically disadvantaged students if they meet certain requirements, including making appropriate academic progress in a rigorous college preparation curriculum. The plan should incorporate recommendations for coordinated academic and student support services for program participants, based on individual student needs.

- **Retention Support**

12. Institutions of higher education should seek needed funding via their Legislative Budget Requests and/or from private sources and take action to institute/strengthen proactive student advising, counseling, and tracking systems (including automated systems, as appropriate). Although tailored to the particular needs of each campus, these mechanisms should eliminate discretionary intervention and instead should provide more automatic and redundant early warning systems that identify and respond to students whose academic performance or other behaviors put them at risk of failure, dropping out, or not progressing through a program in a timely manner.
13. Institutions of higher education should continue to build a positive campus environment, as well as support both on campus and in the community, for enrolled students from underrepresented populations. Academic and student support services that demonstrate a positive impact on retention to graduation should be strengthened and coordinated to provide individual students with the assistance they need for collegiate success.

- **Review and Accountability**

14. Board of Governors staff should work with the Access and Diversity Team to develop recommended guidelines for full Board consideration that require universities to periodically review institutional access, diversity, and retention policies, procedures, and programs. University leaders should use the most current understanding of best practice to evaluate the effectiveness of policies and programs, to identify where efficiencies can be gained, and to leverage the best practices to improve the educational attainment of students from underrepresented populations. These actions might result in the elimination of some programs and activities, the consolidation of others, and the scaling up or replication of others. Any significant changes in policies, procedures, and programs, as well as any recommendations for statewide action, should be provided to the Office of the Chancellor.
15. The Board of Governors Student Affairs Committee, with members of the State University Access and Diversity Team, should continue efforts to improve access, diversity, and retention in the SUS and to incorporate best practices into existing programs.

The Board of Governors' On-Going Commitment to Improved Access, Diversity, and Retention in the State University System

The Student Affairs Committee and the Governor's Access and Diversity Commission recommend that the full Board of Governors endorse the aforementioned recommendations. In so doing, the Board would direct the Student Affairs Committee and the SUS Access and Diversity Team to continue their efforts to seek ways to improve access, diversity, and retention in the State University System. Building on the recommendations listed above, it is suggested that the Student Affairs Committee proceed in the following manner:

- June 2006: Ask Board staff and the SUS Access and Diversity Team to begin developing a plan for a State University System "financial aid commitment program."
- June 2006: Ask Board staff and the SUS Access and Diversity Team to begin developing proposed guidelines that require State universities to periodically review institutional access, diversity, and retention policies, procedures, and programs, as well as to make revisions based on those reviews, as appropriate.
- June 2006: Ask Board staff and the SUS Access and Diversity Team to begin searching for and researching other foundations and philanthropic groups which might be interested in and able to provide financial support to enhance the System's efforts to improve access, diversity, and retention.
- August 2006: Review recommendations from Board staff and the Access and Diversity Team and, if deemed appropriate, ask the full Board to consider a System-wide Legislative Budget Request and/or proposed substantive legislation regarding an SUS "financial aid commitment program."
- August 2006: Ask the full Board to consider proposed substantive legislation regarding authority for the Board Foundation to receive State matching funds for donations, particularly those designated for need-based aid and related support services for students from traditionally underrepresented populations.
- October 2006: Review recommendations from Board staff and the Access and Diversity Team and, if deemed appropriate, ask the full Board to consider proposed guidelines that require State universities to periodically review institutional access, diversity, and retention policies, procedures, and programs, as well as to make revisions based on those reviews, as appropriate.
- On-going: Work with educational, community, and governmental partners to respond to other recommendations outlined above.

Conclusion

Between January and June, 2006, the Student Affairs Committee and the Governor's Commission advocated for the access and diversity initiatives proposed by the Governor. The Legislature provided approximately \$178 million for these projects, which was more than 89% of the total amount recommended by the Governor, or about 60% of the recommended increase (for a \$31.5 million increase). This success will provide a solid foundation for on-going efforts to enhance college readiness and financial access for more Floridians from traditionally underrepresented populations.

Members of the Committee/Commission also worked to identify successful programs in place in Florida and elsewhere that help improve preparation for, access to, and success in postsecondary education for educationally and economically disadvantaged students. They worked to identify those practices that are most effective and worthy of financial support and emulation.

Providing support for low-socioeconomic, first-generation, and other students from traditionally underrepresented populations will improve Florida's economic health and social base. It is imperative that Florida make the financial commitment and put into place the mechanisms necessary to ensure that students from all backgrounds are prepared for success in the global marketplace and community. Members of the Governor's Access and Diversity Commission and the Board of Governors Student Affairs Committee believe that action on the recommendations included in this report will help move Florida significantly forward toward that goal.

¹ Source: SUS Student Data Course Files – Updated with final fall 2005 data on 03/31/2006 (<http://www.flbog.org/factbook/enrollment.asp>). Next update 10/2006.

² Source: SUS Student Data Course Files – Updated with final 2004-2005 data on 11/4/2005 (http://www.flbog.org/factbook/pivot_table.asp). Next update 10/2006.

³ Source: U. S. Census Bureau. (<http://www.census.gov/>).

⁴ Source: SUS Student Data Course Files – Updated with final fall 2005 data on 03/31/2006 (<http://www.flbog.org/factbook/enrollment.asp>). Next update 10/2006.

⁵ Source: SUS Student Data Course Files – Updated with final fall 2005 data on 03/31/2006 (<http://www.flbog.org/factbook/enrollment.asp>). Next update 10/2006.

⁶ Tym, C., McMillion, R., Barone, S. & Webster, J. (November 2004). *First-Generation College Students: A Literature Review*. Texas Guaranteed Student Loan Corporation.

⁷ The State University System Access and Diversity Team and Resource Partners, as informed by the work of George Kuh and his colleagues in *Student Success in College* (2005).

⁸ Subsection 1007.35(4), *Florida Statutes*.

⁹ Subsection 1007.34(1), *Florida Statutes*.