

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; providing an effective date.

25
26 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

27
28 Section 1. Section 1004.6501, Florida Statutes, is created
29 to read:

30 1004.6501 Florida Postsecondary Comprehensive Transition
31 Program and Florida Center for Students with Unique Abilities.-

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

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

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

48 (a) "Center" means the Florida Center for Students with
49 Unique Abilities.

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

51 (c) "Eligible institution" means a state university, a
52 Florida College System institution, a career center, a charter

53 technical career center, or an independent college or university
54 that is eligible to participate in the William L. Boyd, IV,
55 Florida Resident Access Grant Program.

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

59 (e) "Transitional student" means a student who is at least
60 18 but not older than 26 years of age who meets the eligibility
61 requirements of paragraph (5)(e).

62 (4) FLORIDA CENTER FOR STUDENTS WITH UNIQUE ABILITIES.—
63 There is established within the University of Central Florida
64 the Florida Center for Students with Unique Abilities. The
65 center shall:

66 (a) Disseminate information to students with disabilities
67 and their parents, which must include, but is not limited to,
68 information relating to:

69 1. Education programs, services, and resources that are
70 available at eligible institutions.

71 2. Supports, accommodations, technical assistance, and
72 training programs provided by eligible institutions, the
73 advisory council established under s. 383.141, and regional
74 autism centers established under s. 1004.55.

75 3. Mentoring, networking, and employment opportunities.

76 (b) Coordinate, facilitate, and oversee the statewide
77 implementation of this section, including, but not limited to,
78 creating the application, deadlines for the submission of an

79 application, and the approval and renewal process for an FPCTP
80 under subsection (5).

81 (c) Consult and collaborate with the National Center for
82 Information and Technical Support for Postsecondary Students
83 with Disabilities and the coordinating center established under
84 20 U.S.C. s. 1140q regarding guidelines established by the
85 Florida Center for Students with Unique Abilities for the
86 effective implementation of programs for students with
87 disabilities and for students with intellectual disabilities
88 that align with the federal requirements and standards, quality
89 indicators, and benchmarks identified by the National Center for
90 Information and Technical Support for Postsecondary Students
91 with Disabilities and the coordinating center.

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

97 (e) Provide information and technical assistance to
98 administrators, instructors, staff, and other interested parties
99 at an eligible institution relating to programs and services for
100 students with intellectual disabilities, which must include, but
101 are not limited to:

102 1. Holding meetings and annual workshops to share
103 successful practices and address issues or concerns.

104 2. Facilitating collaboration between eligible

105 institutions, school districts, private schools, and the parents
106 of students enrolled in home education programs to better assist
107 students with intellectual disabilities and their parents in
108 planning for the transition of such students into an FPCTP or
109 another program at an eligible institution.

110 3. Assisting eligible institutions with FPCTP and federal
111 comprehensive transition and postsecondary program applications.

112 4. Assisting eligible institutions with the identification
113 of funding sources for an FPCTP and for student financial
114 assistance for students enrolled in an FPCTP.

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

120 (f) Plan, advise, and evaluate approved degree,
121 certificate, and nondegree programs and evaluate the performance
122 of students and FPCTPs using the performance indicators included
123 in the application pursuant to subparagraph (5)(c)6.

124 (5) FLORIDA POSTSECONDARY COMPREHENSIVE TRANSITION
125 PROGRAMS.—Any eligible institution desiring to offer an FPCTP
126 shall submit an application to the center in a manner prescribed
127 by the center. The application must be approved by the eligible
128 institution's governing board and be submitted by the
129 institution's president or director by a date established by the
130 center.

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

150 (b) Initial approval of an FPCTP is valid for the 3
151 academic years immediately following the academic year in which
152 the approval is granted. An eligible institution may submit, in
153 the same manner as the initial application, an application for
154 renewal of an FPCTP. The application for renewal must be
155 submitted before the end of the initial 3-year period. If the
156 eligible institution and the FPCTP continue to meet the

157 requirements of this section, a renewal shall be granted for an
158 additional 5 academic years. The renewal period shall begin at
159 the end of the original approval period.

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

161 1. Address the requirements of the federal comprehensive
162 transition and postsecondary program in 20 U.S.C. s. 1140 and
163 this section.

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

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

182 4. Address the ways in which students with intellectual

183 disabilities will be socially and academically integrated, to
184 the maximum extent possible, with nondisabled students, which
185 must be on at least a half-time basis. Such integration must
186 include one or more of the following for such students:

187 a. Regular enrollment in credit-bearing courses at an
188 eligible institution.

189 b. Audit of or participation in noncredit-bearing courses
190 at an eligible institution.

191 c. Enrollment in noncredit-bearing, nondegree courses at
192 an eligible institution.

193 d. Participation in internships or employment training
194 programs.

195 5. Identify a plan for partnerships with businesses to
196 promote experiential training and employment opportunities for a
197 student with an intellectual disability.

198 6. Identify, after collaboration with the Board of
199 Governors and the State Board of Education, performance
200 indicators for the satisfactory progress of a student with an
201 intellectual disability in an FPCTP and for the performance of
202 an FPCTP and any other requirements specified by the center.
203 Each eligible institution must address the performance
204 indicators identified by the center in its application for the
205 approval and renewal of a proposed FPCTP and in the annual
206 report that the institution submits to the center.

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

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

220 (d) Upon approval of an application, an eligible
221 institution must notify students with intellectual disabilities
222 and their parents of the FPCTP and student eligibility
223 requirements for participation in the FPCTP.

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

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

230 2. Physically attend the eligible institution.

231 3. Submit to the eligible institution documentation
232 regarding his or her intellectual disability. Such documentation
233 may include, but not be limited to, a current individualized
234 plan for employment associated with a review completed pursuant

235 to s. 413.20(3) or a diagnosis from a physician licensed under
236 chapter 458 or chapter 459 or a psychologist licensed under
237 chapter 490.

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

242 1. Efforts to recruit students to enroll in the FPCTP and
243 the number of students enrolled in the FPCTP.

244 2. Efforts to retain student enrollment in the FPCTP and
245 the retention rate of students in the FPCTP.

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

248 4. Transition success of students who complete the FPCTP,
249 as measured by employment rates and salary levels at 1 year and
250 5 years after completion, as available.

251 5. Other performance indicators identified by the center
252 under subparagraph (c) 6.

253 (6) ACCOUNTABILITY.—

254 (a) By October 1 of each year, the center shall provide to
255 the Governor, the President of the Senate, the Speaker of the
256 House of Representatives, the Chancellor of the State University
257 System, and the Commissioner of Education a report that
258 includes, but is not limited to:

259 1. The status of the statewide coordination of FPCTPs and
260 the implementation of FPCTPs at eligible institutions including,

261 but not limited to, the number of applications approved or
262 disapproved, the reasons for each disapproval, and the number of
263 applications on which no action was taken by the chancellor or
264 the commissioner, as applicable.

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

268 3. The projected number of students with intellectual
269 disabilities who may be eligible to enroll in the FPCTPs within
270 the next academic year.

271 4. Education programs and services for students with
272 intellectual disabilities that are available at an eligible
273 institution.

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

282 (7) RULES.—The Board of Governors and the State Board of
283 Education, in consultation with the center, shall expeditiously
284 adopt the necessary regulations and rules, as applicable, to
285 allow the center to perform its responsibilities pursuant to
286 this section beginning in the 2015-2016 fiscal year.

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

289 1009.25 Fee exemptions.—

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

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

299 Section 3. This act shall take effect upon becoming a law.