

Updates from The Florida College System

March 22, 2023

**Submitted by Dr. Tonjua Williams, President, St. Petersburg College and
Chair, Florida College System Council of Presidents**

Good morning, Commissioner Diaz, Chair Grady, Vice Chair Gibson, and members of the State Board of Education. Thank you for providing the Florida College System the opportunity to update you all on what we have been doing since the last State Board meeting in January.

At the end of the 2022 Legislative Session, the Florida College System was tasked with developing a brand-new funding model formula. In September, and ahead of the deadline that we were given, all 28 Florida College Presidents *unanimously* agreed on a funding formula and sent this to the Legislature. Thus, on behalf of the Council of Presidents I would like to formally share our number one legislative priority for this session. Building off the support from both the Governor's recommended budget and the State Board of Education's recommended budget, the Council is requesting a total of \$150 million new recurring dollars to be put into the base program funding. With this new money, we will increase our workforce by continuing to focus on job placement through rapid credentialing and the expansion of career dual-enrollment courses. This investment in the Florida College System will pay off massive dividends in our communities, as this will strengthen our ability to recruit and retain faculty and students to ensure our talent will live, work, and play near our institutions.

We are also working with insurance consultants and experts to explore potential inclusion into the state group health insurance. Because of the complexity of the issue, we are committed to finding the best solution that helps all Florida colleges, big or small.

I'd also like to take this moment to brag about the FCS for a little bit. You have heard many of us refer to ourselves as the "Great 28"; and we do mean that literally, we are all truly great. We serve nearly 640,000 students, and award 119,000 certificates and degrees annually. We are concentrating on areas of high need such as nursing, law enforcement, and all of our first responders. We are partnering with our workforce leaders to ensure that we strengthen Florida's expertise in manufacturing, cybersecurity, electronic vehicles and automation. In fact, 90% of graduates who earned workforce credentials in 2020-2021 were either employed or furthering their education in 2021-2022.

Senate Bill 750 is important to us in strengthening our students ability to transfer to our state universities. This Bill addresses solutions to articulation challenges discussed during the convening hosted by Commissioner Diaz and Chancellor Rodriguez with FCS and SUS presidents. A unique component of this bill includes not only associate in arts degrees, but also associate in science degree (workforce degree) transfers. The bill also strengthens our existing 2 + 2 agreement to ensure that our FCS graduates matriculate smoothly to SUS institutions. We want to keep all FCS graduates here in the state of Florida. Strengthening the articulation agreement from FCS to SUS will be a great first step. I'd like to recognize and thank the State Board of Education for supporting this bill.

Tomorrow, we will host a joint legislative meeting with FCS Trustees, Presidents, and SBOE Leaders. This interactive session will include presentations by key legislators, Commissioner Diaz, Chancellors Mack and Hebda, Secretary Eric Hall, and Mark Wilson to name a few. We will end the day with a reception to recognize our Trustees and Legislators. I hope you can join us.

And finally, I would be remiss if I did not thank Commissioner Diaz for his unwavering support of the College system. On behalf of all the College Presidents, thank you Commissioner Diaz, Senior Chancellor Henry Mack, and Chancellors Hebda and O'Farrell. You have helped us all see the true potential of our advocacy efforts when we are united behind one common goal. We are excited to see the new policies and projects that are yet to come in this Legislative Session

Thank you all for your time, and I look forward to your questions.