

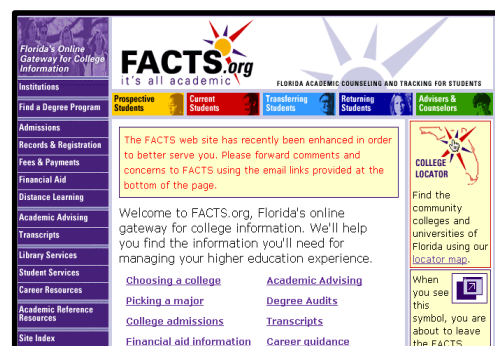


Connie W. Graunke
Executive Director
Ph: (850) 201-7363
SUNCOM: 213-7363
Fax: (850) 201-7322

Florida Center for Advising & Academic Support 2001 FACTS Project Status Report

The Florida Academic Counseling and Tracking for Students (FACTS) system is the single statewide academic advising system for all of Florida's postsecondary and distance learning opportunities. It provides accurate information and interactive tools to meet the needs of all its users: prospective students, currently enrolled students, transfer students, advisors and counselors, and other interested parties. Created by legislative mandate, Section 240.2099 F.S., the FACTS system serves 97.83% of public college students in Florida.

The system is a result of a collaborative effort on behalf of all the education sectors in Florida. The Florida Center for Advising & Academic Support (FCAAS) manages the system with guidance from a Board of Directors. The mission of FCAAS is to promote seamless system integration and articulation among K-20 educational organizations through a statewide student advising system. FCAAS is committed to fulfilling its mission and to providing relevant services for the State of Florida.



FCAAS incorporates five goals into its daily operations. One, to help users define their educational objectives and to proceed toward their objectives. Two, to help users gain access to the K-20 education system. Three, to help users transition from one educational opportunity to another within the system. Four, to help users exit the education system with the knowledge, skills and credentials expected. Five, to help users obtain access to educational information through effective management of the FACTS system.

“Providing students with as many educational resources as possible to best prepare them for their future is our core mission. The services provided by FACTS is a key part of the endeavor.” —Commissioner of Education, Charlie Crist

The FACTS system provides efficient, convenient, and cost-effective alternatives for its stakeholders: Florida's K-20 system, the Florida Board of Education, institutions, students, and Florida's communities. For instance, Florida Atlantic University has been distributing grades via FACTS transcripts to their students instead of mailing them since Summer 2000. This has resulted in an estimated savings of \$20,000 a year for the institution.

The following project status report describes the progress of the FACTS system to date. All functions are on schedule for full implementation by 2003.

Academic Advising

Generating over 80% of the hits to the system, academic advising is the premiere function on FACTS.org. This portion of the web site provides access to information that helps users evaluate their academic status and plan for the future. The tools available are as follows:

- College Locator: Find all 39 public and 27 independent (ICUF) institutions by geographic location with interactive maps.
- Find a Degree Program: Search by institution, program area, or degree level for over 75 institutions (public, independent, vocational) and 14 degree types.
- College Transcripts & Grades: Currently available online for 36 public institutions.
- Sample Degree Audit: Allows users to review requirements of a particular degree program at a selected institution, currently available for 30 public institutions.
- Institutional Degree Audit: Compares an academic record against a degree program at a student's home institution to find out what courses are left to take, currently available for 32 public institutions.
- Degree Program Shopping Audits: Compares an academic record against various degree programs available at a student's home institution or at a different institution. This function allows students to investigate transferring and distance learning course offerings to complete their degrees. It is currently available for 29 public institutions.
- 2 + 2 Degree Audits: Currently under development, this audit will allow students to assess how their two-year degree will transfer to a four-year institution in a single audit.

Admissions

An online admission application and residency affidavit has been developed and is available at 15 public institutions with an additional 16 schools coming soon. The FACTS application saves time as it allows users to apply to several institutions without having to re-enter most data by automatically re-populating up to 80% of the required fields. The system also provides links to admission pages at individual institutions for deadlines, policies, and fees related to applying for admission.

“FACTS.org should be every student’s first stop on the road to a postsecondary education. With a click of the mouse, students have access to the information they need to plan a course toward success. This service is a positive example of how we can and should remove barriers and increase student access.” —Secretary of Education, Jim Horne

Career Resources

Career guidance is an integral part of academic advising and planning for the future. FACTS.org has sought after the best career and interest assessment tools available today to integrate into the system.

- SIGI Plus: A statewide license increased access to 17 institutions that previously did not have the program available to their students. The state saved \$14,000+ for a universal license vs. purchasing individual licenses.
 - eCHOICES: A statewide license brought service to 8 institutions that had never used the program before and doubled the number of access sites.
 - Agency for Workforce Innovation: FACTS.org helps students find a job by providing a link to AWI's vast database of vacant positions and workforce trends.
 - Career Portfolio: Currently under development, this interactive tool will allow students to analyze and list their skills, build a profile and resume, maintain a list of work and academic references, store examples of previous work, and distribute at will.
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Distance Learning

FACTS.org eliminates physical barriers and allows users to explore options on their own time. Online advising is convenient and efficient for students that do not have access to campus facilities. The system provides links to the Florida Community College Distance Learning Consortium and to Florida's Virtual Campus. Collectively, they offer:

- Approximately 1900 courses
- AA degrees at 10 community colleges
- AS degrees at 4 community colleges
- 9 BA degrees
- 13 master degree programs
- 1 doctoral degree

**FACTS.org is
Florida's official
college advising
web site!**

Fees & Payments

FACTS.org offers links to "fees and payments" web pages from individual institutions. Users can find information on fee amounts, deadlines, and policies as well as submit fee payments online (if available).

Financial Aid

Paying for college is a serious matter for many students and their families. This section provides a frequently asked questions tutorial and links to various financial aid resources. FCAAS and the Bureau of Student Financial Assistance are working together to provide access to the Statewide Student Financial Aid Database (SSFAD) through FACTS. The database will allow students to view their financial aid eligibility, check their current status, and apply online.

High School

FCAAS continues to expand the services offered on FACTS with its users in mind. A special "High School" function was developed for high school students to meet their specific needs. It contains the following tools to assist users plan for postsecondary success:

- High School Planner: Suggests academic tracks that fulfill state graduation requirements and SUS admissions requirements.
- Bright Futures: Offers information on Florida's scholarship program and its three awards, as well as links to the Bright Futures website and requirements for the CLEP exam.
- College Costs: Clarifies misconceptions about college costs.
- Talented 20: Defines the program and its stipulations.
- College Credit Programs: Links to accelerated college credit programs so students can earn college credit while still attending high school. More than 30% of all college freshman have participated in one of the state's acceleration mechanisms.
- SUS Admission Policies/Requirements: Lists the State University System admission policies and requirements.
- NCAA Academic Eligibility: Links to the NCAA web page for information on academic requirements for an athletic scholarship.

FCAAS, the FACTS K-12 Expert User Group and the Secretary of Education's One Florida Committee are collaborating to develop a high school "college readiness" audit for FACTS. For the first time ever, high school students will be able to access their transcripts online and perform an academic and financial aid eligibility audit. A plan for implementing a prototype on the system by Fall 2002 has been developed.

Library Services

FACTS.org links to WEBLUIS and LINCC, library systems for the public universities and community colleges. It also links to participating institutions' library home pages and to the Distance Learning Reference and Referral Center which provides library services for Florida's distance learners.

Registration

Links to various institutions' records and registration web pages are available through FACTS. Some colleges and universities have the ability to register their students online. Others provide important information necessary to register via telephone or other methods.

FCAAS is working to improve the transient registration process and is currently developing an online transient registration form. The form will allow currently enrolled college students to bypass the lengthy admissions process and enroll in courses at different institutions on a temporary basis. The simplified registration will be for both traditional and distance learning courses.

Student Services

This page provides links to various institutions' student services web pages. Extracurricular activities, including orientation, Greek life, athletics, clubs, organizations and overall student support can be found here.

Academic Reference Resources

Numerous reference materials and electronic documents are housed on the system regarding program prerequisites, transferring, residency guidelines, and other relevant advising information. These official documents are maintained online and are easy to access, search, and update. Online availability also reduces costs for reproduction and mailing. The documents available on FACTS are:

- Independent Colleges & Universities of Florida (ICUF) Articulation Manuals
- Common Prerequisite Manuals
- Florida Postsecondary Residency Guidelines
- Florida Counseling for Future Education Handbook

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