DSC takes challenge of $10K degrees

Gov. Scott asks colleges to reduce bachelor’s costs

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DAYTONA BEACH — Daytona State College will take up a challenge from Gov. Rick Scott to provide bachelor degrees at a reduced cost.

Scott spent Monday unveiling his initiative at press conferences in St. Petersburg and Orlando, challenging the 28 state colleges to create a $10,000-degree program aimed at making higher education more affordable and results-oriented for Florida families.

Daytona State College proposes to launch an accelerated “Fast Track Baccalaureate Program” that offers high school students a three-year path through any of the college’s bachelor’s degrees for $10,000 — a savings of about $5,000 and more than half of what it would cost at a state university.

Daytona State is one of seven state colleges that have already accepted the challenge and identified programs, according to the Florida College System. The others are Broward College, College of Central Florida, Santa Fe College, Seminole State College of Florida, St. Petersburg College and Valencia College.

Daytona State’s new program would focus on students such as those in Volusia and Flagler counties graduating from high school in spring 2013 and entering Daytona State in the fall, college President Carol Eaton said.

Eaton and Scott both spoke at a press conference at Valencia College in Orlando.

The proposals will have to be approved by the Legislature in the spring session, Eaton said.

In a statement, Scott said, “I am issuing a challenge to our state colleges to find innovative ways to offer a bachelor’s degree at a cost of just $10,000 in fields that will provide graduates with the best opportunity for employment.”

As I travel the state, families tell me that they care about three things — getting a good job, a quality education, and enjoying a low cost of living. As a former community college student myself, I know how important it is for us to keep costs low while working to connect students with degree fields that prepare them for great careers.”

Daytona State, which launched its first bachelor degree in 2009, offers bachelor’s degrees in five areas of education: applied science in supervision and management; and engineering technology.

The proposed fast-track program would charge $1,660 per semester over six semesters by adjusting the cost of bachelor’s level courses to associate-level prices.

To qualify, it would have to be a student’s first time in college and they must already have earned 15 college credit hours through advanced placement courses in high school, a full year’s enrollment in International Baccalaureate courses. A student would also have to have SAT scores of at least 500 on all three sections of the test or the equivalent on the ACT, according to the proposal.

Eaton called it exciting that the governor recognizes state colleges as a part of improving the economy in Florida by preparing the workforce.

“It gives an alternative path for our students. We’re very excited about that,” Eaton said.

“We see this as a great opportunity to continue our partnerships with our K-12 partners.”

Currently, the cost for a bachelor’s degree for an individual without Bright Futures or an accelerated credit is about $13,284 on average at a state college. The average cost to receive a bachelor’s degree at a university in Florida is about $24,000, state officials said.

Dwight Lewis, chairman of the Daytona State College board of trustees, said the college is proud to be one of the first to accept the governor’s challenge.

“We want our education to be a good buy so when you pay your money to go to school it has value and you can go out and find a job,” Lewis said.

Mary Ann Haas of Flagler Beach, vice chairman of Daytona State’s board of trustees, said the proposal is “a wonderful opportunity for the people in our community.”

“It’s going to cost us something, but I think the payoff of what we are going to provide for the community makes it an overwhelmingly positive choice,” Haas said.

Randy Hanna, chancellor of the Florida College System, said in a statement that the “$10,000 bachelor’s degree strengthens our ongoing commitment to increasing access and affordability, making college a possibility for every Floridian.”

Frank Brogan, chancellor of the State University System, said in a statement that Scott’s challenge to state colleges “complements the hard work already under way by the Board of Governors’ Commission on Higher Education Access and Attainment, which has been tasked with creating a roadmap for an organized, cost-effective and valuable system of higher education.”

He said “a well-articulated partnership with the Florida College System is a key piece of that effort” and added that tuition for the state universities is “among the lowest in the nation.”

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