

2025 Florida Legislative Session Preview:

Additional focus on Bright Futures, Student's Academic and Career Plans in High School, A New Approach for Postsecondary Bachelor's Degree and Certificate Attainment



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*as of 2/24/2025

Introduction

Florida's 2025 Legislative Session is scheduled to start on Tuesday, March 4th. New leadership is in place after the November 2024 elections: Senate President Ben Albritton (R – Wauchula) now occupies the upper Chamber, while House Speaker Daniel Perez (R – Miami) leads in the Florida House of Representatives.

Legislative leaders' remarks and actions often set the tone for the direction of session. In his opening Organizational Remarks, President Albritton called for a 'Rural Renaissance' in Florida. Speaker Perez acknowledged the needs of everyday Floridians, with his priority to "serve the people of Florida."

President Albritton and Speaker Perez have presided over three special sessions to address immigration ahead of regular session. During Special Session C, legislation was signed into law that included a provision to eliminate the out-of-state fee waiver for undocumented students. This 2025 session, we can expect legislation related to rural communities, hurricane and emergency response, and property insurance. We can also expect state lawmaking in response to emerging federal policy.

The committee weeks leading up to this year's legislative session highlighted both chambers' interest in continuing Career and Technical Education (CTE), supporting articulation pathways, and encouraging postsecondary options. Many of the proposals before the legislature over the scheduled 60-day session will impact the state's path to achieving a Talent Strong Florida.

Within the framework of [FCAN's Seven Conditions that Create a Resilient Workforce and Spark Economic Mobility](#), this preview describes the budget and policy priorities that have been filed from Governor DeSantis and the Legislature to watch this session.

Seven Conditions for Success



Budget

Governor Ron DeSantis has recommended a \$115.6 billion budget for FY 2025-2026. The [Focus on Fiscal Responsibility](#) budget outlines the Governor's priorities for the coming year.

In 2019, Governor DeSantis announced the goal for Florida to be #1 in workforce education by 2030. This budget acknowledges strides made toward that effort, including a record of over 479,000 students currently enrolled in postsecondary programs, and a record of over 800,000 students enrolled in high school Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs.

It is worth noting that the Governor's budget removes funding for the Open Door Grant Program, a program established by the legislature in 2021 that provides funds to support student completion of certain CTE programs. For next year, institutions will be able to use any remaining funds from the current year toward the program.

Highlights from the Governor's higher education budget include:

- Funding for **Bright Futures Scholarship Program** at \$632 million, fully funding anticipated student enrollment. (+\$15.3 M)
 - Anticipates funding 3,252 additional students.

- Funding for the **Florida Student Assistance Grant** (FSAG) at \$269 million. (No Change)
 - Maintains total award amounts for FSAG Public, Private, Career Education, and Postsecondary Programs.
 - Maintains maximum award for FSAG of \$3,260.
- \$1.7 billion in state operating funds for the Florida College System (FCS) and \$3.9 billion for the State University System (SUS).
 - Recommends an additional \$25 million for the Florida College System Funding Model and Faculty Recruitment and Retention Initiative.
- **Performance funding** for the FCS and SUS is recommended to remain at \$30 million and \$645 million, respectively.
- \$20 million for the **Pathways to Career Opportunities** Grant Program with \$5 million to continue the Teacher Registered Apprenticeship Program. (No Change)
- \$30 million in **Performance-based Incentives (CAPE) for students** earning industry certifications in high-skill, high-demand areas.
 - \$10 million for school districts. (+1.5M)
 - \$20 million for FCS institutions. (No Change)
- \$130 million in continued funding for two programs implemented in 2022 to enhance Florida's nursing workforce: The Prepping Institutions, Employers and Learners through Incentive for Nursing Education (**PIPELINE**) program and Linking Industry to Nursing Education (**LINE**) program.
- Maintains tuition rates at Florida's colleges and universities at 2014 levels.

Policy

HB 17 – Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program

Bill Sponsors: Representative Yvonne Hinson (D – Gainesville) and Representative Marie Woodson (D – Hollywood)

House Bill 17 would expand access and resources to assist minority and underrepresented students qualify for the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program. This bill would allow minority and underrepresented students with a certain GPA to take the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT) at an earlier grade level. Students with a certain score would be provided several resources to best prepare them to qualify for Bright Futures.

The bill also expands eligibility requirements for the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship award to students recognized by any of the College Board National Recognition programs, a policy that has been proposed in previous sessions with limited success.

CS/SB 102 & HB 127 – Exceptional Student Education

Bill Sponsors: Senator Don Gaetz (R – Crestview) and Representative Kim Kendall (R – St. Augustine)

Committee Substitute for Senate Bill 102 and House Bill 127 are similar bills aimed at helping students with autism secure employment after graduation. The bills establish a workforce credential program within the Department of Education to allow students to earn a badge in the Senate Bill, and a workforce certificate in the House Bill, that indicate that the student has acquired specific skills that meet employer needs.

CS/SB 102 passed favorably through the Senate Committee on Education Pre- K-12 on February 18th; its first of three committee stops.

SB 110 – Rural Communities

Bill Sponsor: Senator Corey Simon (R – Tallahassee)

Senate Bill 110 is comprehensive legislation that increases opportunities for rural communities through various investments and supports, from infrastructure, housing, healthcare, transportation, and business development to education and more.

With regard to education, this bill increases funding to educational consortium service organizations consisting of four or more school districts. Currently, smaller school districts may enter into cooperative agreements to form a regional consortium service organization, and, if consisting of four or more school districts, are eligible for grant funds of up to \$50,000 per school district. This legislation increases this amount to \$150,000 per school district.

This bill establishes The Rural Incentive for Professional Educators (RIPE) Program to attract and retain qualified instructional personnel in rural communities. This incentive includes student loan repayment assistance up to \$15,000 over 5 years for eligible participants.

SB 166 – Administrative Efficiency in Public Schols

Bill Sponsor: Senator Corey Simon (R – Tallahassee)

Senate Bill 166 is comprehensive legislation that amends compliance and certain standards within school districts. Highlights include:

Changes to Statewide Assessments and Requirements to Earn High School Diploma

This bill removes the requirement that a student must pass the statewide, standardized grade 10 ELA assessment and Algebra 1 EOC assessment, or earn a concordant score in either tests, in order to earn a high school diploma.

Changes to Grade Promotion

This bill provides additional opportunities for students to be promoted to the fourth grade. To be promoted, a student must score a level 2 or higher in English Language Arts (ELA) on any administration of the screening and progress monitoring system, including the ELA assessment. If a student doesn't meet the requirement, they can use the mid-year or final assessment as another opportunity to be promoted.

SB 244 / HB 855– Postsecondary Education

Bill Sponsors: Senator Randy Fine (R – Melbourne Beach) and Representative Chase Tramont (R – Port Orange)

Senate Bill 244 repeals the out-of-state fee waiver for undocumented students, which was passed during Special Session C. This bill additionally prohibits certain Florida colleges and universities from accepting applications from or admitting undocumented students.

CS / SB 270 – Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program

Bill Sponsor: Senator Danny Burgess (R – Zephyrhills)

Committee Substitute for Senate Bill 270 expands eligibility for an initial Bright Futures award to extend to a student that earns a high school diploma from a non-Florida school if the parent retired from military service or public service within 12 months prior to the student's graduation. The bill also expands eligibility for the Florida Academic Scholars award to extend to a student that has been awarded Advanced Placement (AP) Capstone designation.

CS/SB 270 passed favorably through the Senate Education Postsecondary Committee on February 18th; its first of three committee stops.

SB 338 / HB 167 – Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program

Bill Sponsors: Senator Kristen Arrington (D – Kissimmee) and Representative LaVon Bracy Davis (D – Ocoee)

Senate Bill 338 and House Bill 167 are identical bills that would increase awareness of the Bright Futures Scholarships and eligibility requirements. In the bill, each public high school would establish a Bright Futures Scholarship mentorship program where students must have access to a certified school counselor that provides information about Bright Futures Scholarship awards and more specifically, awards for which the student is on track to qualify. The program includes an outreach campaign.

SB 360 / HB 45 – Resident Status for Tuition Purposes

Bill Sponsors: Senator Rosalind Osgood (D – Fort Lauderdale) and Representative Jervonte “Tae” Edmonds (D – West Palm Beach)

Senate Bill 360 and House Bill 45 are identical bills that would prevent individuals who are currently or previously incarcerated in Florida to lose their residency status based solely on the fact they have been incarcerated. This bill was passed by the Florida Legislature last year, however, was vetoed by the Governor.

HB 571 – Career Planning Opportunities for Students

Bill Sponsor: Representative Kim Kendall (R – St. Augustine)

House Bill 571 is substantive legislation that places greater emphasis on exposing high school students to career experiences and career planning. This bill requires the Articulation Coordinating Council to develop a workgroup comprised of the Board of Governors, State Board of Education, state colleges and universities, and school districts to establish uniform award of postsecondary credit for apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship students.

SB 584 – Young Adult Housing Support

Bill Sponsors: Senator Ileana Garcia (R – Miami)

Senate Bill 584 seeks to help students who are, or were formerly, in the foster care system as well as those experiencing, or at risk of homelessness, have greater access to residence halls or dormitory residences owned by state colleges or universities. The bill requires colleges and universities to consult with the State Office on Homelessness within the Department of Children and Families and develop plans to prioritize housing needs for these vulnerable student populations.

HB 731 – Prohibitions and Limitations on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and Requirements for Medical Institutions of Higher Education

Bill Sponsor: Representative Lauren Melo (R – Collier/Hendry County)

House Bill 731 restricts the use of state funds for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives across state agencies, healthcare providers receiving public funds, and medical institutions of higher education. The bill additionally sets clear rules regarding DEI and establishes legal course of actions for non-compliance.

The bill also makes changes to medical institutions of higher education processes. Among the changes, these medical institutions (excluding institutions that are open enrollment) must provide letter grade-based assessments for each course required to graduate and may not use pass/fail assessments for any required course. Additionally, this bill establishes a new standardized test requirement for admission to a medical institution of higher education.

SB 742 – Workforce Development

Bill Sponsor: Senator Corey Simon (R – Tallahassee)

Senate Bill 742 clarifies that the Workforce Development Capitalization Incentive Grant Program includes charter schools. The bill revises the number of workforce education programs for which each school district and Florida College System institution must offer a money-back guarantee, doubling the number from three to six programs.







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 report is intended as an educational resource and does not constitute an endorsement of 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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