

2019 Florida Legislative Session Update:

Workforce Education and Career Readiness



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Introduction

With three weeks left in the regular 2019 legislative session, lawmakers are in high gear to advance their bills to a vote. As committees wind down, it will be increasingly difficult for proposals to make it to a full House or Senate vote.

Postsecondary education, especially policies tied to workforce education, continue to gain traction. Since FCAN released its [session preview](#) last month, the Legislature has heard bills related to degree attainment, articulated student pathways, career readiness, and have passed their respective chamber budgets.

Below are updates on proposals that have gained traction in the Legislature and stand to impact Florida's students via postsecondary education and workforce training in the Sunshine State.

Legislation Impacting Postsecondary Education

CS/HB 7071: Workforce Education

Bill Sponsors: Education Committee, Higher Education & Career Readiness Committee, Representatives Amber Mariano (R – Hudson) and Ralph Massullo (R – Lecanto)

House Bill 7071 (HB 7071) moves Florida in the direction of meeting Governor DeSantis' goal of Florida becoming [number one in the nation for workforce education](#) by developing a data-driven, statewide approach to meeting Florida's need for talent. This bill, originally filed by the House of Representatives Higher Education and Career Readiness Subcommittee, represents the House's combined efforts to strengthen Florida's workforce and prepare students for the jobs of the 21st century. Specific provisions of the bill include:

"SAIL to 60" goal and strategic plan

Recognizing that strengthening the talent pipeline is vital for Florida's continued growth and economic prosperity, HB 7071 establishes the SAIL to 60 Initiative (SAIL stands for "Strengthening Alignment between Industry and Learning"). The initiative aims to increase the percentage of working-age Floridians with high-quality degrees or credentials from the current 49% to 60% by 2030. The bill renames the Higher Education Coordinating Council as the Talent Development Council and makes some changes to its membership. It also tasks the Talent

Development Council with developing a coordinated strategic plan for strengthening workforce education and accountability metrics.

Broader student pathways

To reach the SAIL to 60 goal, the bill also aims to broaden pathways for students to receive a credential by developing a systematic approach to **credit for prior learning** gained through relevant work experience or training and **reverse transfer**. Reverse transfer will award an associate's degree to students who earn at least 30 credit hours at a Florida College System institution and complete their associate's degree requirements at a state university. The bill also establishes **articulated career pathways** between school districts, career centers and Florida College System institutions that guarantee college credit for certain career and technical certificate programs.

For students who have stopped out within 12 credit hours of earning their first associate's or bachelor's degree, the bill provides recommendations for a **"Last Mile"** financial assistance program coordinated with Complete Florida. The bill also establishes the **Florida Apprenticeship Grant program**, competitive grant funding to expand apprenticeship programs, subject to appropriations.

Bill advances to House vote

Strengthening Florida's talent and workforce pipeline is a priority of the both the executive and legislative branches this year, with bipartisan support. As a result, HB 7071 has received unanimous support in all three committee stops. The Florida Department of Education, Foundation for Florida's Future, and business and industry groups including the Florida Chamber of Commerce, Florida Council of 100, Florida Association for Career and Technical Education, the Association of Builders and Contractors of Florida, and Florida Association of Counties also support the bill.

In early debate, lawmakers expressed a desire to go even further in the future to strengthen coordination and accountability as well as ensure that strong career pathway options are available to students in diverse regions throughout the state. The next stop will be the House floor for a full chamber vote.

Companion Bill Highlights

In the Senate Innovation, Industry, and Technology committee last week, **Senate Bill 770 – Alternative HS Graduation Requirements** by Senators Travis Hutson (R – Palm Coast) and Keith Perry (R – Gainesville), unanimously approved an amendment that aligns the legislation with CS/HB 7071. The bill also incorporates a 18-credit career and technical education pathway into the high school graduation options, which in addition to core subject areas, requires student to complete 2 credits of career and technical education that result in an industry certification and 1.5 credits of work-based learning program courses. The bill has one more stop, Appropriations, before heading to the full Senate.

Similar to HB 7071, **Senate Bill 1308 – Pathways to College and Career Success**, sponsored by Senator Keith Perry (R – Gainesville), outlines a framework for the award of reverse transfer associate of arts degrees and the Last Mile Scholarship program at state universities, colleges, and online programs. Additionally, the bill would require the Department of Education to conduct an annual audit of the state’s career and technical education programs to ensure they are aligned with current and future workforce demands, similar to [Governor DeSantis’ Executive Order 19-31](#). The Florida Department of Education, Foundation for Florida’s Future, Florida PTA, and business and industry groups support this bill. It has passed the first two education committees by unanimous vote and is headed to the Appropriations Committee.

CS/CS/HB 839: Organization and Operation of State Universities

Bill Sponsor: Representative Ray Rodrigues (R – Ft. Myers)

According to its sponsor, CS/CS/HB 839 picks up several provisions that did not pass from last year’s House companion to Senate Bill 4, the omnibus higher education package. The comprehensive bill contains policy issues related to free speech, performance funding, reverse transfer, the Bright Futures scholarship, and the reorganization of the University of South Florida.

The **performance funding** section of the bill has been amended to hold universities accountable for the success of students who transfer from Florida College System institutions by including them in the universities’ overall graduation rate metric. Additionally, the metric that currently measures the percentage of enrolled students who are Pell-eligible will instead assess graduation rates of Pell-eligible students compared to non-Pell eligible students at state universities. The bill also requires enhanced [2+2 articulation pathways](#) between each Florida College System institution and at least one State University System institution, in order to encourage associate’s degree earners to transfer and complete a baccalaureate degree.

The bill has cleared all three of its committee stops, with some debate. Legislators continue to express concern that the four-year graduation rate metric does not fairly assess performance for universities in the system that serve unique populations and creates other potentially unintended consequences. House Bill 839 passed the first two committees largely along partisan lines, but received only one nay vote from the full Education Committee. The bill will next advance to the House floor for consideration by the full chamber.

Companion Bill Highlights

CS/SB 1296, by Senator Manny Diaz (R – Miami), the identical companion bill to HB 839, received unanimous support from one committee, but has two more stops before a full Senate vote.

Additionally, Senator Kelli Stargel (R – Lakeland) is sponsoring **Senate Bill 194 – Higher Education** that requires “2+2” targeted pathway articulation agreements that guarantee transfer between Florida College System and State University System institutions. That bill has passed its first two committees with unanimous support and is now before the Appropriations Committee.

SB 190: Higher Education

Bill Sponsor: Senator Kelli Stargel (R – Lakeland)

This bill removes the numerical SAT/ACT scores for **Bright Futures** academic and medallion level eligibility requirements and pegs them to the 89th and 75th percentile, respectively. The bill has passed the Committee on Education and Education Appropriations subcommittees with unanimous approval, though legislators have expressed concern that the changes to Bright Futures eligibility criteria will impact the number of students who are eligible for the award and disproportionately impact low-income and/or minority students. According to the bill analysis, “the realignment of SAT and ACT examination scores to SAT national percentile ranks for the FAS and FMS awards may impact the initial eligibility of students to receive such awards;” however, no estimate is provided.

Companion Bill Highlights

This Bright Futures language is in several higher education bills, including HB 5501, HB 839, and SB 1296. **HB 5501 – Higher Education** by the Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee and Representative Randy Fine (R – Palm Bay) includes changes to a number of higher education funding and accountability structures and is awaiting a full House vote.

Other Relevant Bills

CS/HB 217 and CS/SB 442: Postsecondary Education for Certain Military Personnel

Bill Sponsors: Higher Education and Career Readiness Subcommittee, Representatives Adam Hattersley (D – Riverview), and Mel Ponder (R – Destin) (CS/HB 217); Committee on Military and Veterans Affairs and Space; and Senator Tom Lee (R – Brandon) (CS/SB 442)

These bills, which have both received bipartisan support, require the state to utilize national best practices to develop a uniform system to award credit for experience and training obtained for military service and waive transcript fees for active duty servicemembers or honorably discharged veterans and their immediate family members. Since the initial filing, the bills have been amended to clarify that a workgroup of representatives from the State University System, Florida College System, career centers, and veterans must convene by August 31 to develop the framework.

CS/HB 217 received unanimous support in its three committee stops. Next it heads to the House floor for a full vote. CS/SB 442 also received unanimous support in its three committee stops: Education, Military and Veterans Affairs and Space, and Appropriations. The Florida Chamber of Commerce, United Way of Florida, the Foundation for Florida’s Future, United Way Suncoast, United Way of Miami-Dade, and the Greater Tampa Chamber of Commerce also support the bill.

CS/SB 1342 and CS/CS/HB 189 – Dual Enrollment

Bill Sponsors: Senator Kelli Stargel (R – Lakeland); Representative Ardian Zika (R – Land o’ Lakes)

As explained by Chair Stargel, the purpose of the two bills is to expand the opportunity to participate in the dual enrollment program to all Florida students regardless of where they attend high school. The bills expand the early college program from 1 to 2 years, allow charters to establish early college programs, and expand participation to include private and homeschooled students. The bills also lower the dual enrollment eligibility requirements from 3.0 to 2.5 with the college placement (PERT) test.

In debate, a supporter of the bill noted that currently, parents of private school students pay taxes but do not receive public education benefits, making it unfair for them to pay both private school tuition and dual enrollment tuition. However, one legislator voiced some concern about private schools receiving tuition dollars for students in early college programs. The House bill has passed all of its committees by unanimous vote and is headed to the full chamber. The Senate version has passed its first two committees with unanimous support and is now in Appropriations.

CS/HB 257 and SB 680 – Excess Credit Hour Surcharges

Bill Sponsors: House Higher Education and Career Readiness Subcommittee and Representative Amber Mariano (R – Hudson); Senator Keith Perry (R – Gainesville)

These companion bills increase the excess credit hour surcharge threshold from 110 percent to 120 percent of the number of credit hours required for students who switch majors and the number of credit hours needed to complete the new degree program exceeds that of the original program. Bill sponsor Representative Mariano noted that this increase will allow students more flexibility to change their major in order to pursue degrees in high-demand fields without the burden of additional fees.

CS/HB 257 received unanimous support in the Higher Education and Career Readiness Subcommittee, Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee, and Education Committee. It will now be placed on the House calendar for a full floor vote. The senate companion bill, SB 680, received unanimous support from the Education Committee and Education Appropriations Subcommittee. The bill now heads to Appropriations.

SB 456/458 and HB 117/119 Historically Black Colleges and Universities Matching Endowment Scholarship Program/Trust Fund

Bill sponsors: Senator Audrey Gibson (D – Jacksonville); Representative Delores Hogan Johnson (D – Ft. Pierce)

According to Representative Hogan Johnson, the House bill's sponsor, the Historically Black Colleges and Universities Matching Endowment Scholarship Program bill is an effort to advance a similar measure that was introduced, but was unsuccessful, during the 2018 legislative session. The Department of Education will distribute the scholarship for students with financial need who attend one of Florida's four HBCUs: Bethune-Cookman University, Edward Waters College, Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University, and Florida Memorial University. Subject to the \$2 million appropriation requested for 2019-20, each of Florida's four HBCUs would be eligible to participate in the program if they commit to a \$500,000 match.

HB 117/119 cleared its first stop in the Higher Education and Career Readiness Committee with some debate. While committee members expressed support of the program's mission and goals, a few members were concerned about the establishment of a trust fund by a non-appropriations committee and the likelihood of the program receiving a \$2 million appropriation after budgets were already proposed and approved. Next it will head to Higher Education Appropriations and the Education Committee. SB 456/458 passed the Education Committee last week with unanimous support; its remaining committee stops are the Appropriations Subcommittee on Education, and the Committee on Appropriations.

Budget Allocations

A little more than halfway through the 2019-20 legislative session, the House and Senate have each passed their respective budgets. At \$89.9 billion, the House's total budget is leaner than the Senate's proposed budget of \$90.3 billion, which includes a \$255 million difference in higher education. Both chambers provide additional funding for industry certifications, aligned with Governor DeSantis' budget recommendation and priorities outlined in Executive Order 19-31. The budgets also continue performance funding in the state colleges and universities. The House budget proposes a \$135 million cut to the state universities, while the Senate provides an additional \$38 million in operational support for the state colleges. The next step is budget conference, where legislators will make final budget decisions.



Florida College Access Network (FCAN) is Florida's first collaborative network committed to ensuring all Floridians have the opportunity to achieve an education beyond high school and prosper in Florida's dynamic economy. Our mission is to create and sustain a statewide network that catalyzes and supports communities to increase college and career preparation, access, and completion for all Florida students.

As a nonpartisan organization, FCAN strives to expand knowledge of research, data, policies and practices that impact postsecondary access and attainment in Florida. This preview is intended as an educational resource and does not constitute an endorsement or opposition to any specific bill or legislation.

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

FCAN is a statewide organization hosted by the University of South Florida System (USF). The statements and positions presented are those of FCAN and are not made on behalf of the USF Board of Trustees or intended in any way to be representative to USF.

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