

2018 Florida Legislative Preview:

Governance, accountability, affordability
and other proposals impacting college
students



Introduction

The 2018 Florida Legislative Session starts January 9, and higher education remains a high priority for policymakers. Which of the 2,395 proposed bills are poised to impact postsecondary access and attainment for Florida Students?

Here are some of the top budget priorities and proposals to watch this session.

Budget

The general revenue forecast for FY 2018-19 is slightly positive with an estimated \$52 million surplus. However, this does not include costs associated with Hurricane Irma or additional changes to federal policy. Also, significant shortfalls are anticipated in the next two years.¹

Governor Rick Scott has proposed an \$87.4 billion budget for 2018-19, which includes more than \$25 billion for education.² The Governor's budget provides an \$11.9 billion state investment for K-12, \$1.26 billion for the Florida College System institutions, and \$2.46 billion for the state universities. This corresponds to \$7,497 per K-12 student, \$6,285 per Florida state/community college student and \$14,334 per state university student. The budget recommends no tuition increases. Performance funding continues to be a priority for the governor. The budget recommends doubling the state investment for performance funding for the Florida College System to \$60 million, increasing the state investment for state universities to \$395.6 million and increasing the incentive funding to colleges for industry certifications to \$14 million. Governor Scott's recommended budget also provides an additional \$23 million for the Bright Futures merit-based scholarship program for a total of \$420.6 million, which maintains 100 percent tuition funding for the Academic Scholars.

Postsecondary Education

SB 4: Florida Excellence in Higher Education Act of 2018

Bill Sponsor: Senator Bill Galvano (R-Bradenton)

Targets reforms impacting state universities and state financial aid programs. Proposed changes include expanding the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program Academic Scholars and Medallion Scholars awards; extending the Benacquisto Scholarship Program (for National Merit Scholars) to eligible students from other states; and establishing the Florida Farmworker Student Scholarship Program for farmworkers and their children. Additionally, the bill increases the state-to-private match for the First Generation Matching Grant Program; requires each state university board of trustees to adopt a block tuition option; modifies the state university performance-funding metrics to incentivize on-time graduation; and requires a gap analysis to identify internship opportunities in high-demand fields.

SB 540: Community College Competitiveness Act of 2018

Bill Sponsor: Senator Dorothy Hukill (R-Port Orange)

This bill includes a number of reforms aimed at strengthening leadership and accountability for the state's 28 Florida College System (FCS) institutions. Proposed changes include renaming the Florida College System (FCS) as the Florida Community College System (FCCS) and establishing a State Board of Community Colleges (SBCC), which would take on oversight responsibilities currently assigned to the State Board of Education. The bill also proposes additional oversight of bachelor's degree programs offered by state and community colleges, including a 20 percent cap on upper-level, undergraduate enrollment at each FCS institution and a 10 percent cap for the system as a whole. The bill also requires each FCS institution to implement at least one "2+2" targeted pathway articulation agreement with at least one state university to help their associate's degree earners transfer and complete a bachelor's degree. Finally, the bill modifies performance-based funding metrics for state colleges.

HB 181: Sunshine State Scholarship Program

Bill Sponsor: Representative Shevrin Jones (D-West Park)

Establishes the Sunshine State Scholarship Program, a last-dollar scholarship that covers 100 percent of tuition and fees for eligible low-income Florida students attending a public community college or technical school. The new scholarship program would cover the remaining cost of tuition and fees not provided by other sources of financial aid, including Bright Futures, Florida Student Assistance Grant, the Pell Grant, and other grants and scholarships. To receive this scholarship, students must have an annual household income of \$50,000 or less, complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), be enrolled full-time, attend a Florida College System institution or technical college, and maintain at least a 2.5 GPA.

HB 75: Postsecondary Education Fee Waivers for Eligible U.S. Armed Forces Members

Bill Sponsor: Representative Mel Ponder (R-Destin)

Provides Florida College System institutions the option to absorb fees for active duty U.S. Armed Service members using Department of Defense (DOD) Military Tuition Assistance (MTA), which prevents these students from incurring any out-of-pocket costs for tuition and fees.

HB 565: Excess Credit Hour Surcharge

Bill Sponsor: Representative Amber Mariano (R-New Port Richey)

Prevents state university students who earn a bachelor's degree within four years from paying an excess credit hour surcharge and provides higher excess credit hour surcharge thresholds for students enrolled in a degree program of strategic emphasis (science, technology, engineering, math and health disciplines, etc.).

SJR 7001: Supermajority Vote for Tax or Fee Increases

Joint Resolution by Ways and Means Committee

Proposes an amendment to the State Constitution to require a two-thirds affirmative vote by each house of the legislature to impose or raise a state tax or fee, including tuition and fees.

HB 619: Renaming of Florida College System Institutions

Bill Sponsor: Representative Jeanette Nuñez (R-Miami) and Representative Holly Raschein (R-Key Largo)

Changes name of "Florida Keys Community College" to "The College of the Florida Keys," and "North Florida Community College" to "North Florida College."

K-12

SB 88: Financial Literacy

Bill Sponsor: Senator Dorothy Hukill (R-Port Orange)

Adds a half-credit financial literacy course as a Florida high school graduation requirement. The purpose of the course is to help students better understand topics such as how to manage debt, understand credit scores, apply for loans, compute interest rates and analyze simple contracts.

SB 180: Computer Coding Instruction

Bill Sponsor: Jeff Brandes (R-St. Petersburg)

Allows high schools to offer the option of two credits in computer coding to satisfy students' foreign language requirement. Public colleges and universities would also be required to recognize such coding courses as foreign-language credits.

HB 1: Hope Scholarship Program

Bill Sponsor: Byron Donalds (R-Naples)

Establishes the Hope Scholarship Program, which provides parents of students who have been victims of bullying with vouchers or "scholarships" that can be used to attend a private school or transportation to a different school of their choice.

SB 216: Schools of Hope

Bill Sponsor: Senator Lauren Book (D-Plantation)

Amends the Schools of Hope program, which allows charter schools to move into areas where public schools have shown low state test scores over an extended period of time. The change would prevent Schools of Hope from serving children primarily from other locations.

Other relevant bills:

Senate Bill 318 creates the "Florida Internship Tax Credit Program," which would authorize a corporate income tax credit up to a specified amount to a qualified business paying wages to a degree-seeking student during the student's internship at the business. **House Bill 363** provides access to state financial aid to eligible students who are undocumented students for federal immigration purposes. **Senate Bill 252** modifies tuition waivers for state employees from six credits per semester to 18 credits per calendar year. **Senate Bill 832** allows state funds to be used on postsecondary workforce programs for the education of state or federal inmates. **Senate Bill 436** authorizes the Commissioner of Education to coordinate with specified educational entities to assess needs for resources and assistance during emergency situations. **House Bill 375** authorizes revenue bonds to be secured by or payable from revenues from grants & contracts for state universities if required by specified federal program.

NOTES

¹ "Florida: Long-Range Financial Outlook, September 2017." The Florida Legislature Office of Economic and Demographic Research. <http://edr.state.fl.us/Content/presentations/long-range-financial-outlook/3YearPlan2017FallUpdate.pdf>.

² "Governor Rick Scott's 2018-2019 Budget: Securing Florida's Future." <http://fightingforfloridasfuturebudget.com/HomeFY19.htm>.



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. Our vision for Florida is Goal 2025: For 60% of working-age Floridians to hold a high-quality postsecondary degree or credential by the year 2025.

As a nonpartisan organization, we strive to expand knowledge of research, data, policies and practices that impact postsecondary access and attainment in Florida. This legislative overview is intended as a resource and does not constitute an endorsement or opposition to any of the legislative proposals described herein. The views expressed in this policy brief were developed independently and do not reflect the opinions of the universities, agencies, and funders with which the leadership team and staff are affiliated.