

Bennett wants Florida's higher education system studied

By CHRISTINE HAWES
chawes@bradenton.com

State Sen. Mike Bennett, R-Bradenton, is calling for a committee to explore creation of a three-tiered higher educational system that distinguishes among research universities, those focused on baccalaureate and master's degrees, and junior colleges that offer technical degrees.

"There's been a lot of criticism of our higher education system, and we want to see if there's a better way to do it," Bennett said Tuesday, as his S.B. 1606 hit the bill roster. "I'm interested in trying to see if we can save money."

Bennett said a potential duplication of missions by State College of Florida and the University of South Florida Sarasota Manatee is the main inspiration for his bill. He pointed to SCF's growing offerings of four-year degrees, and USF Sarasota Manatee's focus on "two-year relationships."

"We've got them compet-

ing against each other for the same students," Bennett said. "We want to take a hard look at this before we get into a situation we can't reverse."

But representatives of SCF and USF Sarasota-Manatee say Bennett's bill may duplicate what's already happening.

Arthur Guilford, regional chancellor for USF's Sarasota-Manatee campus, and Kathy Walker, spokesperson for SCF, say the state's Higher Education Coordinating Council already is charged with researching Florida's higher education system and finding what works best.

Walker also said that even though SCF has added four-year degrees, none of them duplicate what USF is already offering. She said the state Board of Education's approval of SCF's new four-year degrees is proof that the two programs are not duplicating each other.

Guilford said even if the two schools are expanding beyond their initial roles,

they will remain focused on niches and complement each other.

"State College of Florida will for many, many years still remain primarily a mission to educate associate of science and associate of arts degrees, and hopefully those degrees will come to us as transfer students," he said. "And despite the fact that we're slowly going to start admitting lower-degree students, we will remain for many years an institution that accepts upper division students."

Guilford also said the two schools are collaborating more than Bennett and the general public may know.

He said talks are ongoing between the two schools for SCF's science courses to serve as "entry into our interdisciplinary program." The two schools also are meeting regularly to discuss sharing USF's faculty with SCF.

Christine Hawes, Herald education writer, can be reached at 941-745-7081.

DREDGE FROM 1B

in a recent e-mail update to county officials.

Dredging will continue from 7 a.m. - 7 p.m., seven days a week, said Charlie Hunsicker, Manatee County director of natural resources.

The job of all the equipment that has been installed is to separate, dry and dis-

pose of sediment that the dredge will unearth.

Water unearthed with the muck will be processed and returned to the creek, officials said.

Dried material will be dumped in the county landfill.

The 32-foot dredge has remained tied up in the creek since the ground breaking Nov. 14, while workers prepared the dewatering sys-

tem for operation.

The \$3.5 million Phase 1 is designed to clear out sediment and to deepen the creek. Future phases will entail widening the creek from 17th Avenue West south to Cortez Road, with the total project length reaching almost 5 miles.

Sara Kennedy, Herald reporter, can be reached at 941-745-7031.

SEATS FROM 1B

Golden, 64, a long-time pastor at Bradenton's Ward Temple African Methodist Episcopal Church, lost his city council seat in 2007 to Harold Byrd. In 2010, he was trounced by U.S. Rep. Vern Buchanan in a race for Congress.

"I think that the current political environment of confrontation needs to be replaced with an environment of collaboration, and that the entire political dialogue needs to be broadened to be more inclusive of the needs of all Manatee County residents," Golden said.

Hayes said last week after a minor car accident that she planned to drop out of the race, but she was still listed Tuesday as a candidate at the Manatee County supervisor of elections' website.

Asked whether Hayes is running, Manatee County Republican Party Chair-

woman Kathleen King said, "That's a great question; I don't know" she's officially withdrawn.

Hayes was charged with careless driving and failure to immediately report a vehicle crash after the accident last week. In an interview after the accident, Hayes said she would not be running for re-election in the fall. It was the second time in the past year that Hayes, a county commissioner since 2004, had publicly changed her mind about whether to seek re-election.

"I will not be running for re-election for this office or any other office," she said. "I have given my all to Manatee County and that's it."

Since then, she has declined to return repeated phone calls and e-mail queries.

Another Republican, Lakewood Ranch businesswoman Vanessa Baugh, has filed to run for the District 5 commission seat. Holmes, 34, a Democrat

CONTROL FROM 1B

have kept Lakewood Ranch from adopting a twice-a-week lawn irrigation schedule enjoyed by the rest of Manatee County.

Shah's study is incomplete, but has identified that some of the irrigation lines in the ground are not as large as those shown on plans, Heise said.

But the study has thus far not found any problem in the delivery of water to residents, he said.

Still to be completed is the field testing of the water pumps to gauge whether they are operating with the correct pressure. In some cases, irrigation

lines needed to be cleaned and, once they were cleaned, worked properly, Heise said.

"It might be a combination of all these things," Heise said.

Despite the once-a-week water schedule, Braden River Utilities states that Lakewood Ranch is exceeding its water allotment, Heise said.

Dave Emission, one of the Inter-District Authority supervisors, asked how it is possible that Lakewood Ranch is exceeding its allotment.

Heise said he has asked Shah to further study that problem.

Down to Earth Lawn Care, based in Mount Dora, took over Lakewood Ranch's

TRAFFIC FROM 1B

Avenue onto Eighth Street West will remain open along with business entrances and driveways on Eighth Street West between Manatee and Fourth avenues.

State Road 789 (Gulf Drive) at Longboat Key Pass Bridge: An improvement project — including bridge repair, painting and sidewalk construction — is under way, with temporary nighttime lane closures 10 p.m.-6 a.m. (excluding 10 p.m.-Friday-6 a.m.

Sunday/s). Motorists are advised to obey speed limit and exercise extreme caution. This project is anticipated for completion in the spring.

Sunshine Skyway Fishing Piers: Demolition of 75 spans from the east sides of the north and south fishing piers together with the pile caps and associated piles. Project is expected to be complete by spring.

County Road 675/Rutland Road from U.S. 304 to State Road 64: Traffic control sign installations as well as erosion control

and a lifelong resident of the Palmetto area, is seeking to oust Bustle.

"I'm choosing to run because the people within District 1 deserve better. We can do better," said Holmes. "I seek to improve the citizens' access to government, and what it means is I'm going to be accessible to the people not only within my district but the county. They'll know who their county commissioner is."

Bustle said had met Holmes shortly after the Club Elite shootings in Palmetto in September.

"I guess he came before the county commission at one point, I'm not really sure what his objectives are, what he hopes to accomplish," Bustle said.

"We're blessed with a country (in which) anybody can run for any office if they want to, so more power to him."

Sara Kennedy, Herald reporter, can be reached at 941-745-7031.

installations.

State Road 64 from County Road 675 to Zipper Road: Intermittent lane closures while crews work in the shoulder.

Various roads in vicinity of Bayshore, B.D. Guillett, Kinnan, Oneco, Palm View, Palma Sola, Pine, Rowlett and Samoset elementary schools: Possible lane closures, except during school arrival and dismissal times, for sidewalk installation. No work will be done between 9 p.m. and 7 a.m. in residential areas.

—Herald staff reports

James A. Jones Jr., East Manatee editor, can be contacted at 941-745-7021. Tweet @tjones1