

THE FLORIDA SENATE
2024 SUMMARY OF LEGISLATION PASSED
Committee on Education Postsecondary

CS/SB 62 — Resident Status for Tuition Purposes

by Education Postsecondary Committee and Senators Osgood and Book

The bill provides that an individual who has met the requirements to be classified as a resident for tuition purposes may not lose his or her resident status for tuition purposes solely because of incarceration in a state or federal correctional facility in Florida.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2024.

Vote: Senate 38-0; House 109-5

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CS/CS/HB 217 — College Campus Facilities in Areas of Critical State Concern

by Appropriations Committee; Postsecondary Education & Workforce Subcommittee; and Rep. Mooney and others (CS/CS/SB 222 by Appropriations Committee on Education; Education Postsecondary Committee; and Senator Rodriguez)

The bill expands the categories of non-students that may be housed in dormitories on the campus of a Florida College System (FCS) institution to include healthcare workers. The bill also revises from 25 to 50 the number of dormitory beds that may be provided for such individuals.

The bill clarifies which revenues may be used for construction, debt service payments, maintenance, or operation of dormitories, to authorize FCS institutions to use grants and donations for capital outlay, as well as revenues from the capital improvement fee, for such purposes.

The bill also creates a requirement for the Division of Bond Finance to review financing prior to the issuance of any bonds by a nonpublic entity as part of a public-private partnership with the FCS institution, and for the institution to consider issues raised by such analysis.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2024.

Vote: Senate 29-0; House 116-0

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CS/CS/SB 494 — Graduate Program Admissions

by Military and Veterans Affairs, Space, and Domestic Security Committee; Education Postsecondary Committee; and Senators Avila, Perry, and Collins

The bill requires an institution of higher education to waive the Graduate Record Examination (GRE) and the Grade Management Admission Test (GMAT) for servicemembers who apply for admission to a graduate program that requires the examination.

The bill also provides definitions, to include:

- A “graduate program” as an advanced academic degree program in a specialized field of study, including, but not limited to, a master’s or doctoral degree program, which degree is pursued after one has obtained a bachelor’s degree.
- An “institution of higher education” as a state university.
- A “servicemember” as any person serving as a member of the United States Armed Forces on active duty or state active duty and all members of the Florida National Guard and United States Reserve Forces.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor’s signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2024.

Vote: Senate 37-0; House 113-1

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SB 522 — Tallahassee Community College

by Senator Simon

The bill changes the name of “Tallahassee Community College” to “Tallahassee State College.” As Tallahassee Community College (TCC) is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools Commission on Colleges (SACS) as a baccalaureate-degree-granting institution and the TCC Board of Trustees has approved the name change, TCC has met the statutory criteria to seek a name change from the Legislature.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor’s signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2024.

Vote: Senate 40-0; House 114-0

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CS/HB 707 — State University Unexpended Funds

by Higher Education Appropriations Subcommittee and Rep. Silvers and others (CS/SB 1128 by Education Postsecondary Committee and Senator Martin)

The bill authorizes a state university to retain and report to the Board of Governors an annual reserve balance exceeding the required seven percent of its state operating budget. The bill also authorizes a university's carry forward spending plan to include a reserve fund for expenditures authorized in law.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2024.

Vote: Senate 35-0; House 115-1

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CS/HB 1291 — Educator Preparation Programs

by Education & Employment Committee and Reps. Snyder, Jacques, and others (CS/SB 1372 by Appropriations Committee on Education and Senators Ingoglia, Yarborough, and Perry)

The bill modifies requirements for courses and instruction in initial teacher preparation programs, educator preparation institutes, professional learning certification programs, and school leader preparation programs to specify that such programs:

- May not distort significant historical events, teach identity politics, violate Florida law regarding discrimination, or base coursework or instruction on specified theories regarding social, political, and economic inequities.
- Must afford teacher candidates the opportunity to think critically, achieve mastery of academic content, learn instructional strategies, and demonstrate competence; and afford school leader candidates the opportunity to demonstrate mastery of program content, including instructional leadership strategies, coaching development, and continuous improvement efforts.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2024

Vote: Senate 28-12; House 81-31

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HB 7007 — OGSR/Campus Emergency Response

by Ethics, Elections & Open Government Subcommittee and Rep. Griffitts (SB 7022 by Education Postsecondary Committee)

The bill saves from repeal the public records exemption making exempt from public inspection and copying requirements any portion of a campus emergency response held by a public postsecondary institution, a state or local law enforcement agency, a county or municipal emergency management agency, the Executive Office of the Governor, the Department of Education, the Board of Governors of the State University System, or the Division of Emergency Management. Likewise, the bill saves from repeal the exemption to public meetings requirements for that portion of a public meeting which would reveal information related to the campus emergency response.

The bill also removes a superfluous provision of the exemption that authorizes such entities to disclose the exempt information in specified circumstances, as these entities are not prohibited under public records and meeting requirements from disclosing the information.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect October 1, 2024.

Vote: Senate 38-0; House 115-0

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CS/SB 7032 — Education

by Appropriations Committee and Education Postsecondary Committee

The bill creates the Graduation Alternative to Traditional Education (GATE) Program, GATE Scholarship Program, GATE Startup Grant Program, and GATE Program Performance Fund. All four programs are aimed at re-engaging students who have withdrawn from high school by providing opportunities to earn career education credentials while also completing a standard high school diploma or equivalent credential. The bill adds information about the GATE Program to the required notifications to 16 and 17 year old students who withdraw from high school.

The bill waives tuition and specified fees and the costs of instructional materials for students that are enrolled in the GATE Program at a school district career center, charter technical career center, or a Florida College System (FCS) institution. After the student's first term, the waiver is provided after an award of state aid from the Open Door Grant Program is applied, as available. The bill provides eligibility criteria for students to enroll in the GATE Program to specify that a student must:

- Not have earned a standard high school diploma or a high school equivalency diploma.
- Have been withdrawn from high school. If age 16 or 17, have withdrawn according to requirements specified in law.
- Be a resident of this state for tuition purposes.
- Be 16 to 21 years of age at the time of initial enrollment.
- Select an adult secondary education program and career education program at the time of admission to the GATE Program, provided that the career education program is included on the Master Credentials List. The student must remain in the pathway after enrollment, except that the student may enroll in an adult basic education program prior to enrolling in the adult secondary education program.
- Maintain a 2.0 grade point average (GPA) for career and technical education coursework.
- Complete the adult secondary education program and the career education program within three years unless the institution determines that an extension is warranted due to extenuating circumstances.

To assist FCS institutions, school districts, and charter technical career centers in administering the GATE Program, the GATE Scholarship and GATE Startup Grant Programs provide funds for starting programs in rural areas and reimbursing all participating institutions for the tuition and fees and instructional materials for students enrolled in the GATE program.

Additionally, the bill provides funding for institutions through the GATE Program Performance Fund. The performance funding is provided based on the number of students enrolled in the GATE program who earn a standard high school diploma or equivalent credential and a career certification that has been identified as having local, regional, or statewide value.

The bill requires the Department of Education to disseminate information about the GATE Program and administer the GATE Scholarship and GATE Startup Grant Programs.

The GATE Scholarship and Startup Grant programs and the GATE Program Performance Fund provided for in this bill are subject to legislative appropriation.

To support students in earning a standard high school diploma, the bill increases from 2 to 4 the number of courses that may be reported for funding for a student who is coenrolled in a K-12 education program and adult education program. The bill also removes the requirement that the courses funded be core curricula.

If approved by the Governor, or allowed to become law without the Governor's signature, these provisions take effect July 1, 2024.

Vote: Senate 40-0; House 112-0