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**Report Says Students Can Help Develop Meaningful Education Policy**

*~Annual Florida Student Education Policy Conference is designed to help students get involved in reform~*

**Tampa, FL-** In a [report](#) released today by [ENLACE Florida](#), the group touts success in effectively engaging first generation college students in education policy development and mobilizing them to meaningful advocacy work in Tallahassee. According to the report, by organizing college students, supporting their research, and facilitating their interaction with policy makers, a channel of communication can be opened between the students and policy makers that can lead to meaningful education policy development. ENLACE Florida organized Florida's first [Student Education Policy Conference](#) to help accomplish exactly that. "The students took full advantage of this unique opportunity," said Paul Dosal, Ph.D., Executive Director for ENLACE Florida. "They researched and analyzed the issues carefully and came prepared to debate. We were impressed by the students' high level of enthusiasm and their command of the issues," said Dosal. ENLACE Florida is a statewide network promoting college readiness, access, and success for underrepresented students. They hosted the 2 ½ day event at [Florida Atlantic University](#) in Boca Raton. Sixty-four college students were selected to participate in this one-of-a-kind conference through a competitive application process from eight universities throughout Florida. After months of research on key education issues, the students presented [their recommendations](#) on improving education. They debated specific points and passed resolutions that they later carried with them to Tallahassee. On March 5, 2009, student delegation leaders visited the State Capitol and presented and discussed the conference resolutions with Senator Evelyn Lynn, Representative Anitere Flores, the Council of Community College Presidents, and the Commissioner of Education Eric Smith. In response to the students' recommendation to raise high school graduation requirements, at least one elected official pointed out that Hispanic and African American students would suffer most from higher standards. The students, most of them Hispanic

or African American, argued that they could meet the new academic requirements. On March 18, 2009, three students from UNF and one from FAMU [testified](#) before the House Council on Education and Economic Development. The students offered their personal testimonies in support of raising high school graduation requirements as provided in HB 1293. While courses like Algebra II and Chemistry would present tougher challenges to the students, Kevin Vu of UNF argued to the House Council that “adding rigor to Florida’s curriculum is necessary for us to compete in the global economy.” And on March 31, 2009, the entire assembly of student delegates from the conference traveled to Tallahassee to promote their policy recommendations and encourage meaningful education reform. “If we empower students by giving them a voice in the policy-making process, we can fine tune our policies to reflect the particular needs of our students,” said Edwin Estevez, Ph.D., Senior Researcher for ENLACE Florida. “Florida students want to be heard and involved,” said Estevez. “This model of student leadership development and advocacy offers the potential for an institutionalized means of communication between policy makers and students, particularly if expanded to all universities and community colleges.” For more information on the Florida Student Education Policy Conference, visit [www.enlaceflorida.org](http://www.enlaceflorida.org)

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