

2026 Florida Legislative Session Budget Recap:

After regular session adjourned in March, legislators reconvened in a May special session to complete the 2026-2027 state budget. University Boards of Trustees can now set fees for out-of-state students, while Florida continues to hold the line on in-state tuition.



June 2026*
*as of 6/10/2026

Introduction

The Florida Legislature passed the 2026-2027 State Budget on May 29. The budget awaits the Governor's signature and will take effect July 1, 2026, pending any line-item vetoes.

This is the second consecutive year in which the budget was not completed during the regular 60-day session. After the session adjourned in March, House Speaker Daniel Perez and Senate President Ben Albritton called legislators back to Tallahassee to complete the budget from May 12 – May 29. During that time, conference committees met, unresolved issues were “bumped” to leadership, and each chamber voted on the final compromise conference product – HB 5001, General Appropriations Act and accompanying implementing and conforming bills.

Lawmakers passed a \$114.5 billion budget, a 3.9% reduction from last year's, supporting a variety of new and continued initiatives. Highlights of the budget overall include \$1.56 billion for teacher salary increases, \$200 million to protect agricultural land, 4% raise for state law enforcement officers, state firefighters, park rangers, and \$150 million to pay the state's outstanding debts.

Higher education negotiations centered on funding tied to preeminence, expanding the Linking Industry to Nursing Education (LINE) fund, university out-of-state fees, and the transfer of the University of South Florida Sarasota Manatee Campus to New College of Florida. New investments included funding to expand the Guardian Program to state college and university campuses.

Within K-12 Education, both chambers negotiated approaches to scholarship funding. Funding for the Acceleration Options Supplement was maintained after its creation last year.

This budget recap outlines key appropriations that will impact Florida students' postsecondary access and success.

FCAN's policy recap was released March 26th, and is accessible at www.floridacollegeaccess.org, or by clicking [here](#).

Highlights

The State University System will receive \$3.8 billion in operating funds (-\$28.5 M).

Highlights include:

- No in-state tuition increases
 - During budget conference, the Senate and House negotiated changes to state Universities' abilities to set tuition for graduate and professional programs and out-of-state tuition, an ability which the Board of Governors (BOG) currently holds. Consensus was reached to allow university boards of trustees to set these rates, while maintaining the current restrictions on out-of-state enrollment through BOG regulations.
- \$645 million for state university performance-based funding incentives (No Change), including:
 - \$350 million of state investment
 - \$295 million redistributed from base funding
- \$18.5 million for incentives for Programs of Strategic Emphasis (No Change).
- No funding allocated for Preeminent State Research University status.
 - The Preeminent State Research University Program was established in 2013 to acknowledge and reward public universities for achieving 12 of 13 preeminence metrics, subject to legislative appropriation. The program received \$40 million in the 2025-2026 budget.
- \$1.8 million for the Post Secondary Guardian Program to certify and train school guardians (+1.8 M).

The Florida College System will receive \$1.7 billion in operating funds (+\$48.4 M).

Highlights include:

- No tuition increases
- \$30 million increase to the Florida College System Program fund through the President's agreed upon funding model.
- \$20 million to support industry certifications in high-skill, high-demand areas at Florida colleges (No Change)
- \$30 million for student success incentive funds (No Change), including:
 - \$17 million for the 2+2 Student Incentive Fund to improve associate of arts degree graduation rates and transfer into baccalaureate degree programs.
 - \$13 million for the Work Florida Student Incentive Fund to support college efforts to align career education programs with workforce demands and high-wage jobs.
- \$4.2 million for the Post Secondary Guardian Program to certify and train school guardians (+4.2 M).

Financial aid programs in the state continue to receive strong support. Highlights include:

- *Bright Futures*: The Bright Futures Scholarship Program is funded at \$705.2 million (+67.5 M).
- *Florida Student Assistance Grant (FSAG)*: \$269 million for Florida's need-based aid program with maximum award amount at \$3,260 (No Change). Separate versions of

the FSAG grant exist for students enrolled in a technical college, state college, state university, or private institution, and this amount is the aggregate.

- *Effective Access to Student Education (EASE) Grant*: EASE is funded at \$136.9 million (+\$1 M) providing \$3,500 for 38,272 students. The EASE grant provides tuition assistance to Florida resident students attending eligible independent, non-profit schools (and certain for-profit schools).
 - From the allocation above, \$2.9 million will be used for the EASE Plus incentive program (-2.1 M), to provide students in a quality, high-demand program with an additional financial award. The Senate proposed \$5 million; conferees agreed upon \$2.9 million.
- *Benacquisto Scholarship Program*: \$34.2 million (-2.9 M)
 - This program provides merit scholarships to National Merit Scholars.
- *Open Door Grant Program*: \$25 million (-\$10 M)
 - The Senate proposed level funding at \$35 million; the final agreement set the program at \$25 million. Open Door was designated as nonrecurring in last year's budget. The Open Door Grant Program provides funds to cover the cost of tuition, fees, exams, and materials for students completing CTE programs at district career centers and Florida College System institutions.
- *First Generation in College Matching Grant Program*: \$10.6 million for need based, in-state undergraduate aid to students who are the first in their families to attend a Florida college or university (No Change).

Workforce education highlights include:

- \$8.5 million for incentives to districts for students earning industry certifications in high-skill, high-demand areas at career technical centers (No Change).
- \$20 million for the Pathways to Career Opportunities Grant Program to establish or expand pre-apprenticeship and apprenticeship programs for high school and college students (No Change).
 - From the allocation above, \$5 million will be used for the Grow Your Own Teacher Registered Apprenticeship Program.
- \$40 million for the Workforce Development Capitalization Incentive Grant Program to expand CTE programs at school district and Florida College System institutions (No Change).
- Graduation Alternative to Traditional Education (GATE) Program allocations:
 - \$2 million for the GATE Program (-\$5 M) providing individuals aged 16-21 that have left high school, an option to earn a career and technical education while completing a standard high school diploma or its equivalent.
 - \$2 million for the GATE Startup Grant Program (-\$2 M) to assist school districts and Florida College System institutions establish GATE programs.
 - \$500,000 for the GATE Program Performance Fund (-500,000) to award school districts and Florida College System institutions based on student performance outcomes within GATE programs.

Accelerated Course Funding for Dual Enrollment, Advanced Placement (AP), International Baccalaureate (IB), Advanced International Certificate of Education (AICE), and Florida Advanced Courses

- \$596.7 million is allocated to the Academic Acceleration Options Supplement, to provide dedicated funding to school districts based on specified accelerated course student outcomes (No Change). Florida Advanced Courses will now be included to benefit from additional funding from the state. The legislature created the Academic Options Supplement during the 2025 session in the form of a “categorical,” to keep these funds used for specific purposes separate from school district base allocations.

Other notable postsecondary access and success items in this session’s budget include:

- \$18 million for the Dual Enrollment Scholarship Program providing eligible postsecondary institutions with tuition and cost reimbursement for participating students (No Change).
- \$34.5 million in operating funds for Florida’s Historically Black Colleges and Universities (+2.6 M).
- \$130 million in continued funding for two programs implemented in 2022 to enhance Florida’s nursing workforce: (1) The Prepping Institutions, Employers and Learners through Incentive for Nursing Education (**PIPELINE**) program funded at \$100 million and (2) The Linking Industry to Nursing Education (**LINE**) program funded at \$30 million (No Change).



Florida College Access Network (FCAN) leads the statewide collaborative movement to strengthen Florida by ensuring every Floridian attains education beyond high school towards 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.

For more research and data, visit www.floridacollegeaccess.org/research-and-data/.

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