



EDITORIALS

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Gov. Rick Scott should protect MDC with veto

MIAMI HERALD EDITORIAL BOARD

On Thursday, the Herald Editorial Board urged Florida Gov. Rick Scott to veto House Bill 7069 from the state budget because it will gut K-12 public education in the state.

Today we bring the same message, this time encouraging the governor to veto the Florida College System section of the budget passed by the Legislature that unfairly restructures funding for higher education institutions with an elitist twist, again at the expense of public institutions, including Miami Dade College and Broward College.

It appears that state Senate President Joe Negron is trying to make Florida's 12 public universities — the ones with football teams — destination schools while simultaneously cutting \$25 million that has helped the state's 28 colleges that serve students challenged financially and in the classroom get a hand up.

This obvious disparity in education funding priorities is a slap in the face to Miami Dade College and Broward College — and the tens of thousands of students they serve so well.

What exactly is the message here? Poor, needy students be damned? Let's just support only our expensive universities — yes, of value to the state — and students who can afford them?

In the proposed higher education budget, MDC stands to lose at least \$5 million and potentially as much as \$14 million in 2017-18. Broward College is poised to be cut by at least \$2.3 million. And it gets worse. These cuts could be steeper depending on how these colleges meet higher benchmarks for performance-based funding. Lawmakers also raised the bar for the colleges next year with unrealistic performance metrics that well-funded students at the more-elite schools will have less difficulty attaining.

At the core, these proposed cuts to the second-tier Florida College System — the heart and soul of fueling employment and training those who need it most — are counter-productive to the goals of Gov. Scott, who has been a champion of job creation and workforce training. Hello! MDC and BC, among others, are where such training is taking place. The state cannot justify hamstringing these institutions.

Even though the Florida budget has a surplus of \$1 billion this year, state colleges are likely receiving the worst cut in history — needlessly. Or is it intentional? In fact, the State University System, which oversees the more renowned four-year universities, received additional allocations in excess of \$290 million while the Florida College System was cut nearly \$30 million.

We could understand these cuts if this were 2008, but they are not necessitated because of a plunge in the overall state budget.

No, this one smells.

As an aside, the financial obstacles and disrespect shown in recent years to Miami Dade College have a personal tinge to them.

For an institution that helps jump start the lives of low-income, immigrant, older and academically struggling students — maybe that’s not in style anymore — it has suffered some serious slings and arrows — most surprisingly from some members of the Miami-Dade delegation.

For now, the governor should veto the section of the budget that undercuts the Florida College System and ensure lawmakers ultimately do what is right for state colleges. If he fails to do so, the state will undercut the very people who can help it progress the most.



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