

The Florida Senate
BILL ANALYSIS AND FISCAL IMPACT STATEMENT

(This document is based on the provisions contained in the legislation as of the latest date listed below.)

Prepared By: The Professional Staff of the Committee on Appropriations

BILL: CS/CS/SB 270

INTRODUCER: Appropriations Committee on Higher Education; Education Postsecondary Committee;
and Senator Burgess

SUBJECT: Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program

DATE: April 1, 2025

REVISED: 3/24/25

	ANALYST	STAFF DIRECTOR	REFERENCE	ACTION
1.	<u>Palazesi</u>	<u>Bouck</u>	<u>HE</u>	<u>Fav/CS</u>
2.	<u>Gray</u>	<u>Elwell</u>	<u>AHE</u>	<u>Fav/CS</u>
3.	<u>Gray</u>	<u>Sadberry</u>	<u>AP</u>	<u>Pre-meeting</u>

Please see Section IX. for Additional Information:

COMMITTEE SUBSTITUTE - Substantial Changes

I. Summary:

CS/CS/SB 270 expands the eligibility criteria for the Bright Futures Scholarship Program to include a student who graduated from a non-Florida school if the parent retired from military service within 12 months prior to the student's graduation.

The bill also expands eligibility for the Florida Academic Scholar (FAS) award requirements to include the Advanced Placement (AP) Capstone designation with eligible diploma options. The bill specifies the course composition of the AP Capstone designation.

The bill is expected to have a significant negative fiscal impact on the Bright Futures Scholarship Program. **See Section V., Fiscal Impact Statement.**

The bill is effective on July 1, 2025.

II. Present Situation:

Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program

The Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program is a lottery-funded scholarship program for Florida high school graduates who merit high academic achievement and enroll in a degree, certificate, or applied technology program at an eligible Florida public or private postsecondary

education institution.¹ Since the 1997-1998 academic year, the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program has disbursed approximately \$9.2 billion for over 3.3 million students to attend an eligible postsecondary institution in this state.²

General Eligibility Requirements

Florida high school students who wish to qualify for a Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program award must meet the following initial eligibility requirements:

- Be a Florida resident for at least one year preceding an award.
- Earn a standard Florida high school diploma or a high school equivalency diploma unless:
 - The student completes a home education program.
 - The student earns a high school diploma from a non-Florida school while living with a parent or guardian who is on military or public service assignment away from Florida; or
 - The student earns a high school diploma from an eligible Florida private school.
- Be accepted by and enroll in an eligible Florida public or independent postsecondary education institution.
- Be enrolled for at least six semester credit hours or the equivalent in quarter hours or clock hours.
- Not have been found guilty of, or entered a plea of nolo contendere to, a felony charge, unless the student has been granted clemency.
- Apply for a scholarship by high school graduation, or by December 31 for mid-year graduates.³

Academic Eligibility Requirements

There are four awards through the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship program, including the Florida Academic Scholars award, the Florida Medallion Scholars award, the Florida Gold Seal CAPE Scholars award, and the Florida Gold Seal Vocational Scholars award.⁴ In the 2023-2024 academic year, 35,111 students received an initial disbursement for one of the four awards offered through the Bright Futures Scholarship Program.⁵

Florida Academic Scholar (FAS) Award

In the 2023-2024 academic year, 20,093 students received an initial disbursement for the FAS award.⁶ Florida high school students who wish to qualify for the FAS award must meet the following academic requirements:

- Graduate from a Florida public high school with a standard diploma, from a registered private high school, earn a GED, complete a home education program, or graduate from a non-Florida high school if specific eligibility requirements are met.

¹ Section 1009.53(1), F.S.

² Florida Department of Education, *Florida Bright Futures Student Counts and Total Costs (2024)*, available at <https://www.floridastudentfinancialaidsg.org/PDF/PSI/BFReportsA.pdf>. (last visited Mar. 11, 2025)

³ Section 1009.531(1), F.S.

⁴ Section 1009.53(2), F.S.

⁵ Florida Department of Education, *Florida Bright Futures End-of-Year Report (2024)*, available at https://www.floridastudentfinancialaidsg.org/PDF/PSI/BF_2023_2024.pdf (last visited Mar. 11, 2025)

⁶ Florida Department of Education, *Office of Student Financial Assistance End-Of-Year Report, Florida Academic Scholarship*, available at https://www.floridastudentfinancialaidsg.org/PDF/PSI/BFFAS_2023_2024.pdf. (last visited Mar. 11, 2025)

- Complete the required high school coursework.
- Achieve the required minimum high school grade point average (GPA) of 3.5.⁷
- Achieve the required minimum score on either the ACT, CLT, or SAT college entrance exam.⁸
- Complete 100 total hours of volunteer service, paid work hours, or combination of both.
- Submit a Florida Financial Aid Application no later than August 31 after high school graduation.⁹

A student is exempt from the required ACT, CLT, or SAT college entrance exam scores if he or she is:

- Awarded an International Baccalaureate Diploma from the International Baccalaureate Office or an Advanced International Certificate of Education Diploma from the University of Cambridge International Examinations Office;
- Recognized by the merit or achievement programs of the National Merit Scholarship Corporation as a scholar or finalist; or
- Recognized by the National Hispanic Recognition Program as a scholar recipient.¹⁰

Florida Medallion Scholar (FMS) Award

In the 2023-2024 academic year, 14,442 students received an initial disbursement for the FMS award.¹¹ Florida high school students who wish to qualify for the FMS award must meet the following academic requirements:

- Graduate from a Florida public high school with a standard diploma, from a registered private high school, earn a GED, complete a home education program, or graduate from a non-Florida high school if specific eligibility requirements are met.
- Complete the required high school coursework.
- Achieve the required minimum high school grade point average (GPA) of 3.0.
- Achieve the required minimum score on either the ACT, CLT, or SAT college entrance exam.¹²
- Complete 75 hours of volunteer service, 100 hours of paid work, or 100 hours of a combination of both.
- Submit a Florida Financial Aid Application no later than August 31 after high school graduation.¹³

⁷ Florida Department of Education, *Bright Futures Student Handbook*, available at

<https://www.floridastudentfinancialaidsg.org/pdf/bfhandbookchapter1.pdf>, at 3. (last visited Mar. 11, 2025)

⁸ Section 1009.531(6), F.S. The SAT score requirement for the FAS must be set no lower than the 89th national percentile. The corresponding ACT and CLT scores must be concordant with the applicable SAT scores.

⁹ Florida Department of Education, *Bright Futures Student Handbook*, available at

<https://www.floridastudentfinancialaidsg.org/pdf/bfhandbookchapter1.pdf>, at 3. (last visited Mar. 11, 2025)

¹⁰ Section 1009.534(1), F.S.

¹¹ Florida Department of Education, *Office of Student Financial Assistance End-Of-Year Report, Florida Medallion Scholarship* available at https://www.floridastudentfinancialaidsg.org/PDF/PSI/BFFMS_2023_2024.pdf (last visited Mar. 11, 2025).

¹² Section 1009.531(6), F.S. The SAT score requirement for the FAS must be set no lower than the 75th national percentile. The corresponding ACT and CLT scores must be concordant with the applicable SAT scores.

¹³ Florida Department of Education, *Bright Futures Student Handbook*, available at

<https://www.floridastudentfinancialaidsg.org/pdf/bfhandbookchapter1.pdf>, at 3. (last visited Mar. 12, 2025)

A student is exempt from the required ACT, CLT, or SAT college entrance exam scores if he or she is:

- Awarded an International Baccalaureate Diploma from the International Baccalaureate Office or an Advanced International Certificate of Education Diploma from the University of Cambridge International Examinations Office;
- Recognized by the merit or achievement programs of the National Merit Scholarship Corporation as a scholar or finalist; or
- Recognized by the National Hispanic Recognition Program as a scholar recipient.¹⁴

Florida Gold Seal CAPE (GSC) Award

In the 2023-2024 academic year, 284 students received an initial disbursement for the Florida GSC award.¹⁵ Florida high school students who wish to qualify for the Florida GSC award must meet the following initial eligibility requirements:

- Earn a minimum of five postsecondary credit hours through CAPE industry certifications that articulate for college credit.
- Complete 30 volunteer service hours, 100 paid work hours, or the combination of 100 total hours.¹⁶

Florida Gold Seal Vocational Scholars (GSVS) Award

In the 2023-2024 academic year, 292 students received an initial disbursement for the Florida GSVS award.¹⁷ Florida high school students who wish to qualify for a Florida GSVS award must meet the following initial eligibility requirements:

- Achieve the required weighted minimum 3.0 GPA in non-elective high school courses.
- Take at least three full credits in a single career and technical education program.
- Achieve the required minimum 3.5 unweighted GPA in career education courses.
- Achieve the required minimum score on the ACT, SAT, or Florida Postsecondary Education Readiness Test (PERT).
- Complete 30 volunteer service hours, 100 paid work hours, or the combination of 100 total hours.¹⁸

Advanced Placement (AP) Capstone Designation

The AP Capstone is a diploma program based on two yearlong AP courses: AP Seminar and AP Research. These courses are designed to complement other AP courses that the AP Capstone student may take. The AP Seminar course is an introductory AP class for grades 10 and 11, and

¹⁴ Florida Department of Education, *Bright Futures Student Handbook*, available at <https://www.floridastudentfinancialaidsg.org/pdf/bfhandbookchapter1.pdf>, at 5 (last visited Mar. 12, 2025).

¹⁵ Florida Department of Education, *Office of Student Financial Assistance End-Of-Year Report Florida Gold Seal CAPE Scholarship*, available at https://www.floridastudentfinancialaidsg.org/PDF/PSI/BFGSC_2023_2024.pdf.

¹⁶ Florida Department of Education, *Bright Futures Student Handbook*, available at <https://www.floridastudentfinancialaidsg.org/pdf/bfhandbookchapter1.pdf>, at 8 (last visited Mar. 12, 2025).

¹⁷ Florida Department of Education, *Office of Student Financial Assistance End-Of-Year Report Florida Gold Seal Vocational Scholarship*, available at https://www.floridastudentfinancialaidsg.org/PDF/PSI/BFGSV_2023_2024.pdf (last visited Mar. 12, 2025).

¹⁸ Florida Department of Education, *Bright Futures Student Handbook*, available at <https://www.floridastudentfinancialaidsg.org/pdf/bfhandbookchapter1.pdf>, at 6.

serves as a prerequisite for AP Research, which is typically offered in grades 11 or 12. The AP scores for both courses are based on teacher assessment of student presentation components and College Board scoring of student-written components plus an end-of-course exam (for AP Seminar only). To earn an AP Capstone designation, students must earn scores of three or higher in the AP Seminar and AP Research courses, and on four additional AP Exams of their choosing. Students who earn scores of three or higher in the AP Seminar and AP Research courses, but not on four additional AP Exams, receive the AP Seminar and Research Certificate.¹⁹

III. Effect of Proposed Changes:

This bill amends s. 1009.531, F.S., to expand eligibility requirements for the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship program to students who earned a high school diploma from a non-Florida school while living with a parent or guardian who, within 12 months before the student's high school graduation, retired from military or public service assignment away from Florida. Currently, a student who earns a high school diploma from a non-Florida school may only qualify for the Florida Bright Futures Scholarship Program if that student is living with a parent or guardian who is on military or public service away from Florida.

The bill amends s. 1009.531, F.S., to expand eligibility for the Florida Academic Scholar (FAS) award requirements to include the Advanced Placement (AP) Capstone designation on the same basis as the International Baccalaureate or Advanced International Certificate of Education diplomas beginning with the high school students graduating in 2025-2026. The amendment requires that the AP Capstone designation may only be used for the FAS award if the student completes six AP courses, including:

- AP Seminar;
- AP Research;
- One AP course in mathematics or science;
- One AP course in English;
- One AP course in art, history, or social sciences; and
- One AP course in a subject of the student's choice.

The bill also specifies that earning an AP Capstone designation does not satisfy the requirements for a standard high school diploma.

The bill is effective on July 1, 2025.

IV. Constitutional Issues:

A. Municipality/County Mandates Restrictions:

None.

¹⁹ College Board, *How AP Capstone Works*, <https://apcentral.collegeboard.org/courses/ap-capstone/how-ap-capstone-works#:~:text=Students%20who%20earn%20scores%20of,Seminar%20and%20Research%20Certificate%E2%84%A2,> (Last visited Mar. 12, 2025).

B. Public Records/Open Meetings Issues:

None.

C. Trust Funds Restrictions:

None.

D. State Tax or Fee Increases:

None.

E. Other Constitutional Issues:

None.

V. Fiscal Impact Statement:**A. Tax/Fee Issues:**

None.

B. Private Sector Impact:

None.

C. Government Sector Impact:

The bill would increase the number of students who are eligible for the Bright Futures Scholarship Program. The fiscal impact for expanding the Bright Futures Scholarship Program to include those students earning an Advanced Placement (AP) Capstone designation would grant initial eligibility to an additional 660 students for the 2026-2027 academic year, resulting in approximately a \$3.8 million fiscal impact. Based on the current forecast growth, the total cost for initial eligibility and students meeting the renewal requirements would result in a cost of \$7.6 million for 2027-2028, \$9.8 million for 2028-2029, and \$11.2 million for 2029-2030.²⁰ However, some of the students who earn an AP Capstone Designation may have already qualified for a Bright Futures Florida Academic Scholarship or the Florida Medallion Scholarship based on meeting the test score and grade point averages.

The fiscal impact for expanding the Bright Futures Scholarship Program eligibility requirements for students who earn a high school diploma from a non-Florida school while living with a parent or guardian who, within 12 months before the student's graduation, retired from military or public service assignment away from Florida, has an indeterminate fiscal impact.

²⁰ Email from Amelia Johnson, Deputy Chief of Staff, Florida Department of Education, (Feb. 27, 2025) (on file with Senate Appropriation Committee on Higher Education). Numbers were updated based on deferring the effective day to 2026.

VI. Technical Deficiencies:

None.

VII. Related Issues:

None.

VIII. Statutes Affected:

This bill substantially amends the following section of the Florida Statutes: 1009.26, 1009.531, and 1009.534.

IX. Additional Information:**A. Committee Substitute – Statement of Substantial Changes:**

(Summarizing differences between the Committee Substitute and the prior version of the bill.)

CS/CS by Appropriations Committee on Higher Education on March 18, 2025:

The committee substitute provides that the Bright Futures Scholarship Program eligibility for the Advanced Placement Capstone designation is to begin with the high school students graduating in the 2025-2026 school year.

CS by Education Postsecondary on February 18, 2025:

The committee substitute expands eligibility for the Florida Academic Scholar award requirements to include the Advanced Placement (AP) Capstone designation with eligible diploma options but specifies that the AP Capstone is not a standard high school diploma option. The amendment requires that the AP Capstone designation can only be used if the student completes six AP courses, including AP Seminar; AP Research; one AP course in mathematics or science; one AP course in English; one AP course in art, history, or social sciences; and one AP course in a subject of the student's choice.

B. Amendments:

None.