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MEMORANDUM

TO: Florida College System Presidents

FROM: Kathryn S. Hebda 

DATE: October 17, 2025

SUBJECT: The Florida College System Sunshine State Debate

The State of Florida is dedicated to equipping students with the civic knowledge and skills necessary to become informed, engaged and patriotic citizens who contribute positively to their communities. Students who graduate from our colleges should have a strong understanding of the founding principles of the United States and a solid grasp of their duties as citizens.

To this end, the Florida Department of Education, Division of Florida Colleges, with the support of the Florida College System Foundation (FCSF), will host the first annual Sunshine State Debate among all 28 state colleges within the system. This year's theme will be the celebration of America's Semiquincentennial. Colleges are encouraged to submit student competitors to participate in a statewide debate in a display of excellence and camaraderie. This debate will be hosted by the Florida College System at Florida's Historic State Capitol on President's Day. Students will have an opportunity to not only participate in the competition, but also engage in tours of our state Capitol, meet with State leaders and be recognized during Florida's 2026 legislation session.

In honor of President's Day, we will adopt the Ronald Reagan Presidential debate style for this competition. This style places emphasis on civility, storytelling and humor, allowing students to take a stand while aiming to win over the opposition and the audience with grace. The Ronald Reagan Presidential Foundation and Institute, which runs the Reagan Presidential Library, has committed to providing logistical support, remote training and an in-person orientation prior to the debate. Winners will receive scholarship awards funded by the FCSF and Florida Prepaid in the following amounts: \$1,500 for first place, \$1,000 for second place and \$750 for third place.

We would like to solicit the support of each of our colleges in recruiting students and faculty advisors to attend the event. Signups should be coordinated through the college president's office

The Florida College System Sunshine State Debate
October 17, 2025
Page Two

and can be done through this [link](#). Participating colleges will be responsible for covering travel expenses for their students and faculty attending the debate. We will be working with various donors to provide accommodation, food, beverages and other necessary materials. If you can get them here, we will take care of the rest.

We have attached a tentative schedule of the proceedings as an FYI.

KH/ja

Attachment