

Affordability in the Florida College System 2017

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Introduction

This report responds to 1004.084, Florida Statutes, requiring the Florida College System (FCS) to annually report strategies to promote college affordability providing students and their families with information on the cost of attending a Florida College System institution.

The Florida College System is the primary access point to undergraduate education for Floridians, including recent high school graduates and returning adult students. The 28 member colleges of the Florida College System respond quickly and efficiently to meet the demands of employers by aligning certificate and degree programs with regional workforce needs. With an array of programs and services, the FCS serves individuals, communities and the state with low-cost, high-quality education opportunities. College access and affordability have been and remain priorities for all 28 colleges.

During the 2016 legislative session, the State Board of Education was tasked with conducting a study that identified strategies and initiatives to promote college affordability by evaluating the impact of tuition and fees on students; examined federal, state, and institutional financial aid on the actual cost of attendance for students and their families; and explored the costs of textbooks and instructional materials.

This Florida College System Affordability Report has been prepared for the Governor, the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives as statutorily required.

Who the Florida College System Serves

The 28 colleges that comprise the Florida College System served nearly 770,000 students in 2016-17. Sixty-three percent (63%) of Florida's high school graduates who pursue higher education enroll in a Florida College System institution, and nearly half of the juniors and seniors enrolled in the State University System are graduates of the Florida College System. More than half of students enrolled in the FCS qualify for Pell Grants and are the first in their families to attend college.

Ninety-nine percent (99%) of FCS students are from Florida and the average age of the student body is 25. Many FCS students, 65 percent, are enrolled part-time, allowing them to balance college and life responsibilities. Nine out of ten Florida College System graduates are employed in Florida or continue their education.

The Florida College System institutions are recognized as being among the nation's best colleges. Whether it is through innovations in teaching, advising, transfer or partnering with business and industry the FCS maintains a focus on keeping college affordable. This report provides an overview of the strategies employed by FCS institutions to maintain and increase college affordability.

Achieving Affordability through Stabilizing Tuition and Fees

Florida College System institutions keep college affordable for students by maintaining low tuition and fees. Tuition at Florida College System institutions has remained flat as colleges implement strategies that focus on growth, efficiency and affordability.

Strategy: Stabilizing Tuition and Fees

Florida College System institutions are the most affordably priced option for higher education in Florida. For 2016-17, in-state tuition and fees were \$3,209 per year compared to \$5,943 at a state university.

Reducing/Holding Tuition. Florida College System institutions did not increase tuition in 2016-17. Daytona State College approved a two percent reduction in tuition effective spring 2016 that is now the standard tuition cost for 2016-17.

FCS institutions provide students with options to pay their tuition without taking on debt. Florida Keys Community College increased the number of payment plan options to assist students' ability to pay their tuition and avoid high-interest loans. The timing of these plans was adjusted to allow more students to take advantage of these options.

Reducing Fees. FCS institutions are committed to affordability and regularly review course fees as required in s. 1009.23, F.S. Such evaluations may result in the reduction or elimination of student fees. Several colleges reduced fees in 2016-17. For example, Florida SouthWestern State College (FSW) evaluated overall fees and reduced course fees in 61 courses and eliminated 81 course fees. The savings impact for students at FSW is approximately \$610,000. Additionally, FSW reduced the online access fee by \$5 per credit hour, saving students \$377,510. Another example is from Polk State College which reduced fees for 21 courses in 2015-16 and 17 courses in 2016-17 due to reduced costs for required materials.

Increasing Affordability through Cost Savings

In addition to investments from the state and students, FCS institutions are able to provide an affordable college education by operating efficiently. Actions taken by the FCS to keep college affordable fit within the following areas: 1) 2+2 articulation agreements and targeted pathways; 2) reducing time to graduation; 3) enhancing operational efficiency; and, 4) evaluating academic offerings. An additional set of actions regarding textbook affordability are detailed in a separate report.

Strategy 1: 2+2 Articulation Agreements and Targeted Pathways

When other systems partner with the FCS, further savings to students can be realized. Most notably is the vaunted 2+2 articulation agreement in Florida. The impact of this agreement on affordability is notable. For example, in the fall of 2016, the State University System of Florida (SUS) admitted 57,864, students who had previously earned an Associate in Arts (AA) degree from a Florida College System

institution. For those students, the average savings was \$5,468 in tuition and fee payments. In total, those students saved \$316.4 million because of Florida's 2+2 articulation policies. These savings are realized year after year as FCS students earn their Associate in Arts degrees and transfer into SUS institutions. The FCS continues to develop strategies, enhancing 2+2 programs with targeted pathways such as DirectConnect that ensure students have a seamless pathway to completing their degrees at the one of the state universities. In these programs, students who earn their AA at certain FCS institutions are guaranteed admission to a specific state university. All 28 FCS institutions have developed at least one targeted pathway.

Strategy 2: Reducing Time to Graduation

While the majority of students enrolled in the FCS are part-time, decreasing their time to graduation provides benefits to the students and the state. One such benefit is the reduced cost borne by students. To this end, FCS institutions are implementing practices to reduce the time to graduation by restructuring the students' experience and expanding dual enrollment.

Structuring the Student Experience. The FCS is actively analyzing data, engaging in convenings related to best practices and innovation to structure the students' academic paths into a format that increases completion. These best practices have been implemented by the colleges and include mandatory orientation, intrusive academic advisement and career pathways that map students to a college credential.

This pathways work is also resulting in colleges' structuring their institutions to increase student success. For example, St. Johns River State College's Student Success initiative includes pro-active advising with integration of faculty mentoring, early alert system, one-stop student services, scheduling, onboarding and online orientation.

Broward College has led the national efforts in implementing guided pathways that help students take only the courses required for graduation and/or transfer in a selected career area. This reduces time and costs to students by ensuring that they follow their academic plan. Broward College also provides students with information on job tools and salaries. At Miami Dade College, students can access additional information on the employment options associated with their degree choice through EMSI Career Coach.

Implementing Developmental Education Reform. For 2016-17, FCS institutions implemented nationally recognized, high-impact practices which enhanced student success as well as addressed the statutorily mandated changes to the populations enrolled in developmental education. Colleges adjusted delivery strategy structure, implemented pedagogical revisions, and ensured content alignment in an effort to support student success.

Colleges reported pervasive use of technology in three different ways to support developmental education. Comparable to national trends, colleges implemented instructional technology, course management technology, and student support technology. Throughout the reports colleges highlighted the importance of technology for supporting delivery strategies, pedagogy, course alignment, advising, early alerts and tutoring.

Expanding Online Offerings. Online offerings at FCS institutions continue to grow in high-demand areas. For example, at Valencia College online courses have increased from four percent to 27.8 percent over the last 12 years representing nearly 12,000 students. Eastern Florida State College has developed fully online college certificate programs to address current workforce needs. The college offered 237 courses online last year having added courses in Office Support/Management, Medical Office Management, and other workforce areas. The colleges have developed a model for quality online and hybrid teaching and learning that includes enhanced student services and learning to support student success. In total, FCS institutions offered more than 42,235 online courses providing options that allow students to accommodate work and family responsibilities while progressing towards an academic credential.

Recent legislation limits each Florida College System institution charging a fee for distance learning course not to exceed \$15 per credit hour. For the purposes of assessing the fee, distance learning is defined as a course in which at least 80 percent of the direct instruction of the course is delivered using some form of technology when the student and instructor are separated by time, space or both. Currently, eight FCS institutions (29%) do not charge students a distance learning fee. For 2016-17, the average distance learning fee for those institutions who charged a fee was \$12.16.

Offering Acceleration Mechanisms. Students at Florida College System institutions complete college faster when earning dual enrollment credits. Dual enrollment was developed, in part, to provide high school students the opportunity to earn college credits prior to enrolling in college with the intent both to challenge students academically while also decreasing their time to an associate degree. For students who enter with credits earned through the dual enrollment acceleration avenue, their time to degree is nearly half of that for students who enter without dual enrollment credits. For example, Lake-Sumter State College increased the number of dual enrollment students by nearly 40 percent last year and Northwest Florida State College estimates nearly \$50,000 in tuition and fee costs are saved annually by students in the dual enrollment program.

Increasingly, these experiences are leading to high school students earning Associate in Arts degrees while in high school. State College of Florida, Manatee-Sarasota launched an accelerated dual enrollment program on their Venice campus, allowing eligible juniors the opportunity to earn their AA degree while simultaneously finishing their last two years of high school (saving students just over \$6,000 in tuition and fee costs). Students at the college are estimated to have saved \$1.1 million last year through dual enrollment.

The FCS is innovating in other ways to reduce the time to graduation. These innovations extend beyond the practice of awarding credit for Advanced Placement, International Baccalaureate and Cambridge AICE courses to include converting high school career and technical education courses into college level courses, converting industry certifications into college credit, and converting work experience in the military and other work environments into college credit.

Strategy 3: Enhancing Operational Efficiency

There are a number of elements that provide savings and efficiency to colleges, it begins with the budget process for both the operational and capital need.

Reducing Administrative Costs. FCS institutions regularly review administrative staffing to ensure operational efficiencies. As a result of this practice a college may downgrade or eliminate positions and consolidate the responsibilities under another administrator as occurred at Florida Gateway College and North Florida Community College. In another example, South Florida State College reorganized several positions and departments to better focus on utilization of resources.

Increasing Efficiencies in Utility Costs. Advancements in building technology and monitoring have resulted in increased savings in college utilities. All colleges reported energy saving strategies including Hillsborough Community College, which reduced electrical use via two phases of facility improvements in partnership with Tampa Bay Trane for a three-year return on investment of \$3.3 million. Santa Fe College (SF) conserves energy and generates solar power through state-of-the-art mechanisms and has reduced its energy consumption, while adding nearly 100,000 square feet of building space. Solar arrays installed on SF's library provide the college with a rebate of approximately \$35,000 each year. Reducing energy usage by nearly 21% since 2004-05, the college saved over \$432,000 last year. Analysis of building usage, scheduling and building energy management systems at many colleges results in reduced utility consumption on an annual basis. Florida State College at Jacksonville implemented an Energy Conservation Program in 2013 to better monitor and modify time-of-day schedules. The program results in approximately \$1 million in savings annually.

Optimizing Space Utilization. Space utilization analysis is a key component of the FCS institutions' capital needs evaluation. Each college reported that capital planning is conducted each year to ensure that the institutions are utilizing existing space in the most cost-efficient manner.

Several colleges reported renovation of their buildings in place of new construction. When feasible, existing buildings are refurbished to house new or expanded programs. The elimination of programs allowed for repurposing of existing facilities to expand high-demand programs without investment in new facilities. Broward College is presently renovating 150,000 square feet in the campus system in lieu of new construction. Last year, Broward College renovated approximately 60,000 square feet of space. These renovations include tech labs and classrooms. Additionally, the college is examining design space to determine if there are non-traditional ways of handling how offices are appropriated so additional classrooms may be created and working with partner institutions to eliminate the need for deferred maintenance expenditures along with annual overhead and maintenance costs

Outsourcing Services. FCS institutions have found instances where outsourcing services have resulted in cost savings. For example, the College of Central Florida implemented a number of administrative control and management strategies to enhance college affordability including but not limited to outsourcing bookstore management services, after-hours and weekend security services, custodial services, and motor coach services to private vendors. Pasco-Hernando State College outsources security, custodial, and grounds maintenance as a cost savings measure, which also allows them to expand services to more students. Polk State College is achieving better pharmacy pricing and rebates for employee benefit programs expected to save over \$500,000 annually.

Improving Bidding and Procurement Practices. In the case of projects requiring a bid, colleges solicit multiple bids and competitively bid projects. Reducing the time period of the bid has also resulted in savings. Pensacola State College (PSC) recently began using SmartProcure, a purchasing tool, to gather important pricing information obtained by other public entities to leverage negotiation opportunities with current and new vendors. Savings for the year totaled \$54,787. This tool also allows for research in traditionally sole or single source markets.

In addition, nearly all colleges continue to utilize various purchasing cooperative agreements in order to save money on all commodities. Colleges also achieve significant savings by using various procurement strategies unrelated to formal procurement such as asking for educational discounts or requesting additional quotes although not required.

All of the colleges participate in the Florida College System Risk Management Consortium (FCSRMC), a number of local/regional/state buying cooperatives and other state authorized consortiums, as well as working with local governmental entities and state university partners to share costs, combine purchase orders, offer joint programs and activities, and implement other cost saving strategies. Multi-year contracts are reviewed annually and rebid or renegotiated wherever possible and feasible. Palm Beach State College reduced health insurance costs by participating in a college consortium, saving nearly \$300,000 a year over market costs. Additionally, by participating through FCSRMC to conduct audits, rather than paying for an outside auditing firm, Palm Beach State College saves \$25,000 per year.

Modernization of Telecommunications Systems. St. Petersburg College and Santa Fe College have reduced costs by converting from legacy phone systems to new, unified communications systems. This results in significant direct cost savings while improving timeliness of information and saving effort and travel costs for students, faculty and staff.

Strategy 4: Evaluating Academic Offerings

Aligning Course Demand and Offerings. Offering the courses students need not only reduces their time to graduation, but also saves the college money. Gulf Coast State College has a robust program review process in place that evaluates programs for currency, effectiveness and need to increase course fill rates while maintaining optimal instructor-student ratios. FCS institutions have been able to respond to high-demand workforce needs by leveraging existing faculty, facilities, equipment and hybrid course scheduling in a very cost-effective and efficient manner. Florida State College at Jacksonville added 15 workforce-oriented degrees over the past eleven years; none of which required new buildings or large-scale capital investments.

Terminating Programs. Florida College System institutions have processes in place for reviewing program viability. Programs are terminated for multiple reasons including workforce needs, low enrollments, outdated curriculum or changes in statute or policy.

In the past six years, Florida College System institutions terminated over 740 programs. During this timeframe, the average number of terminated programs per institution was 28, with a range of zero to 78. Of the programs terminated, three-quarters came from one of the following three areas: College Credit Certificates (234), Associate in Applied Science (193) and Associate in Science (140). Associate in Applied Science degrees were primarily terminated because industry need typically required an Associate in Science not an Associate in Applied Science. Similarly, Associate in Science programs were also terminated in cases where the Associate in Applied Science was the workforce standard.

Of the 193 terminated Associate in Applied Science degrees, the majority were in Business Management, Marketing and Related Services (52) followed by Engineering and Technologies and Engineering-Related Fields (31) and Computer and Information Sciences and Support Services (31). These terminations are the result of industry standard requirements.

Expanding \$10,000 Bachelor's Degrees. The Florida College System is dedicated to providing access to a high-quality, affordable education to all Floridians and \$10,000 workforce baccalaureate degree programs are one way the FCS accomplishes this goal. Overall, baccalaureate degree students make up less than seven percent of FCS enrollments, but they are a vital component of the FCS in our efforts to prepare Floridians for work in our dynamic state and local economies. The Florida College System approved ten workforce baccalaureate degrees during 2016-17. Six of the approved degrees were in the field of Nursing, ensuring that the demand to provide a pathway for associate degree nurses to achieve their Baccalaureate of Science in Nursing is within reach for registered nurses across the state. The other approved workforce baccalaureate degrees were in the areas of business and science, technology, engineering and mathematics preparing students to fill positions in high demand by Florida employers.

Student Financial Support

In addition to federal and state aid programs, colleges provide scholarships to students to help offset remaining, eligible costs. Examples of institutional aid include Daytona State College's need-based grant and scholarship programs that awards over \$800,000 annually, The Santa Fe College Foundation annually awarding \$1 million in aid to students and an additional \$1.4 million in scholarships, and the Miami Dade Honors College where all students receive a full tuition scholarship at the in-state rate along with a \$500 book stipend and \$600 for education-related expenses.

The FCS institutions continue to focus on providing scholarships to students to reduce the direct cost to students and decreasing debt.

Strategy: Providing Institutional Student Financial Aid

Targeted Aid. Grants and scholarships are often targeted to particular populations on campus. Chipola College awarded \$450,000 to over 550 students who were close to completing their education. Similarly, the Santa Fe College Foundation has pledged \$30,000 to assist 99 students who were within twelve credit hours of finishing as part of the college's "Finish at the Top" campaign. Florida State College at Jacksonville (FSCJ) is participating in a national initiative to cover all expenses for two years for students in need. FSCJ Promise will pay the cost of tuition, fees and books for students for whom state and federal funding isn't enough to cover those costs.

Emergency Aid. For FCS students, a few hundred dollars can mean the difference between completing college or not. Some FCS institutions have implemented emergency aid programs to reduce this barrier to completion. College direct support organizations like those at Indian River State College and Broward College have an emergency student aid fund for students in severe financial situations such as a vehicle breakdown or other unplanned costs that impact a student's ability to attend classes and complete their educational goals.

Identifying and Awarding Student Aid. Students are often overwhelmed or lack the understanding of student aid available to them. To alleviate this problem, colleges are encouraging students to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Additionally, colleges have created programs like

the MY FUTURE program at St. Petersburg College to make sure students understand how to qualify for the array of financial aid programs and the important financial implications of debt management.

Partnerships to Support Students. In every college service area there are community-based organizations (CBO) vested in the prosperity of their community. Partnerships with CBO's also make college affordable. For example, Seminole State College established the Destination Graduation program with the United Way helping to keep students in school by providing emergency aid for housing, food, transportation expenses, and paying for past financial obligations in order to get students back in college so they can complete their program. Destination Graduation saved \$96,000 for 132 students in 2016-17.

Conclusion

The 21st Century workforce demands the best education to meet the needs of a diversified state economy. The Florida College System continues to meet those needs in the most affordable manner for students.

The Florida College System and the 28 colleges will continue to innovate and implement strategies that result in cost saving measures. Ensuring that our colleges remain the primary access point to higher education for all students will always be the top priority for our colleges. Every hard-working student deserves a real opportunity to earn an affordable, high-quality degree or credential that offers a clear path to civic engagement, economic security, and success.

The Florida College System, working with the Governor and the Legislature, will work to meet the challenges of college affordability through innovation and sharing of best practices.