

POLICY BACKGROUND:

HIGHER EDUCATION

Brought to you by the policy experts at LobbyTools, Florida's most trusted legislative tracking service.

Topics covered in this backgrounder:

- State University System
- Florida College System
- State Scholarship and Grant Programs
- Recent Legislation
- Additional Reading
- Florida's State Universities
- Additional Resources

State University System

Florida's state university system is made up of 12 universities with a combined enrollment of more than 300,000 students, over 60,000 faculty and staff, and an annual operating budget of more than \$8.5 billion.

Since 2003, the system has been governed by the Florida Board of Governors, which seeks to oversee the system as a whole, enabling a plan that gives each university a distinct mission, rather than governing them as completely interchangeable schools. While the system overall is governed by the BOG, each university is also administered by a separate board of trustees. The governor appoints six members of each board of trustees and the Board of Governors appoints five. A faculty member and the student body president round out the trustees of each university. The Board of Governors includes 17 members, 14 of whom are appointed by the governor, with the commissioner of education, a faculty representative and a student representative rounding out the board, ([Florida Constitution, Article IX, Section 7](#)).

Florida College System

In addition to state universities, Florida's system also includes [28 state colleges](#), which enrolled more than 730,000 students on 72 campuses in 2020. The colleges are also overseen by local boards of trustees and by the State Board of Education. The Chancellor of the Florida College System reports to the Commissioner of Education. About 65% of Florida high school graduates start their college education at one of Florida's colleges.

State Scholarship and Grant Programs

The Office of Student Financial Assistance within the Florida Department of Education offers numerous types of financial aid for higher education. The state-funded scholarship and grant programs have eligibility requirements and differing award amounts, with just under fifteen programs in existence today. The most common state-funded program is

the [Florida Bright Futures Scholarship](#) that was created by the Legislature in 1997. For more information on state scholarship and grant programs see the [Florida Student Scholarship and Grant Programs website](#) or the [LobbyTools Education Budget Backgrounder](#).

Recent Legislation

2020: Omnibus higher education bill: The Legislature in 2020 passed [SB 72](#), a wide-ranging [bill that made changes](#) in the rules around building projects and grant programs and established the Florida Institute of Politics and the Adam Smith Center for the Study of Economic Freedom.

Another 2020 legislative initiative was a higher education package filed later in session. [HB 7087](#) ultimately failed, but the bill would have required New College of Florida and Florida Polytechnic University to merge into the University of Florida. The proposal was aimed at cost savings, with New College and Florida Polytechnic having a [higher-than-average cost per degree to the state](#).

2019: Some legislative Republicans have raised concerns about the liberal “indoctrination” of students on college campuses. The House in 2019 considered a proposal that would have required a survey of faculty members and students about their ideological views, but the Senate refused to include it in its higher education package. ([HB 839](#)).

Additional Reading

State University System Website: www.flbog.edu

State Board of Education: <http://www.fldoe.org/policy/state-board-of-edu/>

Florida’s State Universities:

[Florida A&M University](#)

[Florida Atlantic University](#)

[Florida Gulf Coast University](#)

[Florida International University](#)

[Florida Polytechnic University](#)

[Florida State University](#)

[New College](#)

[University of Central Florida](#)

[University of Florida](#)

[University of North Florida](#)

[University of South Florida](#)

[University of West Florida](#)

Additional Resources:

[Constitutional Establishment of University System Governance, Florida Constitution, Article IX, Section 7.](#)

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