

**The Florida College System Council of Presidents**  
**State Board of Education Update**  
**August 17, 2022**

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Good morning, Chair Grady, Commissioner Diaz, and members of the Florida State Board of Education. It is an honor for me to represent the Florida College System Council of Presidents, on behalf of our chair, Dr. Tonjua Williams.

This is the first week of fall classes for most of our state colleges. With enthusiasm we welcome our students to our campuses and online. Our job is to ensure that students not only arrive to class in the best condition for learning, but also experience quality instruction that ignites the fire for lifelong learning. We have streamlined our onboarding processes, removed enrollment barriers, adjusted our course schedules to be more student centric, strengthened courses and program offerings, and our faculty are offering new teaching strategies to strengthen the learning experience. We are “student ready” and look forward to enhancing student success.

We are the solution to Florida’s workforce needs and helping families gain economic mobility. We are also proud of various strategies we have executed to increase talent for our business and industry partners. Today, I want to highlight two high need careers: nursing and teacher education. We are doubling down on our nursing program enrollment by expanding programs to evenings and weekends, working with our healthcare partners to streamline the clinical experience and create a faculty exchange initiative. We have enhanced articulation opportunities with our technical colleges and high school academies to expedite RN degree attainment. Our teacher education programs continue to thrive by employing innovative methods to certify new teachers. Certifying new teachers to improve learning outcomes requires strong partnerships with our K-12 institutions, innovative internships, alternative certification initiatives, and enhanced communication between educational systems. Your state colleges are responsive, reflective, and ready.

The Florida College System institutions are nimble and creative because of our amazing employees. They are innovative, flexible, caring, and committed. Daily, they invest in the lives of our students, our institutions, and our communities. Retaining today’s higher education employees is becoming more challenging as our business and industry partners seek quality workers with transferable skills. Maintaining committed employees provides institutional stability and strengthens student success. The FCS presidents are determined to retain institutional talent through institutional leadership academies, professional development opportunities, employee wage reviews, and strengthening employee benefits.

As you know, OPPAGA released a report that, at a high level, looks at the cost of the Florida College System being included in the State Health Insurance Plan as is the State University System. The Florida College System agrees with this concept and believes that being included in the state's health insurance plan would greatly strengthen employee retention and meet the needs of our workforce. We are reviewing the study and will return with our findings and final recommendations for a legislative request.

The Florida College System institutions are excited to be the solution to expediting time to completion of all credentials students earn, helping students transfer to their baccalaureate program, or placing students in high wage jobs. Whether it is through "Get There," "S.A.I.L to 60," the "REACH Act," or the Governor's "#1 Workforce State" goal – the major outcomes are – increased and expedited certification/degree production and job placement through partnerships – summing it up, the Florida College System institutions together are determined to "Accelerate Florida." Accelerate Florida is the FCS' strategic approach that strongly supports the goals of Governor DeSantis, the Department of Education, and current legislation, and will shape our legislative requests over the next five years. We will improve our work on ensuring that all Floridians have access to quality expedited educational opportunities, in- and out- of-class support to finish what they started, a streamlined experience to transfer to their institution of choice, and structured systems to place them in a high wage paying job and start their new career.

We look forward to sharing the details of our legislative budget requests regarding the FCS joining the State Health Insurance Plan, and support for Accelerate Florida.