

2024 Florida Legislative Session Update:



February 2024*

*as of 2/9/2024

Additional career and technical education (CTE) expansion, computer science education, International Baccalaureate (IB) teacher bonuses, and an alternative pathway to graduation on the agenda

Introduction

The 2024 regular legislative session ends on March 8th, when many legislators will return to their districts and likely turn their eye to the November 2024 elections. Senate and House leadership continue focusing on career and technical education, while also looking to provide more comprehensive computer science education to students in the K-12 system.

This session update outlines the Legislature's efforts to address Florida's healthcare workforce shortage, focus on CTE by creating a related task force, and add a specialized transfer degree for Florida College System (FCS) students.

Since FCAN released its session preview last month, the Legislature has considered and moved various bills through the legislative process that stand to directly impact postsecondary students in their educational and workforce journey in the Sunshine State. These bills are outlined in further detail below:

- **CS/CS/SB 460 and CS/HB 917 – Career and Technical Education**
- **CS/CS/SB 494 and CS/CS/HB 511 – Graduate Program Admissions**
- **CS/SB 996 and CS/CS/HB 1285 – Education**
- **SB 1688 and HB 553 – Career-themed Courses**
- **CS/SB 7016 – Health Care**
- **SB 7032 and CS/HB 7051 – Education**
- **SB 240 and HB 667 – International Baccalaureate Teacher Bonuses**
- **SB 832 and HB 1137 – Employment of Individuals with Disabilities**
- **CS/SB 1344 and CS/HB 483 – Computer Science Education**
- **SB 1172 and CS/CS/HB 49 – Employment of Minors**

Legislation Impacting Postsecondary Education

CS/CS/SB 460 and CS/HB 917 – Career and Technical Education

Bill Sponsors: Senate Education Pre-K – 12 Committee and Senator Corey Simon (R – Tallahassee); House Choice and Innovation Subcommittee and Representative John Snyder (R – Stuart)

Senate Bill 460 and House Bill 917 focus on additional CTE opportunities for Florida students. The proposals require that high schools include an “industry recruitment day” during their career fairs as a direct effort to ensure specific industries on the Career and Professional Education (CAPE) Funding List have the opportunity to meet with students and discuss current high-wage, high-demand careers.

The bills also include language allowing 16- and 17-year-olds to work on construction sites if they have earned their Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) certification. Both proposals have added language to clarify that these students may not work on a roof or other structure that measures over six feet and cannot violate federal law as it relates to minors in the workforce.

Both bills create the CTE Task Force within the Department of Education (DOE) to study current subject offerings in each school district. This task force would be responsible for identifying how many students earn an industry certification and gain employment in a related field, reviewing existing postsecondary credits that are available for K-12 students, and providing recommendations to change or expand current course offerings. The Senate proposal repeals the Florida Talent Development Council.

The Senate Bill has one hearing left in the Senate Fiscal Policy Committee before a full Senate vote. Similarly, the House proposal has one hearing left in the House Education and Employment Committee before a full House vote.

CS/CS/SB 494 and CS/CS/HB 511 – 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 Postsecondary Education and Workforce Subcommittee and Representative Jeff Holcomb (R – Spring Hill)

CS/CS/SB 494 and CS/CS/HB 511 are identical bills that would waive graduate program testing requirements (GRE or GMAT) for service members applying to a State University System (SUS) institution. The Senate version includes any individual who served in the

US Armed Forces, Florida National Guard, or had an honorable discharge. The House version only broadly states that all service members may be eligible. CS/CS/SB 494 has passed all committees of reference. The entire Senate voted on this bill on February 1st, passing it with a vote of 40 yeas and 0 nays. CS/CS/HB 517 has also passed all three committees of reference. It is now waiting to be placed on the House calendar for a full vote.

CS/SB 996 and CS/CS/HB 1285 – Education

Bill Sponsors: Senate Education PreK-12 Committee and Senator Danny Burgess (R – Zephyrhills); House Choice and Innovation Subcommittee and Representative Jennifer Canady (R – Lakeland)

CS/SB 996 and CS/CS/HB 1285 contain various provisions relating to K-20 education, including charter and private schools. Below are areas of focus for higher education.

Each school district and every charter school is responsible for providing 11th and 12th grade students with a chance to take the Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB), during school hours, and be able to consult a military recruiter if they wish to do so. The bills clarify that public postsecondary institutions may not prohibit prospective or current students from working, either part-time or full-time, while pursuing their degree.

Both proposals also provide guidelines on associate in arts specialized transfer degrees, first proposed last year in SB 750. These degrees must include 36 credit hours of general education courses and require at least 60 credits of college courses. These degrees are specifically for FCS students planning to transfer into majors that require additional prerequisite coursework at a university. The State Board of Education (SBE) must ensure there are articulation agreements for students who graduate with these degrees.

Both versions also expand the list of qualifying documents to establish residency for tuition to include an application for a homestead property exemption, originally from SB 634. The Senate version added a provision that allows FCS institutions to charge up to \$290 per credit hour for online nonresident tuition, or about \$7000 a year for 24 credits.

The Senate proposal has passed two committees of reference and has one hearing left in the Senate Fiscal Policy Committee. The House proposal has passed all committees and is waiting for a full vote from the House.

SB 1688 and HB 553 – Career-themed Courses

Bill Sponsors: Senator Rosalind Osgood (D – Plantation) and Representative Lisa Dunkley (D – Lauderhill)

Senate Bill 1688 and House Bill 553 are identical bills that require school districts to include strategies to promote CTE opportunities available to students, parents, and other stakeholders. This includes information about career academies during middle school course enrollment. Both bills have passed their committees of reference and are waiting to be heard for a full vote.

CS/SB 7016 – Health Care

Bill Sponsors: Senate Fiscal Policy Committee and Senate Health Policy Committee

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.

Dental hygienists would be eligible for the newly established Dental Student Loan Repayment Program if they satisfy employment and volunteer requirements. SB 7016 would also allow advanced practice registered nurses, physician assistants, mental health professionals, registered nurses, and licensed practical nurses to partake in the Florida Reimbursement Assistance for Medical Education Program to offset the costs incurred for their respective degree. Lastly, the proposal also expands the current Linking Industry to Nursing Education (LINE) program to provide funding to eligible high-performing independent colleges and universities.

The bill also creates the Training, Education, and Clinicals in Health (TEACH) Funding Program to increase the number of healthcare workers in the state while also providing healthcare to underserved populations. Targeted practices include advanced practice registered nursing students seeking a primary care specialty, dental and physician students, and behavioral health students.

This bill has passed all committees and the Senate chamber with a unanimous vote of 39 yeas and 0 nays. It has been sent over to the House for consideration.

SB 7032 and CS/HB 7051 – Education

Bill Sponsors: Senate Education Postsecondary Committee; House Postsecondary Education and Workforce Subcommittee and Representative Lauren Melo (R – Immokalee)

Senate Bill 7032 and House Bill 7051 create the Graduation Alternative to Traditional Education (GATE) Program. This program is centered around students 16 to 21 that have dropped out of high school and do not have a diploma.

The GATE Program would incentivize school districts to enroll students in an adult education program to get their high school diploma or equivalent and concurrently enroll in a career education program to receive an industry recognized credential, at no cost. The Senate proposal states that students who enroll in this program may not be counted towards a high school's 4-year graduation rate. Eligible institutions would be reimbursed for tuition, lab, and exam fees for students enrolled in this program.

SB 7032 creates the GATE Program Student Success Incentive Fund to reward school districts and FCS institutions for up to \$1,750 for each student who completes an adult education program and a subsequent career education program.

CS/HB 7051 instead creates the GATE Startup Grant Program to expand access to these programs in rural areas. The program would fund the startup and implementation of this initiative for interested school districts and FCS institutions.

SB 7032 has one hearing left in the Senate Appropriations Committee. CS/HB 7051 has one hearing left in the House Education and Employment Committee.

Other Relevant Bills

SB 240 and HB 667 – International Baccalaureate Teacher Bonuses

Bill Sponsors: Senator Colleen Burton (R – Lakeland) and Representative Fiona McFarland (R – Sarasota)

Senate Bill 240 and House Bill 667 both change the student calculations for IB teacher bonuses. Under these bills, bonuses may also be determined by an equivalent test score (to a 4 or higher) as set by the DOE. The House version also includes guidelines for a study from the Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability (OPPAGA) on the financial impact of weighted funding tied to student performance. OPPAGA must submit their findings to the Legislature by December 1, 2025. The Senate version has passed two of the three committee references and has one hearing left in the Senate Appropriations Committee. The House version has two hearings left in the House PreK-12 Appropriations Subcommittee and the House Education and Employment Committee.

SB 832 and HB 1137 – Employment of Individuals with Disabilities

Bill Sponsors: Senator Alexis Calatayud (R – Miami) and Representative Mike Redondo (R – Miami)

Senate Bill 832 and House Bill 1137 aim to improve agency coordination to assist individuals with disabilities seeking employment, a priority population for incoming Speaker Danny Perez. The bills require that the Division of Vocational Rehabilitation

under DOE, the Agency for Persons with Disabilities, CareerSource Florida, and others, work together to decrease the number of individuals working in a low wage job and improve integrated employment opportunities. Additionally, the Office of Reimagining Education and Career Help (REACH) must submit a yearly report on the implementation of these initiatives. Both bill versions have passed all committees of reference and need to be voted on in each chamber floor.

CS/SB 1344 and CS/HB 483 – Computer Science Education

Bill Sponsors: Senate Education PreK-12 Committee and Senator Alexis Calatayud (R – Miami); House Choice and Innovation Subcommittee and Representative Karen Gonzalez-Pittman (R – Tampa)

Senate Bill 1344 and House Bill 483 address computer science education in K-12 and create the Artificial Intelligence (AI) in Education Task Force. At the start of session, House Bill 483 also included provisions to allow CAPE courses to be weighed the same as an honors course and expand Bright Futures to cover apprenticeship programs, however, these items are no longer included in the bill.

The AI in Education Task Force would be chaired by the Commissioner of Education and is tasked with identifying the appropriate uses of the technology in K-20 and providing policy recommendations to align education and workforce programs with this industry. CS/SB 1344 has one hearing left in the Senate Fiscal Policy Committee. CS/HB 483 has one hearing left in the House Education and Employment Committee.

SB 1596 and CS/CS/HB 49 – Employment of Minors

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

Senate Bill 1596 and House Bill 49 would allow 16- and 17-year-olds to work the same number of hours as an 18-year-old. The bills vary slightly on the exact time minors may begin working when school is scheduled the next day. The House version clarifies that they must receive breaks the same way adult employees would and the Senate version addresses current penalties for employers who would violate this provision. The Senate proposal has passed its first committee reference. The House proposal has passed all committees and passed the House floor with a vote of 80 yeas and 35 nays. It has been sent to the Senate and referenced to the Senate Rules Committee, with the Senate likely looking to pass the House version of this bill.

Budget

February 7th was officially the halfway point of the 2024 legislative session and both chambers have already released and voted on their initial budget proposals. Now, the House and the Senate will enter budget negotiations, also referred to as budget conference, to settle the differences in their respective allocations. In December, Governor DeSantis announced the Focus on Florida's Future budget, covered in detail in FCAN's [2024 Session Preview](#), which totaled **\$114.4 billion**. The Senate has released its budget plan (SB 2500) at **\$115.9 billion** with the House proposing **\$115.5 billion** (HB 5001), both higher than the Governor's proposal. Listed below are the funding differences for major higher education programs and initiatives within each budget proposal.

- SUS operating funds: \$6.5 billion (S) and \$4.3 billion (H)
 - Both chambers allocated \$645 million for performance-based funding.
- FCS operating funds: \$2.4 billion (S) and \$1.8 billion (H)
- Private Colleges and Universities: \$183.7 million (S) and \$191.6 million (H)
 - The Senate has proposed \$125.2 million for the Effective Access to Student Education (EASE) Grant, with maximum funding at \$3,500 per student.
 - The House has proposed a higher allocation at \$134.8 million, while still holding maximum funding at \$3,500 per student. The additional \$9.6 million will be used for the new EASE Plus Incentive Program, to provide students enrolled in high quality and demand program an additional financial incentive.
- Florida Student Assistance Grant (FSAG): \$294.3 million (S) and \$292.9 million (H)
- Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program: \$616.9 million from both chambers.
- Dual Enrollment Scholarship Program: \$18 million from both chambers.
- Workforce Education funding includes the following:
 - Student Success Incentive Funds: \$30 million from both chambers.
 - From the Senate, under SB 7032, the budget also allocates \$4 million for the creation of the GATE Program and \$2 million for the GATE Program Student Success Incentive Fund.
 - Student Success in CTE Incentive Funds: \$2.5 million from both chambers.
 - Open Door Grant Program: \$35 million from both chambers.
 - Pathways to Career Opportunities Grant Program: \$20 million (S) and \$15 million (H)
 - Teacher Apprenticeship Program and Mentor Bonus: \$4 million (S)
- No tuition increases






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