

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Fiscal Policy

BILL: CS/CS/SB 1624

INTRODUCER: Fiscal Policy Committee; Appropriations Committee on Higher Education; and Senator Calatayud

SUBJECT: Higher Education

DATE: April 3, 2025

REVISED: _____

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	Jahnke	Bouck	HE	Favorable
2.	Gray	Elwell	AHE	Fav/CS
3.	Jahnke	Siples	FP	Fav/CS

Please see Section IX. for Additional Information:

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE - Substantial Changes

I. Summary:

CS/CS/SB 1624 modifies provisions related to higher education, workforce development, and regulation which focuses on tuition and fee policies, educational programs, workforce training, and institutional operations. Relating to:

- Tuition and fees, the bill:
 - Requires state universities to establish a market rate out-of-state-fee for “nonresident online students.”
 - Shifts a Florida College System institution allocation of financial aid fees to assist underrepresented students instead of targeted gender or ethnic minorities.
 - Provides tuition and fee waivers for active Florida State Guard members.
 - Repeals the out-of-state fee waiver for nonresident students with a Florida resident grandparent.
- The Office of Ocean Economy at Florida Atlantic University, the bill expands office duties to include collaboration with career centers and the College of the Florida Keys and with education and industry to strengthen Florida’s maritime industry, and requires a catalog of ocean economy programs, credentialing opportunities, and training providers.
- The Graduation Alternative to Traditional Education (GATE) Program, the bill authorizes partnerships with online providers, modifies the age limit, removes a simultaneous enrollment requirement for secondary and career education, and expands uses of the GATE Startup Fund to support marketing and outreach efforts.
- Higher education governance and institutional changes, the bill:

- Renames Hillsborough Community College to Hillsborough College.
- Removes the Board of Governors requirement to provide electronic access to degree job placement and earnings rankings.
- Expands preeminent state research university eligibility by adding the Classical Learning Test (CLT) as an alternative to the SAT and ACT.
- Eliminates reporting requirements on student open access resources and the performance of the annual host entity.
- Modifies licensure exemption requirements for nonpublic religious postsecondary institutions and establishes requirements related to an institution affidavit.

This bill does have a fiscal impact on revenues and expenditures for State Government and institutions. **See Section V., Fiscal Impact Statement.**

II. Present Situation:

The present situation for the relevant portions of the bill is discussed under the Effect of Proposed Changes of this bill analysis.

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability

Present Situation

The Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) is a research arm of the Florida Legislature. The OPPAGA was created by the Legislature in 1994 to help improve the performance and accountability of state government. The OPPAGA provides data, evaluative research, and objective analyses to assist legislative budget and policy deliberations. The OPPAGA conducts research as directed by state law, the presiding officers, or the Joint Legislative Auditing Committee.¹

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill modifies s. 11.52, F.S., by authorizing the OPPAGA to develop contracts or agreements with State University System institutions to utilize the expertise of state university faculty and research staff to provide assistance in analysis and evaluative research.

Postsecondary Tuition and Fees

Present Situation

Residency Status for Tuition Purposes

Students must be classified as residents or nonresidents for the purpose of assessing tuition in postsecondary educational programs offered by public postsecondary institutions. Students pay differing tuition rates based on their status as a resident or nonresident of Florida.²

¹ Office of Program Policy and Government Accountability, *About Us*, <https://oppaga.fl.gov/About> (last visited Mar. 14, 2025).

² Section 1009.21, F.S.

To qualify as a resident for tuition purposes, a person, or if that person is a dependent child, his or her parent or parents, must have established legal residence in Florida and must have maintained legal residence for at least 12 consecutive months immediately prior to his or her initial enrollment in the public postsecondary institution.³

Each public postsecondary institution must make a residency determination based on the submission of at least two forms of documentation specified in law. Documentation includes, but is not limited to, a Florida voter registration card, Florida driver's license, Florida vehicle registration, homestead exemption (which is a single, conclusive proof of residency), proof of full-time Florida employment, declaration of domicile, Florida incorporation, lease agreements, or utility bills.⁴

Tuition and Out-of-State Fees

Florida law defines "tuition" as the basic fee charged to a student for instruction provided by a public postsecondary educational institution in the state. A student who is classified as a resident for tuition purposes qualifies for the in-state tuition rate. An out-of-state fee is the additional fee for instruction charged to a student who does not qualify for the in-state tuition rate,⁵ unless these costs are exempted or waived.⁶

The resident undergraduate tuition rate for the State University System (SUS) is set at \$105.07 per credit hour.⁷ The SUS average tuition and out-of-state fee is \$570.01 per credit hour.⁸

The BOG may establish tuition for graduate and professional programs and out-of-state fees for all programs for state universities. Except as otherwise provided, the sum of tuition and out-of-state fees assessed to nonresident students must be sufficient to offset the full instructional cost of serving such students. However, adjustments to out-of-state fees or tuition for graduate programs and professional programs may not exceed 15 percent in any year.⁹

The Florida College System (FCS) tuition rate for college credit courses is \$71.98 per credit hour, and the out-of-state fee is \$215.94 per credit hour. Baccalaureate degree program resident tuition is \$91.79 per credit hour, and the total tuition and out-of-state fee may not exceed 85 percent of the tuition and out-of-state fee of the nearest state university.¹⁰ If a career center offers college credit courses as a part of a career associate degree program, the standard tuition is also \$71.98 per credit hour, and the out-of-state fee is \$215.94 per credit hour.¹¹

³ Section 1009.21(2), F.S. This section also specifies other circumstances that may classify a person as a resident for tuition purposes.

⁴ Section 1009.21(3), F.S.

⁵ Section 1009.01, F.S.

⁶ Section 1009.24(2), F.S.

⁷ Section 1009.24(4), F.S.

⁸ Florida Board of Governors, *State University System of Florida, Tuition and Required Fees, 2024-25* at 4, <https://www.flbog.edu/wp-content/uploads/2024/10/2024-2025-SUS-Tuition-and-Fees-Report-FINAL.pdf> (last visited Mar. 14, 2025)

⁹ Section 1009.24(4), F.S.

¹⁰ Section 1009.23(3), F.S.

¹¹ Section 1009.22(4), F.S.

For non-college-credit career programs at career centers and FCS institutions, the standard tuition is \$2.33 per contact hour, and the out-of-state fee is \$6.99 per contact hour. Each district school board or FCS institution board of trustees may adopt tuition and out-of-state fees that vary no more than five percent below or five percent above such fees.¹²

Additional Student Fees

Each FCS and SUS institution is authorized to charge additional student fees. Such fees may include activity, service, athletics, financial aid, technology, capital improvements, and other user fees and fines.¹³

Specifically, each FCS institution's board of trustees is authorized to establish a separate fee for financial aid purposes in an additional amount up to, but not to exceed, five percent of the total student tuition or out-of-state fees collected. Up to 25 percent or \$600,000, whichever is greater, of the financial aid fees collected may be used to assist students who demonstrate academic merit; who participate in athletics, public service, cultural arts, and other extracurricular programs as determined by the institution; or who are identified as members of a targeted gender or ethnic minority population.¹⁴

Tuition and Fee Waivers

To support access to higher education, school districts, each FCS institution and state university is authorized to provide a variety of tuition and fee waivers for eligible students. These waivers support individuals based on employment, military service, financial need, and other specific circumstances.¹⁵ These waivers include, but are not limited to, the following:

- University Employees – Waiver for full-time employees of a state university for up to six credit hours per term on a space-available basis.
- Classroom Teachers – Waiver for full-time classroom teachers to enroll in up to six credit hours per term in undergraduate courses related to special education, mathematics, or science.
- Graduate Students in School Psychology Programs – Waiver for internship credit hours for graduate students completing internships in public schools under the supervision of a certified school psychologist.
- Dependents of Deceased First Responders – Waiver for spouses and children of first responders who died in the line of duty.
- Active-Duty Military Members – Waiver of out-of-state fees for active-duty service members residing or stationed outside Florida.
- Grandparent Waiver – Waiver of out-of-state fees for students with a grandparent who is a Florida resident, provided the student achieves an SAT combined score no lower than the 89th national percentile or the concordant score on the ACT or Classic Learning Test (CLT), and enrolls full-time in an undergraduate program.¹⁶

¹² Section 1009.22(3), F.S.

¹³ Sections 1009.23 and 1009.24, F.S.

¹⁴ Section 1009.23(8), F.S.

¹⁵ See Sections 1009.25, 1009.26, and 1009.265, F.S.

¹⁶ Section 1009.26, F.S.

Additionally, FCS and SUS institutions are authorized to waive tuition and fees for full-time state employees. Eligible employees may enroll in up to six credit hours per term on a space-available basis, promoting professional development opportunities for state personnel.¹⁷

Effect of Proposed Changes

Residency Status for Tuition Purposes

The bill modifies s. 1009.21, F.S., by defining a “nonresident online student” as a person who is admitted to a Florida College System institution or state university as an online student and does not qualify for in-state tuition or fee rates.

Student Fees

The bill modifies s. 1009.23, F.S., by authorizing an FCS institution to allocate a portion of financial aid fees to assist underrepresented students rather than students who are members of a targeted gender or ethnic minority.

Tuition and Fee Waivers

The bill amends s. 251.001, F.S., by providing tuition and fee waivers for active members of the Florida State Guard to enroll in a state university or Florida College System institution for up to six credit hours of courses per term on a space-available basis. This waiver is similar to the existing tuition and fee waiver available to state employees.

The bill amends s. 1009.26, F.S., by revising the grandparent out-of-state fee waiver by replacing the legal residency requirement with a new standard requiring the grandparent to have established domicile in Florida for at least five years.

State College Regional Consortium Organization

Present Situation

School districts with 20,000 or fewer students, developmental research (laboratory) schools, and the Florida School for the Deaf and Blind may enter into cooperative agreements to form a regional consortium service organization (regional consortium).¹⁸ Each regional consortium must provide, at a minimum, three of the following services:

- Exceptional student education.
- Teacher student centers.
- Environmental education.
- Federal grant procurement and coordination.
- Data processing.
- Health insurance.
- Risk management insurance.
- Staff development.
- Purchasing.

¹⁷ Section 1009.265, F.S.

¹⁸ Section 1001.451, F.S.

- Planning and accountability.¹⁹

The board of directors of a regional consortium may use various means to generate revenue in support of its activities, which may include patents, copyrights, and trademarks and licenses. Such funds must be used to support the organization's marketing and research development activities in order to improve and increase services to its member districts.²⁰

Effect of Proposed Changes

Creates s. 1001.68, F.S., to create the state college regional consortium service organizations to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of small institutions in the Florida College System that serve rural communities. Colleges with 5,000 or fewer full-time equivalent students may enter into cooperative agreements to form a regional consortium service organization. Each organization must provide at least three of the following services:

- Grant procurement.
- Institutional research and reporting.
- Risk management.
- Professional development for faculty and staff.
- Leadership support.
- Information technology and cybersecurity training.
- Faculty and staff recruitment.
- Workforce development programs.
- Cooperative purchasing.
- Administrative services.
- Enrollment services.

Each state college regional consortium service organization must be governed by a board of directors composed of the presidents of the respective member colleges.

The Office of Ocean Economy

Present Situation

The maritime industry encompasses a wide range of interrelated activities such as shipping, shipbuilding, port operations, maritime logistics, fishing and aquaculture, offshore energy, and marine services. The maritime industry facilitates the movement of goods, connects markets, supports industries, and plays a vital role in sustainable development.

The U.S. marine economy plays a significant role in the national economy, contributing \$432 billion in gross domestic product (GDP) and supporting 2.3 million jobs across various industries. In 2021, the sector generated \$730 billion in sales, reflecting a 10.5 percent increase and demonstrating its substantial economic impact. Notably, the tourism and recreation sector

¹⁹ *Id.*

²⁰ Section 1001.451(5), F.S.

experienced 27.3% growth (\$49.8 billion), underscoring the marine economy's vital role in driving business activity, sustaining employment, and supporting overall economic stability.²¹

Florida's marine economy plays a vital role in the state's economic landscape, supporting numerous businesses, jobs, and wages. As of the most recent data:

- There are 24,588 marine-related businesses operating in the state, contributing to economic activity across various sectors.
- The industry employs 546,866 workers, reflecting its significant impact on Florida's job market.
- These jobs provide a total of \$20.6 billion in wages, supporting livelihoods across the coastal and marine sectors.
- Florida's marine economy contributes \$39.9 billion to the state's GDP, demonstrating its importance in driving statewide economic growth.²²

The Office of Ocean Economy (office) is created within the State University System and housed at Florida Atlantic University (FAU). The office is created to connect the state's ocean and coastal resources to economic development strategies that grow, enhance, or contribute to the ocean economy.²³

The duties of the office are to advance research, innovation, industry recruitment, funding, and workforce training to grow the ocean economy. The office is intended to foster collaboration among universities, colleges, and industry partners while maintaining an online inventory of research and resources. The office identifies economic challenges, supports commercialization, removes regulatory barriers, and expands financial opportunities. It also tracks job growth, wages, and business development while promoting Florida's role in the global ocean economy. Additionally, the office educates state and local entities on aligning economic growth with environmental sustainability.²⁴

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill amends s. 288.036, F.S., by revising the duties of the Office of Ocean Economy at FAU. The bill expands the collaboration and coordination between the office and institutions. Specifically, the bill:

- Shifts from fostering relationships to actively collaborating and coordinating with institutions.
- Expands the scope of collaboration to include career centers and specifies collaboration with the College of the Florida Keys.

The bill adds "strengthening the workforce" as an explicit goal in identifying economic challenges and solutions within the ocean economy. This may broaden the office's role in addressing labor market demands alongside innovation, commercialization, and financial growth.

²¹ Office of Coastal Management, Fast Facts, *Marine Economy*, <https://coast.noaa.gov/states/fast-facts/marine-economy.html> (last visited Mar. 14, 2025).

²² NOAA, *2024 Marine Economy Report: Florida* (2021), available at <https://coast.noaa.gov/data/digitalcoast/pdf/marine-economy-florida.pdf>.

²³ Section 288.036(2), F.S.

²⁴ Section 288.036(3), F.S.

Additionally, the bill expands the office's online reporting requirements by requiring an inventory of programs related to the ocean economy, an evaluation of additional credentialing opportunities, and a list of institutions or training providers offering these credentials.

The bill requires the office to collaborate with public and private educational and industry organizations to make recommendations in:

- Strengthening employment opportunities in specific maritime sectors, including commercial fishing, fisheries and aquaculture, shipbuilding, and shipping.
- Expanding maritime education programs and launching a public awareness campaign.
- Increasing access to dual enrollment, preapprenticeship, apprenticeship, and work-study programs in both public and private institutions.
- Aligning regulatory frameworks for fishing and boat operations with workforce demand through coordination with the Fish and Wildlife Conservation Commission.

Furthermore, the bill clarifies that the office must provide a detailed report on the economic benefits of its activities, and beginning August 1, 2026, the report must include recommendations related to workforce expansion and regulatory alignment.

Florida Center for Brain Tumor Research

Present Situation

In July 2006, the Florida legislature established the Florida Center for Brain Tumor Research (FCBTR), within the Evelyn F. and William L. McKnight Brain Institute of the University of Florida, in a coordinated effort among the state's public and private universities and hospitals and the biomedical industry to discover cures for brain tumor and develop brain tumor treatment modalities.²⁵

The FCBTR serves as a collaborative, statewide resource, maintaining a biorepository of cancerous and non-cancerous brain tumor specimens, along with matched samples of DNA, plasma, serum, and cerebrospinal fluid. These samples are collected from patients who provide informed consent at various healthcare institutions across Florida. Professional research coordinators and tissue acquisition specialists facilitate the collection process, ensuring that valuable specimens and data are available for future research. The bank distributes materials to researchers both within Florida and beyond, supporting investigations into improved treatments and potential cures for brain tumors.²⁶

In addition to its biorepository functions, the FCBTR has awarded pilot funding to researchers throughout the state. This funding has led to the development of novel therapies currently being tested in clinical trials and has resulted in significant extramural funding and meaningful collaborations between public and private institutions in Florida.²⁷

²⁵ Section 381.853, F.S.

²⁶ Florida Center for Brain Tumor Research, College of Medicine, University of Florida, *About Us*, <https://fcbtr.ufl.edu/about-us/> (last visited Mar. 14, 2025).

²⁷ Florida Center for Brain Tumor Research, College of Medicine, University of Florida, *About Us*, <https://fcbtr.ufl.edu/about-us/> (last visited Mar. 14, 2025).

The FCBTR operates under the guidance of a scientific advisory council, which includes biomedical researchers, physicians, clinicians, and representatives from public and private universities and hospitals. The council members are appointed by the Governor, Speaker of the House of Representatives, President of the Senate, and State Surgeon General. These members serve staggered 4-year terms and without compensation. The council meets at least annually to provide oversight and strategic direction.²⁸

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill amends s. 381.853, F.S., to shift the appointment authority to the President of the University of Florida, in consultation with the dean of the University of Florida College of Medicine, to appoint the advisory council members for the Florida Center for Brain Tumor Research.

Assistive Technology Advisory Council

Present Situation

The Assistive Technology Advisory Council was established to ensure consumer involvement in the development, application, and distribution of assistive technology for individuals with disabilities. The council plays a critical role in statewide policy development, legislative advocacy, and the oversight of assistive technology programs to enhance accessibility and service delivery. Its responsibilities include reviewing consumer responsiveness, evaluating program effectiveness, and advising on resource allocation to improve assistive technology access across Florida.²⁹

The council is composed of members representing a diverse range of stakeholders, including individuals with disabilities, their family members, consumer advocacy organizations, business and industry representatives, and various state agencies involved in disability services. A majority of its members must be individuals with disabilities who are assistive technology consumers or their family members. Membership is also required to be geographically representative of the state and reflect diversity in race, ethnicity, gender, age, and disability type. Members are appointed by the Commissioner of Education and serve terms of up to three years, with a limit of two consecutive terms. A member who has served two terms may be reappointed after a three-year break, ensuring opportunities for new voices while maintaining institutional knowledge.³⁰

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill modifies s. 413.407, F.S., by removing diversity, race, ethnicity, gender, and age from the requirement that the Assistive Technology Advisory Council members be representative of the state's population. The bill also increases the term limit of council members from three to five years.

²⁸ Section 381.853(4), F.S.

²⁹ Section 413.407, F.S.

³⁰ Section 413.407(1), F.S.

Apprenticeship Training Programs

Present Situation

Apprenticeship training provides educational opportunities for individuals to develop skills for trades, occupations, and professions that align with their abilities. These programs promote hands-on training in occupations requiring physical manipulative skills by expanding job training opportunities and strengthening coordination between academic programs, career programs, and registered apprenticeships. By combining on-the-job training with related classroom instruction, apprenticeship programs help individuals gain practical experience while enhancing their knowledge and expertise.

Efforts to support apprenticeship training include establishing preapprenticeship programs within the public school system, expanding existing registered programs, and developing new programs in occupations that are well-suited for apprenticeship. Oversight of these programs ensures the adoption of uniform minimum standards, assists educational institutions in developing preapprenticeship opportunities, and upholds the quality of training through program promotion, registration, monitoring, and enforcement of standards.³¹

The established uniform minimum standards and policies governing apprenticeship and preapprenticeship programs ensure training providers submit necessary performance data while maintaining quality training standards. These standards regulate apprentice employment and training conditions, including ratios of apprentices to journeymen, safety measures, related instruction, and on-the-job training. An annual report is published by September 1 detailing registered programs, expenditures, program completion rates, wage progression, and public engagement efforts. It also assists district school boards, Florida College System institutions, program sponsors, and workforce development boards in promoting apprenticeship opportunities to students, parents, and the community.³²

Apprenticeship and preapprenticeship programs must meet established standards to be registered and maintained, ensuring compliance through monitoring and investigation of complaints. Programs that fail to adhere to standards or refuse to cooperate with oversight efforts may have their registration canceled. The development and expansion of apprenticeship opportunities are supported through outreach initiatives, including efforts to educate veterans on career pathways. Local apprenticeship sponsors receive assistance in developing training standards, and registered programs are encouraged to grant credit to individuals who have completed preapprenticeship programs. Apprenticeship programs must operate in compliance with all applicable standards, with minority and gender diversity considered in their administration.³³

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill modifies s. 446.032, F.S., by changing the required publishing date of the annual report on apprenticeship and preapprenticeship programs from September 1 to November 30.

³¹ Section 446.011, F.S.

³² Section 446.032, F.S.

³³ Section 446.041, F.S.

The bill amends s. 446.041, F.S., by removing the term “minority and gender diversity” and replacing it with “underrepresented groups” to be considered in the administration of apprenticeship and preapprenticeship training programs.

Florida Educational Equity Act

Present Situation

The Florida Educational Equity Act³⁴ (FEEA) requires equal access to, and prohibits discrimination against, any student or employee of the state’s K-20 public education system on the basis of race, ethnicity, gender, national origin, disability, religion, or marital status. No individual may, on such bases, be excluded from participation in, be denied the benefits of, or be subjected to discrimination under any public K-20 education program or activity, or in any employment conditions or practices, conducted by a public educational institution that receives or benefits from federal or state financial assistance.³⁵ Additionally, the prohibition on discrimination extends to participation in any interscholastic, intercollegiate, club, or intermural athletics offered by a public K-20 educational institution, and no K-20 education institution may provide athletics separately on such basis, except as provided by law.³⁶ Further, the FEEA expressly requires that any discrimination motivated by anti-Semitic³⁷ intent be treated in an identical manner to discrimination motivated by race.³⁸

Public schools and Florida College System (FCS) institutions must develop and implement strategies to increase participation among students of a particular race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or marital status in programs where they have been traditionally underrepresented. These efforts apply to fields such as mathematics, science, computer technology, electronics, communications technology, engineering, and career education to promote greater diversity and inclusion.³⁹

The FEEA is implemented by the Board of Governors through regulations⁴⁰ and rules adopted by the State Board of Education (SBE).⁴¹ Additionally, the Office of Equal Educational Opportunity (OEEO), within the Department of Education (DOE), serves implementation functions including, but not limited to, the following:

³⁴ Section 1000.05(1), F.S.

³⁵ Section 1000.05(2)(a), F.S. Students may be separated for permissible single gender programs, for portions of a class that deals with human reproduction, or during participation in bodily contact sports. Section 1000.05(2)(d), F.S. All K-20 public education classes and guidance services must be made available to students without regard to any of the bases described above. Section 1000.05(2)(c) and (e), F.S.

³⁶ Section. 1000.05(3)(a), F.S. Public K-20 educational institutions are authorized to maintain separate teams for members of each gender or based on ability in certain circumstances. Section. 1000.05(3)(b)-(c), F.S. It is the responsibility of the Board of Governors and the Commissioner of Education to determine whether equal athletic opportunities are provided for both genders at state universities and in school districts and Florida College Systems, respectively. Section 1000.05(3)(d), F.S.

³⁷ For purposes of this section, the term “anti-Semitism” includes a certain perception of the Jewish people, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jewish people, rhetorical and physical manifestations of anti-Semitism directed toward a person, his or her property, or toward Jewish community institutions or religious facilities. Section 1005.05(8), F.S. The FEEA also lists examples of anti-Semitism. Section 1000.05(7)(a)-(b), F.S.

³⁸ Section 1000.05(8), F.S.

³⁹ Section 1000.05(5), F.S.

⁴⁰ Board of Governors Regulation 2.003.

⁴¹ Rule 6A-19.010, F.A.C.

- Requiring all district school boards and FCS institution boards of trustees to develop and submit plans for the implementation of the FEEA to the DOE.
- Requiring all district school boards and Florida College System institution boards of trustees to submit data and information necessary to determine compliance with the FEEA.
- Developing and implementing enforcement mechanisms with appropriate penalties to ensure that public K-12 schools and Florida College System institutions comply with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and the FEEA.
- Reporting to the Commissioner of Education any district school board or FCS institution board of trustees found to be out of compliance with the FEEA or the rules implementing the FEEA.⁴²

The SBE is responsible for ensuring compliance with its rules by district school boards and FCS institution boards of trustees. If a board is found to be out of compliance, the Commissioner of Education must report the violation, and the SBE may impose penalties, including declaring the institution ineligible for competitive state grants and directing the Chief Financial Officer to withhold general revenue funds until compliance is achieved. The institution remains ineligible for funding until it meets compliance requirements or the SBE approves a corrective plan.⁴³

The FEEA provides a cause of action for anyone aggrieved by a violation of the FEEA. Such an individual is authorized to seek equitable relief and, should he or she prevail, he or she may be awarded reasonable attorney fees and court costs.⁴⁴

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill amends s. 1000.05, F.S., by renaming the “Florida Educational Equity Act” to the “Florida Educational Equality Act”. The bill changes the term “gender” to “sex” and removes the term “particular race, color, national origin, sex, disability or marital status” and replaces it with “underrepresented.”

Additionally, the bill removes the specific reporting duty of the OEEA and the penalties for non-compliance in favor of requiring the Commissioner of Education and State Board of Education to utilize their enforcement authority already specified in law.

Hillsborough Community College

Present Situation

Hillsborough Community College (HCC) opened in 1968 as “Hillsborough Junior College.” In 1970, the college’s name was changed to Hillsborough Community College to better reflect its community orientation and involvement.⁴⁵ HCC is accredited by the Southern Association of

⁴² Section 1000.05(6), F.S.

⁴³ Section 1000.05, F.S.

⁴⁴ S. 1000.05(9), F.S.

⁴⁵ Hillsborough Community College, About Us, *History*, <https://news.hccfl.edu/about-us/history/default.aspx> (last visited Mar. 14, 2025).

Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACS) to award associate and baccalaureate degrees.⁴⁶ HCC offers a baccalaureate degree in nursing.

Florida College System Institution Name Change

With the approval of its board of trustees, a Florida College System (FCS) institution may change the institution's name and use the designation "college" or "state college" if it has been authorized by the SBE to grant baccalaureate degrees and has been accredited as a baccalaureate-degree-granting institution by an accrediting agency or association recognized by the United States Department of Education (USDOE).⁴⁷

With the approval of its board of trustees, an FCS institution that either has not been authorized to grant baccalaureate degrees or has not been accredited as a baccalaureate-degree-granting institution by an accrediting agency or association recognized by the USDOE may request approval from the SBE to change the institution's name and use the designation "college." The SBE may approve the request if the FCS institution enters into an agreement with the SBE to do the following:

- Maintain as its primary mission responsibility for responding to community needs for postsecondary academic education and career degree education.
- Maintain an open-door admissions policy for associate-level degree programs and workforce education programs.
- Continue to provide outreach to underserved populations.
- Continue to provide remedial education.
- Comply with all provisions of the statewide articulation agreement that relate to two-year and four-year public degree-granting institutions as adopted by the SBE.⁴⁸

A district board of trustees that approves a change to the name of an institution must seek statutory codification of such name change during the next regular legislative session.⁴⁹

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill amends s. 1000.21, F.S., to change the name of "Hillsborough Community College" to "Hillsborough College".

Board of Governors

Present Situation

The State University System (SUS) is composed of 12 public universities,⁵⁰ each administered by a board of trustees. The Board of Governors (BOG) is responsible for operating, regulating,

⁴⁶ Southern Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Colleges, *Hillsborough Community College*, https://sacscoc.org/institutions/?institution_name=hillsborough+community+college&results_per_page=25&curpage=1 (last visited Mar. 14, 2025).

⁴⁷ Section 1001.60(2)(b)1., F.S.

⁴⁸ Section 1001.60(2)(b)2., F.S.

⁴⁹ Section 1001.60(2)(c), F.S.

⁵⁰ See State University System of Florida, *Universities*, <https://www.flbog.edu/universities/> (last visited Mar. 14, 2025) (identifying 12 state universities).

and managing the entire SUS.⁵¹ It also ensures compliance with all applicable local, state, and federal laws governing the institutions under its jurisdiction.⁵²

Additionally, the BOG oversees cost-effective policy decisions at each constituent university, ensuring alignment with institutional missions, the maintenance of high-quality education programs, performance measurement, data reporting, and input on state policy, budgeting, and education standards.⁵³ To fulfill these responsibilities, the BOG carries out key functions, including:

- Developing strategic and accountability plans with performance metrics for universities.
- Requiring universities to provide students with employment and earnings data for degree programs.⁵⁴
- Maintaining an information system to track and report institutional performance.
- Investigating allegations of waste, fraud, or financial mismanagement at state universities.
- Authorizing regulatory flexibilities and waivers to support institutional priorities.
- Monitoring and improving four-year graduation rates through institutional proposals.
- Matching student data with state and federal employment records to assess program effectiveness.⁵⁵

MyFloridaFuture is a free online tool, developed by the SUS, that helps students, parents, and policymakers make more informed decisions about college and career planning. This interactive tool allows users to explore data related to graduate salary, employment, and student debt by institution or major at both the statewide and individual institution levels.⁵⁶

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill modifies s. 1001.706, F.S., by removing the requirement for the Board of Governors to provide electronic access to data on the top 25 percent of degrees with the highest job placement and earnings and the bottom 10 percent of degrees with the lowest job placement and earnings before registration.

Preeminent State Research Universities Program

Present Situation

The preeminent state research universities program is a collaborative partnership between the Board of Governors (BOG) and the Legislature to raise the academic and research preeminence of the highest performing state research universities in Florida.⁵⁷ A state university that meets 12 of the 13 academic and research excellent standards specified in law is designated a “preeminent

⁵¹ FLA. CONST., art. IX, s. 7(a)-(d).

⁵² Section 1001.705(2), F.S.

⁵³ Section 1001.706, F.S.

⁵⁴ See Section 1008.39, F.S. The Florida Education and Training Placement Information Program (FETPIP) is a data collection and consumer reporting system that provides employment and education follow-up data on former students and program participants who have graduated, exited, or completed a public education or training program within the State of Florida.

⁵⁵ Section 1001.706(5), F.S.

⁵⁶ Florida Board of Governors, *MyFloridaFuture*, <https://www.flbog.edu/myfloridafuture/> (last visited Mar. 14, 2025).

⁵⁷ Section 1001.7065(1), F.S.

state research university.”⁵⁸ Currently, the University of Florida, Florida State University, University of South Florida, and Florida International University are designated as preeminent state research universities.⁵⁹

The following are the academic and research excellence standards established for the preeminent state research universities program and must be reported annually in the BOG Accountability Plan:

- An average weighted grade point average (GPA) of 4.0 or higher and an average SAT score of 1200 or higher or an average ACT score of 25 or higher for fall semester incoming freshmen.
- A top-50 ranking on at least two well-known national public university rankings, such as U.S. News & World Report.
- A 90% or higher freshman retention rate for full-time, first-time-in-college students.
- A 60% or higher four-year graduation rate for full-time, first-time-in-college students.
- At least six faculty members who are members of a national academy.
- Total annual research expenditures of \$200 million or more, including federal research funding.
- Annual research expenditures in diversified nonmedical sciences of \$150 million or more.
- A top-100 national ranking for research expenditures in five or more STEM fields.
- At least 100 patents awarded by the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office over the most recent three-year period.
- 400 or more doctoral degrees awarded annually, including professional doctoral degrees in medical and health care disciplines.
- 200 or more postdoctoral appointees annually.
- An endowment of \$500 million or more.
- Total annual STEM-related research expenditures of \$50 million or more, including federal research funding.⁶⁰

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill amends s. 1001.7065, F.S., by expanding the standardized test options used to meet the academic and research excellence standards for the preeminent state research universities program. It adds the Classical Learning Test (CLT) as an alternative to the SAT and ACT, requiring an average CLT score of 83 or higher on a 120-point scale for incoming freshmen.

⁵⁸ Section 1001.7065(3), F.S.

⁵⁹ Board of Governors, State University System of Florida, *Accountability Propels State University System of Florida to New Heights*, <https://www.flbog.edu/2024/07/01/accountability-propels-state-university-system-of-florida-to-new-heights/> (last visited Mar. 14, 2025).

⁶⁰ Section 1001.7065(2), F.S.

Emergency Opioid Antagonists

Present Situation

Each Florida College System institution and state university must maintain a supply of emergency opioid antagonists,⁶¹ such as naloxone hydrochloride or any similarly acting drug approved by the United States Food and Drug Administration (FDA), in every residence hall or dormitory it owns or operates. These emergency opioid antagonists must be placed in clearly marked locations within each residence hall or dormitory and must be easily accessible to campus law enforcement officers trained in their administration. Public and private partnerships are encouraged to cover the costs associated with purchasing and placing these emergency opioid antagonists.⁶²

Campus law enforcement officers who are trained and administer or attempt to administer an emergency opioid antagonist in compliance with applicable laws, as well as the institution that employs such officers, are immune from civil or criminal liability.⁶³

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill amends s. 1004.0971, F.S., by removing the specific reference to “naloxone hydrochloride or any similarly acting” drug and instead broadly defining an emergency opioid antagonist as any FDA-approved drug that blocks the effects of opioids and is used for opioid overdose treatment.

Graduation Alternative to Traditional Education Program

Present Situation

Created within the Department of Education, the Graduation Alternative to Traditional Education (GATE) Program offers a unique opportunity for students who have left high school to get back on track. Designed for students aged 16 to 21, GATE provides a pathway to earn valuable career education credentials while also completing a standard high school diploma or its equivalent.⁶⁴

Through the GATE program, students can enroll in a Career and Technical Education (CTE) program and an Adult Secondary Education (ASE) program simultaneously. Eligible ASE programs include Adult High School or GED® Preparation. Participants will work towards earning both a high school diploma and a credential from a Career Education Program on the Master Credential list in their chosen career field. Students have up to three years to complete the GATE Program.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Section 1004.0971(1)(b), F.S., defines an “emergency opioid antagonist” as naloxone hydrochloride or any similarly acting drug that blocks the effects of opioids administered from outside the body and that is approved by the United States Food and Drug Administration for the treatment of an opioid overdose.

⁶² Section 1004.0971, F.S.

⁶³ Section 1004.0971(5), F.S.

⁶⁴ Section 1004.933, F.S. and Florida Department of Education, Adult Education, *Graduation Alternative to Traditional Education (GATE) Program*, <https://www.fldoe.org/academics/career-adult-edu/adult-edu/gate.shtml> (last visited Mar. 14, 2025).

⁶⁵ Florida Department of Education, Adult Education, *Graduation Alternative to Traditional Education (GATE) Program*, <https://www.fldoe.org/academics/career-adult-edu/adult-edu/gate.shtml> (last visited Mar. 4, 2025).

To be eligible for participation in the GATE Program, a student must:

- Not have earned a standard high school diploma or a high school equivalency diploma before enrolling in the GATE Program;
- Have been withdrawn from high school;
- Be a resident of the state for tuition purposes;
- Be 16 to 21 years of age at the time of initial enrollment, and if 16 or 17 years of age, have withdrawn from school enrollment pursuant to certain requirements and safeguards;⁶⁶
- Select the adult secondary education program and career education program of his or her choice at the time of admission to the GATE Program, provided that the career education program is included on the Master Credentials List. The student must remain in their chosen pathway after enrollment, except that, if necessary, the student may enroll in an adult basic education program prior to enrolling in the adult secondary education program;
- Maintain a 2.0 grade point average (GPA) for career and technical education coursework; and
- Complete the adult secondary education program and the career education program within three years unless the institution determines that an extension is warranted due to extenuating circumstances.⁶⁷

GATE Startup Grant Program

The GATE Startup Grant Program is established within the Department of Education (department) to fund and support the startup and implementation of the GATE Program. The purpose of the grant program is to increase access to programs that support adult learners earning a high school credential, either a high school diploma or its equivalent, and a workforce credential aligned to statewide or regional demand. The department is required to administer the grants, determine eligibility, and distribute grant awards.⁶⁸

Applicants eligible to apply for the GATE Startup Grant Program must meet the definition of an “institution”⁶⁹ and must be located in or serve a rural area of opportunity as designated by the Governor. Rural Areas of Opportunity (RAO) are areas designated by the Governor that have been adversely affected by an extraordinary economic event, severe or chronic distress, or a natural disaster.⁷⁰

Florida’s designated RAOs are:

- Northwest Rural Area of Opportunity: Calhoun, Franklin, Gadsden, Gulf, Holmes, Jackson, Liberty, Wakulla, and Washington Counties, and the area within the city limits of Freeport and Walton County north of the Choctawhatchee Bay and intercostal waterway.
- South Central Rural Area of Opportunity: DeSoto, Glades, Hardee, Hendry, Highlands, and Okeechobee counties, and the cities of Pahokee, Belle Glade, and South Bay (Palm Beach County) and Immokalee (Collier County).

⁶⁶ Section. 1003.21(1), F.S.

⁶⁷ Section 1004.933(4), F.S.

⁶⁸ Section 1011.804, F.S.

⁶⁹ Section 1011.804(2), F.S. The term “institution” means a school district career center established under s. 1001.44, a charter technical career center established under s. 1002.34, or a Florida College System institution identified in s. 1000.21 which offers the GATE Program pursuant to s. 1004.933.

⁷⁰ Section 288.0656(d), F.S.

- North Central Rural Area of Opportunity: Baker, Bradford, Columbia, Dixie, Gilchrist, Hamilton, Jefferson, Lafayette, Levy, Madison, Putnam, Suwannee, Taylor and Union.⁷¹

Grant funds may be used for planning activities and other expenses associated with the creation of the GATE Program, such as expenses related to program instruction, instructional equipment, supplies, instructional personnel, and student services. Grant funds may not be used for indirect costs. Grant recipients must submit an annual report in a format prescribed by the department.⁷²

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill amends s. 1004.933, F.S., by authorizing an institution to enter into an agreement with an online provider for the adult education or career instruction portion of the GATE Program, provided the provider's instructional content and services align with the state career and adult education curriculum frameworks.

The bill also modifies the age requirement at initial enrollment, changing it from "16 to 21" to "at least 16" years old. Additionally, it clarifies that students are not required to enroll in adult secondary and career education program coursework simultaneously with the GATE Program but maintains the three-year completion requirement.

The bill amends s. 1011.804, F.S., by expanding the authorized use of the GATE Startup Fund. Specifically, it authorizes institutions with existing GATE Programs located in or serving a RAO to apply for grant funds exclusively for marketing and outreach efforts to increase student participation. Additionally, all grant recipients are authorized to use funds for these purposes.

Nonpublic Religious Postsecondary Institutions

Present Situation

The Commission for Independent Education

The Commission for Independent Education (commission) was established in 2001 and is responsible for matters relating to nonpublic postsecondary educational institutions. The commission's functions include consumer protection, program improvements, institutional policies and administration, data management, and the licensure of independent schools, colleges, and universities.⁷³

Licensure of Nonpublic Postsecondary Educational Institutions

Each college or school operating within the state must obtain licensure from the commission unless the institution is not under the commission's purview or jurisdiction as provided in law.⁷⁴ The commission has developed 12 standards by which to evaluate institutions for licensure.

⁷¹ Department of Education, *Graduation Alternative to Traditional Education (GATE) Program*, <https://www.fldoe.org/academics/career-adult-edu/adult-edu/gate.shtml> (last visited Mar. 14, 2025).

⁷² Section 1011.804(6), F.S.

⁷³ Section 1005.21, F.S., and Florida Department of Education, *Commission for Independent Education*, <https://www.fldoe.org/policy/cie/> (last visited Jan. 16, 2024).

⁷⁴ Sections 1005.31(1) and 1005.06, F.S.

Standards include administrative organization, academic programs, admissions requirements, finances, faculty, library resources, facilities, student services and advertising.⁷⁵

Provisional Licensure is the first level of licensure obtained by an applicant and allows the institution to advertise, recruit students, accept fees and tuition from students, and hold classes. Provisional Licensure is granted when the commission has determined that an applicant is in substantial compliance with the standards for licensure. A Provisional License is typically granted for one year. The process to obtain Provisional Licensure for a new applicant normally takes six to twelve months.⁷⁶ A provisional license may include conditions required by the commission and all conditions must be met before the institution may receive a different licensure status.⁷⁷

Annual Licensure is typically the second level of licensure obtained by an institution holding a Provisional License, or seeking renewal of an Annual License, when the commission has determined that an institution is in full compliance with the standards for licensure. An institution may continue to hold an Annual License as long as the institution remains in full compliance with the standards for licensure, does not undergo a substantive change, or meets the requirements and applies for a License by Means of Accreditation. An Annual License is typically granted for one year. Prior to the granting of an initial Annual License, a satisfactory on-site visit must occur. The process to obtain an initial Annual License or renewal of an Annual License normally takes three months from receipt of the Application for Annual License.

Institutions that hold an Annual License may add new degrees, programs, or majors to their offerings or alter any licensed program by more than 20 percent since their last review, change the title of a program or the credential awarded, or discontinue a program upon approval by the commission.⁷⁸

Religious Institutions

The commission does not have jurisdiction or purview over all nonpublic postsecondary educational institutions. Certain postsecondary educational institutions are exempt from licensure and jurisdiction under the commission.⁷⁹

Religious institutions are not under the jurisdiction or purview of the commission and are not required to obtain licensure. A religious college may operate without governmental oversight if the college annually verifies by sworn affidavit to the commission that:

- The name of the institution includes a religious modifier or the name of a religious patriarch, saint, person, or symbol of the church.

⁷⁵ Section 1005.31(2), F.S. and Rule 6E-2.004, F.A.C.

⁷⁶ Florida Department of Education, 2022-2023 *Commission for Independent Education Annual Report* (2024), available at <https://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7748/urlt/2223annualreport.pdf> at 14 (last visited Apr. 2, 2025).

⁷⁷ Section 1005.31(5), F.S.

⁷⁸ Florida Department of Education, 2022-2023 *Commission for Independent Education Annual Report* (2024), available at <https://www.fldoe.org/core/fileparse.php/7748/urlt/2223annualreport.pdf> at 20 (last visited Apr. 2, 2025).

⁷⁹ Section 1005.06, F.S. These include public colleges and universities; institutions that are otherwise licensed, such as dental schools, midwifery schools, or real estate schools; institutions eligible for the Effective Access for Student Education tuition assistance program; continuing education programs; and religious institutions.

- The institution offers only educational programs that prepare students for religious vocations as ministers, professionals, or laypersons in the categories of ministry, counseling, theology, education, administration, music, fine arts, media communications, or social work.
- The titles of degrees issued by the institution cannot be confused with secular degree titles. For this purpose, each degree title must include a religious modifier that immediately precedes, or is included within, any of the following degrees: Associate of Arts, Associate of Science, Bachelor of Arts, Bachelor of Science, Master of Arts, Master of Science, Doctor of Philosophy, and Doctor of Education. The religious modifier must be placed on the title line of the degree, on the transcript, and whenever the title of the degree appears in official school documents or publications.
- The duration of all degree programs offered by the institution is consistent with the standards of the commission.
- The institution's consumer practices are consistent with those specified in law.⁸⁰

The commission may provide such a religious institution with a letter stating that the institution has met the requirements specified in law and is not subject to government oversight.

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill amends s. 1005.06, F.S., to revise the criteria under which nonpublic religious postsecondary educational institutions may operate without licensure from the Commission for Independent Education. Specifically, the bill replaces the term "religious college" with "nonpublic religious postsecondary educational institution" and expands the number of affirmations required in the annual sworn affidavit from five to seven, to include:

- An explanation of the religious modifier, religious name, or religious symbol used in the institution's name.
- The titles and majors of every degree program offered by the institution as they appear on degrees and transcripts issued by the institution.

The bill authorizes the commission to request documentation from the institution demonstrating compliance with the affidavit requirements and the consumer protection standards. The institution is required to submit the requested documentation within 30 days after the request. The bill requires the commission to review affidavits in a public meeting and approve the affidavit unless the affidavit is facially invalid, is contradicted by the institution's public advertisements or by other evidence, or the institution fails to provide requested documentation.

Additionally, the bill requires the commission to revoke its approval, in a public meeting, if an institution previously received a written exemption and the institution fails to remain in compliance. If an affidavit is denied by the commission, the commission is authorized to take action unless the institution applies for licensure, ceases operations in the state, or submits documentation showing it meets the requirements of the exemption.

The bill authorizes the commission to adopt rules.

⁸⁰ Section 1005.06(1), F.S. and Rule 6E-5.001, F.A.C.

Florida Postsecondary Academic Library Network

Present Situation

The Florida Postsecondary Academic Library Network (Network) is administered by the Florida Virtual Campus (FLVC), which operates under the Northwest Regional Data Center (NWRDC), an affiliate of Florida State University.⁸¹ The Network provides academic support services to Florida College System (FCS) institutions and state universities, including access to distance learning courses, coordination of online academic resources, and administration of a shared library automation system. Additionally, it negotiates statewide licensing agreements for electronic library resources and promotes the use of low-cost and open-access educational materials to reduce textbook costs for students.⁸²

The Student Open Access Resources Repository is a statewide searchable database of open educational resources curated by faculty members from FCS institutions and state universities. It is designed to expand access to free and low-cost instructional materials and support the development of faculty-created content. The repository is based on the statewide course numbering system and aims to accelerate textbook affordability. Institutions receiving grant funds for open educational resources must openly license and share materials developed using these funds by adding them to the repository.⁸³

The Network is administered by a host entity responsible for delivering statewide academic support services. This host entity must submit an annual report by December 31 to the Chancellors of the State University System and Florida College System. The report includes data on the usage of open educational resources, the number and types of courses in the repository, and grant fund distributions. Additionally, the Chancellors must submit an annual performance report on the host entity's service delivery to the Governor, the Legislature, the Board of Governors, and the State Board of Education. The Board of Governors and the Department of Education are also required to include any necessary funding increases for these services in their legislative budget requests.⁸⁴

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill amends s. 1006.73, F.S., by removing certain reporting requirements related to the Student Open Access Resources Repository, which is no longer funded. Specifically, it eliminates the requirement to report the number and types of courses included in the repository and data on the utilization of the repository and open educational resources by FCS institutions and state universities.

The bill removes the requirement for the Chancellors of the SUS and the FCS to submit an annual performance report on the host entity's delivery of services. It also eliminates the

⁸¹ Florida Virtual Campus, About FLVC Library Services, [https://libraries.flvc.org/about-flvc-ls#:~:text=Funded%20by%20the%20state%20as,\)%20\(Served%20only%20state%20universities\)](https://libraries.flvc.org/about-flvc-ls#:~:text=Funded%20by%20the%20state%20as,)%20(Served%20only%20state%20universities)) (last visited Mar. 14, 2025).

⁸² Section 1006.73(1), F.S.

⁸³ Section 1006.73(4), F.S.

⁸⁴ Section 1006.73(5), F.S.

requirement for the BOG and the DOE to include any necessary funding increases for these services in their annual legislative budget requests.

Additionally, the bill removes an obsolete provision that required the Commissioner of Education and the Chancellor of the BOG to submit a joint recommendation on expanding access to postsecondary distance learning, student support services, and library assets for school district career centers and charter technical career centers.

College Reach-Out Program

Present Situation

The College Reach-Out Program (CROP) was established in 1983 to motivate and prepare students in grades six–12 from low-income educationally disadvantaged backgrounds towards pursuing and successfully completing postsecondary education. Participants are students who otherwise would be unlikely to seek admission to a postsecondary institution without additional support and recruitment efforts.⁸⁵

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill modifies s. 1007.34, F.S., by replacing the term “minority” with “underrepresented” in references to the student population within the College Reach-Out Program.

Florida Partnership for Minority and Underrepresented Student Achievement

Present Situation

The Florida Partnership for Minority and Underrepresented Student Achievement was established to prepare, inspire, and connect students to postsecondary success and opportunity, with a particular focus on minority students and students who are underrepresented in postsecondary education.⁸⁶

Each public high school, including alternative sites and centers of the Department of Juvenile Justice, must provide for the administration of the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT) or the PreACT to all 10th-grade students. A written notice must be provided to parents, including the opportunity to exempt their child from taking the assessment.⁸⁷

The partnership is responsible for identifying students for participation in advanced courses, providing information to students and parents regarding available opportunities, and explaining enrollment procedures. This information must include details on the benefits of advanced coursework in preparing students for postsecondary education, increasing access to postsecondary opportunities, and qualifying for scholarships and financial aid.⁸⁸

⁸⁵ Florida Department of Education, *College Reach-Out Program (CROP)* available at <https://www.fldoe.org/schools/family-community/activities-programs/pre-collegiate/crop.shtml> (last visited Mar. 14, 2025)

⁸⁶ Section 1007.35(4), F.S.

⁸⁷ Section 1007.35(5), F.S.

⁸⁸ Section 1007.35(6)(i), F.S.

The partnership must coordinate efforts to expand student access to advanced coursework, including working with school districts, the Florida Virtual School, and Florida College System (FCS) institutions and state universities to develop advanced courses and provide instructional support.⁸⁹ It must also provide assessment tools to evaluate student strengths and weaknesses related to success in advanced coursework.⁹⁰

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill amends s. 1007.35, F.S., by renaming the “Florida Partnership for Minority and Underrepresented Student Achievement” to the “Florida Partnership for Underrepresented Student Achievement.” The bill removes the partnership’s specific focus on minority students, broadening its scope to all underrepresented student populations.

The bill also provides legislative intent recognizing the value of career pathways beyond traditional college access, including vocational and trade schools, and emphasizes the importance of incentivizing high school programs that prepare students for those career paths.

Additionally, the bill removes requirements for the partnership to:

- Provide teacher training, professional development, and instructional materials.
- Consider ways to incorporate FCS institutions into its mission of preparing all students for postsecondary success.
- Cooperate with the DOE to provide information on partnership activities, opportunities, and priorities.

The bill also makes conforming provisions to s. 1007.27, F.S., related to the Florida Partnership for Minority and Underrepresented Student Achievement.

Florida Gold Seal Career and Professional Education (CAPE) Scholars Award

Present Situation

The Florida Gold Seal CAPE Scholars Award, established within the Bright Futures Scholarship Program, supports students who complete industry certifications that articulate for postsecondary credit.⁹¹

To qualify, students must earn at least five postsecondary credit hours through CAPE industry certifications and complete at least 30 volunteer hours or 100 hours of paid work.⁹² This scholarship provides funding for career-focused postsecondary programs, including technical degrees, applied technology diplomas, or career certificates, and may extend to bachelor’s degree programs in specific articulated pathways.⁹³

⁸⁹ Section 1007.35(6)(g) and (l), F.S.

⁹⁰ Section 1007.35(6)(d), F.S.

⁹¹ Section 1009.536, F.S.

⁹² Section 1009.536(2), F.S.

⁹³ Section 1009.536(5), F.S.

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill amends s. 1009.536, F.S., by modifying the eligibility requirements for the Florida Gold Seal CAPE Scholars award. Specifically, the bill reduces the required minimum postsecondary credit hours earned through CAPE industry certifications from five to three and adds a requirement that students earn a minimum cumulative weighted grade point average (GPA) of 2.5 in all subjects required for high school graduation, excluding electives.

The bill also expands eligibility by allowing students who complete the GATE Program to apply for the award before or within three months of completion.

Prepping Institutions, Programs, Employers, and Learners through Incentives for Nursing Education (PIPELINE) Fund***Present Situation***

The PIPELINE Fund is a performance-based funding initiative designed to reward public postsecondary nursing education programs for their excellence and effectiveness.⁹⁴ The fund provides allocations to eligible institutions, school district career centers, charter technical career centers, Florida College System institutions, and state universities,⁹⁵ based on two key performance metrics:

- Number of program completers; and
- First-time passage rate on the National Council of State Boards of Nursing Licensing Examination (NCLEX).⁹⁶

Programs with first-time NCLEX passage rates above the national average receive additional rewards.⁹⁷

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill modifies s. 1009.897, F.S., by specifying that funds under the PIPELINE Fund must be used for healthcare industry-related programs.

Contracting for Educational Facilities***Present Situation***

Governing boards overseeing educational facilities, including district school boards, Florida College System institution boards of trustees, and state university boards of trustees, must competitively bid construction, remodeling, renovation, demolition, or improvement projects and award contracts to the lowest responsible bidder once funds are available and project plans are approved.⁹⁸

⁹⁴ Section 1009.897, F.S.

⁹⁵ Section 1009.897(2), F.S.

⁹⁶ Section 1009.897(3), F.S.

⁹⁷ Section 1009.897(3)(b), F.S.

⁹⁸ Section 1013.46(1)(a), F.S.

Boards are authorized to allocate up to 10 percent of capital project funds exclusively for contracts with minority business enterprises, which are competitively bid only among qualifying businesses to address the effects of past discriminatory practices.⁹⁹ To ensure compliance and contractor qualifications, boards must also prequalify bidders and require that contractors hold the appropriate certificates or licenses before awarding any construction contract.¹⁰⁰ This statutory framework is designed to maintain fair competition, emergency flexibility, and equitable contracting practices while ensuring adherence to licensing and safety regulations.

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill amends s. 1013.46, F.S., by removing the provision related to the option of setting aside 10 percent of allocated funds for construction contracts with minority business enterprises.

University Campus Master Plans

Present Situation

Each university board of trustees (BOT) is required to prepare and adopt a campus master plan for the university and maintain a copy of the plan on the university's website. The master plan must identify general land uses and address the need for and plans for provision of roads, parking, public transportation, solid waste, drainage, sewer, potable water, and recreation and open space during the coming 10 to 20 years. The plans contain certain elements and address the compatibility with the surrounding community. These master plans must be updated every 5 years.

Effect of Proposed Changes

The bill amends s. 1013.30, F.S., to revise the frequency of the university master plan submission from five years to 10 years.

The bill is effective July 1, 2025.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

⁹⁹ Section 1013.46(1)(c), F.S.

¹⁰⁰ Section 1013.46(2), F.S.

D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

None.

E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:

A. Tax/Fee Issues:

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

Should the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability develop contracts with institutions in the State University System, it may result in a revenue increase for the institutions. However, it may result in a cost to the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability.

Requiring state universities and Florida College System institutions to waive tuition and fees for active members of the Florida State Guard would result in a revenue loss for the institutions.

Modifying the grandparent out-of-state fee waiver has an indeterminate fiscal impact on institutions. The bill may reduce the number of individuals enrolling due to the grandparent requirement to have established a domicile in the state for five years.

Hillsborough Community College may have costs associated with their name change, such as those related to signage, publication, documentation, advertising, and other related items.

There would be a fiscal impact on any institution participating in the Graduation Alternative to Traditional Education Program (GATE) Program that chooses to enter into an agreement with an online provider for the adult education or career instruction portion of the program. Eliminating the 21-year-old age cap would likely expand the number of GATE Program participants. However, this waiver is subject to the availability of funds.

The changes to the Florida Gold Seal CAPE Scholars award is indeterminate. It is assumed that reducing the required minimum postsecondary credit hours earned through CAPE would increase the number of eligible participants. The bill also adds provisions regarding minimum GPA requirements which could cause a cost neutral result. However,

there would be a negative fiscal impact on the Florida Gold Seal CAPE Scholars award by expanding it to GATE Program completers.

Revising the frequency of the university campus master plans from five years to 10 years may result in a costs savings to the institutions.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill substantially amends the following sections of the Florida Statutes: 11.51, 251.001, 288.036, 381.853, 413.407, 446.032, 446.041, 1000.05, 1000.21, 1001.706, 1001.7065, 1004.0971, 1004.933, 1005.06, 1006.73, 1007.34, 1007.35, 1009.21, 1009.23, 1009.24, 1009.26, 1009.536, 1009.897, 1011.804, 1013.46, and 1007.27.

IX. Additional Information:

A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Substantial Changes:

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

CS/CS by Fiscal Policy on April 2, 2025:

The committee substitute adds a provision related to nonpublic religious postsecondary institutions. Specifically the committee substitute:

- Replaces the term “religious college” with “nonpublic religious postsecondary educational institution.”
- Expands the affidavit requirements from five to seven affirmations, now requiring institutions not only to attest that their name includes a religious modifier and that their programs are limited to religious vocations, but also to explain the meaning of their religious name or symbol and to list the titles and majors of every degree program as they appear on degrees and transcripts.
- Authorizes the Commission for Independent Education (commission) to request supporting documentation from the institution to verify compliance with the affidavit requirements and consumer protection laws, with a mandatory 30-day response period.
- Requires the commission to review these affidavits in a public meeting and directs the commission to approve them unless there is facial invalidity, contradictory evidence, or a failure to provide required documentation.
- Requires the commission to revoke its approval, in a public meeting, if an institution that previously received a written exemption if the institution fails to remain in compliance.
- Specifies that if an affidavit is denied, the institution must either apply for licensure, cease operating, or submit corrective documentation to regain compliance.

- Authorizes the commission to adopt rules.

CS by Appropriations Committee on Higher Education on March 24, 2025:

The committee substitute modifies the bill by:

- Removing the proposed definition of a “nonresident online student” and the associated provisions that would have required the out-of-state fee for such students to be based on market rates and to exceed the university’s current out-of-state fee.
- Revising the grandparent out-of-state fee waiver by replacing the legal residency requirement with a new standard requiring the grandparent to have established domicile in Florida for at least five years, rather than repealing the waiver altogether.
- Creating the state college regional consortium service organization to improve the effectiveness of small institutions in the Florida College System that serve rural communities.
- Renaming Hillsborough Community College to Hillsborough College, rather than Hillsborough State College.

B. Amendments:

None.