

2023 FL Legislative Session Recap:

A historic budget, new funding programs for teachers, and career and technical education (CTE) expansion



June 2023*

***as of 6/1/2023**

Introduction

The 2023 regular legislative session adjourned sine die early on Friday, May 5th. Lawmakers voted on a record-breaking \$117 billion budget, supporting a variety of new and continued initiatives. Increased per-pupil funding, \$2.7 billion in tax cuts, and the creation of the Hurricane Ian and Nicole Grant Recovery Program are just some of what's included in the balanced budget.

In total, 1,873 bills were filed this session, of which 356 passed. Of the 356, major policy changes include expansion of CTE and work-based learning in the K-12 system, universal charter school vouchers for Florida students, and the creation of various funding and workforce programs to continue addressing Florida's teacher shortage.

This session recap provides an overview of higher education legislation, outlined in further detail below, that will impact Florida's students and postsecondary education system:

- **CS/CS/SB 240 – Education**
- **SB 274 – Nursing Education Pathway for Military Combat Medics**
- **CS/SB 1190 – Step into Success Workforce Education and Internship Pilot Program**
- **CS/SB 1272 – Educational Grants**
- **CS/SB 196 – Guidance Services on Academic and Career Planning**
- **CS/CS/CS/SB 266 – Higher Education**
- **CS/HB 339 – Education of Dependents of Deceased or Disabled Servicemembers, Prisoners of War, and Persons Missing in Action**
- **CS/SB 732 – Collegiate Purple Star Campuses**
- **CS/HB 1035 – K-12 Teachers**
- **CS/CS/CS/HB 1537 – Education**

As of the date on this recap's release, the budget and (unless otherwise indicated) all legislation is awaiting Governor DeSantis' signature.

Legislation Impacting Postsecondary Education

CS/CS/SB 240 – Education

Bill Sponsors: Senate Fiscal Policy Committee, Senate Education PreK-12 Committee, and Senator Travis Hutson (R – St. Augustine)

This Senate Bill on education is a vast bill that builds on the work of the REACH Act from 2021, expands CTE in middle and high school, and provides work-based learning opportunities for students, among other various provisions.

Experiential Learning Tax Credit Program

- Changes the existing Internship Tax Credit Program to the Experiential Learning Tax Credit Program. In addition to interns, businesses would be eligible for this program if they also opted to have an apprentice or pre-apprentice at their business. These individuals must work at least 500 hours for the business to receive the tax credit of \$2,000 per individual (up to \$10,000 per year). The bill appropriates \$2.5 million for the program, each year, through 2025.

CTE Expansion and Work-based Learning

- Each school district must ensure that each high school student has access to at least one work-based learning opportunity (ex. internships or pre-apprenticeships).
- School districts are also responsible for requiring each high school to hold an annual career fair for 11th and 12th grade students and ensure that they have the opportunity to meet and interview with prospective employers. The bill allows a group of high schools to opt to hold a joint career fair, within reasonable distance.
- The bill expands the current statute on controlled open enrollment to include middle school students who completed a CTE course or received an industry certification. These students must have the opportunity to continue their high school education in the same program if it is available.
- Requires that middle school students create a career plan and update annually in high school.
- Students may opt to take a CTE course in place of a course in fine or performing arts, required for a standard high school diploma.
- The State Board of Education (SBE) must establish a rule that would allow students to receive work-based learning credit for their participation in CTE student organizations. (Ex. Future Farmers of America)
- DOE shall convene a workgroup to enhance middle to high school CTE pathways. The workgroup must also create three math pathways in K-12 to align with postsecondary and career success outcomes.

- The Florida Talent Development Council is tasked with identifying current barriers and best practices for students in grades 6-12 to participate in work-based learning opportunities. The Council must submit a report to the legislature and include recommendations for collaborative efforts between school boards, businesses, and local workforce development boards.

Open Door Grant Program

- The Open Door Grant Program is expanded to cover 100% of tuition and fees, books, and other related materials after all other aid programs have been applied.
- Additionally, a student may be eligible to receive a \$1,500 stipend to cover other expenses related to cost of attendance, such as housing or transportation. Funding for the program is subject to the General Appropriations Act (GAA).

Associate Degrees in District Career Centers

- This section of the bill will allow limited associates degrees to be offered by school district career centers. Starting July 1 2024, districts will be able to submit proposals to the SBE to offer an associate in science and an associate in applied science degrees.
- The degree programs must work to meet current workforce needs and be approved by the SBE or created through partnerships with their local Florida College System (FCS) institution. The bill details the timeline for program creation, submission, approval, and implementation. The career centers must submit an annual report detailing program performance metrics to the SBE and legislature.

Workforce Education Partnership Programs

- A state university system (SUS) institution and private business may opt to create a workforce education partnership, similar to a partnership created at [Miami University, OH](#). These programs would allow students to work and learn without taking on additional debt or loans for their education.
- The Board of Governors (BOG) is responsible for establishing a template for the program including student eligibility criteria, and guidance for the SUS school to provide a housing stipend, mentor, and life management skills to students.

Other Provisions

- CareerSource must assist the state board in identifying collaborative approaches for workforce development in order to streamline services and increase efficiency.
- Clarifies that industry certifications in the agricultural sector be submitted for consideration on the Master Credentials List (MCL). The Credentials Review Committee must determine labor market demand for this employment sector. It also creates a one-year phase out timeline for a credential that no longer meets the required metrics.

- Each local workforce development board is responsible for creating an education and industry consortium to provide community-based information to assist the board in making decisions for program and service delivery in their respective community.
- The bill expands who may serve as an apprenticeship sponsor to include an educational institution, a community or faith-based organization, and a local workforce board.
- The Florida Center for Nursing must convene workgroups composed of various industry professionals and stakeholders to identify changes to address the workforce shortage. The workgroups will provide an annual report to the legislature and the Governor.
- Allows an individual with a relevant industry certification to serve as an adjunct teacher without passing a subject area exam.
- The Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) is tasked with reviewing current statewide articulation agreements. Specific areas include the percentage of students in an articulated career program that transfer and complete their linked program and recommendations to strengthen current articulation agreements. This report is due to the legislature by November 1, 2023.
- \$100 million is appropriated for the 2023-2024 fiscal year to the DOE to fund the Workforce Development Capitalization Incentive Grant Program. The funding is for school districts and FCS institutions to update workforce programs that serve secondary students.

This bill takes effect on July 1, 2023 and was signed by the Governor on May 15, 2023.

SB 274 – Nursing Education Pathway for Military Combat Medics

Bill Sponsor: Senator Bryan Avila (R – Hialeah Gardens)

Senate Bill 274 creates the “Pathway for Military Combat Medics Act”, another proposal to address Florida’s nursing shortage. The bill aims to provide combat medics with postsecondary course credit based on their medical experiences in the military. By December 1, the Articulation Coordinating Committee (ACC) workgroup must determine postsecondary course equivalencies or career education clock hours for military training. The bill was signed on May 26, 2023 and took effect upon signing.

CS/SB 1190: Step into Success Workforce Education and Internship Pilot Program

Bill Sponsors: Senate Children, Families, and Elder Affairs Committee and Senator Ileana Garcia (R – Miami)

Committee substitute for Senate Bill 1190 creates the Step into Success Workforce Education and Internship Pilot Program for foster youth in Florida. The Step into Success Pilot Program is a three-year program to provide eligible current and former foster youth (ages 17-25) with the opportunity to learn and develop essential workforce and professional skills and receive assistance in their transition to independent living. The Department of Children and Families (DCF) is responsible for developing and administering program components alongside subject

matter experts. The bill appropriates \$500,000 in recurring funds for the administration of this pilot. The bill takes effect on July 1, 2023.

CS/SB 1272: Educational Grants

Bill Sponsors: Senate Appropriations Committee and Senator Corey Simon (R – Tallahassee)

Committee substitute for Senate Bill 1272 expands the current Effective Access to Student Education (EASE) Grant to specific institutions who were eligible for the repealed Access to Better Learning and Education (ABLE) Grant Program. New institutions must be universities present in Florida for over 20 years, offer nursing programs, and be accredited by the Higher Learning Commission. Additionally, students now attending an independent for-profit university or college that has a level 6 accreditation may also be eligible. These institutions must serve a secular purpose and may not be an SUS or FCS school. This bill was signed on May 17, 2023 and took effect upon signing.

Other Relevant Bills

CS/SB 196: Guidance Services on Academic and Career Planning

Bill Sponsors: Senate Commerce and Tourism Committee and Senator Shevrin Jones (D – Miami Gardens)

This bill adds CTE and work-based learning to the current conversations school counselors have with students. Now, counselors must also discuss the following: career and professional academies, career-themed courses, the CTE pathway to earn a standard high diploma, work-based learning opportunities, and foundational and soft-skill credentialing programs.

School counselors must ensure this information is disseminated to students' parents in a language they can understand. This bill was signed on May 17, 2023 and takes effect on July 1, 2023.

CS/CS/CS/SB 266: Higher Education

Bill Sponsors: Senate Fiscal Policy Committee, Senate Appropriations Committee on Education, Senate Education Postsecondary Committee, and Senator Erin Grall (R – Ft. Pierce)

This bill revises various areas of BOG and SUS operations. The BOG is tasked with periodically reviewing the mission of each public university and ensuring their existing academic offerings align with the mission. It adds a new preeminence metric: annual STEM-related research expenditures of \$50 million. This legislation also creates The Institute for Risk Management and Insurance, at the University of Central Florida (UCF), in order to respond to this everchanging industry in the state.

Hiring Practices

Under this section, the university president has the final hiring authority for all full-time faculty, including deans and the provost of their university. Upon hiring of faculty, the university may

not require an oath or pledge be taken, outside of upholding the state and federal rule of law. Additionally, each president must submit an annual report on university personnel earning a salary of \$200,000 or more and must include their performance evaluations.

University and College Expenditures

This section changes directives on college and university expenditures. In addition to the current protected classes listed, funds cannot go to an organization that discriminates on color, sex, or disability. Universities and colleges may also not spend dollars to promote or maintain activities and programs that “advocate for diversity, equity, and inclusion, or promote or engage in political or social activism.” The bill also clarifies that this language does not prohibit the following activities: access programs for military students, Pell Grant recipients, first generation college students, nontraditional students, students with unique abilities, transfer students, and those from low-income households.

Hamilton Center for Classical and Civic Education/Florida Institute for Governance and Civics

This bill provides language that directs the Hamilton Center for Classical and Civic Education at the University of Florida (UF) to eventually become a formal college and in the meantime, also develop curriculum for civic discourse courses, to be used in the SUS. These courses are created to satisfy the requirement in civic discourse. Starting with January 1, 2025 and each subsequent year, UF must submit a report detailing the timeline for the Center to become a college, current financial progress, and future educational outcomes.

There are also changes to the Florida Institute of Politics at Florida State University (FSU) and Adam Smith Center at Florida International University (FIU) that will create content, including curriculum and courses, on government, civic literacy and civil discourse for use in K-12 and postsecondary.

General Education Courses

This section of the bill directs that general education courses must not include identity politics within their curriculum. Specifically, it lists the outcomes for curriculum in mathematics, social sciences, natural sciences, communications, and humanities courses. Furthermore, the bill states that general education courses should provide rigorous, historically accurate and high-quality coursework. Courses that include unproven, speculative, or exploratory content should be limited to specific program requirements or elective credits.

Each institution’s board of trustees and president is required to review and approve general education courses using the guidelines described above. These courses must be submitted for approval to the SBE and BOG. Institutions that do not comply with these rules will not be eligible for performance-based funding. The bill was signed by Governor DeSantis on May 15, 2023 and takes effect July 1, 2023.

CS/HB 339 – Education of Dependents of Deceased or Disabled Servicemembers, Prisoners of War, and Persons Missing in Action

Bill Sponsors: House Local Administration, Federal Affairs and Special Districts Subcommittee and Representative Taylor Michael Yarkosky (R – Clermont)

The bill expands educational benefits to dependents of deceased or disabled servicemembers, prisoners of war, and persons missing in action. The dependent receiving the benefits must qualify as a Florida resident for tuition purposes and the servicemember must have Florida listed as their official home in the Defense Enrollment Eligibility Reporting System (DEERS) database. This takes effect on July 1, 2023.

CS/SB 732 – Collegiate Purple Star Campuses

Bill Sponsors: Senate Education Postsecondary Committee and Senator Tom Wright (R – Port Orange)

Committee substitute for Senate Bill 732 creates the Collegiate Purple Star Campuses program for postsecondary institutions. The SBE and BOG are responsible for adopting rules to establish this optional program and must include the following: designation of a staff member as a military liaison, priority course registration for military students, and maintenance of a student-led transition program to ensure military student success. This bill was signed on May 26, 2023 and takes effect on July 1, 2023.

CS/HB 1035: K-12 Teachers

Bill Sponsors: House Civil Justice Subcommittee and Representative Karen Gonzalez-Pittman (R – Tampa)

This bill creates the “Teacher’s Bill of Rights” for teachers in the K-12 system and provides a tuition and fee waiver for individuals enrolled in a state-approved teacher preparation program. Below, three new funding programs are covered, created to address Florida’s teacher shortage. Funding for all three programs is subject to appropriations in the GAA.

Dual Enrollment Educator Scholarship Program

Under this program, current teachers would be eligible for a scholarship for their master’s degree, required to teach dual enrollment. The DOE must work with the BOG to create a list of approved degree programs for this scholarship funding. Teachers who receive the award must commit to complete the program within three years, teach at least one dual enrollment course a semester, and remain in their school district for at least three years. The scholarship award will cover tuition and fees, includes a book stipend for each semester, and must be repaid to the DOE if the aforementioned criteria is not met.

The Teacher Apprenticeship Program and Mentor Bonus

This program is created to provide individuals engaged in education (ex. paraprofessionals) with an alternative pathway to step into the teaching sector. Eligible individuals must have an associate degree with at least a 3.0 GPA, received a temporary apprenticeship certificate, and

pass a background screening. Apprentices must complete two years of their training under a teacher mentor, will be paid, and not charged tuition for their postsecondary coursework.

Teacher mentors will be individuals who have at least seven years of teaching in Florida and received a score of “highly effective” on their last three performance evaluations. Mentor teachers are eligible for a bonus for their participation.

Heroes in the Classroom Bonus Program

This bonus program is created to incentivize retired first responders and veterans to become teachers. Eligible recipients will receive a one-time bonus and may receive an additional bonus if they also commit to teaching in DOE determined critical shortage areas.

This bill was signed on May 9, 2023 and takes effect July 1, 2023.

CS/CS/CS/HB 1537: Education

Bill Sponsors: House Education and Employment Committee, House Appropriations Committee, House Education Quality Subcommittee, Representative Alex Rizo (R – Hialeah) and Representative Kimberly Daniels (D – Jacksonville)

This education bill is layered, mainly focusing on various areas of K-12 education. However, changes to postsecondary education are covered below.

Development of New Accelerated Courses

The bill tasks the SBE and BOG to identify FCS and SUS institutions who will develop curriculum for new accelerated courses, similar to advanced placement (AP). DOE is authorized to partner with an independent third-party testing organization who will develop the corresponding assessments for these new courses to measure course competencies. Students passing the test will receive postsecondary credit. By January 1, 2024, DOE must report on the alignment of the new courses and student success at the postsecondary level. Items in the report must include how the new courses align to completion rates and how to improve acceptance (in other states) of postsecondary credit earned by these courses.

Classic Learning Test and Bright Futures Updates

Starting with the 2023-2024 academic year, students will have the option to take the Classic Learning Test (CLT) in addition to the SAT and ACT for college entrance. Students would also be eligible to use a minimum CLT score for their Bright Futures Scholarship testing requirement. The DOE is responsible for establishing concordant scores for the CLT.

Last year, the Legislature passed CS/HB 461, which allowed a student to substitute work experience for the required volunteer service hour component of the Bright Futures Scholarship. However, a student could not combine both. This bill provides this flexibility to students to choose one or both ways to satisfy this requirement. The bill also adds additional accountability and data elements for postsecondary institutions licensed under the Commission for Independent Education (CIE). This bill was signed by the Governor on May 9, 2023 and takes effect on July 1, 2023.

Budget

The Florida Legislature approved a record \$117 billion budget, surpassing last year's budget of \$112.1 billion. In addition to the funding for education that is highlighted below, this budget also includes increased investment in Florida's wildlife corridor and \$252 million in additional funding for teacher pay increases. Governor DeSantis has until July 1, the start of the new fiscal year, to sign the budget.

The State University System will receive \$3.68 billion in operating funds. Highlights include:

- No tuition increases
- \$645 million for state university performance-based funding incentives
- \$38.5 million for incentives for Programs of Strategic Emphasis (Buy One, Get One Free)
 - Includes \$3 million for teacher education programs
- \$100 million for Preeminent state research universities
- \$100 million for performance-based recruitment and retention incentives

The Florida College System will receive \$1.59 billion in operating funds. Highlights include:

- No tuition increases
- \$100 million for the new Florida College System funding model
- \$20 million for students earning industry certifications in high-skill, high-demand areas at Florida colleges
- \$30 million for student success incentive funds

Financial aid programs in the state received strong support, while policymakers continue to look at the state and student return on investment of these funds. Highlights include:

- *EASE Tuition Assistance Grant*: The EASE grant provides tuition assistance to Florida resident students attending eligible independent, non-profit schools (and certain for-profit schools, under HB 1247). An increase from last year, EASE is funded at \$134.8 million, providing \$3,500 for 37,728 students.
- *Bright Futures*: The Bright Futures Scholarship Program is funded at \$590.6 million.
- *Florida Student Assistance Grant (FSAG)*: \$387 million for Florida's need-based aid program.
- *Benacquisto Scholarship Program*: \$34.7 million
- *Law Enforcement Academy Scholarship*: \$5 million
- *Open Door Grant Program*: \$35 million

Workforce education received a total of \$650 million. Highlights include:

- \$8.5 million for students earning industry certifications in high-skill, high-demand areas at career technical centers
- \$20 million for the Pathways to Career Opportunities Grant Program to establish or expand pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs for high school and college students

- \$5 million for the new Grow Your Own Teacher Registered Apprenticeship Program
- \$5 million for the new Adult General Education Performance-based Incentive Funds
 - Based on recent data on the:
 - Number of adult learners in an adult basic education course or English learning program that earn a non-degree credential
 - Number of adult learners in a GED program that then earn a degree from an FCS institution
- \$4 million for the new Teacher Apprenticeship Program and Mentor Bonus

Other notable items in this session's budget include:

- \$18 million for Dual Enrollment Scholarships
- \$32 million in operating funds for Florida's Historically Black Colleges and Universities
- \$24.6 million for the Florida Postsecondary Academic Library Network
- \$100 million for the Prepping Institutions, Programs, Employers, and Learners through Incentives for Nursing Education (PIPELINE) Fund
- \$25 million for the Linking Industry to Nursing Education (LINE) Fund






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 a rewarding career. We envision a Florida working together where education is the pathway to economic mobility for all. As a nonpartisan organization, FCAN strives to expand knowledge of research, data, policies and practices that impact postsecondary access and attainment in Florida. This report is intended as an educational resource.

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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