



LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

A Briefing for Faculty & Staff of the University System of Georgia No.7, February 24, 2005

“Creating a More Educated Georgia”

The House-Senate Conference Committee on the Fiscal Year 2005 Amended Budget is at work, seeking agreement.

House Okays Credit-Hour Limits on HOPE

Legislation limiting HOPE scholarship eligibility to 127 credit hours passed the House Tuesday and now will be considered by the Senate.

House Bill 299, sponsored by Rep. **Bill Hembree**, chair of the House Higher Education Committee, would take effect for students enrolling next fall.

The measure, which passed the House 93-76, limits HOPE eligibility to 127 credit hours, a cap that covers most bachelor’s programs.

Only about 7,300 of the 120,000 HOPE scholars in public and private colleges in Georgia currently are enrolled in programs requiring more than 127 credit hours to graduate, such as

dual-degree programs. Currently enrolled students will be exempt from the credit-hour cap.

The HOPE scholarship program currently pays for up to 150 credit hours, but “HOPE was never intended to provide students with advanced

degrees,” said **Shelley Nickel**, director of the Georgia Student Finance Commission, which administers the scholarships.

“This is an issue of fairness,” Hembree told the House. “All programs and all HOPE scholars should be equal.”

Governor Plans to Expand Honors Program in Agriscience, Biotechnology

Governor **Sonny Perdue** this week announced a plan to recognize outstanding agriculture students by expanding the Governor’s Honors Program in agriscience and biotechnology.

The program – a six-week summer program for academically gifted and artistically talented students held on the campus of **Valdosta State University** – currently supports the participation of 15 agriculture students and one instructor each year. The Governor proposes to add

\$25,000 to double the number of agriculture participants to 30 students, and include two instructors each year.

“I’m committed to agriculture education,” said Perdue. “The Governor’s Honors Program will help these students become the future leaders of the agriculture industry in our state.”

Rising high-school juniors and seniors are eligible to be nominated by their teachers for participation in the Governor’s Honors Program (GHP). Students are nominated in the specific instructional

area in which their abilities, aptitudes and interests lie. Major instructional areas are agriscience and biotechnology, English, foreign languages, mathematics, science, social studies, visual arts, theatre, music, dance, design, technology and executive management.

In 2004, 675 students from across Georgia participated in the Governor’s Honors Program.

The new agriscience and biotechnology slots in the honors program will be funded through the Governor’s 2006

proposed budget for the Department of Education. Perdue, a strong supporter of agriculture education, has added 70 agriculture-teaching positions to the Georgia school system since 2000.

“I have no doubt that organizations like 4-H and the FFA will be well represented by the excellent students that will be chosen for the honors program,” said Perdue. “These kids have learned the same lesson I learned growing up on our family farm. If you take care of the land, it will take care of you.”