

1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to postsecondary options for students
3 with disabilities; creating s. 1004.6501, F.S.;
4 providing a short title; providing purposes and
5 legislative intent; defining terms; establishing the
6 Florida Center for Students with Unique Abilities;
7 providing center duties and responsibilities;
8 providing for Florida Postsecondary Comprehensive
9 Transition Programs at eligible institutions;
10 requiring the center to oversee the programs;
11 providing for application, application submission
12 deadlines, and approval and renewal process for the
13 programs; requiring certain information to be included
14 on the application; requiring the programs to provide
15 certain notification and to submit an annual report;
16 providing student eligibility for program admittance;
17 requiring the center to provide a report to the
18 Governor, Legislature, Chancellor of the State
19 University System, and Commissioner of Education and
20 to provide certain recommendations to the Legislature;
21 providing for rulemaking; amending s. 1009.25, F.S.;
22 providing that certain students with a physical or
23 mental disorder are exempt from specified tuition and
24 fees; repealing s. 19, chapter 2014-184, Laws of
25 Florida; abrogating the scheduled repeal of s.
26 1003.438, F.S., relating to special high school

27 graduation requirements for certain exceptional
 28 students; providing an effective date.

29
 30 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

31
 32 Section 1. Section 1004.6501, Florida Statutes, is created
 33 to read:

34 1004.6501 Florida Postsecondary Comprehensive Transition
 35 Program and Florida Center for Students with Unique Abilities.-

36 (1) SHORT TITLE.-This section shall be known and may be
 37 cited as the "Florida Postsecondary Comprehensive Transition
 38 Program Act."

39 (2) PURPOSE AND LEGISLATIVE INTENT.-The purpose of this
 40 section is to increase independent living, inclusive and
 41 successful experiential postsecondary education, and employment
 42 opportunities for students with intellectual disabilities
 43 through degree, certificate, and nondegree programs and to
 44 establish statewide coordination of the dissemination of
 45 information regarding programs and services for students with
 46 disabilities. It is the intent of the Legislature that students
 47 with intellectual disabilities and students with disabilities be
 48 provided the opportunity to obtain important postsecondary
 49 education credentials and participate in meaningful campus
 50 experiences.

51 (3) DEFINITIONS.-As used in this section, the term:

52 (a) "Center" means the Florida Center for Students with

53 Unique Abilities.

54 (b) "Director" means the director of the center.

55 (c) "Eligible institution" means a state university, a
 56 Florida College System institution, a career center, a charter
 57 technical career center, or an independent college or university
 58 that is eligible to participate in the William L. Boyd, IV,
 59 Florida Resident Access Grant Program.

60 (d) "FPCTP" means a Florida Postsecondary Comprehensive
 61 Transition Program that is approved pursuant to subsection (5)
 62 and offered by an eligible institution.

63 (e) "Transitional student" means a student who is at least
 64 18 but not older than 26 years of age who meets the eligibility
 65 requirements of paragraph (5)(e).

66 (4) FLORIDA CENTER FOR STUDENTS WITH UNIQUE ABILITIES.—
 67 There is established within the University of Central Florida
 68 the Florida Center for Students with Unique Abilities. The
 69 center shall:

70 (a) Disseminate information to students with disabilities
 71 and their parents, which must include, but is not limited to,
 72 information relating to:

73 1. Education programs, services, and resources that are
 74 available at eligible institutions.

75 2. Supports, accommodations, technical assistance, and
 76 training programs provided by eligible institutions, the
 77 advisory council established under s. 383.141, and regional
 78 autism centers established under s. 1004.55.

79 3. Mentoring, networking, and employment opportunities.

80 (b) Coordinate, facilitate, and oversee the statewide
81 implementation of this section, including, but not limited to,
82 creating the application, deadlines for the submission of an
83 application, and the approval and renewal process for an FPCTP
84 under subsection (5).

85 (c) Consult and collaborate with the National Center for
86 Information and Technical Support for Postsecondary Students
87 with Disabilities and the coordinating center established under
88 20 U.S.C. s. 1140q regarding guidelines established by the
89 Florida Center for Students with Unique Abilities for the
90 effective implementation of programs for students with
91 disabilities and for students with intellectual disabilities
92 that align with the federal requirements and standards, quality
93 indicators, and benchmarks identified by the National Center for
94 Information and Technical Support for Postsecondary Students
95 with Disabilities and the coordinating center.

96 (d) Consult and collaborate with the Higher Education
97 Coordinating Council to identify important credentials for
98 FPCTPs and to engage businesses and stakeholders in the
99 promotion of experiential training and employment opportunities
100 for students with intellectual disabilities.

101 (e) Provide information and technical assistance to
102 administrators, instructors, staff, and other interested parties
103 at an eligible institution relating to programs and services for
104 students with intellectual disabilities, which must include, but

105 are not limited to:

106 1. Holding meetings and annual workshops to share
107 successful practices and address issues or concerns.

108 2. Facilitating collaboration between eligible
109 institutions, school districts, private schools, and the parents
110 of students enrolled in home education programs to better assist
111 students with intellectual disabilities and their parents in
112 planning for the transition of such students into an FPCTP or
113 another program at an eligible institution.

114 3. Assisting eligible institutions with FPCTP and federal
115 comprehensive transition and postsecondary program applications.

116 4. Assisting eligible institutions with the identification
117 of funding sources for an FPCTP and for student financial
118 assistance for students enrolled in an FPCTP.

119 5. Monitoring federal and state law relating to the
120 comprehensive transition program and notifying the Legislature,
121 the Governor, the Board of Governors, and the State Board of
122 Education of any change in law that may impact the
123 implementation of this section.

124 (f) Plan, advise, and evaluate approved degree,
125 certificate, and nondegree programs and evaluate the performance
126 of students and FPCTPs using the performance indicators included
127 in the application pursuant to subparagraph (5) (c) 6.

128 (5) FLORIDA POSTSECONDARY COMPREHENSIVE TRANSITION
129 PROGRAMS.—Any eligible institution desiring to offer an FPCTP
130 shall submit an application to the center in a manner prescribed

131 by the center. The application must be approved by the eligible
132 institution's governing board and be submitted by the
133 institution's president or director by a date established by the
134 center.

135 (a) Notwithstanding the program approval requirements of
136 s. 1004.03, within 30 days after receipt of an application from
137 an eligible institution to offer an FPCTP, the director shall
138 issue a recommendation for approval of the application to the
139 Chancellor of the State University System, if the institution is
140 a state university, or the Commissioner of Education, for all
141 other eligible institutions, or give written notice to the
142 eligible institution of any deficiencies in the application.
143 Within 15 days after receipt of the notice of deficiencies, the
144 eligible institution shall correct the deficiencies and return
145 the application to the center or withdraw the application from
146 consideration. Upon receipt of the revised application, the
147 director shall, within 30 days, recommend approval or
148 disapproval of the revised application to the chancellor or
149 commissioner, as applicable. Within 15 days after receipt of the
150 director's recommendation, the chancellor or commissioner shall
151 approve or disapprove the eligible institution's application. If
152 the chancellor or commissioner does not take action within the
153 15-day period, the application shall be considered approved.

154 (b) Initial approval of an FPCTP is valid for the 3
155 academic years immediately following the academic year in which
156 the approval is granted. An eligible institution may submit, in

157 the same manner as the initial application, an application for
158 renewal of an FPCTP. The application for renewal must be
159 submitted before the end of the initial 3-year period. If the
160 eligible institution and the FPCTP continue to meet the
161 requirements of this section, a renewal shall be granted for an
162 additional 5 academic years. The renewal period shall begin at
163 the end of the original approval period.

164 (c) The application developed by the center must:

165 1. Address the requirements of the federal comprehensive
166 transition and postsecondary program in 20 U.S.C. s. 1140 and
167 this section.

168 2. Identify the credential awarded to a student with an
169 intellectual disability upon completion of an FPCTP if he or she
170 meets the eligibility requirements of paragraph (e).

171 3. Outline the length and design of an FPCTP, including,
172 but not limited to, inclusive and successful experiential
173 postsecondary education practices relating to curricular,
174 assessment, and advising structure and internship and employment
175 opportunities that support a student with an intellectual
176 disability who is seeking to continue academic, career,
177 technical, and independent living instruction at an eligible
178 institution, including, but not limited to, opportunities to
179 earn industry certifications, to prepare such student for
180 gainful employment. If an eligible institution offers a credit-
181 bearing degree program, the institution is responsible for
182 maintaining the rigor and effectiveness of a comprehensive

183 transition degree program at the same level as other comparable
184 degree programs offered by the institution pursuant to
185 applicable accreditation standards.

186 4. Address the ways in which students with intellectual
187 disabilities will be socially and academically integrated, to
188 the maximum extent possible, with nondisabled students, which
189 must be on at least a half-time basis. Such integration must
190 include one or more of the following for such students:

191 a. Regular enrollment in credit-bearing courses at an
192 eligible institution.

193 b. Audit of or participation in noncredit-bearing courses
194 at an eligible institution.

195 c. Enrollment in noncredit-bearing, nondegree courses at
196 an eligible institution.

197 d. Participation in internships or employment training
198 programs.

199 5. Identify a plan for partnerships with businesses to
200 promote experiential training and employment opportunities for a
201 student with an intellectual disability.

202 6. Identify, after collaboration with the Board of
203 Governors and the State Board of Education, performance
204 indicators for the satisfactory progress of a student with an
205 intellectual disability in an FPCTP and for the performance of
206 an FPCTP and any other requirements specified by the center.

207 Each eligible institution must address the performance
208 indicators identified by the center in its application for the

209 approval and renewal of a proposed FPCTP and in the annual
210 report that the institution submits to the center.

211 7. Outline a 5-year plan incorporating enrollment and
212 operational expectations for an FPCTP.

213 8. Include documented evidence of a federally approved
214 comprehensive transition and postsecondary program that is
215 determined to be an eligible program for the federal student aid
216 programs and is currently offered at the institution, documented
217 evidence of the submission of an application for such federal
218 approval of a comprehensive transition and postsecondary program
219 proposed by the institution, or documentation demonstrating the
220 commitment of the institution's governing board to submit an
221 application within the subsequent academic year for federal
222 approval of a comprehensive transition and postsecondary program
223 proposed by the institution pursuant to 20 U.S.C. s. 1140.

224 (d) Upon approval of an application, an eligible
225 institution must notify students with intellectual disabilities
226 and their parents of the FPCTP and student eligibility
227 requirements for participation in the FPCTP.

228 (e) To be eligible to enroll in an FPCTP at an eligible
229 institution, a student must, as determined by the institution
230 and based on guidelines established by the center:

231 1. Be a student with an intellectual disability as defined
232 in 20 U.S.C. s. 1140(2), including, but not limited to, a
233 transitional student.

234 2. Physically attend the eligible institution.

235 3. Submit to the eligible institution documentation
236 regarding his or her intellectual disability. Such documentation
237 may include, but not be limited to, a current individualized
238 plan for employment associated with a review completed pursuant
239 to s. 413.20(3) or a diagnosis from a physician licensed under
240 chapter 458 or chapter 459 or a psychologist licensed under
241 chapter 490.

242 (f) By August 1 of each year, an eligible institution with
243 an FPCTP shall submit an annual report to the center that, at a
244 minimum, addresses the following performance indicators for the
245 previous academic year:

246 1. Efforts to recruit students to enroll in the FPCTP and
247 the number of students enrolled in the FPCTP.

248 2. Efforts to retain student enrollment in the FPCTP and
249 the retention rate of students in the FPCTP.

250 3. The completion rate of students enrolled in the FPCTP
251 and related courses, as applicable.

252 4. Transition success of students who complete the FPCTP,
253 as measured by employment rates and salary levels at 1 year and
254 5 years after completion, as available.

255 5. Other performance indicators identified by the center
256 under subparagraph (c)6.

257 (6) ACCOUNTABILITY.—

258 (a) By October 1 of each year, the center shall provide to
259 the Governor, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the
260 House of Representatives, the Chancellor of the State University

261 System, and the Commissioner of Education a report that
262 includes, but is not limited to:

263 1. The status of the statewide coordination of FPCTPs and
264 the implementation of FPCTPs at eligible institutions including,
265 but not limited to, the number of applications approved or
266 disapproved, the reasons for each disapproval, and the number of
267 applications on which no action was taken by the chancellor or
268 the commissioner, as applicable.

269 2. Performance indicators identified by the center under
270 subparagraph (5)(c)6. and the performance of each eligible
271 institution based on such indicators.

272 3. The projected number of students with intellectual
273 disabilities who may be eligible to enroll in the FPCTPs within
274 the next academic year.

275 4. Education programs and services for students with
276 intellectual disabilities that are available at an eligible
277 institution.

278 (b) Beginning December 1, 2015, and annually thereafter,
279 the center, in collaboration with the Board of Governors, the
280 State Board of Education, the Higher Education Coordinating
281 Council, and other stakeholders, shall submit to the Governor,
282 the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House of
283 Representatives statutory and budget recommendations for
284 improving the implementation and delivery of FPCTPs and other
285 education programs and services for students with disabilities.

286 (7) RULES.—The Board of Governors and the State Board of

287 Education, in consultation with the center, shall expeditiously
 288 adopt the necessary regulations and rules, as applicable, to
 289 allow the center to perform its responsibilities pursuant to
 290 this section beginning in the 2015-2016 fiscal year.

291 Section 2. Paragraph (i) is added to subsection (1) of
 292 section 1009.25, Florida Statutes, to read:

293 1009.25 Fee exemptions.—

294 (1) The following students are exempt from the payment of
 295 tuition and fees, including lab fees, at a school district that
 296 provides workforce education programs, Florida College System
 297 institution, or state university:

298 (i) A student who receives social security disability
 299 income or supplemental security income due to a physical or
 300 mental disorder as determined by the Social Security
 301 Administration. Such student is exempt from the payment of
 302 tuition for adult general education pursuant to s. 1009.22(3).

303 Section 3. Section 19 of chapter 2014-184, Laws of
 304 Florida, is repealed.

305 Section 4. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law.