

2024 Florida Legislative Session Recap:

Healthcare education, an alternative pathway to graduation, specialized transfer degrees, and career and technical education (CTE) topped this year's list of priorities.



March 2024*

***as of 3/22/2024**

Introduction

The 2024 regular legislative session adjourned sine die on Friday, March 8th. Lawmakers passed a \$117.46 billion budget, supporting a variety of new and continued initiatives. Highlights of the balanced budget include increased per-pupil funding, a 3% raise for all state employees, efforts to address Florida's healthcare workforce shortage, and \$500 million to pay outstanding debt.

In total, 1,902 bills were filed this session, of which 211 passed. Of those advancing from the Legislature, major policy changes include a public school deregulation package after last year's school choice expansion, the creation of a new associate in arts specialized transfer degree, continued focus on CTE and work-based learning in the K-12 system, and social media regulations for minors.

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/SB 62 – Resident Status for Tuition Purposes**
- **CS/CS/SB 494 – Graduate Program Admissions**
- **SB 1688 – Career-themed Courses**
- **CS/SB 7016 – Health Care**
- **CS/SB 7032 – Education**
- **CS/CS/HB 917 – Career and Technical Education**
- **CS/CS/HB 1285 – Education**
- **SB 832 – Employment of Individuals with Disabilities**
- **CS/SB 7004 – Education**
- **CS/CS/HB 49 – Employment**
- **HB 5101 – 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/SB 62 – Resident Status for Tuition Purposes

Bill Sponsors: Senate Education Postsecondary Committee and Senator Rosalind Osgood (D – Plantation); House Bill sponsored by Representative Jervonte Edmonds (D – West Palm Beach)

Senate Bill 62 states that an individual may not lose their resident status for tuition purposes solely due to having been incarcerated in Florida. This bill takes effect on July 1, 2024.

CS/CS/SB 494 – Graduate Program Admissions

Bill Sponsors: Senate Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security Committee, Senate Education Postsecondary Committee, and Senator Bryan Avila (R – Hialeah Gardens); House Bill sponsored by Representative Jeff Holcomb (R – Spring Hill)

Senate Bill 494 waives entry exam requirements (GRE and GMAT) for active duty servicemembers in the US Armed Forces, US Reserve Forces or Florida National Guard applying to graduate programs at a state university system (SUS) institution. This bill takes effect on July 1, 2024.

SB 1688 – Career-themed Courses

Bill Sponsors: Senator Rosalind Osgood (D – Plantation); House Bill sponsored by Representative Lisa Dunkley (D – Lauderhill)

Senate Bill 1688 requires that school districts include strategies to inform and promote CTE opportunities to students, parents, and other interested parties in their strategic plans. Additionally, school districts are responsible for notifying students and parents about career academies or career-themed courses that are available during a students' middle school course enrollment period. The bill takes effect on July 1, 2024.

CS/SB 7016 – Health Care

Bill Sponsors: Senate Fiscal Policy Committee, Senate Health Policy Committee, and Senator Colleen Burton (R – Lakeland); House Bill sponsored by Representative Michael Grant (R – Port Charlotte)

Senate Bill 7016 is part of Senate President Passidomo's Live Healthy Act, a set of priority bills created to address Florida's healthcare workforce shortages. Below are programs created and expanded to address the costs of pursuing a career in healthcare.

Dental Student Loan Repayment Program

The Dental Student Loan Repayment Program allows dentists and dental hygienists to receive an award of up to 20% their principal loan amount if they volunteer 25 hours annually in a Florida-based free clinic. The yearly award amount can be no greater than \$50,000 per dentist and \$7,500 per dental hygienist.

Florida Reimbursement Assistance for Medical Education Program

The bill expands eligibility and increases reimbursement levels for this program that targets healthcare practitioners. Individuals who are employed in a Florida rural hospital or other Florida location in a medically underserved area and volunteer 25 hours annually in a free clinic are eligible to receive funding to offset the cost of earning their degree. The associated reimbursement amounts per position, over a 4-year period, are as follows:

- Up to \$150,000 for physicians
- Up to \$90,000 for advanced practice registered nurses working in autonomous practice
- Up to \$75,000 for advanced practice registered nurses, physician assistants, and mental health professionals
- Up to \$45,000 for registered nurses and licensed practical nurses

Linking Industry to Nursing Education (LINE)

Originally created in 2022, the bill expands the LINE program to provide funding to eligible high-performing independent colleges and universities. Institutions must have at least a 75% NCLEX pass rate.

Training, Education, and Clinicals in Health (TEACH) Funding Program

The new TEACH Funding Program was created to increase the number of healthcare practitioners in the state while also providing care to underserved populations. Federally qualified health centers, rural health clinics, and certified community behavioral health clinics, among other centers, may be reimbursed for the cost of hosting and maintaining a clinical training program.

The bill takes effect upon signing and was signed by the Governor on March 22, 2024.

CS/SB 7032 – Education

Bill Sponsors: Senate Appropriations Committee, Senate Education Postsecondary Committee, and Senator Erin Grall (R – Ft. Pierce); House Bill sponsored by Representative Lauren Melo (R – Naples)

Senate Bill 7032 creates the Graduation Alternative to Traditional Education (GATE) Program and subsequent funding programs to address Florida's youth population without a high school diploma or further education. Highlights include:

Graduation Alternative to Traditional Education (GATE) Program

The GATE Program was created to provide an alternative pathway for individuals ages 16 to 21, who have dropped out of high school and do not have a diploma and additional education. Students who enroll in this program would participate in an adult secondary education and subsequent career education program, at no cost to them. The career program selected must be included on the state Master Credentials List. Students must maintain a minimum of a 2.0 GPA in this coursework and graduate from the program, earning both a high school diploma and career certificate or industry certification, within three years. Students who participate are also eligible for a stipend, tied to the state's Open Door Grant Program.

GATE Funding Programs

- The GATE Scholarship Program provides funding to the participating institutions for this new program. Institutions may use these funds for registration, tuition, and lab fees, among other related costs.
- The GATE Startup Grant Program provides startup grant funds to institutions looking to serve this population in rural communities in Florida. Applications should include the career programs that will be offered to GATE students, outreach strategies, and related costs. The Department of Education (DOE) must make this application available by August 15, 2024, and prioritize the proposals that would deliver both education programs in one location or offer virtual learning opportunities.
- The GATE Program Performance Fund rewards participating institutions for the number of students they successfully graduate through this pathway. Institutions may receive up to \$1,000 per student that graduates from an adult secondary education and career education program in the three-year timeframe.

This bill takes effect on July 1, 2024.

CS/CS/HB 917 – Career and Technical Education

Bill Sponsors: House Education and Employment Committee, House Choice and Innovation Subcommittee, and Representative John Snyder (R – Stuart); Senate Bill sponsored by Senator Corey Simon (R – Tallahassee)

This bill contains a variety of changes, including increased agency coordination and the creation of a statewide asset map.

CTE Statewide Asset Map

The Reimagining Education and Career Help (REACH) Office is responsible for coordinating efforts with DOE, the Department of Commerce, and CareerSource Florida to create a CTE statewide asset map to inform relevant stakeholders of ways they can partner and expand opportunities for students. The map must include a list of all secondary CTE courses and career dual enrollment courses offered in each district, respective student enrollment, and a comparison of current offerings with workforce needs in the state. The REACH Office is also responsible for facilitating collaboration on ways to increase Florida’s healthcare workforce and reporting on nursing education program outcomes.

Other Provisions

- 16- and 17-year-olds can work on residential construction sites if they have earned their Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) 10 certification and are under the supervision of someone who is at least 21, has at least two years of work experience, and has their OSHA 10 certification. The bill specifies they cannot work on any structure over six feet and employers cannot be in violation of the federal Fair Labor Standards Act.
- In addition to the current requirement that high schools host career fairs, districts can also work with their local workforce development board to bring industries to their students for networking opportunities during the school day.

- Senate Bill 240 from the 2023 legislative session tasked DOE with creating a workgroup to enhance middle to high school CTE pathways. HB 917 clarifies that this workgroup must convene by December 1, 2024.
- The bill repeals the Talent Development Council and aligns statutes for the REACH Office to absorb their responsibilities.

The bill takes effect on July 1, 2024.

CS/CS/HB 1285 – Education

Bill Sponsors: House Education and Employment Committee, House Choice and Innovation Subcommittee, and Representative Jennifer Canady (R – Lakeland); Senate Bill sponsored by Senator Danny Burgess (R – Zephyrhills)

House Bill 1285 makes a variety of changes in K-20 education. The following are highlights concerning postsecondary education.

The Office of the Ocean Economy

The Office of the Ocean Economy is created at Florida Atlantic University (FAU). The intention of this new office is to connect Florida’s oceanic resources to economic development strategies and opportunities. Responsibilities include partnering with SUS, FCS, and private institutions for research, educating other state and local groups on the benefits of the ocean economy, and providing a yearly report to the legislature on the development of related emerging industries.

Associate in Arts Specialized Transfer Degrees

The bill creates a new associate in arts specialized transfer degree for AA programs that may require additional coursework, such as certain STEM majors, prior to transferring to a baccalaureate program at a university. The specialized degree must include at least 60 credit hours. FCS institutions who wish to create this new degree must submit a notice of intent to DOE, describe the rationale, and will receive notification of approval within 45 days.

Other Provisions

- Every school district and charter school shall provide junior and seniors with the opportunity to take the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) during the school day and the chance to meet with a military recruiter.
- Public postsecondary institutions cannot prevent current or prospective students from being employed, either part- or full-time.
- District school boards must make efforts to enter into dual enrollment articulation agreements with an FCS institution that offers these courses online.
- Beginning with the 2024-2025 school year, Miami Dade College, Polk State College, and Tallahassee Community College are authorized to charge up to \$290 per credit hour for online nonresident tuition. This is about \$7,000 a year for 24 credits.
- The bill provides a bonus to International Baccalaureate (IB) teachers, at \$50 per student that passes an IB exam.

This bill takes effect on July 1, 2024.

Other Relevant Bills

SB 832 – Employment of Individuals with Disabilities

Bill Sponsors: Senator Alexis Calatayud (R – Miami); House Bill sponsored by Representative Mike Redondo (R – Miami)

Senate Bill 832 adds data sharing responsibilities under the Employment First Act, addressing employment opportunities for Floridians with disabilities. The bill also states that specific efforts must be made to increase the number of individuals with disabilities who are working in competitive integrated employment sectors and decrease the number of individuals working in minimum wage jobs. The REACH Office is responsible for an annual report on the progress of these goals. The bill takes effect on July 1, 2024.

CS/SB 7004 – Education

Bill Sponsors: Senate Fiscal Policy Committee, Senate Education Pre-K-12 Committee, and Senator Corey Simon (R – Tallahassee); House Bill sponsored by Representative Dana Trabulsky (R- Ft. Pierce)

Senate Bill 7004 is part of the Learn Local Act, the set of bills focused on public school deregulation after the expansion of Florida’s school choice program in 2023 (HB 1). The bill includes measures on early learning, K-12 instructional materials adoption, and school turnaround guidelines. The following are relevant sections of the bill:

- Retention for students in K-2 will be based on their performance in English Language Arts (ELA) and math. Corresponding retention plans should include parental notification requirements, allow parents to provide their input on this decision, and emphasize the importance of reading on grade level by 3rd grade.
- A section of Florida Statute focusing on automotive service technology education programs is repealed.
- Previously, the bill eliminated the Algebra 1 EOC and 10th grade ELA assessment requirements for a standard high school diploma, but this provision is no longer included in the final version.

This bill takes effect on July 1, 2024.

CS/CS/HB 49 – Employment

Bill Sponsors: House Local Administration, Federal Affairs and Special Districts Subcommittee, House Regulatory Reform and Economic Development Subcommittee, and Representative Linda Chaney (R – St. Petersburg); Senate Bill sponsored by Senator Danny Burgess (R – Zephyrhills)

This bill makes changes to the current child labor laws in Florida. The proposal adds that 16- and 17-year-olds may work up to 30 hours a week when school is in session. Parents, guardians, or a school superintendent would have the opportunity to waive this requirement on behalf of the student by submitting a form to their employer. Additionally, it clarifies that students authorized

to work these extended hours still need 30-minute breaks every four hours and specifies penalties for employers who violate this section. This bill takes effect on July 1, 2024.

HB 5101 – Education

Bill Sponsors: House PreK-12 Appropriations Subcommittee and Representative Josie Tomkow (R – Polk City); Senate Bill sponsored by Senate Appropriations Committee

House Bill 5101 contains several policy provisions related to the budget for both K-12 and postsecondary education. Highlights include:

- The bill includes FCS institutions in the State Group Health Insurance (SGHI) Program. The initial enrollment period is required to begin as soon as possible with coverage beginning with the 2025 plan year.
- The current Florida Law Enforcement Academy Scholarship Program is expanded to include emergency medical technicians, paramedics, and firefighters. It is also renamed as the Florida First Responder Scholarship Program.
- Charter schools sponsored by an FCS or SUS institution are authorized to receive state-funded discretionary contributions. The fund is created to support schools that do not receive local discretionary millage.
- After creating the Grow Your Own Teacher Apprenticeship Program (TAP) in 2023, the bill removes the requirement that TAP applicants have to complete subject area content or the demonstration of mastery of subject area knowledge prior to receiving their temporary apprenticeship certificate.

The bill takes effect on July 1, 2024.

Budget

The Florida Legislature approved a \$117.46 billion budget. In addition to the funding for education that is highlighted below, this budget also includes \$50 million for water quality improvement in the Florida Everglades, adds FCS employees into the state health insurance system, and creates a new state veterans' nursing home in Collier County. Governor DeSantis has until July 1, the start of the new fiscal year, to sign the budget.

The State University System will receive \$4.96 billion in operating funds. Highlights include:

- No tuition increases
- \$645 million for state university performance-based funding incentives
- \$38 million for incentives for Programs of Strategic Emphasis (Buy One, Get One Free)
- \$100 million for Preeminent state research universities
- \$46 million for nursing education initiatives

The Florida College System will receive \$1.72 billion in operating funds. Highlights include:

- No in-state tuition increases
- \$20 million to support industry certifications in high-skill, high-demand areas at Florida colleges

- \$30 million for student success incentive funds
- \$59 million for nursing education initiatives

Financial aid programs in the state continue to receive strong support. 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). EASE is funded at \$134.8 million, providing \$3,500 for 35,773 students.
 - From the allocation above, \$9.6 million will be used for the EASE Plus incentive program, to provide students in a quality, high-demand program with an additional financial award.
- *Bright Futures*: The Bright Futures Scholarship Program is funded at \$616.9 million.
- *Florida Student Assistance Grant (FSAG)*: \$295.1 million for Florida's need-based aid program.
- *Benacquisto Scholarship Program*: \$39 million
- *Open Door Grant Program*: \$35 million

Workforce education 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 Grow Your Own Teacher Registered Apprenticeship Program
- \$100 million for the Workforce Development Capitalization Incentive Grant Program
- \$2.5 million for the Student Success in CTE Incentive Fund to establish new programs in high demand areas

Other notable items in this session's budget include:

- \$18 million for Dual Enrollment Scholarships
- \$31.4 million in operating funds for Florida's Historically Black Colleges and Universities
- \$24.5 million for the Florida Postsecondary Academic Library Network
- \$7 million for the GATE Program, \$4 million for the GATE Startup Grant Program, and \$1 million for the GATE Program Performance Fund (SB 7032)






Florida College Access Network (FCAN) is Florida's 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. FCAN strives to expand knowledge of research, data, policies, and practices that impact postsecondary access and attainment in Florida.

This document 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/.

Connect with FCAN:

-  Facebook.com/FloridaCollegeAccessNetwork
-  Twitter.com/FLCollegeAccess
-  LinkedIn.com/company/Florida-College-Access-Network

FCAN is an independent statewide organization hosted by the University of South Florida System (USF). The statements and positions presented are those of FCAN and are not made on behalf of the USF Board of Trustees or intended in any way to be representative to USF.