

# House District 8 candidates seek their own identities

By Julian Pecquet  
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With no significant policy differences separating them, four candidates vying for Florida House District 8 sought to distinguish themselves in other ways during Tuesday evening's Florida A&M Student Government Association Vote Coalition debate.

Attorney Hubert Brown made reforming the FCAT a top priority.

Two-time Tallahassee City Commission candidate Anthony Viegbesie, who teaches economics and public administration at FAMU and Tallahassee Community College, said he'd bring a professor's concerns for education to the Legislature.

Alan Williams, former aide to Tallahassee Mayor John Marks, said he was the only one ready to get to work in the Capitol — "I have those relationships now," he said.

And Sean Shaw, a lawyer, cast himself as a candidate offering clear priorities of what he'd try to get funded during a time of deep budget cuts: edu-

cation, state employees and health care, including access to pre-natal care.

"That's something that we could fix tomorrow if the state had a commitment to it," he said.

All four opposed tuition increases and said they'd fight to fund FAMU. They also said reducing infant mortality rates among blacks and funding prevention programs to keep black youth out of jail should be priorities.

A fifth candidate, former Quincy Police Chief Rodney Moore, missed the debate because of a prior commitment in Gadsden County. All five candidates are black Democrats.

Several dozen students turned out to hear the candidates speak at Lee Hall, many of them students of an American government class.

Jamie Hatfield, a 2006 FAMU graduate who has a health-care management degree, said she liked Williams' proposal to make health care education more available.

"People can always talk about access," she said.

"It's also about education."

District 8 covers parts of southern Leon and most of Gadsden County. The district had 133,335 people in 2000, according to that year's census, more than 55 percent of them black; 72.9 percent of registered voters that year were Democrats.

The seat is being vacated by Rep. Curtis Richardson, who is term-limited out after eight years in office.

Williams led fundraising efforts through Dec. 31, with \$122,064. He was followed by Brown (\$52,977); Shaw (\$23,108); and Viegbesie (\$14,219).

All but Moore, who reported no money raised last year, live in Tallahassee.

More candidates can file for the seat through June 20.

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