

2026 Florida Legislative Session Policy Recap:

Legislature to reconvene in April to finalize budget. New laws would expand the Guardian Program, create advanced course incentives, standardize GPA calculations, and address workforce shortages.



March 2026

*as of 3/25/2026

Introduction

The 2026 Legislative Session concluded on the 60th and final day without passage of the state budget. The House and Senate were unable to reach agreement and plan to reconvene in April during a special session to complete the 2026-2027 budget. The current state budget funds operations through June 30.

Several policy priorities did not make it to the finish line. Senate President Ben Albritton's "Rural Renaissance" legislative package passed the Senate but was not taken up by the House. While the House and Senate passed a bill related to Artificial Intelligence (AI) data centers, the House did not pass an AI "Bill of Rights," deferring instead to potential federal oversight on the topic. The House passed a property tax proposal that would have been put to the voters on the 2026 general election ballot, however the Senate did not consider it.

Both Chambers were able to find consensus on a total of 237 bills out of the 1,896 filed. Legislators continued to advance pathways to support students and increase degree, credential, and workforce training to meet Florida's SAIL to 60 Goal.

This session recap provides an overview of higher education legislation, outlined in further detail below, that could impact Florida's students and postsecondary education system.

- [CS/CS/HB 1279 – Education](#)
- [CS/CS/HB 325 – Education and Workforce Development for Current and Former Inmates](#)
- [CS/CS/HB 757 – School Safety](#)
- [CS/SB 1246 – Linking Industry to Nursing Education Fund](#)
- [CS/HB 1115 – Grants for Genetic Counseling Education](#)
- [CS/HB 1343 – Insurance Customer Representative Licensing Qualifications](#)
- [CS/CS/HB 753 – School Counselors](#)
- [CS/CS/CS/HB 1081 – Cybersecurity Experiential Learning](#)

FCAN will publish a separate budget recap once the legislature reconvenes and passes the final 2026-2027 budget.

Legislation Impacting Postsecondary Education

Unless otherwise indicated, all proposed bills await the Governor's final action and would take effect July 1, 2026.

CS/CS/HB 1279 – Education

Bill Sponsors: House Careers and Workforce Subcommittee, House Education and Employment Committee, and Representative Jennifer Kincart Jonsson (R – Lakeland); Senate Bill sponsored by Senator Alexis Calatayud (R – Miami)

On the last day of session, the Senate and House passed CS/CS/HB 1279 which included several provisions from the K-12 (SB 7036/HB 1071) and higher education (SB 7038/HB 1279) packages. The final version that passed includes the following provisions:

4- Year Graduation Metric and Access Metric Adjusted for State University Performance-Based Funding

In 2014, Florida adopted 10 metrics used to allocate performance-based funding to Florida's 12 public universities. One of these metrics measures the four-year, first time in college graduation rate, with the goal of graduating students in four years.

This year, the legislature amended the four-year graduation metric to provide flexibility to engineering students, understanding that their degree programs often extend beyond four years and to not penalize universities in loss of performance-based funding.

The legislature also amended the access rate metric to only consider the share of first-year undergraduate students receiving a Pell Grant in the fall term. Previously, the access rate did not specify student year. The bill sponsor believes this change will expand access to state universities for lower income students by incentivizing universities to increase enrollment of first time in college Pell recipients.

Expands CAPE (Career and Professional Education) Digital Tools Certificates to Middle School Students, Earning a Maximum of Two per School Year

The bill expands opportunities to earn CAPE Digital Tools Certificates currently offered at the elementary level, to the middle school level. These certificates are aimed at enhancing foundational digital skills such as word processing and spreadsheets. These

certificates were originally available to K-8 students, but narrowed to K-5 for the 2025-26 school year. These certificates are one of the offerings provided through the 2007 Career and Professional Education (CAPE) Act, which created opportunities for K-12 students to earn certificates that support college and career-readiness.

Provides a Deadline for Math Pathways to be Identified by and Creates Applied Algebra Courses

The bill specifies September 1, 2026 as the deadline for identifying three math pathways offered in high school that align with postsecondary education, programs, and careers.

Additionally, the bill requires the Department of Education to develop new applied algebra courses that are aligned to math pathways and CTE career clusters for the purpose of connecting math concepts and skills to those needed in industry professions. Applied algebra courses would be available for school district implementation during the 2029-2030 school year. Each applied algebra course would prepare students to take the required Algebra 1 end-of-course exam.

State Board of Education to Develop Uniform Weighted Grading system for Honors Courses and Articulated Accelerated Courses including Accelerated Placement (AP), Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE), International Baccalaureate (IB), and Dual Enrollment

The State Board of Education is required to develop a uniform weighted grading system for honors courses and articulated accelerated courses when GPAs are calculated. Currently, GPAs are calculated differently across school districts. This change would standardize additional weights for accelerated courses and provide greater transparency for students and parents about their GPAs compared to their peers across the state.

Calculation of Additional FTE (Full-time equivalent) Membership for Students in Advanced Courses

The bill creates incentives similar to those currently awarded to Advanced Placement test results (additional FTE membership and teacher bonuses) for Florida Advanced Course and Text (FACT) tests developed by the Department of Education. Each student that passes a FACT exam would generate an additional .16 FTE for the school district. Teachers would receive \$50 per student that pass a FACT test, and such teachers in a D or F school that has at least one student pass an FACT exam would receive a \$500 bonus.

For background, Florida codified FACT advanced courses into law in 2023 as an additional acceleration option for students to gain college credit and engage in more rigorous academic coursework. Students in these accelerated courses would need to

pass a test to earn college credit that would be counted at any Florida public college or university. Specifically, the legislature recognized the Florida Partnership for Minority and Underrepresented Student Achievement to work with the Florida College System to develop advanced courses and provide teacher training. So far, a College Algebra FACT advanced course and related test has been piloted, with full implementation planned for the 2026-2027 academic year.

Clarifies that Florida Residency Status may not be lost due to Department of State or Department of Defense Assignment

To be classified as a Florida resident for tuition purposes, there are certain requirements that must be met. The main requirement is demonstrating the student's residency or a family member's residency for the past 12 months in the state prior to enrollment. There are exceptions to this rule, including for military personnel.

This bill expands the existing military provision to include not losing residency due to the student's or their parent's out-of-state assignment for the United States Department of State or Department of Defense. The bill also clarifies that residency is not lost in cases where the student or their parent(s) is teaching at a Department of Defense Dependent School. These are K-12 schools that serve military families overseas.

CS/CS/HB 325 – Education and Workforce Development for Current and Former Inmates

Bill Sponsors: House Careers and Workforce Subcommittee, House Education and Employment Committee, and Representative Kim Kendall (D – St. Augustine); Senate Bill sponsored by Senator Alexis Calatayud (R – Miami)

House Bill 325 establishes a program within the Department of Corrections for certain inmates to obtain Class A and Class B commercial drivers licenses (CDLs) while incarcerated. Currently, the Department of Corrections offers limited CDL trainings at some work-release camps in partnership with education providers. This new law brings CDL training into prisons and partners with the Florida Transportation Academy on the curriculum. Participation is limited to nonviolent incarcerated individuals who are either scheduled for release or have two years or less remaining on their sentence, and who demonstrate English proficiency. This program is intended to expand skills training and improve access to workforce pathways upon release, addressing the critical shortage of commercial truck drivers in Florida and across the country.

Other Relevant Bills

CS/CS/HB 757 – School Safety

Bill Sponsor: House Judiciary Committee, House Budget Committee, and Representative Michelle Salzman (R – Escambia County); Senate Bill sponsored by Senator Don Gaetz (R – Crestview)

House Bill 757 expands the Guardian Program to Florida Colleges and State Universities if they elect to participate. This bill would permit an employee or faculty member appointed by the institution's president to serve as a guardian (armed personnel that are trained to prevent or stop active assailants) after undergoing training and becoming certified by a Sheriff's Department.

The bill also requires public postsecondary institutions to develop policies and procedures related to an active assailant, requires transfer of student records from K-12 to postsecondary for students that have been deemed a threat, and expands the prohibition on discharging a firearm on or near a campus.

CS/SB 1246 – Linking Industry to Nursing Education Fund

Bill Sponsor: Senate Appropriations Committee on Higher Education and Senator Tracie Davis (D – Jacksonville); House Bill sponsored by Representative Erika Booth (R – St. Cloud)

Senate Bill 1246 revises program language for the Linking Industry to Nursing Education (LINE) Fund. Specifically, the bill expands eligibility for the LINE Fund to allow nonmonetary contributions from a person or entity to qualify for matching grants from the state to nursing programs. Nonmonetary contributions may include donated space from a medical facility, equipment, the value of donated time by a health care partner to teach students, and other goods and services as determined by the Board of Governors or Department of Education. Currently, only dollars contributed by a health care partner are matched by the state.

For reference, the LINE fund was established in 2022 to provide matching grants to nursing programs that partner with healthcare providers. Those funds support the nursing education to workforce pipeline.

The bill also expands allowable uses for the LINE fund to include recruitment of preceptors (senior nurses) and renovations of educational spaces including simulation labs. Current law allows funding to support student scholarships, recruitment of facility,

and purchasing of equipment. Earlier versions of this bill that would have expanded LINE to non-nursing health science programs were removed during the legislative process.

CS/HB 1115 – Grants for Genetic Counseling Education

Bill Sponsor: House Careers and Workforce Subcommittee and Representative Adam Anderson (R – Palm Harbor); Senate Bill sponsored by Senator Danny Burgess (R – Zephyrhills)

House Bill 1115 creates a new grant program within the State University System to support graduate level genetic counseling programs to help address the shortage of genetic counselors in the state. Grants can be used to establish an accredited program at a state university, recruit and retain faculty, provide financial assistance to students enrolled in the program, and for clinical rotation costs.

CS/HB 1343 – Insurance Customer Representative Licensing Qualifications

Bill Sponsor: House Insurance and Banking Subcommittee and Representative Brian Hodgers (R – Viera); Senate Bill sponsored by Senator Alexis Calatayud (R – Miami)

House Bill 1343 provides an additional option for individuals to qualify for an insurance customer representative license, introducing the knowledge and skills required for the insurance industry in high school. The bill establishes a half credit course in insurance and personal finance to be available to school districts starting with 2027-2028 school year. Completion of this course listed on a student’s diploma would count toward licensure.

CS/CS/HB 753 – School Counselors

Bill Sponsor: House Education Administration Subcommittee, House Careers and Workforce Subcommittee, and Representative Christine Hunschofsky (D – Parkland); Senate Bill sponsored by Senator Alexis Calatayud (R – Miami)

House Bill 753 clears barriers to entry into the field of school counseling and makes changes to how school counselors are evaluated. The bill exempts school counselors from meeting general educator certification requirements including certain tests unrelated to counseling. The bill also establishes that evaluation of school counselors will be based on the Florida School Counseling Standards adopted by the State Board of Education. Currently, school counselors are evaluated on the Florida Educational Accomplished Practices (FEAPs), which are designed for classroom teachers.

CS/CS/CS/HB 1081 – Cybersecurity Experiential Learning

Bill Sponsor: House Education and Employment Committee, House Budget Committee, House Careers and Workforce Subcommittee, and Representative Tyler Sirois (D – Merritt Island); Senate Bill sponsored by Senator Alexis Calatayud (R – Miami)

House Bill 1081 creates the Cybersecurity Experiential Learning Program to accelerate Florida’s clearance-ready cybersecurity workforce through student internships and Industry-aligned curriculum. The program would be available to all state universities, Florida colleges, and private postsecondary institutions in the 2026-2027 academic year.

Policy Priorities Not Advanced this Session

Emergency Aid

Several institutions have implemented emergency aid programs, but Florida lacks a statewide policy. FCAN will continue to advocate for uniform eligibility criteria, funding guidance, and outcome tracking to better understand the financial barriers Florida students face.

How to Stay Informed

The legislature will likely meet in April to finalize the 2026-2027 budget. Use these tools to follow the process:

Bill Tracking

The Florida [House](#) and [Senate](#) offer free bill trackers that can alert you to bill updates. These alerts can be sent to your email or accessed on the website. The House proposed budget bill is SB 2500 and the House proposed budget bill is HB 5001.

Calendars

Calendars for budget conferences, committees, and session will be available on the [House](#) and [Senate](#) homepages.

The Florida Channel

All committee meetings and sessions of the House and Senate can be viewed live and for rewatch on [The Florida Channel](#).

Know Your Elected Officials

If you live in Florida, you are a constituent of a State Representative and a State Senator. Find your elected officials [HERE](#).



Florida College Access Network (FCAN) leads the statewide collaborative movement to strengthen Florida by ensuring every Floridian attains education beyond high school toward a rewarding career. We envision a thriving Florida working together where education is the pathway to economic mobility and a prosperous economy for all.

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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