

**DATE:** January 17, 2007

**TO:** Alan Davis, Vice President, Education  
Deanna Rexe, Director, Research and Strategic Services  
Peter Legg, Vice President, Finance and Administration

**FROM:** Frank Cosco, President, VCCFA

**SUBJECT:** **NEW STUDENT FTE SYSTEM**

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Thank you for the recent and continuing updates to the new student FTE system.

We appreciate and understand the oft-repeated assurance that the new numbering system does not reflect a change in whatever faculty and student activity took place to create FTEs under the old system or whatever takes place under the new system.

Nevertheless, and for the record, we have concerns about the changeover which we want to register with you

**1. It's not clear what activity the new numbering/counting represents.**

Previously, we had a rough understanding of how student contact hours were transformed into FTEs according to program type. We also had historical knowledge of what was deemed to "count" and what was not and whether it was for political, educational or funding reasons. We do not think we have received a transparent description of counting criteria and methods for the new system.

**2. It's not clear what funding/spending value the new numbering brings with it.**

Previously there was a direct relationship between FTEs and funding (\$7200 per FTE we believe). In 2001/02 the cumulative total funding per college was transformed into a block amount which made the FTE less directly related to funding but it still was directly related to "spending" in that the college allocated its "block" roughly according to the number of FTE. Now with the changeover, the education plan is still enumerated in FTEs but their rough equivalence across departments and programs is becoming much less reliable as a "common currency" of spending. Perhaps there is need for a new column in the education plan which gives the year over year dollar value attached to the program or department?

**3. It's not clear what political value the new FTE will retain.**

Clearly, the government continues to use FTE in how it communicates its initiatives to the colleges and to the general public. Student FTE also continues to be used by the college administration especially for utilization rates. Therefore, as time goes by, it would seem that the positive political value of having or fulfilling a higher number of FTE will continue. However, if quite a lot of historical knowledge is not retained in debate or conversations about FTE, will those connections be lost and those conversations become more like those on the Tower of Babel? Decisions and initiatives will not be possible without added information.

**4. It's not clear what impact the new system may have on the rights of union members or the bargaining unit as a whole.**

**On these points, the VCCFA**

A) requests a copy of whatever guide or conversion system is used, including the relevant criteria, for determining how activity is translated into FTE and a meeting for questions and clarifications.

B) suggests adding dollar values to the education plan, especially since it is the foundation of the annual college budget, in order to help to re-establish a common comparative between departments and programs.

C) asserts that the use of this new system will not in itself lead to the loss of any employment for our members, no diminution of their rights and current entitlements, nor any diminution of the rights of the bargaining unit.

Frank Cosco

cc Rob Henderson, Associate Vice President, Human Resources