

Florida's Education in Focus: Navigating the 2025 Higher Education Legislative Landscape

Policy Brief

October 2025

Amber D. Hatch, Pinyi Wang & Lindsay McElhattan - *University of Florida*

Policy Brief

Florida's Education in Focus: Navigating the 2025 Higher Education Legislative Landscape

October 2025

Amber D. Hatch, Pinyi Wang & Lindsay McElhattan

To promote understanding and clarity around higher education policy developments in Florida, the UF Education Policy Research Center presents this legislative brief. This brief is designed to provide a clear, concise overview of key components of several significant higher education bills passed during the 2025 legislative session. It is intended for a general audience and aims to present accessible overviews of key legislative developments in Florida. Please note that this brief is explanatory in nature and does not reflect evaluations or endorsements of any specific legislation. Our goal is to provide unbiased information to support informed public understanding and discussion.

2025 Higher Education Legislation

State-Sponsored Research Centers and Academic Units

Florida Institute for Human and Machine Cognition, Inc. (SB 312)

Senate Bill 312 makes structural and governance changes to the Florida Institute for Human and Machine Cognition, Inc. It shifts authority from the Board of Governors to the Institute's Board of Directors for creating subsidiaries and requires only the Institute's articles of incorporation to be approved by the Board of Governors. The bill revises the board's composition, adding more university and public representatives, and requires the Institute itself (rather than the University of West Florida) to certify annual compliance to state leaders. It also authorizes the Institute and its subsidiaries to form affiliation agreements with other universities

SB 312 was signed into law by the Governor on May 20th, 2025.

See more information including the full text and vote breakdown, [here](#).

Children with Developmental Disabilities (SB 112)

Senate Bill 112 creates the University of Florida Center for Autism and Neurodevelopment. The center is tasked with coordinating research, training, and public awareness; administering startup grants for autism-focused charter schools and summer programs; and developing a statewide autism micro-credential for educators, childcare workers, and pre-K instructors. It must also publish annual reports and provide stipends for individuals who complete the micro-credential, strengthening Florida's higher education role in autism research, workforce development, and professional training.

SB 112 was signed into law by the Governor on May 27th, 2025.

See more information including the full text and vote breakdown, [here](#).

Parkinson's Disease (HB 1545)



House Bill 1545 mandates that the Florida Institute for Parkinson's Disease at the University of South Florida, along with its board and consortium, be a resource for Parkinson's research and medical care for those effected. All present and future research, research plans, and outreach efforts must be reported to the appropriate members of the Florida government by October 15 on an annual basis.

HB 1545 was signed into law by the Governor on June 25th, 2025.

See more information including the full text and vote breakdown, [here](#).

Florida Institute for Pediatric Rare Diseases (HB 907)

House Bill 907 mandates that the Florida Institute for Pediatric Rare Diseases at Florida State University be a research and medical care resource pertaining to pediatric rare diseases. The Sunshine Genetics Consortium and board must fulfill their mandatory responsibilities, and the board is required to meet and report their research and activities to the appropriate members of government in-line with the designated timeline. The Sunshine Genetics Pilot Program must also fulfill its responsibilities and report their data to the Consortium and findings to the appropriate members of the Florida government, and each of these programs and institutions are dependent on money from the General Appropriations Act.

HB 907 was signed into law by the Governor on June 25th, 2025.

See more information including the full text and vote breakdown, [here](#).

Florida State University Election Law Center (SB 892)

Senate Bill 892 creates the Florida State University Election Law Center within the FSU College of Law. The center will focus on studying and teaching election law, broadly defined to include voting rights, election administration, campaign finance, redistricting, and election integrity. It is tasked with conducting nonpartisan research, hosting events, training officials, and serving as a resource to the Legislature, courts, and election administrators. The center may also provide scholarships, fellowships, and public education programs, and will be funded through state appropriations, grants, and donations.

SB 892 was signed into law by the Governor on July 3, 2025.

See more information, including the full bill text and vote breakdown, [here](#).

Workforce Development Programs

Workforce Education (HB 1145)

House Bill 1145 expands opportunities for career and technical training in Florida. It allows charter schools to apply directly for state grant funding to start or grow workforce education programs that prepare students for industry-recognized certifications. The law also strengthens Florida's Money-back Guarantee Program by requiring school districts and state colleges to offer more programs where students can get their tuition refunded if they cannot find a job within six months of graduating. It also sets clearer rules for who qualifies for a refund and requires more detailed reporting so the state can track how well the program is working.

HB 1145 was signed into law by the Governor on June 13th, 2025.

See more information, including the full bill text and vote breakdown, [here](#).

Educator Preparation (HB 875)

House Bill 875 makes changes to how Florida prepares and certifies teachers. It requires the Department of Education to create a workgroup to update the state's teaching standards (Florida Educator Accomplished Practices) and develop a new Florida Teacher Excellence Exam to better measure teacher readiness. The bill also creates new flexibility for school counselor training, expands alternative certification pathways, and establishes the Florida Center for Teaching Excellence at Miami Dade College to support evidence-based teacher training. In addition, it sets clearer requirements for teacher preparation coursework, internships, and mentor training, aiming to modernize teacher education and better equip future educators.

HB 875 was signed into law by the Governor on May 30, 2025.

See more information including the full bill text and vote breakdown, [here](#).

Education (HB 1105)

House Bill 1105 extends the Workforce Development Capitalization Incentive Grant Program to colleges for high-demand programs and creates a new workforce credential program for students with autism or modified curricula, with digital badges and annual reporting. It also expands access to the Florida College System by allowing students with certificates of completion for high school to enter vocational certificate programs, excludes transportation access fees from Bright Futures calculations, and broadens Bright Futures eligibility to include certain non-Florida graduates, AP Capstone recognition, and new service/work options. Further, the bill moves the Council on the Social Status of Black Men and Boys to Florida Memorial University, which must now provide staffing, oversight, and annual reporting.

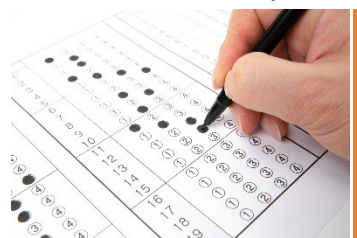
HB 1105 was signed into law by the Governor on June 2, 2025.

See more information, including the full bill text and vote breakdown, [here](#).

Expanded Programs, Scholarships and Student Support Systems

Education (HB 1255)

House Bill 1255 introduces mandates for a wide range of educational institutions and programs spanning from pre-K to higher education in Florida. Focusing on higher education, it first updates systemwide definitions to reaffirm the Florida College System



and state universities as core parts of the state's Early Learning-20 system and requires universities to update campus master plans every 5 years instead of 10. For the Preeminent State Research Universities Program, it adds the Classic Learning Test alongside SAT and ACT as an accepted admissions metric. The bill also expands Bright

Futures Scholarship eligibility for students graduating from non-Florida high schools under certain conditions and allows tutoring hours, including math tutoring through the New Worlds Program, to count toward service requirements. Finally, it broadens the LINE nursing fund to include more institutions with nursing programs, authorizes colleges and universities with student housing to stock emergency opioid antagonists, and directs state institutions to participate in national consortia to expand advanced placement and acceleration course offerings.

HB 1255 was signed into law by the Governor on May 30th, 2025.

See more information including the full text and vote breakdown, [here](#).

Appropriations (SB 2500)

Senate Bill 2500 outlines Florida's appropriations for the 2025–2026 fiscal year. A handful of the appropriations allocate funding to Florida's higher education system, including \$254.8 million for the Florida College System operations and \$612.2 million for the State University System operations. It also provides \$407.4 million for university

capital outlay projects and \$113.9 million for Florida College System facility construction and renovation. Private colleges and universities, including historically Black colleges and universities, receive \$193.4 million for instruction, campus improvements, and program-specific initiatives. Student financial aid programs are supported through Bright Futures, the Effective Access to Student Education (EASE) Grant, the Florida Student Assistance Grant (FSAG), the Benacquisto Scholarship, the First-Generation Matching Grant, dual enrollment scholarships, and the Open-Door Grant Program. Additional provisions fund workforce education, healthcare and nursing training initiatives, library resources, and oversight of university facilities and budgets.

SB 2500 was signed into law by the Governor on June 30th, 2025.

See more information including the full text and vote breakdown, [here](#).

Young Adult Housing Support (SB 584)

Senate Bill 584 mandates that all qualifying Florida colleges and universities have an institution-owned housing plan to place prior and current foster students, students who are homeless, and students who may become homeless in the near future.

Collaborating with the State Office on Homlessness (part of the DCF), the Office of Continuing Care and each educational institution is expected to identify the students that qualify for these services. Under certain circumstances, the student does not need a guarantor or other form of financial backup, and all associated agencies and organizations must remain in accordance with the Foster Youth to Independence initiative. The Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability and associates must conduct research on the youth population and present their findings no later than December 1, 2026 to the necessary members of the Florida government.



SB 584 was signed into law by the Governor on June 27th, 2025.

See more information including the full text and vote breakdown, [here](#).

Summary

In 2025, Florida enacted higher education laws prioritizing specific research institutes, strengthening workforce and educator preparation pathways, and expanding student supports. Several bills established or restructured state-sponsored academic units, including centers for autism and neurodevelopment at the University of Florida, pediatric rare diseases at Florida State University, Parkinson's disease at the University of South Florida, and election law at Florida State University's College of Law. Workforce-focused measures broadened career and technical training opportunities, created new credentialing options, and updated teacher preparation standards. Legislation also expanded scholarship eligibility, introduced supports for foster and homeless students,

authorized campus health and safety initiatives, and required universities to update campus master plans more frequently.

Appendix

Methodology

The 2025 higher education-related bills discussed in this brief were identified through a review of the Florida House and Senate websites and filtered by those that had passed both House and Senate committees.

To maintain a clear focus on postsecondary education, bills focusing on K-12 education alone were excluded. While these bills are important within the broader educational landscape, they fall outside the scope of this brief.

Once the relevant higher education bills were identified, each was researched in greater detail using the official websites of the Florida House of Representatives and the Florida Senate. This included reviewing bill text, sponsors, status, and voting history.

The methodology used in this brief aims to provide an accurate and focused overview of 2025 legislation most directly affecting higher education in Florida. By narrowing the scope to postsecondary-specific bills, this brief offers a more in-depth examination of the policies and proposals shaping the educational experiences of Florida's postsecondary students in the 2025 legislative session.

www.ufedpolicy.org