

FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

BILL ANALYSIS

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BILL #: [CS/HB 1279](#)

TITLE: Education

SPONSOR(S): Kincart Jonsson

COMPANION BILL: [SB 1052](#) (Grall)

LINKED BILLS: None

RELATED BILLS: None

Committee References

[Careers & Workforce](#)

12 Y, 5 N, As CS

[Budget](#)

20 Y, 7 N

[Education & Employment](#)

SUMMARY

Effect of the Bill:

The bill requires preeminent state universities to reserve 95 percent of each new fall, first-time-in-college enrolled cohort for Florida resident students based on a 3 year average. It limits international student enrollment at state universities and requires students to be a United States citizen or lawfully present to receive state financial aid. The bill revises the graduation rate metric for state universities seeking preeminent status or performance-based incentive funding. The bill broadens the category of accreditors that may be approved by the State Board of Education (SBE) or Board of Governors (BOG) and removes an exemption on DEI spending for accreditation purposes. The bill prohibits state colleges and universities from imposing institution-wide graduation requirements that include courses that distort significant historical events or teach discriminatory content. It removes a requirement for state colleges and universities to develop a gender equity plan for intercollegiate athletics. The bill reduces the comment timeframe on proposed specialized associate in arts transfer degree programs. The bill clarifies licensure requirements for the Commission for Independent Education. The bill requires the SBE to establish a uniform weighted grading system for advanced courses and clarifies eligibility and course weighting requirements for dual enrollment courses. The bill authorizes bonuses to school districts and teachers offering a Florida Advanced Course and Test. Finally, the bill improves transparency for blind services and strengthens the quality assurance system for vocational rehabilitation service providers.

Fiscal or Economic Impact:

Provisions in the bill have an indeterminate negative impact on the Department of Education, state government, specified students, and private vocational rehabilitation service providers. The bill has an indeterminate positive impact on Florida students, consumers, teachers, school districts, state universities, and state government.

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ANALYSIS

EFFECT OF THE BILL:

The bill requires [preeminent state universities](#) to limit [nonresident enrollment](#) in each fall, full-time first-time-in-college (FTIC)¹ entering cohort to 5 percent, reserving 95 percent of seats for Florida students based on a 3 year average. This provision does not apply to graduate students. By July 1, 2030, a preeminent state university that fails to maintain this average is ineligible for preeminent funding. The bill also specifies that the 4-year graduation rate of 60 percent or higher for full-time FTIC students required for preeminent status excludes those enrolled in a [baccalaureate engineering degree program](#) that requires more than 120 semester hours. (Section 3).

¹ BOG Regulation 6.002. First-time-in-college (FTIC) freshman seeking admission to an undergraduate degree program in the State University System (SUS) are defined as students who have earned a standard high school diploma from a Florida public or regionally accredited high school, or its equivalent, and who have earned fewer than 12 semester hours of transferable college credit since receiving a standard high school diploma or its equivalent.

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DATE: 2/10/2026

The bill limits the enrollment of degree-seeking [students who are not United States citizens](#) and not permanent residents of the United States to no more than 5 percent from any one country at each state university. This limitation is based on the systemwide limitation on nonresident enrollment established by the BOG, and therefore, does not apply to graduate students. (Section [7](#)).

The bill also requires students to be a United States citizen or lawfully present in the United States to receive [state financial aid](#). (Sections [16](#) and [17](#)). This provision is consistent with federal law on eligibility for [federal financial aid](#).

The bill specifies that for state universities seeking [performance-based incentive funding](#), the metric for a 4-year graduation rate of 60 percent or higher for full-time FTIC students excludes those enrolled in a baccalaureate engineering degree program that requires more than 120 semester hours. (Sections [3](#) and [4](#)).

The bill removes a current exemption to the [prohibition](#) on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) spending by Florida College System (FCS) institutions, state universities, or their direct support organizations, if required for [accreditation](#) purposes. The bill clarifies that programmatic accreditors are also not permitted to compel public postsecondary institutions to violate state law and provides flexibility for such institutions to seek accreditation from accreditors beyond the “regional” accreditors. The provision still requires any institutional accreditor that accredits a Florida public postsecondary institution to be approved by both the U.S. Department of Education and the SBE and BOG, as applicable. (Sections [6](#) and [14](#)).

The bill also strikes specific references to the [American Bar Association](#) (ABA) in statutes relating to the Florida A&M University (FAMU) College of Law and the Florida International University (FIU) College of Law. (Sections [8](#) and [9](#)). This provision does not prohibit the FAMU or FIU Colleges of Law, or any other public Florida law school, from being accredited by the ABA. The provision also does not prohibit a graduate of a law school accredited by the ABA from sitting for the bar exam.

The bill prohibits state colleges and universities from imposing an institution-wide [graduation requirement](#) that includes a course that distorts significant historical events or includes a curriculum that teaches identity politics, violates the [Florida Educational Equity Act](#), or is based on theories that systemic racism, sexism, oppression, and privilege are inherent in the institutions of the United States and were created to maintain social, political, and economic inequities. (Section [12](#)).

The bill removes a requirement for state colleges and universities to develop a [gender equity plan](#) for intercollegiate athletics. (Section [11](#)).

The bill specifies that to qualify for the [tuition and fee exemption](#) for homeless students, a student must have previously been determined to be homeless by a Florida public school and remain in the state for the duration of the tuition and fee exemption. (Section [15](#)).

The bill reduces the comment timeframe on proposed [specialized associate in arts transfer \(SAAT\) degree programs](#) from 60 to 30 days. (Section [12](#)).

The bill clarifies that a private college or school that is approved by another state agency to offer one or more courses or programs does not qualify for exemption from [Commission for Independent Education](#) (CIE) jurisdiction. (Section [10](#)).

The bill requires the SBE to establish a [statewide uniform weighted grading system](#) for honors courses and articulated acceleration mechanisms, including dual enrollment, the Advanced Placement Program (AP), the International Baccalaureate Program (IB), and the Advanced International Certificate of Education Program (AICE). (Section [5](#)).

The bill clarifies that only Florida students are eligible for the [dual enrollment](#) program and that the postsecondary institutions eligible to participate include FCS institutions, state universities, and eligible nonprofit independent colleges and universities. School districts and postsecondary institutions must use the uniform weighted grading system for dual enrollment courses when calculating GPAs and high school GPAs must be calculated based on the high school credit earned by the student in each course. (Sections [5](#) and [13](#)).

The bill authorizes bonuses for school districts and teachers offering a [Florida Advanced Course and Test \(FACT\)](#) that are in line with [bonuses offered for other advanced courses](#), such as AP, AICE, IB, and Career and Professional Education (CAPE) industry certifications. (Section [20](#)).

The bill increases transparency by requiring vendors offering fee-based [services to people who are blind or visually impaired](#) to disclose if equivalent or substantially similar services are available at no cost through the Division of Blind Services or another public agency. (Section [1](#)).

The bill strengthens the quality assurance system for [vocational rehabilitation \(VR\) service providers](#) by giving the VR Division of the Department of Education (DOE) more authority to regulate and manage service providers. Beginning January 1, 2027, only service providers that meet the minimum qualifications established by the division and that have been approved by the division to provide employment-related services to individuals with disabilities may participate in the VR program. Providers also must set rates that are allocable, reasonable, and necessary, as determined by the division. (Section [2](#)).

Finally, the bill authorizes the chair of the board of the [Florida Prepaid College Board](#) to choose a designee who possesses knowledge, skill, and experience in the areas of accounting, risk management, or investment management to serve as the director of its direct support organization (DSO) and to sit on the board of directors for [Florida ABLE](#). (Sections [18](#) and [19](#)).

The bill takes effect July 1, 2026. (Section [21](#)).

RULEMAKING:

The bill authorizes the SBE to adopt rules to implement consumer disclosure for blind services. The bill also modifies several provisions of law already under the SBE's rulemaking authority, thus allowing the SBE to make rules to implement the bill. Current law authorizes the SBE to adopt rules and the BOG to adopt regulations regarding fee exemptions for homeless students. Current law requires the SBE and the BOG to adopt rules and regulations, respectively, regarding prohibited expenditures. The BOG is required to adopt regulations to administer the SUS Performance-Based Incentive. The SBE is required to adopt rules relating to dual enrollment programs, the associate in arts specialized transfer degree, and the Open Door Grant Program.

Lawmaking is a legislative power; however, the Legislature may delegate a portion of such power to executive branch agencies to create rules that have the force of law. To exercise this delegated power, an agency must have a grant of rulemaking authority and a law to implement.

FISCAL OR ECONOMIC IMPACT:

STATE GOVERNMENT:

The bill has an indeterminate negative fiscal impact to the state by adding additional full-time equivalent (FTE) students to the Florida Education Finance Program (FEFP) for each student in a Florida advanced course who achieves a minimum score on the assessment. Provisions regarding blind services and VR providers may have an indeterminate negative fiscal impact to the DOE through a potential increase in use of services and administrative work.

Changes to the graduation metric could have a positive fiscal impact for state universities through the performance-based incentive. Provisions regarding homeless students and financial aid requirements may have an indeterminate positive fiscal impact on the state through savings on fee exemptions and financial aid.

PRIVATE SECTOR:

The bill has a potential indeterminate negative impact on fee-based providers of blind services and VR services, but a potential positive impact for consumers of those services. The bill may have a negative fiscal impact on students who would no longer qualify for the tuition and fee exemption for homeless students or for financial aid due to eligibility requirements, but a potential positive impact for Florida students accepted into state universities. The bill has a positive impact for teachers of a Florida advanced course who receive bonuses based on student assessment scores.

RELEVANT INFORMATION

SUBJECT OVERVIEW:

Preeminent State Universities

The preeminent state research universities program is a collaborative partnership between the BOG and the Legislature to raise the academic and research preeminence of the highest performing state research universities in Florida.² A state university that meets 12 of the 13 academic and research excellence standards specified in law is designated a "preeminent state research university."³ Currently, the University of Florida, Florida State University, University of South Florida, and Florida International University are designated as preeminent state research universities.⁴ The University of Central Florida is expected to be certified by the BOG as a Preeminent State Research University in 2026.⁵

The following are the academic and research excellence standards established for the preeminent state research universities program that must be reported annually in the BOG Accountability Plan:⁶

- An average weighted grade point average (GPA) of 4.0 or higher and an average SAT score of 1200 or higher; an average ACT score of 25 or higher; or an average CLT score of 83 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 percent or higher freshman retention rate for full-time, first-time-in-college students.
- A 60 percent 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.

² Section [1001.7065\(1\), F.S.](#)

³ Section [1001.7065\(3\), F.S.](#)

⁴ 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 Jan. 24, 2026).

⁵ See Board of Governors, *2025 Accountability Plan: State University System of Florida Summary*, BOG Approval June 18, 2025 at 12, available at https://www.flbog.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/2025_System_Accountability_Plan_BOG_Approved_08-13-2025.pdf. See also University of Central Florida, *Preeminence*, <https://analytics.ucf.edu/performance/preeminence/> (last visited Jan. 26, 2026).

⁶ *Id.*

- 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.

Nonresident Enrollment

Students must be classified as residents or nonresidents for the purpose of assessing tuition in postsecondary educational programs offered by charter technical career centers, career centers operated by school districts, FCS institutions, and state universities. Students pay differing tuition rates based on their status as a resident or nonresident of Florida.⁷ A “resident for tuition purposes” means an admitted or currently enrolled student who meets the residency requirements in statute and rule or regulation, and is therefore eligible to pay the resident tuition and fee rate.⁸

Specifically, 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 an institution of higher education.
- Every applicant for admission to an institution of higher education must make a statement as to his or her length of residence and establish that his or her presence or, if the applicant is a dependent child, the presence of his or her parent or parents in Florida currently is, and during the requisite 12-month qualifying period was, for the purpose of maintaining a bona fide domicile.⁹

A person must show certain proof that he or she should be classified as a resident for tuition purposes and may not receive the in-state tuition rate until clear and convincing evidence related to legal residence and its duration has been provided. Each institution of higher education must make a residency determination that is documented by the submission of written or electronic verification that includes two or more specified documents that:

- Must include at least one of the following (“Tier 1”):
 - A Florida voter’s registration card.
 - A Florida driver license.
 - A State of Florida identification card.
 - A Florida vehicle registration.
 - Proof of a permanent home in Florida which is occupied as a primary residence by the individual or by the individual’s parent if the individual is a dependent child.
 - Proof of a homestead exemption in Florida.¹⁰
 - Transcripts from a Florida high school for multiple years if the Florida high school diploma or high school equivalency diploma was earned within the last 12 months.
 - Proof of permanent full-time employment in Florida for at least 30 hours per week for a 12-month period.
- May include one or more of the following (“Tier 2”):
 - A declaration of domicile in Florida.
 - A Florida professional or occupational license.
 - Florida incorporation.
 - A document evidencing family ties in Florida.
 - Proof of membership in a Florida-based charitable or professional organization.
 - Any other documentation that supports the student’s request for resident status, including, but not limited to, utility bills and proof of 12 consecutive months of payments; a lease agreement and proof of 12 consecutive months of payments; or an official state, federal, or court document

⁷ Section [1009.21, F.S.](#)

⁸ Rule 6A-10.044, F.A.C.; Board of Governors Regulation 7.005.

⁹ Section [1009.21\(2\)\(a\), F.S.](#)

¹⁰ Proof of a homestead exemption in Florida is deemed a single, conclusive piece of evidence proving residency. See [S. 1009.21\(3\)\(c\), F.S.](#)

evidencing legal ties to Florida.¹¹

Current BOG regulation limits nonresident student enrollment in the SUS to no more than 10 percent of the total systemwide, fall term, degree-seeking undergraduate enrollment.¹² The regulation does not limit the enrollment of nonresident undergraduate students at any single university in the SUS to 10 percent of that university's total enrollment as long as the total number in the SUS does not exceed 10 percent of the total systemwide enrollment. Students who receive specified nonresident tuition and fee waivers intended to encourage nonresident enrollment in the SUS¹³ and students who are classified as nonresident students¹⁴ and who enroll entirely in distance learning courses are exempt from the nonresident count for the 10 percent calculation.¹⁵

International Students

Under current law, there are no enrollment caps specific to international students at state universities. However, international students are subject to the BOG regulation limiting nonresident student enrollment in the SUS to no more than 10 percent of the total systemwide, fall term, degree-seeking undergraduate enrollment.¹⁶ Within enrollment, space, and fiscal limitations, eligible international students may be accepted for admission to a state university. Each UBOT is required to develop regulations for admission of international students that are consistent with BOG regulations. At a minimum, such regulations must require that:¹⁷

- International students are obligated to follow the laws and regulations set by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services of the United States Department of Homeland Security and the United States Department of State.
- An international applicant must be academically eligible for admission to the program at the level of entrance requested by the applicant. An international student must demonstrate the required level of academic preparation as evidenced by official copies of any academic records needed to ascertain the comparability of the level and quality of the student's previous education and achievement to that required for other students.
- An international applicant's proficiency in English must be adequate. International students whose first language is not English must demonstrate English language proficiency, as determined by the university. Universities may utilize various methods to determine English language proficiency, such that the method utilized to evaluate an individual student is sufficient to ensure a reasonable chance of academic success.
- In order for an appropriate official at the university to issue a Certificate of Eligibility (Form I-20 or a DS 2019) to an international applicant, the student must provide documentation showing sufficient resources to cover tuition, fees, books, room and board, health insurance, and other living expenses while enrolled at the university.
- Each international applicant determined to be academically and financially eligible for admission must submit a health history form including proof of immunizations as required by the university prior to enrollment at the university.

The Student and Exchange Visitor Program (SEVP) is a U.S. government program that is part of Homeland Security Investigations (HSI) within U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security (DHS).¹⁸ SEVP certifies U.S. schools to enroll F-1 and M-1 foreign students and ensures their compliance with administrative regulations. The Department of State (DOS) manages the J-1 Visa Exchange Visitor Program, under which there are a variety of exchange visitor categories. Both SEVP and the DOS use the Student and

¹¹ Section [1009.21\(3\), F.S.](#)

¹² Board of Governors Regulation 7.006(1).

¹³ Sections [1009.26\(8\), \(13\), \(14\), and \(20\)](#) and [1009.893\(2\), F.S.](#) Mandatory nonresident waivers exist for decorated combat ([s. 1009.26\(8\), F.S.](#)); C.W. Bill Young Veteran Tuition Waiver Program ([s. 1009.26\(13\), F.S.](#)); nonresident active duty ([s. 1009.26\(14\), F.S.](#)); grandparent waiver ([s. 1009.26\(20\), F.S.](#)); and Benacquisto Scholars ([s. 1009.893\(2\), F.S.](#)).

¹⁴ Board of Governors Regulation 7.005; s. [1009.21, F.S.](#)

¹⁵ Board of Governors Regulation 7.006(2).

¹⁶ Board of Governors Regulation 7.006.

¹⁷ Board of Governors Regulation 6.009(1).

¹⁸ U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Student and Exchange Visitor Program, *SEVP Overview*, <https://www.ice.gov/sevis> (last visited Jan. 26, 2026).

Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) to maintain critical information that allows DHS to protect national security, while supporting the legal entry of foreign students and exchange visitors.¹⁹

There are three nonimmigrant visa categories for foreign students and exchange visitors who enter the United States temporarily and solely for the purpose of pursuing a full course of study or to participate in a U.S. DOS-designated exchange program. These visas are commonly known as the F, M, and J visas.²⁰

F-1 students are foreign students whose primary purpose is to complete an academic course of study at a SEVP-certified school or program. M-1 students are foreign students whose primary purpose is to complete a vocational course of study at a SEVP-certified school or program. J-1 exchange visitors are foreign students selected to participate in a DOS-designated exchange visitor program.²¹

You may enter in the F-1 or M-1 visa category provided you meet the following criteria:²²

- You must be enrolled in an "academic" educational program, a language-training program, or a vocational program
- Your school must be approved by the Student and Exchange Visitors Program, Immigration & Customs Enforcement
- You must be enrolled as a full-time student at the institution
- You must be proficient in English or be enrolled in courses leading to English proficiency
- You must have sufficient funds available for self-support during the entire proposed course of study
- You must maintain a residence abroad which you have no intention of giving up.

Baccalaureate Degree Program

Under state law, a baccalaureate degree program must require no more than 120 semester hours of college credit and include 36 semester hours of general education coursework, unless prior approval has been granted by the BOG for programs offered by state universities and by the SBE for programs offered by FCS institutions.²³

The BOG may approve a university board of trustees (UBOT) request for a baccalaureate degree program to exceed 120 credit hours for one or more of the following reasons:²⁴

- Additional courses are required to meet specialized accreditation standards for program content, and such accreditation is expected or required for program graduates to become employed in the profession for which they are being prepared.
- Additional courses are required to meet state or federal-mandated criteria for professional licensing.
- The degree program offers a unique and innovative learning experience, such as honors programs, individualized study, and other non-traditional educational approaches.

Many engineering programs are approved to require more than 120 credit hours.²⁵

¹⁹ U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Student and Exchange Visitor Program, *Student and Exchange Visitor Information System*, <https://www.ice.gov/sevis/overview> (last visited Jan. 26, 2026).

²⁰ U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Student and Exchange Visitor Program, *2024 SEVIS by the Numbers Report* (2024), available at https://www.ice.gov/doclib/sevis/btn/25_0605_2024-sevis-btn.pdf.

²¹ *Id.*

²² Department of Homeland Security, Study in the States, *Students and the Form I-20*, <https://studyinthestates.dhs.gov/students/prepare/students-and-the-form-i-20> (last visited Jan. 26, 2026).

²³ Section 1007.25(10), F.S.

²⁴ Board of Governors Regulation 8.014.

²⁵ SUS Council of Provosts, Board of Governors' Update, *Excellence in Engineering Education: Enhancing Undergraduate Student Access, Retention, Graduation and Student Learning Outcomes to Meet Workforce Needs*, available at https://www.flbog.edu/wp-content/uploads/ASA_09b -Engineering Programs Credit Hour Review Report.pdf.

Eligibility for Federal Student Aid

Pursuant to federal regulations on federal student aid, undocumented students, including Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients are not eligible for federal student aid.²⁶ Such individuals may be eligible for state financial aid, school aid, or private scholarships.²⁷

Eligibility for State Financial Aid

In order to be eligible for state financial aid awards and tuition assistance grants, a student must:²⁸

- Achieve the academic requirements of and be accepted at a state university or FCS institution; a nursing diploma school approved by the Florida Board of Nursing; a Florida college or university which is accredited by an accrediting agency recognized by the SBE; a Florida institution the credits of which are acceptable for transfer to state universities; a career center; or a private career institution accredited by an accrediting agency recognized by the SBE.
- Establish Florida residency no less than 1 year preceding the award of aid or a tuition assistance grant for a purpose other than to obtain an education. Resident status for purposes of receiving state financial aid awards is determined in the same manner as resident status for tuition purposes.²⁹
- Submit certification attesting to the accuracy, completeness, and correctness of information provided to demonstrate a student's eligibility to receive state financial aid awards or tuition assistance grants.

Performance-Based Incentive Funding

Performance funding for the SUS is intended to provide funding based on indicators of system and institutional attainment of performance expectations.³⁰ The BOG Performance Funding Model contains ten performance metrics that evaluate each state university on the following:³¹

1. Percent of bachelor's degree graduates employed (\$40,000+) and/or continuing their education (1 year after graduation)
2. Median wages of bachelor's graduates employed full-time
3. Average cost to the student (Net tuition & fees per 120 credit hours)
4. 4-year graduation rate (full-time, FTIC)
5. Academic progress rate (2nd year retention with GPA above 2.0)
6. Bachelor's degrees awarded in areas of strategic emphasis
7. University access rate (percent of undergraduates with a Pell Grant)
8. a. Graduate degrees awarded in areas of strategic emphasis
b. Percent of Newly Admitted FTICs with HS GPA 4.0+- for New College of Florida only
9. a. 3-year graduation rate for FCS associate in arts transfer students
b. 6-year graduation rate for students who are awarded a Pell Grant in their first year
10. Institution Board of Trustees Choice³²

Metrics one through seven apply to all institutions. The eighth metric includes an alternative metric, 8b, for New College of Florida. The ninth metric includes an alternative metric, 9b1, for Florida Polytechnic University. Metric 10 is a choice metric picked by the applicable UBOT.

Institutions receive scores on each metric based on the achievement of both excellence and improvement. The higher of the two scores for each metric is applied to the overall score for each institution. Any institution that fails to meet the BOG's minimum performance funding threshold (a total score of less than 60 points) will not be eligible

²⁶ <https://studentaid.gov/understand-aid/eligibility/requirements/non-us-citizens>

²⁷ *Id.*

²⁸ Section [1009.40\(1\)\(a\), F.S.](#)

²⁹ See s. [1009.21, F.S.](#)

³⁰ Section [1011.905, F.S.](#)

³¹ Section [1001.92, F.S.](#); Board of Governors Regulation 5.001.

³² Each Board of Trustees selects a metric from the University Work Plan that is applicable to the mission of the university and has not been previously chosen for the model. See Florida Board of Governors, *Performance Funding Model Overview*, available at <https://www.flbog.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/Overview-Doc-Performance-Funding-10-Metric-Model-Condensed-Version-2025.pdf>.

for the state's investment, will have a portion of its institutional investment withheld, and is required to submit an improvement plan that specifies the activities and strategies for improving its performance.³³ A state university may submit an improvement plan for only one fiscal year.³⁴

Prohibited Expenditures

State statute prohibits FCS institutions, state universities, and FCS and SUS direct-support organizations from spending any state or federal funds to promote, support, or maintain any programs or campus activities that violate the Florida Educational Equity Act, advocate for DEI, or promote or engage in political or social activism, as defined by rules of the SBE and regulations of the BOG.³⁵ However, there is an exemption for expenditures on programs, campus activities, or functions required for obtaining or retaining institutional or discipline-specific accreditation with the approval of either the SBE or the BOG.³⁶

Accreditation

FCS institutions and state universities are required to be accredited by an accrediting agency or association recognized by the United States Department of Education and the SBE or BOG, respectively. In the year following reaffirmation or fifth-year review by its accreditor, each state college or university must seek and obtain accreditation before its next reaffirmation or fifth-year review date and is limited to a one-time change in accreditors. These requirements do not apply to professional, graduate, departmental, or certificate programs that have specific accreditation requirements or best practices, including, but not limited to, law, pharmacy, engineering, or other similarly situated educational programs.³⁷ The state college or university is required to seek accreditation from a regional accreditor, approved by the SBE or BOG, as applicable, and provide quarterly reports of its progress toward accreditation to the SBE or BOG, as applicable.³⁸ Accrediting agencies and associations are prohibited from compelling state colleges and universities to violate state law.³⁹

In 2025, the BOG approved the creation of the CPHE, a non-profit corporation that will serve as a higher education accreditor. A non-paid Board of Directors (BOD) is responsible for the administration and oversight of CPHE's affairs. The higher education systems from Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Texas A&M, and Tennessee (Founding University Systems) have representation on the BOD through a designated director selected by each respective state, who together comprise the initial six members of the BOD.⁴⁰

The BOD establishes accreditation standards, policies, and procedures and takes accreditation actions (e.g., approval of institutional accreditation applications). CPHE's mission is to advance the quality and improvement of higher education by accrediting state public colleges and universities that are incorporated, chartered, licensed or authorized in the United States. CPHE serves as an institutional accrediting agency for state public colleges and universities that award associate, bachelor's, or higher degrees. By establishing rigorous, transparent, and adaptable outcomes-based accreditation standards and practices, CPHE ensures that colleges and universities meet and maintain academic quality and excellence on behalf of their students. CPHE's competitive advantage lies in modern accreditation frameworks that emphasize data-driven assessment, institutional innovation, and regulatory compliance.⁴¹

³³ Section [1001.92\(3\)\(a\), F.S.](#); see also Florida Board of Governors, *Performance Funding Model Overview*, available at <https://www.flbog.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/08/Overview-Doc-Performance-Funding-10-Metric-Model-Condensed-Version-2025.pdf>.

³⁴ Section [1001.92\(3\)\(a\), F.S.](#)

³⁵ Section [1004.06\(2\), F.S.](#)

³⁶ Section [1004.06\(3\), F.S.](#)

³⁷ Section [1008.47\(2\)\(a\), F.S.](#)

³⁸ Section [1008.47\(2\)\(b\), F.S.](#)

³⁹ Section [1008.47\(3\), F.S.](#)

⁴⁰ Florida Board of Governors, *Agenda Item for Board Action* (July 11, 2025), available at <https://www.flbog.edu/wp-content/uploads/2025/07/Agenda-Item-for-Board-Action-7.pdf>.

⁴¹ *Id.*

American Bar Association

The ABA is the sole programmatic accreditor recognized by the United States Department of Education to accredit programs in legal education that lead to the first professional degree in law.⁴² Pursuant to Article 5 of the Florida Constitution, the Florida Supreme Court (FLSC) has exclusive jurisdiction over admission to the Florida Bar.⁴³ Prior to January of 2026, graduation from an ABA-accredited law school was required for admission to the Florida Bar.

However, pursuant to the FLSC's recent decision⁴⁴ to no longer recognize the ABA as the sole accrediting agency for law schools whose graduates are eligible to sit for the state's Bar Exam, that requirement has changed.⁴⁵

In relevant part, the FLSC's majority opinion stated the following to explain the effect of the decision:

"The effect of this amendment is to expand the accrediting agencies by which a law school may be approved or provisionally approved for purposes of graduate eligibility to sit for this state's General Bar Examination. At present, the ABA is the sole programmatic accreditor recognized by the United States Department of Education to accredit programs in legal education that lead to the first professional degree in law. The Court acknowledges that additional programmatic accreditors for legal education programs may be recognized in the future and expresses its support for that possibility; this amendment is intended to accommodate that outcome. Under the amended rule, graduates of ABA-accredited law schools will continue to qualify to sit for the state's General Bar Examination, and graduates of law schools accredited by any subsequently recognized programmatic accreditor will be afforded the same eligibility."

Postsecondary Graduation Requirements

The SBE and BOG approve statewide general education core course options for inclusion in the statewide course numbering system. General education core course options consist of a maximum of five courses within each of the subject areas of communication, mathematics, social sciences, humanities, and natural sciences. Each general education core course option must contain high-level academic and critical thinking skills and common competencies that students must demonstrate to successfully complete the course. General education core courses may not distort significant historical events or include a curriculum that teaches identity politics, violates the Florida Educational Equity Act,⁴⁶ or is based on theories that systemic racism, sexism, oppression, and privilege are inherent in the institutions of the United States and were created to maintain social, political, and economic inequities.⁴⁷

General education core courses must meet the following standards:⁴⁸

- Communication courses must afford students the ability to communicate effectively, including the ability to write clearly and engage in public speaking.
- Humanities courses must afford students the ability to think critically through the mastering of subjects concerned with human culture, especially literature, history, art, music, and philosophy, and must include selections from the Western canon.
- Social science courses must afford students an understanding of the basic social and behavioral science concepts and principles used in the analysis of behavior and past and present social, political, and economic issues.

⁴² Supreme Court of Florida, Opinion No. SC2025-2064 (January 15, 2026), available at https://flcourts-media.flcourts.gov/content/download/2483731/opinion/Opinion_SC2025-2064.pdf.

⁴³ Art. V, s. 15, Fla. Const.

⁴⁴ Supreme Court of Florida, Opinion No. SC2025-2064 (January 15, 2026), available at https://flcourts-media.flcourts.gov/content/download/2483731/opinion/Opinion_SC2025-2064.pdf.

⁴⁵ *Id.*

⁴⁶ Section [1000.05, F.S.](#)

⁴⁷ Section [1007.25\(3\), F.S.](#)

⁴⁸ *Id.*

- Natural science courses must afford students the ability to critically examine and evaluate the principles of the scientific method, model construction, and use the scientific method to explain natural experiences and phenomena.
- Mathematics courses must afford students a mastery of foundational mathematical and computation models and methods by applying such models and methods in problem solving.

Students must complete at least one identified core course in each subject area as part of the general education course requirements. All public postsecondary educational institutions must offer at least one general education core course in each of the identified subject areas and accept courses as meeting general education core course requirements upon transfer, regardless of whether the receiving institution offers the identical general education core courses.⁴⁹

In addition to the above standards relating to general education core courses, the BOG has adopted a regulation that prohibits a state university from imposing an institution-wide graduation requirement that includes a course in conflict with standards relating to general education core courses.⁵⁰

Florida Educational Equity Act

The Florida Educational Equity Act prohibits subjecting students or employees in the Florida K-20 public education system to training or instruction that promotes or compels belief in any of the following concepts, on the grounds that it constitutes discrimination:⁵¹

- Members of one race, color, national origin, or sex are morally superior to members of another race, color, national origin, or sex.
- A person, by virtue of his or her race, color, national origin, or sex, is inherently racist, sexist, or oppressive, whether consciously or unconsciously.
- A person's moral character or status as either privileged or oppressed is necessarily determined by his or her race, color, national origin, or sex.
- Members of one race, color, national origin, or sex cannot and should not attempt to treat others without respect to race, color, national origin, or sex.
- A person, by virtue of his or her race, color, national origin, or sex, bears responsibility for, or should be discriminated against or receive adverse treatment because of, actions committed in the past by other members of the same race, color, national origin, or sex.
- A person, by virtue of his or her race, color, national origin, or sex, should be discriminated against or receive adverse treatment to achieve diversity, equity, or inclusion.
- A person, by virtue of his or her race, color, sex, or national origin, bears personal responsibility for and must feel guilt, anguish, or other forms of psychological distress because of actions, in which the person played no part, committed in the past by other members of the same race, color, national origin, or sex.
- Such virtues as merit, excellence, hard work, fairness, neutrality, objectivity, and racial colorblindness are racist or sexist, or were created by members of a particular race, color, national origin, or sex to oppress members of another race, color, national origin, or sex.

However, this prohibition does not prohibit discussion of these concepts as part of a larger course of training or instruction, as long as it is conducted in an objective manner, without endorsement of the concepts.⁵²

⁴⁹ *Id.*

⁵⁰ BOG Regulation 6.017(2)(b).

⁵¹ Section [1000.05\(4\)\(a\), F.S.](#)

⁵² Section [1000.05\(4\)\(b\), F.S.](#)

Gender Equity Plan

Under current law,⁵³ state colleges and universities are required to develop a gender equity plan for intercollegiate athletics. The plan must consider equity in sports offerings, participation, availability of facilities, scholarship offerings, and funds allocated for administration, recruitment, comparable coaching, publicity and promotion, and other support costs. The Commissioner of Education must annually assess the progress of each state college's plan and advise the SBE and the Legislature regarding compliance and the Chancellor of the SUS must annually assess the progress of each state university's plan and advise the BOG and the Legislature regarding compliance. Each board of trustees of a state college or university must annually evaluate the president on the extent to which the gender equity goals have been achieved. To determine the proper level of support for women's athletic scholarships, an equity plan may determine, where appropriate, that support for women's scholarships may be disproportionate to the support of scholarships for men.

State colleges and universities are also required to be in compliance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972⁵⁴ and the Florida Educational Equity Act⁵⁵ or they will become ineligible for competitive state grants and have funding withheld until they are back in compliance or have an approved plan to come into compliance.⁵⁶

Tuition and Fee Exemption for Homeless Students

In Florida, young adults who meet certain criteria are exempt from paying tuition and fees at school districts that provide workforce education programs, state colleges, and state universities.⁵⁷

Among those criteria, a student is eligible if he or she was the subject of a shelter proceeding, a dependency proceeding, or a termination of parental rights proceeding, and:⁵⁸

- is, or was at the time he or she reached 18 years of age, in out-of-home care.
- is, or was at the time he or she reached 18 years of age, in the custody of a relative or nonrelative.⁵⁹
- after spending at least six months in the custody of the Department after reaching 16 years of age, was placed in a guardianship by the court.
- after reaching 14 years of age and thereafter spending at least 18 months in out-of-home care, was reunited with his or her parent or parents who were the subject of the dependency proceeding before he or she reaches 18 years of age.⁶⁰ Such a student must be Pell Grant-eligible and the entity imposing the tuition and fees must verify such eligibility.
- was adopted from the Department after May 5, 1997.
- was placed in a permanent guardianship, regardless of whether the caregiver participates or participated in the Relative Caregiver Program,⁶¹ and remains in such guardianship until the student either reaches 18 years of age or, if before reaching 18 years of age, he or she enrolls in an eligible institution.

The exemption includes fees associated with enrollment in applied academics for adult education instruction and remains valid until a student reaches 28 years of age.⁶²

A student who meets the definition of a homeless child or youth under federal law⁶³ is also eligible for the exemption. Florida uses the same criteria as in federal law to identify students experiencing homelessness, and also includes individuals who would otherwise meet the definition but for their residence in college or university dormitory housing. Any student who is determined to be a homeless child or youth for a preceding award year is

⁵³ Section [1006.71\(1\)\(a\)-\(f\), F.S.](#)

⁵⁴ Section [1000.05, F.S.](#)

⁵⁵ Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, 20 U.S.C. §§ 1681–1688 (1972).

⁵⁶ Section [1006.71\(g\), F.S.](#)

⁵⁷ Section [1009.25\(1\), F.S.](#)

⁵⁸ Section [1009.25\(1\)\(c\)1.-6., F.S.](#)

⁵⁹ See ss. [39.5085](#) and [39.6225, F.S.](#)

⁶⁰ See s. [39.8155, F.S.](#)

⁶¹ Section [39.5085, F.S.](#)

⁶² Section [1009.25\(1\)\(c\), F.S.](#)

⁶³ McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, s. 725 (42 U.S.C. s. 11434a(2)).

presumed to be a homeless child or youth for each subsequent year unless the student informs the institution that his or her circumstances have changed or the institution has specific conflicting information about the student's independence, and has informed the student of this information.⁶⁴

SAAT Degree Programs

In 2024, the Legislature authorized state colleges to offer SAAT degrees for students who need supplemental lower-division coursework beyond the 60 credits required for an associate in arts degree in preparation for transfer to another institution.⁶⁵ An SAAT degree must include 36 semester hours of general education coursework and require 60 semester hours or more of college credit. The SBE is required to establish criteria for the review and approval of new SAAT degrees, including a requirement for a college to submit a notice of its intent to propose a new SAAT degree program to the Division of Florida Colleges. The notice must include the recommended credit hours, the rationale for the specialization, the demand for students entering the field, and the coursework being proposed to be included beyond the 60 semester hours required for the general transfer degree, if applicable. The Division of Florida Colleges must forward the notice of intent within 10 business days to all FCS institutions and to the Chancellor of the SUS, who must forward the notice to all state universities. State universities and colleges have 60 days after receiving the notice to submit comments to the proposed SAAT degree. After receiving the comments, the requesting college submits a proposal to the Division of Florida Colleges, which includes responses to the comments received.⁶⁶

Commission for Independent Education

The CIE 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.⁶⁷ Under current law, any college, school, or course that is licensed or approved for establishment and operation by another state agency is not under the jurisdiction of the CIE and not required to obtain licensure by the CIE.⁶⁸

Middle and High School Grading System

The grading system and interpretation of letter grades used to measure student success in grade 6 through grade 12 courses for students in public schools is as follows:⁶⁹

- Grade "A" equals 90 percent through 100 percent, has a grade point average value of 4, and is defined as "outstanding progress."
- Grade "B" equals 80 percent through 89 percent, has a grade point average value of 3, and is defined as "above average progress."
- Grade "C" equals 70 percent through 79 percent, has a grade point average value of 2, and is defined as "average progress."
- Grade "D" equals 60 percent through 69 percent, has a grade point average value of 1, and is defined as "lowest acceptable progress."
- Grade "F" equals zero percent through 59 percent, has a grade point average value of zero, and is defined as "failure."
- Grade "I" equals zero percent, has a grade point average value of zero, and is defined as "incomplete."

⁶⁴ Section [1009.25\(1\)\(e\), F.S.](#); r. 6A-10.087, F.A.C.; Board of Governors Regulation 7.008.

⁶⁵ Section [1007.25\(9\), F.S.](#); r. 6A-14.094, F.A.C.

⁶⁶ *Id. See also* Florida Department of Education, Florida College System, *SAAT Proposal Approval Process Timeline*, <https://www.fl doe.org/schools/higher-ed/fl-college-system/administrators/saat.shtml> (last visited Jan. 24, 2026).

⁶⁷ Section [1005.21, F.S.](#); Florida Department of Education, *Commission for Independent Education*, <https://www.fl doe.org/policy/cie/> (last visited Jan. 24, 2026).

⁶⁸ Section [1005.06\(1\)\(b\), F.S.](#) This includes colleges, schools, or courses licensed under part I of chapter 464 (Nurse Practice Act), chapter 466 (Dentistry, Dental Hygiene, and Dental Laboratories), chapter 475 (Real Estate Brokers, Sales Associates, Schools, and Appraisers), or any other chapter of the Florida Statutes.

⁶⁹ Section [1003.437, F.S.](#)

For the purposes of class ranking, district school boards are authorized to exercise a weighted grading system.⁷⁰ School districts and FCS institutions must weigh dual enrollment courses the same as AP, IB, and AICE courses when GPAs are calculated. Alternative grade calculation systems, alternative grade weighting systems, and information regarding student education options that discriminate against dual enrollment courses are prohibited.⁷¹

Dual Enrollment

The dual enrollment program is an acceleration mechanism that allows an eligible secondary⁷² or home education student to enroll and earn credit in a postsecondary course creditable toward high school completion and career certificate or an associate or baccalaureate degree.⁷³ Upon successful completion of a dual enrollment course, the student simultaneously receives credit towards their high school diploma and, a career certificate, an industry certification, or an associate or baccalaureate degree.⁷⁴ College credit earned prior to high school graduation may reduce the average time-to-degree and increase the likelihood of completion of a postsecondary degree.⁷⁵ Eligible students are permitted to enroll in dual enrollment courses conducted during and after school hours and during the summer term.⁷⁶ The DOE maintains an active list of dual enrollment articulation agreements between Florida's state universities, FCS institutions, and career and technical centers.⁷⁷

A student must meet the following eligibility criteria for initial enrollment in college credit dual enrollment courses:⁷⁸

- Be enrolled as a student in any of grades 6 through 12 in a Florida public school, Florida private school, or home education program.
- Not be scheduled to graduate from high school prior to the completion of the dual enrollment course.
- Have a 3.0 unweighted high school GPA to enroll in college credits or a 2.0 unweighted high school GPA to enroll in career certificate dual enrollment courses.⁷⁹
- Achieve a minimum score on a common placement test adopted by the SBE or meet alternative methods for assessing postsecondary readiness adopted by the SBE.⁸⁰
- Meet any additional eligibility criteria specified by the postsecondary institution in the dual enrollment articulation agreement.

FACT

In 2023, the Legislature established advanced courses developed by the DOE in collaboration with public postsecondary institutions as an additional acceleration option for students.⁸¹ The DOE collaborated with

⁷⁰ Sections [1003.437](#) and [1007.271\(18\), F.S.](#)

⁷¹ Section [1007.271\(18\), F.S.](#)

⁷² For purposes of dual enrollment, "secondary" is defined as a student who is enrolled in grades 6-12 in a Florida public school or Florida private school. Section [1007.271\(2\), F.S.](#)

⁷³ Section [1007.271\(1\), F.S.](#) See also r. 6A-14.064, F.A.C.

⁷⁴ Florida Department of Education, Office of Articulation, *Dual Enrollment Frequently Asked Questions*, at 1, available at <http://www.fl DOE.org/core/fileparse.php/5421/ur1t/DualEnrollmentFAQ.pdf>.

⁷⁵ *Id.* See also Florida Department of Education, *Dual Enrollment*, <https://www.fl DOE.org/policy/articulation/dual-enrollment-agreements.shtml> (last visited Jan. 24, 2026).

⁷⁶ Section [1007.271\(2\), F.S.](#) If an eligible student is projected to graduate from high school before the scheduled completion date of a postsecondary course, the student may not register for that course through dual enrollment.

⁷⁷ Florida Department of Education, Dual Enrollment, *Active List of Dual Enrollment Articulation Agreements*, <https://www.fl DOE.org/policy/articulation/dual-enrollment-agreements.shtml> (last visited Jan. 24, 2026).

⁷⁸ Section [1007.271\(2\)-\(3\) and \(13\), F.S.](#) Such requirements may not arbitrarily prohibit students who have demonstrated the ability to master advanced courses and may not limit the number of dual enrollment courses in which a student may enroll based solely upon enrollment by the student at an independent postsecondary institution.

⁷⁹ A home education student participating in dual enrollment may not be required to meet the GPA requirement for initial eligibility if the student demonstrates achievement of college-level communication and computation skills and such eligibility is included in the articulation agreement. See s. [1007.271\(13\)\(b\)2., F.S.](#)

⁸⁰ See s. [1008.30\(1\)-\(2\), F.S.](#) An FCS institution may use alternative methods adopted by the SBE to assess student readiness for college-level work in communication and computation. See also rr. 6A-14.064 and 6A-10.0315, F.A.C.

⁸¹ Section [1007.35\(l\), F.S.](#)

secondary and postsecondary faculty to develop a high school advanced mathematics course and associated assessment that will offer students an opportunity to earn college credit in college algebra. The DOE launched a pilot of the FACT College Algebra in the 2025-26 academic year, coordinated by the Division of Florida Colleges Florida Student Success Center. Participating secondary instructors received professional learning and will provide feedback to the DOE on the course. Full statewide implementation is scheduled for the 2026-27 school year.

The FACT College Algebra assessment will be based on the B.E.S.T. Standards within the 9-12 Florida Advanced College Algebra course and aligned to competencies and outcomes identified in the course curriculum for College Algebra (MAC X105). The assessment will be offered during the normal spring (March – May) K-12 testing window. Upon passing the FACT College Algebra assessment, students will receive college credit for MAC X105 good at any public college or university in the state of Florida. Additionally, students who pass the assessment will be prepared for courses in the “Algebra through Calculus” postsecondary mathematics pathway, including pre-calculus, statistics, and/or business calculus.⁸²

Bonuses for Advanced Courses

The Academic Acceleration Options Supplement was created in 2025 to assist school districts in providing academic acceleration options, career-themed courses, and courses that lead to digital tool certificates and industry certifications for prekindergarten through grade 12 students. The supplement is allocated based on each school district's proportionate share of the state's total academic acceleration values. The total academic acceleration options supplement for FY 2025-26 is \$596.8 million.⁸³ Acceleration values by program:

Program	Acceleration Value	Qualifying Student Attainment
Advanced Placement (AP)	0.16 FTE	Score of three or higher on each College Board AP Subject examination. ⁸⁴
College Board AP Capstone Diploma	0.3 FTE	Receives a Capstone Diploma and meets the requirements for a standard high school diploma. ⁸⁵
International Baccalaureate (IB)	0.16 FTE	Score of four or higher on the subject examination or a score of “C” or higher on the Theory of Knowledge Course. ⁸⁶
IB Diploma	0.3 FTE	Receives an IB Diploma. ⁸⁷
Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE)	0.16 FTE	Receives a score of “E” or higher on a full-credit subject exam. ⁸⁸
	0.08 FTE	Enrolled in a half-credit class and earns a score of “E” or higher on the subject exam. ⁸⁹
AICE Diploma	0.3 FTE	Receives an AICE Diploma. ⁹⁰
Dual Enrollment	0.16 FTE	Enrolled in an early college program and completes a general education core course with a grade of “A” or better. ⁹¹

⁸² Florida Department of Education, *Memorandum, Subject: Florida Advanced Course and Test (FACT) College Algebra* (June 13, 2025), available at <https://info.fl doe.org/docushare/dsweb/Get/Version-11717/20225-69.pdf>.

⁸³ Section [1011.62\(17\), F.S.](#) Specific Appropriations 5 and 88, s. 2, ch. 2025-198, L.O.F.

⁸⁴ Section [1011.62\(17\)\(c\)1., F.S.](#)

⁸⁵ *Id.*

⁸⁶ Section [1011.62\(17\)\(e\)1., F.S.](#)

⁸⁷ *Id.*

⁸⁸ Section [1011.62\(17\)\(d\)1., F.S.](#)

⁸⁹ *Id.*

⁹⁰ *Id.*

⁹¹ Sections [1007.273](#) and [1011.62\(17\)\(b\)1., F.S.](#)

	0.08 FTE	Completes a general education core course with a grade of "A" or completes a career course with a grade of "A" in a pathway that leads to an industry certification that is included on the CAPE Industry Certification Funding List. ⁹²
	0.3 FTE	Receives an associate degree through the dual enrollment program and earns a 3.0 grade point average or better. ⁹³
Career and Professional Education Act (CAPE)	0.025 FTE	CAPE Digital Tool certificates earned by students in elementary and middle school grades. Beginning with the 2025-26 school year, this value only applies to students in elementary school grades. ⁹⁴
	0.1 FTE	Completes a career-themed course or a course with an embedded CAPE Industry Certification and earns an industry certification that does not articulate for college credit. ⁹⁵
	0.2 FTE	Completes a career-themed course or a course with an embedded CAPE Industry Certification and earns an industry certification that has a statewide articulation agreement for college credit. ⁹⁶
	0.3 FTE	Completes at least three courses and an industry certification in a single career and technical education program or program of study. ⁹⁷
	0.5 FTE	Completes CAPE Acceleration Industry Certifications that articulate for 15 to 29 college credit hours. ⁹⁸
	1.0 FTE	Completes CAPE Acceleration Industry Certifications that articulate for 30 or more college credit hours. ⁹⁹
Early High School Graduation	0.25 FTE	Student earns 24 credits and graduates one semester in advance of the student's cohort. ¹⁰⁰
	0.50 FTE	Student earns 24 credits and graduates one year or more in advance of the student's cohort. ¹⁰¹

Bonuses for teachers of advanced courses, such as IB courses, AICE courses, and AP courses, are based on students' achievements of specified scores on course examinations.¹⁰²

⁹² Section [1011.62\(17\)\(b\)1.. F.S.](#)

⁹³ *Id.*

⁹⁴ Section [1011.62\(17\)\(f\)1.. F.S.](#)

⁹⁵ *Id.*

⁹⁶ *Id.*

⁹⁷ *Id.*

⁹⁸ *Id.*

⁹⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰⁰ Section [1011.62\(17\)\(h\)1.. F.S.](#)

¹⁰¹ *Id.*

¹⁰² Section [1011.62\(1\)\(l\)-\(n\), F.S.](#); International Baccalaureate, <https://www.ibo.org/> (last visited Jan. 26, 2026); University of Cambridge, International Examinations, *Cambridge Advanced International Certificate of Education Diploma*, <http://www.cie.org.uk/qualifications/academic/uppersec/aice> (last visited Jan. 26, 2026); College Board, *Advanced Placement Program*, <http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/ap/about.html> (last visited Jan. 26, 2026).

- IB- Bonus provides an IB teacher a \$50 bonus for each student who scores 4 or higher on the IB examination or earns a "C" or higher in the Theory of Knowledge course. An IB teacher in a school designated with a grade of "D" or "F" who has at least one student who scores 4 or higher on the IB or earns a "C" or higher in the Theory of Knowledge course examination receives an additional \$500 bonus.¹⁰³
- AICE- Bonus provides an AICE teacher a \$50 bonus for each student in an AICE course, or \$25 bonus for each student in a pre-AICE (half-credit) course, who scores "E" or higher on the corresponding AICE examination. An AICE teacher in a school designated with a grade of a "D" or "F" receives an additional \$500 bonus if at least one of the teacher's students' scores "E" or higher on the AICE examination, or a \$250 bonus for each pre-AICE (half-credit) course taught which has at least one student scoring "E" or higher on the half-credit AICE examination.¹⁰⁴
- AP- Bonus provides an AP teacher a \$50 bonus for each student who scores 3 or higher on the College Board AP examination. An AP teacher in a school designated with a grade of "D" or "F" who has at least one student scoring 3 or higher on the College Board AP examination receives an additional \$500 bonus.¹⁰⁵

The table below summarizes the bonuses awarded to teachers based on their students' achievement criteria on the respective advanced course examinations.

Annual Teacher Bonuses by Advanced Course				
	IB	AP	AICE	pre-AICE
Achieved Required Score (bonus per student)	\$50	\$50	\$50	\$25
Achieved Required Score at D or F School (bonus per teacher)	\$500	\$500	\$500	\$250

There are also bonuses for teachers of career courses that lead to the attainment of a CAPE industry certification. Depending on the certification earned, a school district receives supplemental funding for acceleration courses with assigned values of 0.1, 0.2, 0.3, 0.5, or 1.0 FTE.¹⁰⁶ Teacher bonus funding is awarded for each student taught by a teacher who provided instruction in a course that led to the student's attainment of a CAPE industry certification on the CAPE Industry Certification Funding List¹⁰⁷, as follows:¹⁰⁸

Annual Teacher per-Student CAPE Bonuses		
Acceleration Values	Type of Certificate Earned by Student	Amount
0.1 FTE	CAPE industry certification that does not articulate to college credit ¹⁰⁹	\$25

¹⁰³ Section [1011.62\(17\)\(e\)2., F.S.](#)

¹⁰⁴ Section [1011.62\(17\)\(d\)2. a., F.S.](#) Teachers who receive a \$500 award for a student earning an E or higher on the AICE examination are ineligible for the pre-AICE bonus of \$250, which applies to students earning an E or higher on the AICE exam at schools designated as D or F.

¹⁰⁵ Section [1011.62\(17\)\(c\)2., F.S.](#)

¹⁰⁶ Section [1011.62 \(17\)\(f\), F.S.](#)

¹⁰⁷ Sections [1008.44\(1\)](#) and [445.004\(4\), F.S.](#) The CAPE Industry Certification Funding List assigns additional funding to certifications identified in the Master Credentials List under [s. 445.004\(4\), F.S.](#) which meet a statewide, regional, or local demand, and courses that lead to such certifications. A school district can only receive supplemental funding for regional or local demand courses and certifications identified as needs for the region or locality in which the school district is located. See also, Florida Department of Education, *CAPE Industry Certification Funding List (2024-2025)*, available at <https://www.fl DOE.org/core/fileparse.php/8904/ur1t/2425CAPEFundList.pdf>.

¹⁰⁸ Section [1011.62 \(17\)\(f\)2., F.S.](#)

¹⁰⁹ Identified in the CAPE Certification Funding List as a CAPE Basic Non-articulated industry certification embedded in a career-themed course. See s. [1011.62\(17\)\(f\)1., F.S.](#)

0.2 FTE	CAPE industry certification that articulates to college credit ¹¹⁰	\$50
0.3 FTE	CAPE industry certification in a single career technical education program ¹¹¹	\$75
0.5 FTE	CAPE acceleration industry certification articulating to 15-29 college credit hours ¹¹²	\$100
1.0 FTE	CAPE acceleration industry certification articulating to 30+ college credit hours	\$100

Blind Services

The Florida Division of Blind Services, within the DOE, helps blind and visually impaired individuals achieve their goals and live their lives with as much independence and self-direction as possible.¹¹³ As set forth by the Legislature in statute, all programs, projects, and activities of the division are to be carried out in a manner consistent with the following principles:¹¹⁴

- respect for individual dignity, personal responsibility, self-determination to live independently, and pursuit of meaningful careers, based on informed choice;
- support for the involvement of an individual's representative if an individual requests, desires, or needs such support;
- respect for the individual's privacy and equal access, including the use of information in accessible formats; and
- integration and full participation of individuals who are blind in society on equal terms with others.

VR Service Providers

The State VR Services Program is authorized by the Rehabilitation Act of 1973¹¹⁵ (Rehabilitation Act), as amended by Title IV of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA).¹¹⁶ This program provides grants to assist States in operating statewide VR programs, each of which is an integral part of a statewide workforce development system.¹¹⁷

State VR programs provide VR services for individuals with disabilities, consistent with their strengths, resources, priorities, concerns, abilities, capabilities, interests, and informed choice, so that they may prepare for and engage in competitive integrated employment or supported employment and achieve economic self-sufficiency. To be eligible for the VR program, individuals must have a physical or mental impairment that results in a substantial impediment to employment and who require and can benefit from VR services to achieve employment and maximize career goals, with priority given to individuals with the most significant disabilities.¹¹⁸

As authorized by the Rehabilitation Act, as amended, Florida has two VR agencies both of which are housed within the DOE. The Division of Blind Services serves individuals who are blind and the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation serves all other individuals with disabilities.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁰ Identified in the CAPE Certification Funding List as a CAPE Basic Articulated industry certification embedded in a career-themed course and has a statewide articulation agreement for college credit. See s. [1011.62\(17\)\(f\)1. F.S.](#)

¹¹¹ Student must also complete at least three courses in addition to achieving an industry certification in a single career and technical education program or program of study. See s. [1011.62\(17\)\(f\)1. F.S.](#)

¹¹² A CAPE Acceleration industry certification is one identified in the CAPE Industry Certification Funding List that articulates to 15 or more college credits. See s. [1003.4203\(4\). F.S.](#)

¹¹³ Florida Department of Education, Division of Blind Services, *Welcome Message*, <https://dbs.fl doe.org/> (last visited Jan. 24, 2026).

¹¹⁴ Section [413.011\(1\). F.S.](#)

¹¹⁵ Rehabilitation Act of 1973, Pub. L. 93-112, 87 Stat. 355.

¹¹⁶ Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, Pub. L. 113-128.

¹¹⁷ United States Department of Education, *State Vocational Rehabilitation Services Program*, <https://rsa.ed.gov/about/programs/vocational-rehabilitation-state-grants> (last visited Jan. 24, 2026).

¹¹⁸ *Id.*

¹¹⁹ See Part I and Part II, ch. 413, F.S. See also CareerSource Florida, 2024-2028 WIOA Combined Plan, available at <https://careersourceflorida.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/2024-2028-WIOA-Combined-Plan.pdf>.

VR service providers must register with the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation. To qualify for registration, the division must ensure that the service provider maintains an internal system of quality assurance, has proven functional systems, and is subject to a due-diligence inquiry as to its fitness to undertake service responsibilities.¹²⁰

Florida Prepaid College Board

The Florida Prepaid College Board (Board) administers the Stanley G. Tate Florida Prepaid College Program (prepaid program) and the Florida College Savings Program (savings program), and performs other specified essential governmental functions.¹²¹

In 1989, the Legislature authorized the Board to establish a DSO.¹²² The Board established the Florida Prepaid College Foundation, Inc.,¹²³ (Foundation) in 1990 as a public/private partnership to provide scholarships to students who may not have otherwise had the opportunity to go to college.¹²⁴

The Foundation administers the Florida Prepaid Tuition Scholarship Program (Scholarship Tuition for At-Risk Students, or STARS Program).¹²⁵ This program provides economically disadvantaged youth with prepaid postsecondary tuition scholarships.¹²⁶ The Foundation has established additional scholarship programs, which include the Black History Month Scholarship and the Hispanic Heritage Month Scholarship.¹²⁷

The Board is required to certify that the Foundation operates in a manner consistent with the goals of the Board and in the best interest of the state.¹²⁸ The Foundation is required to be:¹²⁹

- A Florida not-for-profit corporation registered, incorporated, organized, and operated in compliance with chapter 617.
- Organized exclusively to receive, hold, invest, and administer property and to make expenditures on behalf of the board.

¹²⁰ Section [413.208\(1\), F.S.](#)

¹²¹ Section [1009.971\(1\), F.S.](#) See also ss. [1009.97-1009.988, F.S.](#) The Board is assigned to and administratively housed within the State Board of Administration, but it independently exercises specified powers and duties. The Board consists of seven members, composed of the Attorney General, the Chief Financial Officer, the Chancellor of the State University System, the Chancellor of the Division of Florida Colleges, and three members appointed by the Governor and subject to confirmation by the Senate. Section [1009.971\(1\)-\(2\), F.S.](#)

¹²² Section 1, ch. 89-316, L.O.F.

¹²³ The Foundation was renamed the Stanley G. Tate Florida Prepaid College Foundation, Inc., in 2012. See Florida Prepaid College Foundation, *Amendment and Name Change* (2012), available at <http://search.sunbiz.org/Inquiry/CorporationSearch/ByName> (search for “Florida Prepaid College Foundation”, then follow “Florida Prepaid College Foundation, Inc.” hyperlink).

¹²⁴ Stanley G. Tate Florida Prepaid College Foundation, *2024 Annual Report*, available at <https://www.floridaprepaidcollegefoundation.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/2024-Florida-Prepaid-College-Foundation-Annual-Report.pdf>, at 5.

¹²⁵ Sections [1009.983\(8\)](#) and [1009.984, F.S.](#); Stanley G. Tate Florida Prepaid College Foundation, *2024 Annual Report*, available at <https://www.floridaprepaidcollegefoundation.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/2024-Florida-Prepaid-College-Foundation-Annual-Report.pdf>, at 11.

¹²⁶ Section [1009.984, F.S.](#)

¹²⁷ Stanley G. Tate Florida Prepaid College Foundation, *2024 Annual Report*, available at <https://www.floridaprepaidcollegefoundation.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/2024-Florida-Prepaid-College-Foundation-Annual-Report.pdf>, at 18.

¹²⁸ Section [1009.983\(1\)\(c\), F.S.](#)

¹²⁹ Section [1009.983\(1\), F.S.](#)

The Foundation has awarded more than 60,900 Florida Prepaid College Plan scholarships, and more than 37,500 Foundation scholarship recipients have gone to college using their benefits.¹³⁰ The STARS Program remains the Foundation's largest initiative, representing 83 percent of the scholarships purchased by the Foundation.¹³¹

Florida ABLE

Congress enacted the ABLE Act (Achieving a Better Life Experience Act) in 2014.¹³² The ABLE Act permits a state to implement an ABLE Program and establish ABLE accounts for eligible individuals with disabilities¹³³ to spend distributions on "qualified disability expenses."¹³⁴ The purposes of the ABLE Act are to encourage individuals and families to save money to support individuals with disabilities to maintain health, independence, and quality of life and to provide secure funding for disability-related expenses on behalf of designated beneficiaries with disabilities to supplement benefits provided through other sources.¹³⁵

The Florida ABLE Program was created in 2015 to encourage and assist the saving of private funds in tax-exempt accounts in order to pay for the qualified expenses of eligible individuals with disabilities.¹³⁶ The Florida Prepaid College Board was required to establish a direct-support organization to be known as "Florida ABLE, Inc." to establish and administer the Florida ABLE Program.¹³⁷

Current law requires the board of directors of the Florida ABLE program to consist of:

- The chair of Florida Prepaid, or his or her designee.
- One individual who possesses knowledge, skill, and experience in the areas of accounting, risk management, or investment management, who must be appointed by Florida Prepaid. A current member of Florida Prepaid, other than the chair, may be appointed.
- One individual who possesses knowledge, skill, and experience in the areas of accounting, risk management, or investment management, who must be appointed by the Governor.
- Two individuals who are advocates of persons with disabilities, one of whom must be appointed by the President of the Senate and one of whom must be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives. At least one of the individuals appointed must be an advocate of persons with developmental disabilities, as that term is defined in statute.¹³⁸

Currently, the Governor-appointee and the individuals appointed by the President of the Senate and Speaker of the House all serve 3-year terms and each may be reappointed for up to one consecutive term. The board of directors annually elects a board member to serve as chair.¹³⁹

¹³⁰ Stanley G. Tate Florida Prepaid College Foundation, *2024 Annual Report*, available at <https://www.floridaprepaidcollegefoundation.com/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/2024-Florida-Prepaid-College-Foundation-Annual-Report.pdf>, at 4.

¹³¹ *Id.*

¹³² Pub. L. No. 113-295, 128 Stat. 4056 (Dec. 19, 2014).

¹³³ 26 U.S.C. § 529(e). An individual is an eligible individual for a taxable year if during such taxable year: (1) the individual is entitled to benefits based on blindness or disability under title II or XVI of the Social Security Act, and such blindness or disability occurred before the date on which the individual attained age 26; or (2) a disability certification with respect to such individual is filed with the Secretary of Education for such taxable year.

¹³⁴ 26 U.S.C. § 529(e)(5). "Qualified disability expense" is defined as "any expense related to the eligible individual's blindness or disability which are made for the benefit of an eligible individual who is the designated beneficiary, including the following expenses: education, housing, transportation, employment training and support, assistive technology and personal support services, health, prevention and wellness, financial management and administrative services, legal fees, expenses for oversight and monitoring, funeral and burial expenses, and other expenses, which are approved by the Secretary under regulations and consistent with the purposes of this section."

¹³⁵ 26 U.S.C. § 529(b).

¹³⁶ Section 2, ch. 2015-56, L.O.F.

¹³⁷ Section [1009.986\(3\), F.S.](#)

¹³⁸ Sections [393.063](#) and [1009.986\(3\)\(d\)1., F.S.](#)

¹³⁹ Section [1009.986\(3\)\(d\)2.b.-c., F.S.](#)

RECENT LEGISLATION:

YEAR	bill #/SUBJECT	HOUSE/SENATE SPONSOR(S)	OTHER INFORMATION
2025	<u>CS/CS/SB 584</u> - Young Adult Housing Support	Rizo/ <i>Garcia</i>	Became law on June 27, 2025.
2025	<u>SB 2510</u> - Prekindergarten Through Grade 12 Education	Persons-Mulicka/ <i>Hooper</i>	Became law on June 30, 2025.
2023	<u>CS/CS/HB 1537</u> - Education	Rizo, Daniels/ <i>Avila</i>	Became law on May 9, 2023.
2023	<u>CS/CS/SB 266</u> - Higher Education	Andrade/ <i>Grall</i>	Became law on May 15, 2023.
2022	<u>CS/CS/HB 1577</u> - Homeless Youth	Woodson/ <i>Garcia</i>	Became law on April 6, 2022.
2022	<u>SB 2524</u> - Education	Plasencia/ <i>Stargel</i>	Became law on June 2, 2022.
2022	<u>CS/HB 7</u> - Individual Freedom	Avila/ <i>Stargel</i>	Became law on April 22, 2022.

BILL HISTORY

COMMITTEE REFERENCE	ACTION	DATE	STAFF DIRECTOR/ POLICY CHIEF	ANALYSIS PREPARED BY
<u>Careers & Workforce Subcommittee</u>	12 Y, 5 N, As CS	1/28/2026	Kiner	Blalock
THE CHANGES ADOPTED BY THE COMMITTEE:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised the provisions in the underlying bill relating to calculation of the 4-year graduation rate for preeminence and performance-based funding to exclude students in baccalaureate engineering programs that exceed 120 semester hours. • Specified that the 95 percent Florida resident enrollment requirement for preeminent state research universities is based on a 3-year average and ineligibility for preeminent funding due to noncompliance begins on July 1, 2030. • Removed the provisions requiring a 10 percent enrollment cap on students who are not United States citizens and not permanent residents of the United States at state colleges and state universities. • Removed the provision limiting the enrollment of students who are not United States citizens and not permanent residents of the United States to no more than 5 percent from any one country at state colleges. • Removed references to the ABA in statutes relating to the FAMU College of Law and the FIU College of Law. • Authorized the chair of the Florida Prepaid College Board to choose a designee with knowledge, skill, and experience in the areas of accounting, risk management, or investment management to serve as director of its DSO and to sit on the board of directors for Florida ABLE. • Moved the provision authorizing bonuses for school districts and teachers offering a Florida Advanced Course and Test to the Academic Acceleration Options Supplement. • Corrected two references to Advanced Placement to advanced course in the provision authorizing bonuses for advanced courses. 			
<u>Budget Committee</u>	20 Y, 7 N	2/10/2026	Pridgeon	Fontaine
<u>Education & Employment Committee</u>				

THIS BILL ANALYSIS HAS BEEN UPDATED TO INCORPORATE ALL OF THE CHANGES DESCRIBED ABOVE.