

2025 Florida Legislative Session Update:

FAFSA Awareness in High School, Changes to Calculations for Dual Enrollment, Increased Focus on Apprenticeship Pathways, Budgets Released



April 2025*

*as of 4/7/2025

Introduction

The 2025 regular legislative session is scheduled to end on May 2nd, and thus far, leadership from the Governor down to Committee Chairs continue to reiterate a point of pride – Florida remains the #1 state for Higher Education in the U.S. News & World Report rankings. There has been recurring emphasis on maintaining that position.

Proposed education policies discussed include exploring career planning for students, promoting financial aid information, and ensuring students achieve a return on investment from their postsecondary education.

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.

Legislation Impacting Postsecondary Education

CS/HB 1261 – Personal Financial Literacy and SB 1530 – Smart Living Course

Bill Sponsors: House Careers and Workforce Subcommittee and Representative Susan Valdés (R – Tampa); Senator Jay Collins (R – Tampa)

CS/HB 1261 and SB 1530 emphasize additional topics to be included in course curriculum to prepare students for life after high school. The House bill expands the required financial literacy course topics to include instruction on how to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), applying for scholarships, and considering postgraduation pathways. SB 1530 shares the same topics of instruction, while its structure is different.

The House bill has one hearing left in the Education and Employment committee before a full House vote. The Senate version has yet to be heard in committee.

CS/SB 1618 – Prekindergarten Through Grade 12 Education and CS/HB 1255 – Education

Bill Sponsors: Senate Appropriations Committee on Pre-K-12 Education and Senator Alexis Calatayud (R – Miami); House Student Academic Success Subcommittee and Representative Dana Trabulsy (R – Ft. Pierce)

CS/SB 1618 and CS/HB 1255 contain various provisions relating to K-12 education, including approved expenditures, curriculum, and reading interventions. The following two areas are of particular relevance.

Both bills include instruction on postsecondary pathways as well as completion of the FAFSA, scholarships and grants, and student loans in the financial literacy course that is required for high school graduation.

The bills further clarify that the Department of Education may join or establish a national consortium as an alternative to develop and implement courses of rigor (similar to Advanced Placement) that articulate into postsecondary credit.

The House bill has one hearing left in the House Education and Employment committee before a full House vote. The Senate version has one hearing left in the Senate Fiscal Policy committee before a full Senate vote.

CS/CS/SB 1624 – Higher Education

Bill Sponsors: Senate Committee on Fiscal Policy, Senate Appropriations Committee on Higher Education and Senator Calatayud (R – Miami)

CS/CS/SB 1624 is a large higher education bill. The following areas are of particular relevance.

This bill expands the Graduation Alternative to Traditional Education (GATE) Program, which is a career pathway for students that have left high school before graduation. The proposed language removes simultaneous enrollment requirements, removes the upper age limit of 21 years old and allows institutions to contract with online providers.

This bill also requires a grandparent to live in the State of Florida for five years (current law is one year) before an out of state student can become eligible for the grandparent waiver. Additionally, tuition at public colleges and universities is waived up to six credit hours per term for active members of the Florida State Guard.

This bill clarifies areas of collaboration for the Office of Ocean Economy. This bill also includes language related to student demographic identifiers.

The bill has passed all committees of reference and is waiting for a full vote from the Senate.

CS/HB 1105 and SB 1688 – Education

Bill Sponsors: House Careers and Workforce Subcommittee and Representative Kincart Jonsson (R – Lakeland) and Senator Colleen Burton (R – Lakeland)

CS/HB 1105 and SB 1688 are similar bills aimed at expanding eligibility for students to graduate high school through the Career and Technical Education (CTE) pathway. Both bills also encourage schools to promote the Gold Seal Vocational Scholars and Florida Gold Seal CAPE Scholars awards within the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program.

Under the 18 credit CTE pathway, current law requires a student to complete two credits in career and technical education that result in program completion and an industry certification. The proposed legislation expands the pathway eligibility to students that have completed any three CTE credits. This allows students to try different classes and explore career options.

The House bill lowers the GPA requirement to achieve the Gold Seal Vocational Scholars and Florida Gold Seal CAPE Scholars Award CAPE Scholars award from 3.5 unweighted GPA to 3.0 weighted. The bill also encourages scheduling changes to optimize dual enrollment.

The House bill has two hearings left before a full House vote. The Senate version has yet to be heard in committee

HB 5101 – Education and SB 2510 – Prekindergarten Through Grade 12 Education

Bill Sponsors: House PreK-12 Budget Subcommittee; Senate Appropriations Committee

HB 5101 and SB 2510 are budget conforming bills. Both bills reduce the add-on full-time equivalent calculations for students enrolled in certain programs by half, such as Dual Enrollment, International Baccalaureate, Advanced International Certificate of Education courses, Advanced Placement courses, career-themed courses with CAPE connections, and others.

Currently, \$865 in additional funding is generated for each student that scores a 3 or higher on an AP exam. Also, \$433 in additional funding is generated for each student (not enrolled in an early college program) that completes a general education course through dual enrollment with a grade of A. Additional funding can be used for teacher bonuses, reinvested back into the program, and towards supports for students. This bill would reduce these, and other amounts, by half.

The substance of these two bills will be decided in budget conference.



CS/SB 166: Administrative Efficiency in Public Schools

Bill Sponsors: Senate Fiscal Policy and Senator Corey Simon (R – Tallahassee)

CS/SB 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 10th grade English Language Arts (ELA) assessment and Algebra 1 EOC assessment, or earn a concordant score in either tests, in order to earn a high school diploma. Instead, the bill makes the ELA score 30% of the student's final course grade. The Algebra 1 EOC score currently accounts for 30% of a student's final course grade.

Additional Good Cause Exemption for Promotion to Grade 4

This bill creates an additional good cause exemption for students to be promoted to grade 4. Under statute, students must score a level 2 or higher on the final administration of the standardized ELA assessment to be promoted to grade 4 unless they qualify for specific good cause exemptions. The additional exemption in this bill is for students who have scored a level 2 or higher on both the first and midyear administration of the progress monitoring system.

CS/SB 166 has passed all committees of reference and the Senate chamber. It has been sent to the House for consideration.

CS/HB 1145 and CS/SB 742 – Workforce Education

Bill Sponsors: House Higher Education Budget Subcommittee and Representative Jason Shoaf (R – Port St. Joe); Senate Education Pre-K-12 Committee and Senator Corey Simon (R – Tallahassee)

CS/HB 1145 and CS/SB 742 are similar bills that clarify charter schools are eligible recipients for the Workforce Development Capitalization Incentive Grant Program. Both bills increase the money back guarantees on workforce education programs offered by school districts programs and Florida Colleges from three to six programs. These programs vary by institution. The House bill has passed the House chamber. It has been sent to the Senate for consideration. The Senate version has two committees left before a full Senate vote.

CS/HB 681 and CS/SB 1458 – Apprenticeship and Preapprenticeship Program Funding

Bill Sponsors: House Careers and Workforce Subcommittee and Representative Lauren Melo (R – Collier/Hendry County); Senate Education Postsecondary Committee and Senator Nick DiCeglie (R – Indian Rocks Beach)

CS/HB 681 and CS/SB 1458 are identical bills that require a local education agency and industry partner to use standardized contracts developed by the Department of education for apprenticeship and preapprenticeship programs. The local education agency cannot receive more than 10% of funding if they provide solely administrative functions. An apprenticeship and preapprenticeship funding transparency tool would be developed by July 1, 2026.

The House bill has one hearing left before a full House vote. The Senate version has two hearings left before a full Senate vote.

CS/SB 102 and CS/HB 127 – Exceptional Student Education

Bill Sponsors: Senate Education Pre-K-12 Committee and Senator Don Gaetz (R – Crestview); House Careers and Workforce Subcommittee and Representative Kim Kendall (R – St. Augustine)

CS/SB 102 and CS/HB 127 are similar bills aimed at helping students with autism and other disabilities secure employment after graduation. The bills establish a workforce credential program within the Department of Education to allow students to earn credentials that indicate that the student has acquired specific skills that meet employer needs. The Department of Education will develop this program by January 31, 2026.

This Senate bill has passed the Senate floor. The House version has one hearing left in the House Education and Employment Committee before a floor vote.

CS/CS/SB 270 – Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program

Bill Sponsors: Senate Appropriations Committee on Higher Education, Senate Education Postsecondary Committee and Senator Danny Burgess (R – Zephyrhills)

CS/CS/SB 270 expands eligibility for an initial Bright Futures award 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. The bill has passed all committees of reference and is waiting for a full vote by the Senate. This language is included in HB 1105, listed above.

Other Relevant Bills

CS/HB 123 – Education and CS/SB 140 – Charter Schools

Bill Sponsors: House Education Administration Subcommittee and Representative Alex Andrade (R – Pensacola); Senate Education Pre-K-12 Committee and Senator Don Gaetz (R – Crestview)

CS/HB 123 and CS/SB 140 address charter schools. Both bills allow a municipality to convert a public school for the purpose of attracting job-producing entities to the area. That school would be designated as a “job engine charter school.” Additionally, the bill creates a trigger of declining enrollment for 3 years for a public school to be considered for conversion.

The Senate bill has one hearing left in the Senate Rules committee before a full Senate vote. The House version has one hearing in the Education and Employment committee before a full House vote.

SB 918 and CS/HB 1225 Employment of Minors

Bill Sponsors: Senator Jay Collins (R – Tampa); House Industries and Professional Activities Subcommittee and Representative Monique Miller (R – Palm Bay)

SB 918 and CS/HB 1225 remove time restrictions on the employment of minors aged 16 and 17, permitting them to work on school nights and removes the requirement for a lunch period during continuous work. The bills also allow 14 and 15 year olds who have graduated high school, received a high school equivalency diploma, and those that hold a valid certificate of exemption from school, attend home school or virtual school, to work in the same conditions. The bill strikes the waiver that would typically waive these restrictions on certain work hours for minors.

The Senate bill has two hearings left before a full Senate vote. The House version has two hearings left before a full House vote.

HB 919 and CS/SB 526 – Nursing Education Programs

Bill Sponsors: Representative Toby Overdorf (R – Palm City); Senate Health Policy Committee and Senator Gayle Harrell (R – Stuart)

HB 919 and CS/SB 526 are similar bills aimed at holding nursing education programs accountable in producing nurses that are workforce ready. Representative Overdorf explained aggressive actions are needed to address Florida’s unacceptably low Nursing Licensing Examination (NCLEX) passage rates.

The bills require programs to identify students that may require additional supports, requires remediation plans, implements an exit exam to prepare students for the NCLEX, refunds (in the House version) tuition and fees to students who do not pass the NCLEX under certain circumstances, and program termination if rules or standards are not met.

The House bill has one hearing left in the Health and Human Services committee before a full House vote. The Senate version has two hearings left before a full Senate vote.

HB 1111 and SB 1698 – Certificates of Completion

Bill Sponsors: Representative Susan Valdés (R – Tampa) and Senator Randy Fine (R – Melbourne Beach)

HB 1111 and SB 1698 are identical bills that delete the certificate of completion from the education code, thereby eliminating the option for a student to receive a certificate of completion from high school. High school students who have taken the required number of courses, but have not met the other graduation requirements (GPA and passing exit examinations) will still be eligible to enroll in certificate career education programs at Florida Colleges. Current law allows students to remain in high school for up to one additional year to remedy deficiencies to obtain a standard high school diploma.

The House bill has passed all committees of reference and is waiting for a full vote from the House. The Senate version has not yet been heard in any of its assigned three committees.

CS/SB 584 – Young Adult Housing Support and CS/HB 879 Young Adults who are Homeless or were in the Child Welfare System

Bill Sponsors: Senate Education Postsecondary Committee and Senator Ileana Garcia (R – Miami); House Careers and Workforce Subcommittee, Representative Alex Rizo (R – Hialeah) and Representative Marie Woodson (D – Hollywood)

CS/SB 584 and CS/HB 879 are similar bills that seek 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. Both bills require colleges and universities to consult with the Department of Children and Families and develop plans to prioritize housing needs for these vulnerable student populations.

The House bill provides a definition for a young adult and specifies that state colleges and universities should prioritize students aged 28 and younger for placement in school housing.

The House bill has one hearing left in the House Education and Employment committee before a full House vote. The Senate version has two hearings left before a full Senate vote.

SB 644 and HB 467 – Dual Enrollment Student Eligibility

Bill Sponsors: Senator Tom Wright (R – New Smyrna Beach) and Representative Debbie Mayfield (R – Melbourne)

SB 644 and House Bill 467 are identical bills that expand dual enrollment eligibility to students, aged 16-18, that are working towards their high school diploma in an adult education program.

Neither the Senate nor House bill have been heard in their committees of reference.

SB 338 and HB 167 – Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program

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

SB 338 and HB 167 are identical bills that would increase awareness of the Bright Futures Scholarships and eligibility requirements. In the bills, 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.

Neither the Senate nor House bill have been heard in their committees of reference.

SB 1368 and HB 17 – Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program

Bill Sponsors: Representative Yvonne Hinson (D – Gainesville) and Senator Tracie Davis (D – Jacksonville)

SB 1378 and HB 17 are similar bills that would expand access and resources to assist minority and underrepresented students qualify for the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program.

The House bill would allow minority and underrepresented students with a certain GPA to take the Preliminary SAT/National Merit Scholarship Qualifying Test (PSAT/NMSQT) in 8th grade, versus 10th grade, currently. Students with a certain score would be provided several resources to best prepare them to qualify for Bright Futures, including SAT or ACT prep courses, and information to qualify for the scholarship. The House Bill 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.

The Senate bill continues testing of the PSAT/NMSQT in 10th grade, but otherwise contains the same resources as the House bill to best prepare students to qualify for Bright Futures. The Senate version also expands eligibility to those recognized by certain College Board National Recognition programs.

Neither the Senate nor House bill have been heard in their committees of reference.

Budget

April 2nd was officially the halfway point of the 2025 Legislative session and both chambers have already released their initial budget proposals. The Senate has released its budget plan (SB 2500) at **\$117 billion** with the House proposing **\$112.9 billion** (HB 5001). For context, Governor DeSantis in February announced the Focus on Fiscal Responsibility budget recommendations, covered in detail in FCAN's [2025 Session Preview](#), totaling **\$115.6 billion**. Between now and the end of session, the House and the Senate will enter budget negotiations, to settle the differences in their respective allocations.

Listed below are the allocations for major higher education programs and initiatives within each chamber's budget proposal.

- SUS operating funds: \$4.2 billion (S) and \$4.5 billion (H)
 - The House allocated \$645 million for performance-based funding, while the Senate budget allocated \$545 million.
- FCS operating funds: \$1.80 billion (S) and \$1.77 billion (H)
 - The Senate allocated an additional \$100 million to the Florida College System, and the House allocated an additional \$40 million.
 - The House and Senate allocated \$20 million in performance-based incentives for CAPE Industry Certifications.
- Private Colleges and Universities: \$187 million (S) and \$189.9 million (H)
 - Each chamber proposed a total of \$135.9 million for the Effective Access to Student Education (EASE) Grant, with maximum funding at \$3,500 per student. There are slight differences in funding for the EASE Plus Incentive Program, targeting students enrolled in high quality in-demand programs.
- Florida Student Assistance Grant (FSAG): \$269.4 million from both chambers.
- Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program: \$637.7 million from both chambers.
- Dual Enrollment Scholarship Program: \$18.1 million from both chambers.

- Student Success Incentive Funds: \$30 million from both chambers.
 - \$17 million each for 2+2 Student Success Incentive Funding.
 - \$13 million each for Work Florida Student Success Incentive Funding.
- Workforce Education funding includes the following:
 - Open Door Grant Program: \$35 million in nonrecurring funds from both chambers.
 - Pathways to Career Opportunities Grant Program: \$20 million from both chambers. This funding includes \$5 million for the Grow Your Own Teacher Registered Apprenticeship Program Expansion.
- Strategic Statewide Initiatives:
 - Both budgets allocate \$4 million for startup grants of the GATE Program and \$1 million for the GATE Program Student Success Incentive Fund.
 - House budget includes \$2.5 million in Student Success in CTE Incentive Funds and \$2 million for Teacher Apprenticeship Program and Mentor Bonuses; the Senate reappropriates the unexpended balance from FY 2024-25.
- No tuition increases







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.

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