

2020 Florida Legislative Session Update:

Workforce Education and Career Readiness



February 2020

Introduction

With one month left in the regular 2020 legislative session, lawmakers are headed into overdrive as they push their bills to a vote. As committees wind down, it will be increasingly difficult for proposals to make it to a full House or Senate vote.

Postsecondary education, especially policies tied to workforce education and preparation, continue to gain traction. Since FCAN released its session preview last month, the Legislature has heard bills related to dual enrollment, apprenticeships, college affordability, and degree attainment.

Below are updates on proposals that have gained traction in the Legislature and stand to impact Florida's students via postsecondary education and workforce training in the Sunshine State.

Legislation Impacting Postsecondary Education

SB 62 K-12 Education and CS/SB 1246: Dual Enrollment

Bill Sponsors: Appropriations Committee (Recommended by Appropriations Subcommittee on Education) and Senator Kelli Stargel (R-Lakeland)

As explained by Chair Stargel, Senate Bill 62 "sets a framework. . .so that all children have the most opportunities for their educational experience." Since its initial filing, the bill has been amended substantially. The bill now includes several of the Senate's K-12 education proposals including the implementation of Governor Desantis' teacher salary increase, and also contains the dual enrollment language from Senator Stargel's CS/SB 1246.

CS/SB 1246 – Dual Enrollment, now also included in SB 62, seeks to expand the early college program from one to two years, allows charter schools to establish early college programs, and expands participation to private and homeschooled students at no cost to the private school or the student. Additionally, the bill prohibits school districts or FCS institutions from denying students who meets the state's dual enrollment eligibility requirements from. The bill also creates the Dual Enrollment Scholarship program within the DOE to reimburse eligible colleges and universities for costs incurred by admitting private and home-schooled students.

To incentivize and reward school districts that proactively participate in dual enrollment, SB 62 includes bonus full-time enrollment (FTE) funding for (1) each dual enrollment "core general

education course” completed with an earned grade of C or higher; (2) each student who completes their associate degree through the program with a 3.0 or higher GPA; (3) each student enrolled in an early college program.

While there are many concerns about the K-12 provisions in SB 62, Senator Stargel highlighted the importance of the dual enrollment component of her bill as a silver lining. Both SB 62 and CS/SB 1568 have one final stop in the Senate Appropriations Committee before they can be heard on the floor.

SB 72: Postsecondary Education

Bill Sponsors: Appropriations Committee (recommended by Appropriations Subcommittee on Education) and Senator Kelli Stargel (R – Lakeland)

Senate Bill 72, originally filed by Senator Kelli Stargel (R – Lakeland), is the Senate’s higher education package this year. It creates the [State Universities of Distinction](#) program, which allows non-preeminent universities to identify and receive funding for a unique area of excellence that aligns with the state’s workforce demands. Additionally, the bill authorizes state universities and colleges to set aside reserves to prepare for natural disasters or other emergencies. The funding and spending plan must still be approved by the institution’s Board of Trustees, and the Board of Governors retains the right to make any necessary amendments to the funding or spending plans.

SB 72 also makes some changes to the Florida Student Assistance Grant Program, the state’s largest need-based grant program. Under the bill, the maximum award amount will be explicitly stated in the annual state budget. The bill also includes new reporting requirements and other provisions lawmakers say make the program more flexible for participating students, such as allowing FSAG to be used in the summer, when available.

The Benacquisto Scholarship Program, a merit-based scholarship for National Merit finalists, would also see changes. Grant recipients would be allowed to retain their scholarship if their state residency status changes. However, students receiving Benacquisto funds would be required to enroll in at least 12 credit hours per semester, and would only be able to receive the award for up to five years or ten semesters following their high school graduation.

Finally, the bill allows universities the option to automatically enroll their students in cost-saving initiatives for textbook purchases by giving universities the option to make the programs opt-out, rather than restricting them to opt-in.

SB 72 has received broad bipartisan support, passing through both the Senate Education Committee and the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Education without a single dissenting vote. The bill has one more stop in the Senate Appropriations Committee before it can be heard on the Senate Floor.

Companion Bill Highlights

Though SB 72 does not have a “true companion” bill, CS/HB 613 by Representative Ray Rodrigues (R – Bonita Springs) shares several key components of the bill. Most notably, the bill includes the creation of a “State Universities of Distinction” program and the “opt-out” option for textbook affordability programs. CS/HB 613 passed favorably in both the House Higher Education and Career Readiness Subcommittee and the House Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee, but not without opponents.

CS/HB 613 also includes an “intellectual freedom survey,” which would require postsecondary institutions to administer a nonpartisan survey regarding the diversity of thought on college and university campuses. This provision has drawn debate as some lawmakers are concerned about the cost and distribution of such a survey, and the possibility that the survey could be used to penalize staff or faculty. In committee, Representative Rodrigues admitted that if the bill were to pass through the House, there would be additional work needed to pass the language in the Senate. CS/HB 613 has one more stop in the House Education Committee before heading to the House floor for a vote.

CS/CS/HB 1203 and CS/SB 1568: Pathways to Career Opportunities

Bill sponsors: House Higher Education and Career Readiness Subcommittee and Representative Amber Mariano (R – Hudson); Senator Travis Hutson (R – St. Augustine)

CS/CS/HB 1203 tasks the Commissioner of Education with producing a report on the feasibility of establishing a P-TECH program in Florida that blends high school, community college, and workforce training into a comprehensive 4-6 year program. The program would require an open enrollment policy to promote diversity; allow students to earn their high school diploma, AA, and work experience within 6 years; and articulate into credit at any of Florida’s public postsecondary institutions.

In the Education Committee, CS/CS/HB 1203 was replaced with a committee substitute that more closely aligns the bill with CS/SB 1568 – Education by Senator Hutson. The amended bill includes a process to redesign math pathways to college meta-majors, revises CAPE incentive funding, and updates definitions and program requirements for apprenticeships and preapprenticeships. Currently Florida uses a list of meta-majors, including Health, Education, Business and STEM, which serve as broad categories for the majors and programs offered by the FCS and SUS institutions. CS/CS/HB 1203 requires the State Board of Education and the Board of Governors to define three specific mathematics pathways and assign them to meta-majors, college programs, and careers.

The bill also makes changes to the Career And Professional Education (CAPE) list, which is a list of high-value certifications and credentials that align with the needs of Florida’s workforce. Schools and teachers are given incentives to offer CAPE industry certifications through FTE

funding or cash bonuses. CS/CS/HB 1203 modifies the FTE bonus funding for CAPE industry certifications to incentivize certifications that articulate to college credit, and the aviation and aerospace industry. Finally, CS/CS/HB 1203 makes some alterations to Florida's apprenticeship and preapprenticeship programs. The legislation redefines terms relating to apprenticeships to better match the US Department of Labor's (USDOL) definitions. It also expands the potential apprenticeship program sponsors to include an educational institution, a local workforce board, a community or faith-based organization, an association, or any entity approved by the DOE.

It also clarifies that the DOE is responsible for evaluating the statewide minimum standards for the apprenticeship and preapprenticeship programs and requires the department to register any program that meets those standards. CS/CS/HB 1203 also clarifies that the program sponsor is responsible to administer and supervise supplemental instruction for apprentices, rather than the career education institution. With the bill's passage, preapprenticeships would no longer be required to include general education courses needed to earn a high school diploma. School boards, FCS institutions and state university boards of trustees would be required to work together to ensure that preapprenticeship students receive credit toward an apprenticeship and eventually, college credit toward a technical degree program.

CS/CS/HB 1203 was favorably passed by the Education Committee. Its next stop is on the House floor where it will be voted on before being sent to the Senate.

Other Relevant Bills

HB 55 and SB 132 – Sunshine Scholarship Program

Bill Sponsors: Representative Shevrin Jones (D – Pembroke Pines); Senator Oscar Braynon (D – Miami Gardens)

HB 55 and SB 132 are companion bills that establish the Sunshine Scholarship Program. The scholarship program, administered by the FLDOE, would cover 100% of tuition and fees for eligible Florida residents pursuing an associate degree or career certificate from an FCS institution or career center. To be considered eligible for the scholarship, the student would have to complete a FAFSA, have an annual household income below \$50,000, and maintain continuous full-time enrollment with a 2.5 GPA or greater.

The "last dollar" scholarship, meaning that funding would only be dispersed to cover remaining tuition after all other scholarships and aid have been applied, would require recipients to work in Florida a year for each year they received funds. During committee, Representative Jones clarified that recipients of the program would not be penalized if they are unable to find employment in the state.

HB 55 passed through the Higher Education and Career Readiness Subcommittee favorably with unanimous support. It still has to pass through two additional Education committees before

being considered by the full body. SB 132 also received unanimous support from the Senate Education Committee, and has two additional committee stops.

CS/HB 171 and CS/SB 372: Postsecondary Education for Certain Military Personnel

Bill Sponsors: Higher Education and Career Readiness Subcommittee, Representatives Adam Hattersley (D – Riverview), and Mel Ponder (R – Destin); Committee on Education; and Senator Tom Lee (R – Brandon)

These bills, which have both received bipartisan support, require the state to utilize national best practices to develop a uniform system to award college credit for experience and training obtained for military service and waive transcript fees for active duty service members or honorably discharged veterans and their immediate family members. The bills call upon the Articulation Coordinating Committee (ACC), Florida Department of Education (FLDOE), Board of Governors (BOG), State Board of Education (SBE), and the Florida Department of Veteran Affairs to work in tandem to translate military experience into relevant college credit. All of Florida’s public colleges, universities, and career centers would be required to honor the military articulation system, but they would be able to offer additional credit for military service as they see fit.

Both CS/HB 171 and CS/SB 372 received unanimous support in their three respective committee stops. The Board of Governors for the SUS, the Florida Department of Veterans Affairs, United Way of Florida, and the Foundation for Florida’s Future also support the bill.

CS/SB 418 and HB 725 – Workforce Education

Bill sponsors: House Education Committee and Senator Manny Diaz (R – Hialeah); Representative Will Robinson (R – Bradenton)

Florida has a well-documented nursing shortage. CS/SB 418 and HB 725 seek to mitigate that problem by authorizing career centers operated by school districts to offer an associate in applied science or an associate in science nursing degree program. However, these centers would only be able to offer an associate in applied science to graduates of a licensed practical nursing (LPN) program offered at the same center. By allowing career centers to conduct these programs, more seats would become available to nursing hopefuls. During committee, Senator Diaz also noted that associate degrees in applied science, when earned from a career center, do not automatically articulate in Florida’s 2+2 articulation system, so students would not be able to bypass certain requirements of the system to enroll in a state university.

Ultimately, HB 725 successfully made it out of all three of its committee assignments with unanimous bipartisan support and is currently awaiting a calendar date to be heard on the House floor. CS/SB 418 passed through the Senate Education Committee with a committee substitute and must still pass through the Senate’s Appropriations Subcommittee on Education and Appropriations Committee before it can be heard in the Senate.

HB 993/SB 1550 – High School Graduation Requirements

Bill sponsors: Representative Richard Stark (D – Pembroke Pines); Senator Janet Cruz (D – Tampa)

House Bill 993 and Senate Bill 1550 are identical bills that deal with postsecondary attainment as it relates to college affordability. The bills would make it mandatory for all of Florida's public high school students to complete a FAFSA (Free Application for Federal Student Aid) in order to graduate. In lieu of filing the FAFSA, the student (upon turning 18) or the student's parent or legal guardian may submit a letter to the school district declining to fill out the FAFSA.

HB 993 has been referred to the House's PreK-12 Innovation Subcommittee, PreK-12 Appropriations Subcommittee, and Education Committee, but has not been scheduled to be heard. SB 1550, however, has already passed through the Senate Education Committee unanimously. The bill would still need to be heard in the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Education and the Senate Appropriations Committee.

HB 7087: Higher Education

Bill sponsors: Education Committee

Perhaps the most surprising higher education bill of the session is the House Education Committee's Proposed Committee Bill, HB 7087. The legislation, which would merge Florida Polytechnic University and New College of Florida with the University of Florida and Florida State University, respectively, has been described by media outlets as "radical" and "jarring". The bill is championed by Representative Randy Fine (R – Palm Bay), who cited the disproportionate cost to the state per degree at the state's two smallest universities. If passed, the bill would require University of Florida and the Florida State University to assume all financial obligations, liabilities, and outstanding debts of Polytech and New College, respectively.

The bill would also allow Florida Medallion Scholars—scholars who currently earn 75% tuition coverage through Florida's Bright Futures Scholarship program—to have 100% of their tuition covered if they enroll in an associate degree program at an FCS institution. Upon receiving their AA from the FCS institution, students who meet GPA requirements would have 75 to 100% of their tuition covered at a state university. The bill also removes the \$300 cap on the Bright Futures textbook stipend, making funding available based on a specific budget appropriation.

The bill also changes eligibility requirements for EASE and ABLE, Florida's private tuition assistance programs. Currently, EASE and ABLE are available to students regardless of need. However, if the bill is passed, the scholarships would only be available to students who are Pell-eligible and meet the demonstrated financial need requirements for the Florida Private Student Assistance Grant Program. According to Chair Fine, limiting EASE and ABLE eligibility to students with financial need may actually make it possible to increase the value of the grants awarded.

Currently, HB 7087 has been referred to the House Appropriations Committee.

CS/HB 7079 – Education

Bill sponsors: PreK-12 Appropriations Subcommittee, PreK-12 Innovation Subcommittee, Representative Vance Aloupis (R – Miami)

Beginning in 2020-21, CS/HB 7079 would require school districts to administer the SAT or ACT districtwide to all 11th graders attending public high schools, alternative schools, and

Department of Juvenile Justice Centers to meet national assessment requirements under the Every Student Achieves Acts (ESSA). Pending USDOE approval, the bill also allows the commissioner of education to end end-of-course testing for Geometry and instead use the math portion of the SAT or ACT to assess student performance.

Additionally, beginning in 2022-23, CS/HB 7079 makes changes to the school grade calculation to include the percentage of students who pass the English language arts portion of the SAT or ACT and the percentage of students who pass the math portion of the SAT or ACT. The bill does not define SAT or ACT passing scores and requires the state board of education to set such scores before the 2022-23 school grade calculations.

The House PreK-12 Appropriations Subcommittee amended the bill to include a recurring \$8 million appropriation from the General Revenue Fund to Florida DOE to pay for statewide SAT or ACT administration. CS/HB 7079 passed through the House PreK-12 Appropriations Subcommittee and the House Education Committee.

Budget Allocations

As the 2020 legislative session inches just past its halfway point, both the House and the Senate have voted on their final budget proposals. At \$91.3 billion, the House's total budget is just under Governor DeSantis' budget recommendation of \$91.4 billion. Both budgets are leaner than the Senate's proposed budget of \$92.8 billion, which includes \$111.1 million more for higher education funding than the House's proposed budget. In part, this may be due to a budget re-prioritization exercise that tasked the House Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee to find \$295.7 million dollars in potential budget cuts. Although the subcommittee initially drew attention with an aggressive \$371.3 million in potential cuts, Chair Fine ultimately landed on a more modest cut of \$58 million in funding, mainly impacting colleges and universities with larger reserves.

Additionally, both the House and Senate budgets provide additional funding for the newly-proposed, tiered performance-based funding model for FCS institutions. In the same vein, both chambers maintained SUS performance-based funding; however, the Senate included \$15,000,000 for the proposed Universities of Distinction funding model, while the House did not.

Both chambers prioritized public workforce education, with the House adding \$5 million in new funding for postsecondary certificate training programs and the Senate including \$6.5 million in performance funding for district-led workforce education programs. They both increased funding for EASE, Benacquisto, and ABLE Scholarships by \$2.7 million, \$5.2 million, and \$80,000 respectively, in order to maintain the award amount for the projected increase in student enrollment. Both the House and the Senate passed their proposed budgets; next, the proposals will be workshopped in a joint budget conference until the chambers can agree on a final budget proposal.



Florida College Access Network (FCAN) is Florida's first collaborative network committed to ensuring all Floridians have the opportunity to achieve an education beyond high school and prosper in Florida's dynamic economy. Our mission is to create and sustain a statewide network that catalyzes and supports communities to increase college and career preparation, access, and completion for all Florida students.

As a nonpartisan organization, FCAN strives to expand knowledge of research, data, policies and practices that impact postsecondary access and attainment in Florida. This preview is intended as an educational resource and does not constitute an endorsement or opposition to any specific bill or legislation.

For more research and data from FCAN, visit www.floridacollegeaccess.org/research-and-data/.

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