

2021 Florida Legislative Session Update:



April 2021

Financial aid, dual enrollment, and budget cuts on the agenda

Introduction

The 2021 regular legislative session ends on April 30th; however, most would describe this year's experience as anything but 'regular'. Despite an unprecedented year of limited public interaction due to COVID-19 safety protocols, House and Senate leadership appear more determined than ever to pass legislation efficiently and systematically.

House and Senate leadership have doubled down on their efforts to align education and workforce as a way to expedite the economic recovery. Early on, proposals to align financial aid and scholarships to in-demand fields were met with strong opposition, while proposals to increase access to short-term credentials have gained support. Additionally, efforts to expand dual enrollment to high school students and remove barriers to access have also been considered.

Since FCAN released its session preview last month, the Legislature has considered several bills that stand to impact students via postsecondary education and workforce training in the Sunshine State, which are outlined in further detail in this report which includes:

- **CS/CS/SB 52 – Postsecondary Education**
- **PCS/CS/SB 86 – Student Financial Aid**
- **CS/HB 1505 – Workforce Programs and Sponsors**
- **CS/CS/HB 1507 – Workforce Related Programs and Services**
- **CS/HB 51 – Charter Schools**
- **CS/CS/HB 233 – Education**
- **CS/HB 791 – Workforce and Postsecondary Education**
- **CS/HB 845 and CS/SB 1672 – State University Free Seat Program**
- **HB 847 and SB 1436 – Florida Postsecondary Academic Library Network**
- **SB 1108 – Education**
- **CS/HB 1273 and SB 1728 – Out-of-State Fee Waivers for Nonresident Students**

Legislation Impacting Postsecondary Education

CS/CS/SB 52 – Postsecondary Education

Bill Sponsors: Appropriations Committee, Education Committee, Senator Ray Rodrigues (R - Fort Myers) and Senator Dennis Baxley (R - Ocala)

Senate Bill 52 breathes new life to the Dual Enrollment Scholarship Program, a policy outlined in 2020's Senate Bill 62. This year, Senate Bill 52 has already made it through its respective committees and successfully cleared the Senate Floor. The bill contains several provisions that expand postsecondary institutions' financial resources.

Dual Enrollment Scholarship Program

SB 52 establishes the Dual Enrollment Scholarship Program within the Department of Education (DOE). Starting in fall of 2021, the \$33 million Dual Enrollment Scholarship Program would reimburse institutions for the cost of tuition and materials for private and home-schooled dual enrollment students.

Additionally, the Program includes a significant expansion of Florida's investment in dual enrollment for all students. In summer 2022, the Program would repay tuition and fees to institutions for all students taking dual enrollment courses during the summer, regardless of whether they go to a public, private, or home education school.

Early College Program

The proposed legislation also makes some changes to Florida's collegiate high school programs. First, it changes the charge of collegiate programs, specifying their intent to be an accelerated track of full-time postsecondary coursework intended to produce an associate degree. Accordingly, the bill also renames 'collegiate programs' as 'early college programs.' The bill also requires the newly-defined "early college programs" to prioritize courses that align with general education requirements and stipulates that contracts for early college programs must be between a district school board and Florida College System (FCS) institution.

Fee Waivers for Students in DCF Custody

Under current law, students in DCF or non-parent custody are eligible for postsecondary tuition and fee waivers. However, there has been some confusion among postsecondary institutions regarding student eligibility. The bill clarifies that students are eligible for a fee waiver if they were in the custody of the Department of Children and Families (DCF), a relative, or a nonrelative outlined in 39.5085, F.S., or s. 39.6225, F.S at the age of 18.

Senate Bill 52 doesn't have a true companion, but it does share some components with House Bill 281 by Representatives Wyman Duggan (R – Jacksonville) and Ardian Zika (R – Land O' Lakes). HB 281 uses similar language to create the Dual Enrollment Scholarship Fund. The bill

passed through the House's Secondary Education and Career Development Subcommittee and the Post-Secondary Education and Lifelong Learning Subcommittee but has yet to be added to the Appropriations Committee calendar.

PCS/CS/SB 86 – Student Financial Aid

Bill Sponsors: Education Committee and Senator Dennis Baxley (R – Ocala)

One of the most highly debated bills of this year's legislative session is Senate Bill 86. Since the initial filing, the bill has undergone significant changes to address concerns from students, families, and community members around changing Bright Futures eligibility criteria.

In its initial version, SB 86 required the Board of Governors (BOG) and State Board of Education (SBE) to identify postsecondary programs that, upon graduation, lead directly to employment. In order to qualify for financial aid or tuition assistance, students would have to be enrolled in a major or certificate program from the approved list. Critics of the legislation feared the list would eliminate scholarship eligibility for students enrolled in liberal and fine arts programs. In response, Senator Baxley and the Committee on Education reworked the bill, turning the "list of programs that lead to immediate employment" into a "list of programs that do not lead directly to employment," among other changes. However, the Bright Futures eligibility list was ultimately abandoned altogether by the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Education. The version proposed by the subcommittee is the third and most current version of the bill, and includes provisions designed to improve students' career opportunities after graduation.

Bright Futures Eligibility and Funding

Although the most recent proposal for SB 86 eliminates the provision tying student eligibility to their chosen major or program, it still makes several changes to the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program. Most notably, the bill will alter funding by requiring the Legislature to set a predetermined dollar amount per credit hour outlined in the General Appropriations Act (GAA) each year. Under current law, Florida Academic Scholars (FAS) and Florida Medallion Scholars (FMS) receive an award covering 100% and 75% respectively of their tuition and fees at any of Florida's public postsecondary institutions.

In committee, policymakers have insisted that removing the percentage-based funding mechanism does not mean they will cut overall Bright Futures funding or award amounts. However, the bill's opponents are wary of future cuts. Senator Baxley pointed out that, although the state promises to award recipients a certain percentage of tuition and fees, Florida's constitutional requirement to balance the budget means that the award is contingent on the economy.

In addition to the proposed changes to the program's funding, SB 86 also expands the eligibility requirements for the scholarship. Starting in 2021-2022, students who earn an associate's degree in high school or an AP Capstone Diploma with a specific score on 6 AP exams would be eligible to qualify for the FAS and FMS awards.

Benacquisto Scholarship Eligibility

The bill also specifies that 2021-2022 will be the final academic year that nonresident students will be eligible for a Benacquisto Scholarship award. Students currently receiving the award will be grandfathered in with award renewals. Like Bright Futures, the Benacquisto Scholarship would also be annually funded by the GAA, not tied to the cost of tuition.

Career Planning

Although SB 86's changes to Florida's scholarship programs may be the most frequently discussed element of the bill, there are several provisions to help students identify their career options. By 2022, universities will be required to develop a plan to ensure that each student has access to career planning resources, including a BOG created online dashboard with career-planning data organized by discipline to help students understand their salary and career options before committing to a major or career program. The dashboard would include information on postgraduate median salaries, debt-to-income ratio, and other useful career-planning data. University plans must also include an automatic hold on registration for students who have not registered with the university's career center and completed a career readiness training module in their first year.

Fee Waivers for Students in DCF Custody

Like SB 52, SB 86 also clarifies the eligibility requirements for postsecondary tuition and fee waivers for students who are in custody of a relative, nonrelative, or in the custody of the Department of Children and Families (DCF) at the age of 18.

CS/CS/SB 86 has made it out of its final committee stop, Senate Appropriations. It is scheduled to have its second reading in the Senate on April 7th.

CS/HB 1505 – Workforce Programs and Sponsors

Bill sponsors: Post-Secondary Education and Lifelong Learning Subcommittee and Representative Lauren Melo (R – Naples)

CS/HB 1505 is a consumer-centered workforce bill meant to streamline access to services provided by the Department of Economic Opportunity (DEO), the Department of Education (DOE), and the Department of Children and Families (DCF) by creating a one-stop workforce system, promoting collaboration and coordination between the agencies, and simplifying accessibility and case management. The bill also includes uniform minimum standards for apprenticeships and preapprenticeships to measure program performance.

One-Stop Consumer-First Workforce System

HB 1505 requires the DEO to work with the DOE and the DCF to create an automated one-stop workforce system. In order to minimize barriers to consumers, the system would have a single intake form shared by all three agencies. State employees monitoring the system would be trained to recognize and prequalify individuals who may be eligible for services administered by

other partner agencies. This way, Floridians would be notified of all the assistance for which they are qualified, and a case manager could guide them through the processes.

Student Career Planning

The bill also contains provisions to improve K-12 students' knowledge of career options early on. HB 1505 stipulates that middle school students may not be promoted to high school until they have completed an Internet-based career and education planning course. The course must meet eight standards that focus on helping students develop a career plan and soft skills. Additionally, high school students would be required to complete a digital resume.

For postsecondary students, the bill requires career service centers to help students become employable. The centers would be required to help students to the best of their ability, by utilizing state career planning resources, so that they may find employment after graduation.

Apprenticeships and Preapprenticeships

To better serve students pursuing a workforce-based education, HB 1505 requires the DOE to create a uniform minimum set of standards for apprenticeship and preapprenticeship programs by occupation. Training providers would have to submit relevant data to measure each program's performance. The bill also adds new reporting requirements that the DOE must supply in their annual apprenticeship and preapprenticeship programs.

Digital Credential

Starting in the 2022-2023 academic year, all public postsecondary institutions must provide students with the opportunity to earn a nationally recognized digital credential demonstrating career readiness. The credential would be awarded when the student completes a certain selection of core competency courses determined by a faculty committee.

Work-Based Learning

Finally, HB 1505 explicitly defines "work-based learning" and sets some basic standards for what it must include, such as firsthand experience with tasks in a given career field, the development of workplace skills, and links to a career path. It also tasks the SBE to use these standards to adopt formal rules for work-based learning opportunities.

The bill sailed through its initial committee assignments and its substitute is currently in its final committee stop, the House Education Employment Committee. From there, it will be ready to head to the House Floor.

CS/CS/HB 1507 – Workforce Related Programs and Services

Bill sponsors: Appropriations Committee, Post-Secondary Education and Lifelong Learning Subcommittee, and Representative Clay Yarborough (R – Jacksonville)

Like HB 1505, HB 1507 by Representative Yarborough (R – Jacksonville) seeks to improve Florida's workforce by promoting cross-collaboration between agencies and encourage students to pursue high-demand degrees and credentials. At 95 pages, HB 1507 is a lengthy bill addressing issues from the local level to federal-level resources. This update covers the elements of the bill that pertain to education, data collection, and transparency.

Reimagining Education and Career Help Office

To align the different agencies in Florida's workforce development system, HB 1507 creates the Reimagining Education and Career Help (REACH) Act, establishing the REACH Office within the Executive Office of the Governor. The Governor would appoint a Director to oversee operations of the REACH Office, and the office serve as a dedicated expert on all things pertaining to Florida's education to workforce pipeline, including oversight of the Florida Talent Development Council and coordination of state and federal workforce programs such as CareerSource and the DOE.

Notably, a key responsibility of the REACH Office would be to improve access to federal workforce programs. HB 1507 calls on the REACH Office to utilize a "no-wrong-door entry strategy," meaning that Floridians should not have to initiate contact with multiple departments or agencies to be connected with a workforce training or education program. The bill provides several directives to implement the strategy, such as a common intake form for a shared case management system.

To further the mission of access and equity seen in the "no-wrong-door strategy," the REACH Office would also develop an Internet-based "workforce opportunity portal" providing Floridians with a clear look at workforce services from the local to the federal level. The portal would also contain labor market data and align in-demand jobs with required skills and credentials. By accessing this portal, Floridians would navigate through programs, career paths, wage data, and program quality. The office would also review public postsecondary, and public and private workforce programs at least once every five years.

Strategic Efforts to Self-Sufficiency (SEAS)

In direct response to Florida's [SAIL to 60 Attainment goal codified in 2019's workforce education bill](#), HB 1507 creates three strategies to help the state meet its goal for 60% of working-age Floridians to hold a degree or credential beyond a high school diploma.

First, it establishes the aforementioned workforce opportunity portal to be administered by the REACH Office.

Second, it creates the Open Door Grant Program. The Open Door Grant Program would provide grants to eligible postsecondary technical centers and FCS institutions to cover two-thirds of the cost of "short-term, high-demand" programs per eligible student upon graduation and attainment a credential. The student would pay one-third of the program cost and agree to cover an additional third of the program costs if they do not graduate. The State Board of Education (SBE) would adopt rules for the grant program and the Department of Education (DOE) would administer the grants.

The third and final Strategic Effort to Self-Sufficiency is the creation of a Money-Back Guarantee Program. In short, starting in the 2022-2023 academic year, school districts and FCS institutions would be required to refund tuition to eligible graduates who are unable to find a job in their field of training within six months of successfully completing their program. The institutions would have to offer this money-back guarantee for at least four programs that lead to in-demand jobs, or, if the institution offers seven or fewer programs, 50% of the programs offered.

Credentials of Value

In Florida's ongoing attempt to align education with the workforce, one of the most commonly asked questions is "what defines a high-value credential?" HB 1507 seeks to answer that question by reviewing Florida's postsecondary program offerings from the credential level to the postgraduate level. The bill requires the CareerSource state board to appoint a committee to identify both degree and non-degree credentials of value. The committee, titled the Credentials Review Committee, must consist of specific individuals outlined by the bill, such as the Chancellor of the FCS and the Chancellor of the Division of Career and Adult Education. The Credentials Review Committee would be tasked with creating a framework that defines credentials of value, establishes metrics and criteria to identify such credentials, and a "Masters Credential List" to be approved by the CareerSource state board.

CAPE Industry Certification Identification

In the Master Credentials List, the committee must include credentials of value for CAPE Industry Certification funding at the secondary and postsecondary levels. The SBE would use the list to update the CAPE Industry Certification starting with the 2022-2023 school year, including those that are eligible for additional FTE funding. HB 1507 also requires middle grades to align professional and academy courses to careers and occupations on the CAPE list.

PSE List

In addition to the Master Credentials List, the bill would require the BOG prioritize certain degree programs based off the criteria established by the Credentials Review Committee. Priority programs would be added to a list of "Programs of Strategic Emphasis," or the PSE list. The list would have to be revised every three years.

Workforce Performance Funding Model

HB 1507 also alters the incentive formulas for school district technical centers and FCS institutions. Beginning with the 2022-2023 fiscal year, the Credentials Review Committee would have to design and implement a "returned-value" funding formula based on student employment and wages. The legislation specifies that this formula must place emphasis on improving the economic mobility of underserved populations.

Workforce Education Programs

The bill also creates new provisions related to workforce education programs. The SBE would have to approve workforce education programs before implementation at an FCS institution or school district technical center. The SBE would create criteria to evaluate new programs according to certain stipulations in the bill. For example, the criteria should prioritize institutions successfully utilizing the Money-Back Guarantee Program.

Other Provisions

HB 1507 includes several other provisions. The bill provides additional guidance for the DOE's annual CTE audit, makes changes to the Florida Education & Training Placement Information Program (FETPIP), and restructures the Workforce Estimating Conference, renaming it as the Labor Market Estimating Conference. It also requires the Talent Development Council (TDC) to

develop a plan to meet the state's demand for health care employees, beginning with the nursing shortage. The TDC would be required to report on their progress annually. Finally, the bill requires the DEO to work with Local Workforce Development Boards (LWDBs) to measure the impact of workforce programs that assist individuals receiving public assistance. Together, the DEO and LWDBs would conduct annual reports evaluating the programs using multiple measures, including a "self-sufficiency" index.

House Bill 1507 has received overwhelming support in each of its committee stops. Its substitute is currently awaiting approval from the House Education and Employment Committee before heading to the House floor for a vote.

Other Relevant Bills

CS/HB 51– Charter Schools

Bill sponsors: Early Learning and Elementary Education Subcommittee and Representative Stan McClain (R – Ocala)

House Bill 51 authorizes state universities and FCS institutions to sponsor charter schools with approval from the DOE. It also allows state university sponsored charters to enroll students from multiple school districts, and FCS sponsored charter schools to enroll students from any county in their service area. According to Representative McClain, the purpose of the bill is to expand service to underserved regions and better meet workforce demands. For state university and FCS sponsored schools, the institution's board of trustees would serve as the local educational agency and would take on the responsibility of accepting federal funds. Students attending the schools would be included in the school district's grade calculation. The bill also allows charter schools to operate career and professional academies and revises several provisions related to charter schools

HB 51 passed through its committees with a substitute. It is currently awaiting approval by the Education & Employment Committee.

CS/CS/HB 233– Education

Bill sponsors: Education & Employment Committee, Post-Secondary Education and Lifelong Learning Committee and Representative Spencer Roach (R – Orlando)

CS/CS/HB 233, originally filed by Representative Spencer Roach (R – Orlando) addresses intellectual freedom on college campuses. The bill has attracted statewide attention from both sides of the aisle as it passed through its first two committee stops, the House Postsecondary Education and Lifelong Learning Subcommittee and the House Education and Employment Committee.

The bill's centerpiece features a diversity survey to be administered annually at each SUS and FCS institution beginning in 2022. The State Board of Education (SBE) and Board of Governors (BOG) would be responsible for creating the survey, which must be "objective, nonpartisan, and statistically valid," and publishing the results.

Also included in the bill is a provision to prevent the SBE, BOG, FCS and SUS institutions from “shielding” students from ideas that they may find “uncomfortable, unwelcome, disagreeable, or offensive.” Critics of the bill have pointed out that this policy could cause discord at institutions by restricting their autonomy when restricting certain activists and public figures from demonstrating on campus. However, those championing the bill claim that institutions would retain the right to prioritize student safety.

CS/CS/HB 233 also allows students to record their classes without the consent of others present, however those recordings may not be published without the permission of the lecturer. The bill stipulates that lectures may only be used for personal educational use, in relation to a complaint made against the institution where the recording was made, or as evidence in a legal proceeding. Those in violation of these limitations would be subject to damages pending litigation.

Finally, the bill expands due process for all students, student government officers, and student organizations. It provides an appeal process and some additional rights to students who face disciplinary action from the institution.

CS/CS/HB 233 has already passed a House floor vote with 77 yeas and 42 nays. It is currently on its third reading in the Senate. Its companion bill, CS/CS/SB 264 by Senator Ray Rodrigues (R – Fort Myers), was read twice in the Senate before being substituted by CS/CS/HB 233.

CS/HB 791 – Workforce and Postsecondary Education

Bill sponsors: Secondary Education & Career Development Subcommittee and Representative Joe Harding (R – Ocala)

Committee substitute for House Bill 791 seeks to improve high school students’ access to postsecondary education through articulation. It allows State Board of Education (SBE) to determine alternate assessments to measure college-level competency in admissions counseling and course placement. The bill would also allow applicants with out-of-state high school equivalency diplomas to enroll, subject to FCS approval.

The bill also removes the requirement that students must achieve a minimum score on a common placement test for initial entry in a dual enrollment program. Instead, the student would have to demonstrate college-level communication and computation skills using alternative measures established by the SBE.

Additionally, the bill requires faculty from the SUS, FCS, and school district career centers to identify the three pathways that align high school and college math courses with postsecondary programs and meta-majors and careers. Students pursuing a liberal arts meta-major would have a different math curriculum than those interested in pursuing STEM, for example.

Finally, HB 791 increases equity by authorizing the SBE and Board of Governors (BOG) to adopt rules and regulations that would revise the documentation requirements for homeless students seeking a fee waiver.

Senate Bill 366 shares some similar provisions to HB 791. Like HB 791, SB 366 requires the SBE and BOG to consult in the creation of “meta majors” and corresponding math pathways. It also shares the provision expanding competency assessments for students entering FCS institutions to better facilitate dual enrollment.

CS/HB 791 was reported favorably by the House Post-Secondary Education & Lifelong Learning Committee and is assigned to the Education Employment Committee.

CS/HB 845 and CS/SB 1672 – State University Free Seat Program

Bill Sponsors: Post-Secondary Education and Lifelong Learning Subcommittee and Representative David Smith (R—Winter Springs); Senate Education Committee and Senator Manny Diaz (R—Hialeah Gardens)

HB 845 is a waiver program to incentivize adults to enroll in one of Florida’s state universities. The bill would award a tuition waiver to eligible students—veterans, active-duty military members, active members of the Florida National Guard, and individuals who have not been enrolled in a postsecondary institution for over five years—to cover the cost of one online course at a state university. For all subsequent courses, program participants would receive a 25% discount on tuition for up to 110% of the required course credit hours. The bill has already passed its first two committees with overwhelming support from both sides of the aisle.

CS/ SB1672 by Senator Manny Diaz (R – Hialeah Gardens), is identical to HB 845. The bill passed through the Senate Education Committee but yet to be added to the calendar of its next stop, the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on Education.

HB 847 and SB 1436 – Florida Postsecondary Academic Library Network

Bill Sponsors: Representative Cord Byrd (R—Jacksonville Beach); Senator Joe Gruters (R—Sarasota)

HB 847 creates the Florida Postsecondary Academic Library Network under the purview of the Board of Governors (BOG) and the Department of Education (DOE). The bill comes in response to Governor DeSantis’ 2020 veto of Complete Florida Plus, an initiative designed to improve Floridian’s degree completion rate. If passed, the Florida Postsecondary Academic Library Network would continue services from Complete Florida Plus.

First, HB 847 will provide access and information about distance learning programs offered throughout the state. Second, the bill requires the FCS and SUS to organize online academic support services. Third, it establishes an online library with all the standard services and resources available at Florida’s public colleges and universities.

HB 847 codifies services to be administered by the Florida Postsecondary Academic Library Network. Included in the bill would be a shared catalog of library holdings accessible to

authorized users, a database of digital archives, and a virtual helpdesk. The bill also requires the network to promote and distribute open-access textbooks to help students save money.

Finally, the bill formally repeals Complete Florida Plus, which is currently still in statute but no longer receives funding. The Office of the BOG and DOE will share the responsibility of choosing a Florida Postsecondary Academic Library Network host entity.

HB 847's companion is Senate Bill 1436 by Senator Joe Gruters is similar to HB 847 but has some minor differences in language. The bill passed through the Senate's Education Committee as well as the Appropriations Subcommittee on Education. SB 1436 has not yet been scheduled for its last stop, the Appropriations Committee.

SB 1108 – Education

Bill sponsors: Senate Judiciary Committee and Senator Manny Diaz (R – Hialeah Gardens)

Senate Bill 1108 primarily deals with civic literacy at the high school level. It requires high school students to take a civic literacy course and pass a civic literacy assessment beginning in the 2021-2022. It also tasks the State Board of Education (SBE) and the Board of Governors (BOG) to develop a postsecondary literacy course and assessment. Students who pass the high school civic literacy assessment would be exempt from the postsecondary civic literacy requirements.

Notably, the bill also requires all Florida public high schools to administer the SAT or ACT to all 11th grade students. In committee, Senator Diaz clarified that the tests would be administered at the student's school during regular school hours.

SB 1108 has enjoyed unanimous bipartisan support during its stops in the Senate Education and Judiciary Committees. It has one final stop in the Senate Appropriations Committee before being sent to the Senate Floor for a vote.

CS/HB 1273 and SB 1728 – Out-of-State Fee Waivers for Nonresident Students

Bill sponsors: Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee and Representative Patt Maney (R – Fort Walton Beach); Senate Education Committee and Senator Dennis Baxley (R—Ocala)

House Bill 1273 creates a fee waiver for out-of-state students whose grandparents are state residents of Florida, as defined in statute. For a student to be eligible, they would have to earn a high school diploma and an SAT or ACT score within at least the 89th percentile. They would also have to enroll in an undergraduate program full-time in the Fall term and provide a "written declaration" of the student's relationship to the grandparent.

The bill's Senate companion, SB 1728 by Senator Dennis Baxley (R – Ocala), is almost identical to HB 1273 with the exception of one extra provision. Senate Bill 1728 was amended by Senator Joe Gruters (R – Sarasota) to include the creation of a compact with other states. This version of the bill would limit fee waivers to students from a state participating in the compact. In return, Florida's students would also be eligible for an out-of-state fee waiver from states participating

in the compact. SB 1728 provides additional rules and specifications for the creation and administration of the compact.

Currently, HB 1273 is in the House Education and Employment Committee for the CS to be approved before it can be sent to the House Floor for a vote. SB 1728 has only been heard in its first committee stop, the Senate Education Committee, where it was reported favorably with a committee substitute.

Budget

As the 2021 legislative session blazes past the halfway point, the Florida House and the Senate have begun their annual budgetary number-crunching. These budgets are expected to undergo significant changes, as Florida economists plan to release a revised estimate of the total available general revenue funds on April 6. Like last year's proposals, the Florida Senate recommends a more modest budget than the House at \$95 billion and \$97.1 billion, respectively. Governor Ron DeSantis' budget proposal falls squarely in the middle at \$96.6 billion. Although all three budget proposals are larger than last year's, DeSantis has called for state agencies to continue their holdback of 6%.

While neither chamber's budget is finalized, both the House and Senate call for significant cuts to higher education, an unfortunate consequence of COVID's impact. The Senate's higher education proposal totals nearly \$8.3 billion. Meanwhile, the House's higher education package totals \$7.9 billion, representing \$593 million in cuts, a 7% decrease from the current fiscal year.

Although the House's higher education budget may be the leaner of the two chambers, the Senate proposal calls for almost \$217 million in cuts to the State University System, the majority of which come from the performance-based funding pool. It also calls for nearly \$30 million in cuts to the Florida College System, including the suspension of CAPE performance-based funding. The House proposal makes no direct cuts to the FCS or SUS but does reform operational support funding, salvaging \$556.4 million from the SUS Major Funding Program Reform. These reforms include cuts to performance and preeminence funding, as well as cuts to faculty salaries over a certain amount, and the elimination of funding for the graduate and professional programs of excellence program. Also included in the House package is \$66.3 million for programs of strategic emphasis within the SUS and \$35 million for the proposed Open Door Grant Program, and \$21 million for the proposed Florida Postsecondary Academic Library Network. The Senate package includes \$25 million for the Student Success Incentive fund.

In terms of student financial assistance, both the House and the Senate have promised to fully fund the Bright Futures and Benacquisto scholarships. The Senate package also includes \$33 million for the Dual Enrollment Scholarship fund, and a \$26 million increase for EASE and ABLE. The House went in a different direction, raising the eligibility requirements for EASE and cutting the ABLE program altogether. The House Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee Chair,

Rene Plasencia (R – Orlando), defended the decision, citing the low graduation rates at certain institutions that receive EASE funds. The new eligibility requirements require institutions receiving EASE funds to meet three out of five metrics and are expected to affect 16 institutions in total.






Florida College Access Network (FCAN) leads the collaborative movement to ensure every Floridian achieves 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 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/.

FCAN is a 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.

Connect with FCAN:

-  [Facebook.com/FloridaCollegeAccessNetwork](https://www.facebook.com/FloridaCollegeAccessNetwork)
-  [Twitter.com/FLCollegeAccess](https://twitter.com/FLCollegeAccess)
-  [Linkedin.com/company/Florida-College-Access-Network](https://www.linkedin.com/company/Florida-College-Access-Network)