

1 A bill to be entitled
2 An act relating to education; creating s. 413.0114,
3 F.S.; requiring certain persons and entities to
4 complete a written consumer disclosure for blind-
5 related services; authorizing the State Board of
6 Education to adopt rules; amending s. 413.208, F.S.;
7 requiring certain service providers to apply to the
8 Division of Vocational Rehabilitation; requiring the
9 division to establish qualifications for certain
10 service providers and an application process and
11 period for such service providers; providing division
12 and service provider requirements relating to such
13 process; providing reporting and evaluation system
14 requirements for the division relating to service
15 provider effectiveness; providing requirements for
16 rates for vocational rehabilitation services; amending
17 s. 1001.7065, F.S.; revising certain academic and
18 research excellence standards for preeminent state
19 research universities; providing that such
20 universities are ineligible for specified funding
21 under certain circumstances; amending s. 1001.92,
22 F.S.; revising state university performance-based
23 metrics for the award of a State University System
24 Performance-Based Incentive; amending s. 1003.437,
25 F.S.; requiring the State Board of Education to

26 establish a uniform weighted grading system for
27 specified courses and articulated acceleration
28 mechanisms; requiring district school boards to use
29 such system for specified purposes; amending s.
30 1004.06, F.S.; revising construction for the
31 prohibition of certain expenditures; creating s.
32 1004.072, F.S.; providing limitations for student
33 enrollment in a state university or Florida College
34 System institution; amending s. 1005.06, F.S.;
35 prohibiting certain postsecondary institutions from
36 being exempt from the purview of the Commission for
37 Independent Education; amending s. 1006.71, F.S.;
38 deleting a requirement that public postsecondary
39 educational institutions develop a gender equity plan;
40 amending s. 1007.25, F.S.; revising the number of days
41 public postsecondary educational institutions have to
42 submit comments for certain proposed degrees;
43 prohibiting such institutions from imposing certain
44 institution-wide graduation requirements; amending s.
45 1007.271, F.S.; revising postsecondary institution
46 eligibility for participation in dual enrollment
47 programs; revising provisions relating to the
48 calculation of student grade point averages; amending
49 s. 1008.47, F.S.; revising the period of time in which
50 a public postsecondary institution must seek and

51 obtain specified accreditation; revising the
52 accrediting agencies such institutions may seek
53 accreditation from; providing that certain provisions
54 apply to programmatic accreditors for postsecondary
55 education institutions; amending s. 1009.25, F.S.;
56 revising the requirements for a student to meet the
57 definition of "homeless children and youths"; amending
58 s. 1009.40, F.S.; requiring a person to be a United
59 States citizen or lawfully present in the United
60 States to receive state financial aid awards and
61 tuition assistance grants; amending s. 1009.895, F.S.;
62 conforming a cross-reference to changes made by the
63 act; amending s. 1011.62, F.S.; revising the procedure
64 to determine Florida Education Finance Program funds;
65 providing a method for calculating additional full-
66 time equivalent membership based on advanced courses
67 and test scores; providing specified bonuses;
68 providing an effective date.

69
70 Be It Enacted by the Legislature of the State of Florida:

71
72 **Section 1. Section 413.0114, Florida Statutes, is created**
73 **to read:**

74 413.0114 Consumer disclosure for blind-related services.-

75 (1) Any person, business, nonprofit, or other entity

offering fee-based services to persons who are blind or visually impaired must, before entering into a contract or accepting payment, disclose in writing if equivalent or substantially similar services may be available at no cost through the Division of Blind Services or another public agency.

(2) The written disclosure must:

(a) Be provided in plain language and an accessible format, including, but not limited to, braille, large print, or audio upon request.

(b) Include contact information for the Division of Blind Services.

(c) Be signed or electronically acknowledged by the consumer or his or her representative.

(3) A violation of this section constitutes an unfair or deceptive trade practice under part II of chapter 501, and is subject to penalties and enforcement as provided therein.

(4) The State Board of Education may adopt rules to implement this section.

Section 2. Subsection (1) of section 413.208, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

413.208 Service providers; quality assurance; fitness for responsibilities; background screening.—

(1) Service providers must apply to ~~register with~~ the division. To qualify for approval, ~~a registration~~, ~~The division must ensure that the service provider must maintain~~ maintains an

101 internal system of quality assurance, have ~~has~~ proven functional
102 systems, meet the minimum qualifications, and be ~~is~~ subject to a
103 due-diligence inquiry as to its fitness to undertake service
104 responsibilities.

105 (a) The division shall establish minimum qualifications
106 for service providers. The division may approve or deny any
107 service provider application. The division shall establish an
108 annual application period for service providers to submit
109 applications. Beginning January 1, 2027, only service providers
110 that meet the minimum qualifications established by the
111 division, and that have been approved to provide employment-
112 related services to individuals with disabilities, may
113 participate in the vocational rehabilitation program.

114 (b) The division shall develop and make publicly available
115 an annual report of service provider effectiveness which
116 includes an evaluation system measuring the effectiveness of all
117 service providers that are approved by the division to provide
118 employment-related services to individuals with disabilities.

119 (c) In order to maintain approved status with the
120 division, service providers must meet minimum standards of
121 effectiveness in the provision of vocational rehabilitation
122 services, including placement of individuals in competitive and
123 integrated employment.

124 (d) Rates for vocational rehabilitation services must be
125 allocable, reasonable, and necessary, as determined by the

126 division.

127 Section 3. **Paragraph (d) of subsection (2) and paragraph**
128 **(c) of subsection (5) of section 1001.7065, Florida Statutes,**
129 **are amended to read:**

130 1001.7065 Preeminent state research universities program.—

131 (2) ACADEMIC AND RESEARCH EXCELLENCE STANDARDS.—The
132 following academic and research excellence standards are
133 established for the preeminent state research universities
134 program and shall be reported annually in the Board of Governors
135 Accountability Plan:

136 (d) A 4-year graduation rate of 60 percent or higher for
137 full-time, first-time-in-college students enrolled in a
138 baccalaureate degree program requiring no more than 120 semester
139 hours.

140 (5) PREEMINENT STATE RESEARCH UNIVERSITIES PROGRAM
141 SUPPORT.—

142 (c) The award of funds under this subsection is contingent
143 upon funding provided by the Legislature to support the
144 preeminent state research universities program created under
145 this section. Funding increases appropriated beyond the amounts
146 funded in the previous fiscal year shall be distributed to each
147 designated preeminent state research university that meets the
148 criteria in paragraph (a). Each designated preeminent state
149 research university shall receive an equal amount of funding. A
150 preeminent state research university that fails to maintain a

151 fall full-time, first-time-in-college enrollment ratio comprised
152 of at least 95 percent residents for tuition purposes is
153 ineligible for funding under this section.

154 Section 4. Paragraph (a) of subsection (1) of section
155 1001.92, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

156 1001.92 State University System Performance-Based
157 Incentive.—

158 (1) A State University System Performance-Based Incentive
159 shall be awarded to state universities using performance-based
160 metrics adopted by the Board of Governors of the State
161 University System. Beginning with the Board of Governors'
162 determination of each university's performance improvement and
163 achievement ratings, and the related distribution of annual
164 fiscal year appropriation, the performance-based metrics must
165 include:

166 (a) The 4-year graduation rate for first-time-in-college
167 students enrolled in a baccalaureate degree program requiring no
168 more than 120 semester hours;

169
170 The Board of Governors may approve other metrics in a publicly
171 noticed meeting. The board shall adopt benchmarks to evaluate
172 each state university's performance on the metrics to measure
173 the state university's achievement of institutional excellence
174 or need for improvement and minimum requirements for eligibility
175 to receive performance funding. Benchmarks and metrics may not

176 be adjusted after university performance data has been received
177 by the Board of Governors.

178 Section 5. **Section 1003.437, Florida Statutes, is amended**
179 **to read:**

180 1003.437 Middle and high school grading system.—The
181 grading system and interpretation of letter grades used to
182 measure student success in grade 6 through grade 12 courses for
183 students in public schools shall be as follows:

184 (1) Grade "A" equals 90 percent through 100 percent, has a
185 grade point average value of 4, and is defined as "outstanding
186 progress."

187 (2) Grade "B" equals 80 percent through 89 percent, has a
188 grade point average value of 3, and is defined as "above average
189 progress."

190 (3) Grade "C" equals 70 percent through 79 percent, has a
191 grade point average value of 2, and is defined as "average
192 progress."

193 (4) Grade "D" equals 60 percent through 69 percent, has a
194 grade point average value of 1, and is defined as "lowest
195 acceptable progress."

196 (5) Grade "F" equals zero percent through 59 percent, has
197 a grade point average value of zero, and is defined as
198 "failure."

199 (6) Grade "I" equals zero percent, has a grade point
200 average value of zero, and is defined as "incomplete."

The State Board of Education must establish a statewide uniform weighted grading system for honors courses and articulated acceleration mechanisms identified in s. 1007.27. ~~For the purposes of class ranking,~~ District school boards shall use the ~~may exercise a~~ weighted grading system to calculate weighted high school grade point averages ~~pursuant to s. 1007.271.~~

Section 6. Subsection (3) of section 1004.06, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

1004.06 Prohibited expenditures.—

(3) Subsection (2) does not prohibit programs, campus activities, or functions required for compliance with general or federal laws or regulations; ~~for obtaining or retaining institutional or discipline-specific accreditation with the approval of either the State Board of Education or the Board of Governors;~~ or for access programs for military veterans, Pell Grant recipients, first generation college students, nontraditional students, "2+2" transfer students from the Florida College System, students from low-income families, or students with unique abilities.

Section 7. Section 1004.072, Florida Statutes, is created to read:

1004.072 Enrollment of noncitizen and nonresident students in public postsecondary institutions.—

(1) Within the limitation on systemwide enrollment of

nonresident degree-seeking students established by regulation of the Board of Governors, a state university must limit the number of enrolled nonresident degree-seeking students who are noncitizens and who are not permanent residents of the United States to no more than 10 percent and no more than 5 percent from any specific country.

(2) Each Florida College System institution must limit the number of students enrolled in credit-bearing programs who are noncitizens and who are not permanent residents of the United States to no more than 10 percent and no more than 5 percent from any specific country.

Section 8. Paragraph (b) of subsection (1) of section 1005.06, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

1005.06 Institutions not under the jurisdiction or purview of the commission.—

(1) Except as otherwise provided in law, the following institutions are not under the jurisdiction or purview of the commission and are not required to obtain licensure:

(b) Any college ~~or~~ school, ~~or course~~ licensed or approved for establishment and operation by another agency of the state. Colleges or schools approved by another state agency to offer one or more courses or programs under ~~part I of~~ chapter 464, chapter 466, or chapter 475, or any other chapter of the Florida Statutes may not qualify for exemption from the commission's jurisdiction under this subsection ~~requiring licensing or~~

~~approval as defined in this chapter.~~

Section 9. Subsection (1) of section 1006.71, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

1006.71 Gender equity in intercollegiate athletics.—

(1) PENALTIES FOR FAILURE TO COMPLY WITH TITLE IX AND THE FLORIDA EDUCATIONAL EQUITY ACT ~~GENDER EQUITY PLAN.~~—

~~(a) Each Florida College System institution and state university shall develop a gender equity plan pursuant to s. 1000.05.~~

~~(b) The plan shall include consideration of 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.~~

~~(c) The Commissioner of Education shall annually assess the progress of each Florida College System institution's plan and advise the State Board of Education and the Legislature regarding compliance.~~

~~(d) The Chancellor of the State University System shall annually assess the progress of each state university's plan and advise the Board of Governors and the Legislature regarding compliance.~~

~~(e) Each board of trustees of a Florida College System institution or state university shall annually evaluate the presidents on the extent to which the gender equity goals have~~

276 ~~been achieved.~~

277 ~~(f) To determine the proper level of support for women's~~
278 ~~athletic scholarships, an equity plan may determine, where~~
279 ~~appropriate, that support for women's scholarships may be~~
280 ~~disproportionate to the support of scholarships for men.~~

281 (a) ~~(g)~~ 1. If a Florida College System institution is not in
282 compliance with Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and
283 the Florida Educational Equity Act, the State Board of Education
284 shall:

285 1.a. ~~1.~~ Declare the Florida College System institution
286 ineligible for competitive state grants.

287 2.b. ~~2.~~ Withhold funds sufficient to obtain compliance.

288
289 The Florida College System institution shall remain ineligible
290 and the funds shall not be paid until the Florida College System
291 institution comes into compliance or the Commissioner of
292 Education approves a plan for compliance.

293 (b) ~~2.~~ If a state university is not in compliance with
294 Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and the Florida
295 Educational Equity Act, the Board of Governors shall:

296 1.a. ~~1.~~ Declare the state university ineligible for
297 competitive state grants.

298 2.b. ~~2.~~ Withhold funds sufficient to obtain compliance.

299
300 The state university shall remain ineligible and the funds shall

not be paid until the state university comes into compliance or the Board of Governors approves a plan for compliance.

Section 10. Paragraph (b) of subsection (9) of section 1007.25, Florida Statutes, is amended, and subsection (15) is added to that section, to read:

1007.25 General education courses; common prerequisites; other degree requirements.—

(9)

(b) An associate in arts specialized transfer degree must include 36 semester hours of general education coursework and require 60 semester hours or more of college credit. Specialized transfer degrees are designed for Florida College System institution students who need supplemental lower-level coursework in preparation for transfer to another institution. The State Board of Education shall establish criteria for the review and approval of new specialized transfer degrees. The approval process must require:

1. A Florida College System institution to submit a notice of its intent to propose a new associate in arts specialized 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. Notices of intent may be submitted by a Florida

College System institution at any time.

2. The Division of Florida Colleges to forward the notice of intent within 10 business days after receipt to all Florida College System institutions and to the Chancellor of the State University System, who shall forward the notice to all state universities. State universities and Florida College System institutions shall have 30 ~~60~~ days after receipt of the notice to submit comments to the proposed associate in arts specialized transfer degree.

3. After the submission of comments pursuant to subparagraph 2., the requesting Florida College System institution to submit a proposal that, at a minimum, includes:

a. Evidence that the coursework for the associate in arts specialized transfer degree includes demonstration of competency in a foreign language pursuant to s. 1007.262 and demonstration of civic literacy competency as provided in subsection (5).

b. Demonstration that all required coursework will count toward the associate in arts degree or the baccalaureate degree.

c. An analysis of demand and unmet need for students entering the specialized field of study at the baccalaureate level.

d. Justification for the program length if it exceeds 60 credit hours, including references to the common prerequisite manual or other requirements for the baccalaureate degree. This includes documentation of alignment between the exit

requirements of a Florida College System institution and the admissions requirements of a baccalaureate program at a state university to which students would typically transfer.

e. Articulation agreements for graduates of the associate in arts specialized transfer degree.

f. Responses to the comments received under subparagraph 2.

(15) A Florida College System institution or state university may not impose an institution-wide graduation requirement that includes a course that is in conflict with paragraph (3)(c).

Section 11. Subsections (1), (16), and (18) of section 1007.271, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

1007.271 Dual enrollment programs.—

(1) The dual enrollment program is the enrollment of an eligible Florida secondary student or Florida home education student in a postsecondary course creditable toward high school completion and a career certificate or an associate or baccalaureate degree. Postsecondary institutions eligible to participate in the dual enrollment program are Florida College System institutions, state universities, and eligible not-for-profit, independent colleges and universities pursuant to s. 1011.62(1)(i). A student who is enrolled in postsecondary instruction that is not creditable toward a high school diploma may not be classified as a dual enrollment student.

(16) Students who ~~meet the eligibility requirements of this section and who choose to~~ participate in dual enrollment programs are exempt from the payment of registration, tuition, and laboratory fees.

(18) School districts and postsecondary ~~Florida College System~~ institutions must weigh dual enrollment courses pursuant to s. 1003.437 ~~the same as advanced placement, International Baccalaureate, and Advanced International Certificate of Education courses~~ when grade point averages are calculated. High school grade point averages must be calculated based on the high school credit earned by the student in each course. Alternative grade calculation systems, alternative grade weighting systems, and information regarding student education options that discriminate against dual enrollment courses are prohibited.

Section 12. Paragraphs (a) and (b) of subsection (2) and subsection (3) of section 1008.47, Florida Statutes, are amended to read:

1008.47 Postsecondary education institution accreditation.—

(2) ACCREDITATION.—

(a) ~~By September 1, 2022,~~ The Board of Governors or the State Board of Education, as applicable, shall identify and determine the accrediting agencies or associations best suited to serve as an accreditor for public postsecondary institutions. Such accrediting agencies or associations must be recognized by

the database created and maintained by the United States Department of Education. Within 3 years ~~In the year~~ following reaffirmation or fifth-year review by its accrediting agencies or associations, each public postsecondary institution must seek and obtain accreditation from an accrediting agency or association identified by the Board of Governors or State Board of Education, respectively, before its next reaffirmation or fifth-year review date. The requirements in this section are limited to a one-time change in accreditation. The requirements of this subsection are not applicable to those professional, graduate, departmental, or certificate programs at public postsecondary institutions that have specific accreditation requirements or best practices, including, but not limited to, law, pharmacy, engineering, or other similarly situated educational programs.

(b) Once a public postsecondary institution is required to seek and obtain accreditation from an agency or association identified pursuant to paragraph (a), the institution shall seek accreditation from an ~~a regional~~ accrediting agency or association and provide quarterly reports of its progress to the Board of Governors or State Board of Education, as applicable. If each ~~regional~~ accreditation agency or association identified pursuant to paragraph (a) has refused to grant candidacy status to an institution, the institution must seek and obtain accreditation from any accrediting agency or association that is

different from its current accrediting agency or association and is recognized by the database created and maintained by the United States Department of Education. If a public postsecondary institution is not granted candidacy status before its next reaffirmation or fifth-year review date, the institution may remain with its current accrediting agency or association.

(3) PROHIBITION.—Notwithstanding any other provision of law, an accrediting agency or association, including programmatic accreditors, may not compel any public postsecondary institution to violate state law, and any adverse action upon the institution based upon the institution's compliance with state law constitutes a violation of this section that may be enforced through subsection (4), except to the extent that state law is preempted by a federal law that recognizes the necessity of the accreditation standard or requirement.

Section 13. Paragraph (e) of subsection (1) of section 1009.25, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

1009.25 Fee exemptions.—

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

(e) A student who meets the definition of homeless children and youths in s. 725 of the McKinney-Vento Homeless

451 Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. s. 11434a(2), as previously determined
452 by a public school in the state, and whose physical presence is
453 in the state for the duration of the tuition and fee exemption.

454 This includes a student who would otherwise meet the
455 requirements of this paragraph, as determined by a college or
456 university, but for his or her residence in college or
457 university dormitory housing. The State Board of Education may
458 adopt rules and the Board of Governors may adopt regulations
459 regarding documentation and procedures to implement this
460 paragraph. Such rules and regulations must consider
461 documentation of a student's circumstance to be adequate if such
462 documentation meets the standards under 20 U.S.C. s. 1087uu-
463 2(a). Any student who is determined to be a homeless child or
464 youth for a preceding award year is presumed to be a homeless
465 child or youth for each subsequent year unless the student
466 informs the institution that the student's circumstances have
467 changed or the institution has specific conflicting information
468 about the student's independence, and has informed the student
469 of this information.

470 **Section 14. Paragraph (a) of subsection (1) of section**
471 **1009.40, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:**

472 1009.40 General requirements for student eligibility for
473 state financial aid awards and tuition assistance grants.—

474 (1)(a) The general requirements for eligibility of
475 students for state financial aid awards and tuition assistance

grants consist of the following:

1. United States citizenship or lawful presence in the United States.

~~2.1.~~ Achievement of the academic requirements of and acceptance at a state university or Florida College System 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 State Board of Education; 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 State Board of Education.

~~3.2.~~ Residency in this state for no less than 1 year preceding the award of aid or a tuition assistance grant for a program established pursuant to s. 1009.50, s. 1009.505, s. 1009.51, s. 1009.52, s. 1009.521, s. 1009.53, s. 1009.60, s. 1009.62, s. 1009.72, s. 1009.73, s. 1009.75, s. 1009.77, s. 1009.89, or s. 1009.894. Residency in this state must be for purposes other than to obtain an education. Resident status for purposes of receiving state financial aid awards shall be determined in the same manner as resident status for tuition purposes pursuant to s. 1009.21.

~~4.3.~~ Submission of 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. Falsification of such information shall result in the denial of a pending application and revocation of an award or grant currently held to the extent that no further payments shall be made.

Additionally, students who knowingly make false statements in order to receive state financial aid awards or tuition assistance grants commit a misdemeanor of the second degree subject to the provisions of s. 837.06 and shall be required to return all state financial aid awards or tuition assistance grants wrongfully obtained.

Section 15. Paragraph (a) of subsection (2) of section 1009.895, Florida Statutes, is amended to read:

1009.895 Open Door Grant Program.—

(2) ELIGIBILITY.—In order to be eligible for the program, a student must:

(a) Meet the requirements under s. 1009.40(1)(a)3. and 4.
~~s. 1009.40(1)(a)2. and 3.;~~

An institution may not impose additional criteria to determine a student's eligibility to receive a grant under this section.

Section 16. Paragraph (o) is added to subsection (1) of section 1011.62, Florida Statutes, to read:

1011.62 Funds for operation of schools.—If the annual allocation from the Florida Education Finance Program to each district for operation of schools is not determined in the

annual appropriations act or the substantive bill implementing the annual appropriations act, it shall be determined as follows:

(1) COMPUTATION OF THE BASE FLORIDA EDUCATION FINANCE PROGRAM.—The following procedure shall be followed in determining the base Florida Education Finance Program funds for each district:

(o) Calculation of additional full-time equivalent membership based on Florida advanced courses and tests scores of students.—A value of 0.16 full-time equivalent student membership shall be calculated for each student in a Florida advanced course who achieves a minimum score on an assessment identified by the Department of Education pursuant to s. 1007.27(2) and added to the total full-time equivalent student membership in basic programs for grades 9 through 12 in the subsequent fiscal year. Each district shall allocate at least 80 percent of the funds provided to the district for Advanced Placement instruction, in accordance with this paragraph, to the high school that generates the funds. The school district shall distribute to each classroom teacher who provided Advanced Placement instruction:

1. A bonus in the amount of \$100 for each student taught by the Florida advanced course teacher in each Florida advanced course who achieves a minimum score on an assessment identified by the Department of Education pursuant to s. 1007.27(2).

551 2. An additional bonus of \$500 to each Florida advanced
552 course teacher in a school designated with a grade of "D" or "F"
553 who has at least one student who achieves a minimum score on an
554 assessment identified by the Department of Education pursuant to
555 s. 1007.27(2), regardless of the number of classes taught or of
556 the number of students who achieve a minimum score on an
557 assessment identified by the Department of Education pursuant to
558 s. 1007.27(2).

559
560 Bonuses awarded under this paragraph shall be in addition to any
561 regular wage or other bonus the teacher received or is scheduled
562 to receive. For such courses, the teacher shall earn an
563 additional bonus of \$100 for each student who has a qualifying
564 score.

565 **Section 17.** This act shall take effect July 1, 2026.