



Florida Rising

An Assessment of Public Universities in the Sunshine State

American Council of Trustees and Alumni
with The James Madison Institute



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a report by the
American Council of Trustees and Alumni
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June 2013

Acknowledgments

This report on 11 public four-year undergraduate institutions in the state of Florida was prepared by the staff of the American Council of Trustees and Alumni, primarily Dr. Michael Poliakoff and Armand Alacbay, Esq., with the assistance of The James Madison Institute (JMI) and the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE). ACTA is grateful to the Office of the Board of Governors of the State University System of Florida for its kind advice and assistance in the research for this report. Unless otherwise stated, all data are based on publicly available information including academic catalogs, board agendas, minutes, bylaws, news releases, institutional websites, media reports, as well as conversations with various education leaders in the state. In addition, requests for supporting or clarifying information were sent to each institutional governing board.

The **American Council of Trustees and Alumni** (ACTA) is an independent non-profit dedicated to academic freedom, academic excellence, and accountability at America's colleges and universities. Since its founding in 1995, ACTA has counseled boards, educated the public, and published reports about such issues as good governance, historical literacy, core curricula, the free exchange of ideas, and accreditation. ACTA has previously published *Best Laid Plans: The Unfulfilled Promise of Public Higher Education in California*; *The Diffusion of Light and Education: Meeting the Challenges of Higher Education in Virginia*; *Prepared in Mind and Resources?: A Report on Public Higher Education in South Carolina*; *Made in Maine: A State Report Card on Public Higher Education*; and *Here We Have Idaho: A State Report Card on Public Higher Education*, among other state-focused reports.

The mission of **The James Madison Institute** (JMI) is to keep the citizens of Florida informed about their government and to shape the state's future through the advancement of practical free-market ideas on public policy issues. The Institute achieves its mission through research, conferences and seminars, and a variety of publications.

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Executive Summary

During this time of fiscal constraint, we must continue to maximize the effective and efficient use of our resources and work with our partners in the Legislature to achieve the proper balance of revenue derived from appropriation and from tuition. We must also remain keenly aware that the economic pressures our students face are as real as the economic challenges our universities and the Legislature are experiencing. The Florida Board of Governors and our universities' Boards of Trustees will no doubt continue in their thoughtful stewardship of public resources and prudent decision making regarding tuition and fees.¹

– Frank T. Brogan, Chancellor
State University System of Florida, January 14, 2011

The State University System of Florida has in recent years faced major budgetary challenges, remarkable for the size of its reductions in state funding, even when compared to the large cuts seen in so many states struck by the recession of 2008. What is more surprising in the world of higher education, however, is the progress that Florida's public universities have achieved on such key indicators of quality as graduation and retention during these challenging times. This report, the 11th in ACTA's series of state-focused studies, will examine the progress and achievements of the System, as well as the weaknesses and obstacles that it continues to confront. The story of Florida's public universities has particular importance for higher education in other states: if successful, Florida's proactive initiatives to maximize both access and academic quality will represent a key example for other states to follow and a new benchmark for cost-effectiveness in higher education.

Between 2007 and 2012, state funding for the System fell from \$2.6 billion to \$1.7 billion. State funding per full-time enrolled student during that time fell from \$7,656 to \$4,387 (not adjusted for inflation). Educational appropriations per FTE in two- and four-year colleges and universities in Florida for fiscal year 2012 were 87% of the national average.²

Although tuition in the System increased 58% between 2007 and 2012, tuition increases were built upon the low base of tuition and fees of \$3,525 in 2007. The University of Florida is one of the 62 members of the Association of American Universities, and has the further distinction of the lowest tuition rate in the AAU. Enrollment increases, moreover, have been strong: overall the System saw a 12% rise between 2006 and 2011.³

Metrics of academic quality during this period have shown significant improvement. The State University System had a combined six-year graduation rate of 66% for its 2006–2012 cohort, which places it among the top ten nationally, showing a 2% improvement over the 2002–2008 cohort. Retention rates for the 2011–2012 cohort of first-time college students moved up to 88%, one percentage point higher than the 2007 cohort.

Despite the overall progress for the System as a whole, individual campuses, as the System Accountability Report notes, need to improve their graduation rates. Six universities have six-year graduation rates below 50%. Only two campuses (the University of Florida and Florida State University) have four-year graduation rates above 60%. The System four-year graduation rate average is 42%, and five universities have rates of 25% or lower. It is promising, however, that Florida is taking clear aim at improving the four-year graduation rate. With the encouragement of Florida’s “Excess Credit Hour Surcharge” legislation, students have a strong financial incentive to complete their baccalaureate degrees efficiently. Florida has also created rules for its “Bright Futures” scholarship that discourage non-completion of courses: Students must repay a portion of their award for any course dropped or withdrawn. 64% of the 2011–2012 graduates of System universities completed their degrees without excess credit hours, an important metric that will continue to merit attention.⁴

Improved graduation rates are important but, in isolation, they tell us little about academic quality: core curriculum and assessment of progress in core collegiate skills are crucial correlates of graduation rates in determining levels of student success.

Florida has established a framework for the development of a strong core curriculum at System universities, but it has not yet completed the task of ensuring that all students graduate with the knowledge and skills essential for success as citizens and as workers facing a demanding and ever-evolving job market. State legislation and System Board of Governors policies have established clear requirements for expository writing, collegiate level mathematics, and natural science. It is to the System’s credit that it ranks third among all university systems for its production of undergraduate STEM degrees, but even that achievement will not suffice to meet the needs of students and our country. A focus on careers should not ignore the importance of broad-based skills and knowledge, which help prepare students for informed citizenship and lifelong learning. The Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that the average person changes jobs more than 11 times between the ages of 18 and 46; a quality college education must look toward acquiring the tools that make it possible to adapt to new career opportunities, and that means the essentials of liberal education.⁵

As important as career training is, so is shaping the values of citizenship and civic character. The absence of a requirement for economics in today’s global marketplace is a disservice to students, and the failure to require a foundational course in U.S. history or government means

that too many students will leave college with a limited understanding of how to participate effectively in the free institutions of our nation. In contrast, states such as Texas and Nevada have passed legislation requiring institutions to ensure that students complete coursework in U.S. history and government. In a state whose history includes the oldest continuous European settlement in the United States and whose neighbor Georgia requires American history for undergraduates in its public universities, it is a sad irony that a fundamental course in the nation's history is required at only one of Florida's public universities.⁶

The System and the individual universities have facilitated policy analysis through the System's annual Accountability Report and the annual Fact Books, Accountability Reports, and Work Plans from the individual universities. These commendably ensure transparency and help the Board of Governors, state government, and public understand Florida's initiatives to improve quality and cost effectiveness. The clear and efficient presentation of key data in these reports sets an example for the nation.

These reports in turn reveal progress with a number of important quality and cost-effectiveness initiatives. Between May 2011 and May 2012, System boards of trustees terminated 21 undergraduate programs, suspended six others, and refused to approve three. Twelve new programs were added during that same period. Eighteen graduate programs were terminated, four suspended, and three denied approval, while nine new programs were added. Since 2008, the System decreased administrative and support expenditures by 8%, while increasing expenditure on instruction and research.

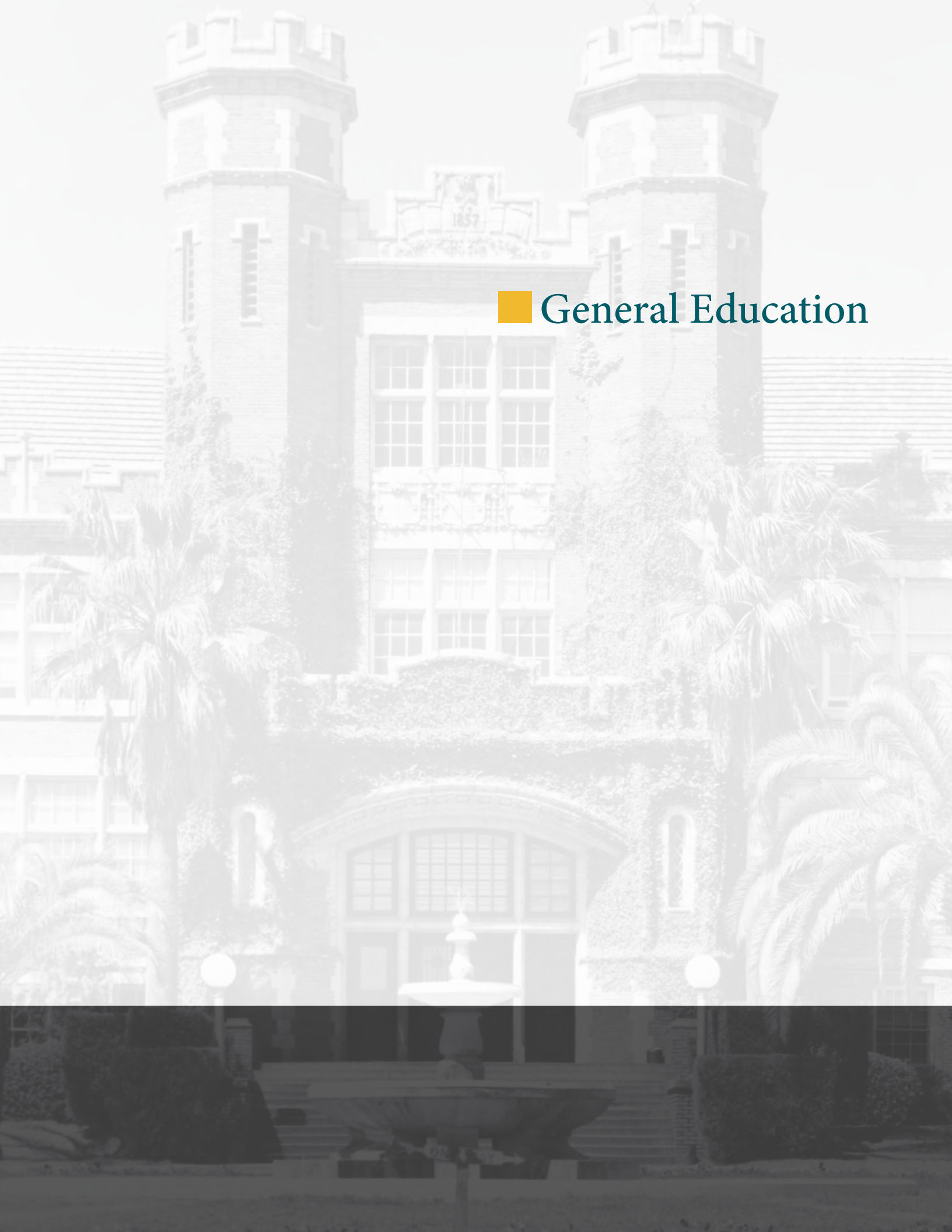
There are, however, some important indicators that should be added on both a campus and System level. Only three universities provide information in their annual Fact Books on changes in grade distribution over time, a key indicator of possible grade inflation and a crucial metric that can guard against the danger of increasing graduation rates by lowering academic rigor. Although Florida has state requirements for efficient use of classroom and laboratory stations and overall the System universities exceed those requirements, only one university provides public information on utilization of classrooms by day of the week and hour of the day. Its low usage on Friday afternoons and on all mornings at 8:00 AM does, in fact, show an underutilized capacity that suggests a need for more fine-grained data before new capital building projects are undertaken.⁷

Florida's strong commitment to student success has not diminished its success in community engagement and research. Six of the System institutions are classified by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Learning as Community Engagement Universities. Based on 2010 income from licensing technological and scientific inventions, the Association of University Technology Managers (AUTM) ranked University of Florida 17th in the nation and University of South Florida 20th. In 2012, the National Science Foundation ranked the Uni-

versity of Florida 12th in the nation in research and development expenditures, and the same year the University of South Florida moved from 65th in those rankings to 50th in the nation.⁸

Florida's public university system has a bold course ahead, with plans under development for the University of Florida to take the lead in establishing an institute for online learning, making the existing network of 389 distance-learning programs offered by ten System institutions more efficient. Moreover, recent legislation has paved the way for the System to streamline its general education program in order to promote student completion.⁹

Overall, Florida public universities are on a prudent and successful course during these difficult economic times. Significant challenges and difficult decisions over priorities remain. It is clear, however, that Florida has high potential to be a model for other states.



■ General Education

1. What are students learning?

Around the nation, a consensus is building that college students must acquire certain core skills to be ready for the responsibilities of citizenship and for the challenges of today’s dynamic, ever-changing workplace. In August 2011, the Roper group administered a national survey: Seventy percent responded that colleges and universities should require all students to take basic classes in core subjects such as writing, math, science, economics, U.S. history, and foreign language. The strongest support for the core curriculum (80%) came from respondents age 25-34—including those who have recently transitioned from college into today’s demanding workplace.¹⁰

Surveys of employers and business leaders underscore these findings. In a 2009 survey conducted by Hart Research Associates for the American Association of Colleges and Universities, employers registered their strong desire for colleges and universities to place more emphasis on concepts and new developments in science and technology (70%); written and oral communication (89%); the ability to work with numbers and understand statistics (63%); civic knowledge, participation, and engagement (52%); democratic institutions and values (40%); and proficiency in a foreign language (45%). Of the hundreds of business leaders surveyed, 26% complained that recent graduates of four-year institutions were deficient in writing skills.¹¹

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, between the ages of 18 and 46, a person can anticipate changing jobs on average more than 11 times. In these challenging economic times, a well-constructed and well-taught core curriculum offers significant advantages: general surveys of major fields give students a broader, more comprehensive education than narrowly-focused classes, and thus prepare them for a dynamic workplace where they will need multiple skill sets and broad-based knowledge.¹²

Public concerns in Florida about the employability of college graduates have prompted everything from the passage last year of a performance funding bill to promote “high-demand” engineering and technical programs, to statements from the state governor questioning whether Florida benefits from non-STEM majors, like anthropology. Yet long-term employability may be far more dependent on the development of foundational skills rather than choice of major.¹³ 93% of employers agreed that critical thinking, communication, and problem solving—precisely the goal of a disciplined core curriculum—are more important than college

major. Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa, authors of *Academically Adrift*, recently surveyed more than 2,300 students at 24 four-year institutions, and found that “[s]tudents majoring in traditional liberal-arts fields, including social science, humanities, natural science, and mathematics, demonstrated significantly higher gains in critical thinking, complex reasoning, and writing skills over time than students in other fields of study,” exceeding performance of students in more popular majors such as communications or business.¹⁴

A robust collegiate core curriculum—also known as general education—ensures a solid basis of common skills and knowledge outside of the major for all students, whatever their preparation. And requiring standard classes in foundational subjects is a far more cost-effective model than offering a large list of esoteric courses.

We assessed the state of general education at 11 of the 12 four-year institutions of the State University System of Florida. The 12th institution, Florida Polytechnic University, which is still in transition to operate as a standalone campus, is excluded from this portion of the study.

Using the most recent publicly available catalogs, we examined whether these institutions require their students to take general education courses in seven key subjects: **Composition, Literature, Intermediate-level Foreign Language, U.S. Government or History, Economics, Mathematics, and Natural or Physical Science.**

To receive credit in this report, a course must be a true general education course—broad in scope, exposing the student to the rich array of material that exemplifies the subject. Further, a course must truly be a requirement. Many universities give the appearance of providing a core curriculum because they require students to take courses in several subject areas other than their majors—often called “distribution requirements.” But these are “requirements” in name only, typically giving students dozens or even hundreds of “distributional” courses from which to choose. For further details on the criteria used for this section of the report, please see Appendix A.

Even when finances are good, a bloated curriculum is academically unsound. When resources are limited, as they are in this challenging fiscal landscape, reforming the core curriculum offers financial advantages in addition to academic benefits. A tighter and more coherent program of courses can improve student achievement and cut costs.

Indeed, the solid, fundamental courses that students need are typically much less expensive to deliver than many of the “boutique” and “niche” programs. An English composition program, for example, will usually employ a very high proportion of adjuncts and graduate instructors under the guidance of a small core of senior professors. With this structure, thousands of students can receive high-quality writing instruction in small classes, in sharp contrast to specialized or trendy programs that have fewer majors and limited application to current business, industry, or public sector needs.

Former University of Northern Colorado president Robert C. Dickeson, author of *Prioritizing Academic Programs and Services*, explains the fiscal prudence of maintaining rigorous general education requirements:

General education creep is expensive. What might have been considered a peripheral luxury item before (offering a groaning buffet table with excessive course choices) should now be seen as a waste of precious resources.

Academic departments proliferate their general education offerings in the absurd belief that by doing so more students will be produced. The truth is there are only so many students to go around. Instead, the question should be: How many quality general education courses ought we offer to mount a distinguished program?

In practice, 80 percent of students typically enroll in less than 20 percent of general education offerings. Query: What is the cost of sustaining the unnecessary balance?¹⁵

As the chart on the following page shows, most Florida institutions currently require three of the seven core courses: all but one require a course in Composition, nine out of 11 receive credit for Mathematics, and the same number require Natural or Physical Science. Within the System, Florida State University has the most comprehensive general education requirements, receiving credit in five areas, including Literature and Foreign Language.

Some significant gaps remain. Fewer than half of Florida schools have a Literature requirement, only one requires Foreign Language at the intermediate level, and only one school receives any credit for requiring coursework in Economics.

Current System policy already provides a lever by which the Board of Governors can bolster its institutions' curricular requirements. Board Regulation 6.017, which applies to baccalaureate programs at all System institutions, requires students to take 36 hours of coursework in communication, mathematics, social sciences, humanities, and natural sciences. In point of fact, a comprehensive core curriculum comprising requirements in expository writing, literature, foreign language through the intermediate level, economics, U.S. history or government, collegiate level mathematics, and natural science can be done in 30 semester hours. Judicious further enhancements are both possible and desirable, but it is clear that a rigorous general education can be highly efficient, too.¹⁶

Indeed, in an attempt to streamline the path for degree completion while maintaining academic standards, last year the state legislature passed a bill requiring the Board to reduce the number of required general education semester hours to 30 hours, starting with the 2014–2015

**GENERAL EDUCATION REQUIREMENTS
BY INSTITUTION***

INSTITUTION	Comp	Lit	Lang	Gov/ Hist	Econ	Math	Sci
Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University	●			●		●	●
Florida Atlantic University	●					●	●
Florida Gulf Coast University	●					●	●
Florida International University	●						●
Florida State University	●	●	●			●	●
New College of Florida							
University of Central Florida	●			◐	◐	●	●
University of Florida	●					●	●
University of North Florida	●	●				●	●
University of South Florida	●					●	
University of West Florida	●	●				●	●

*See Appendix B for school evaluation notes on core courses.

incoming class. This process has been delayed, as the federal accrediting agency for the region—the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS)—has insisted on having final approval over the legislatively-mandated program, requiring that institutions provide SACS with six months’ formal notice prior to implementation. A bill passed by the state legislature earlier this year extends the timeline for implementation to 2015–2016, in response to SACS’ action. (For discussion of the disturbing precedent of a regional accreditor interfering with the work of state government, see page 39.)¹⁷

General education at the New College of Florida, the legislatively-designated “honors college for the liberal arts” for the state of Florida, is an anomaly within the State University System. Its catalog states “there are no specific ‘core course’ requirements.” Instead, students develop academic contracts with their advisors to fulfill the college’s expectations. Eight courses, including one from each of three broad academic divisions, suffice to meet the New College requirement for breadth. The New College requirements for proficiency in writing and mathematics can be fulfilled by coursework or an SAT score of 500 or above. In practice, this means that New College does not make any of the seven core subjects listed above a requirement for graduation.

The model that New College of Florida follows is not an inevitable choice for a public liberal arts honors college. In contrast, the University of Science and Arts of Oklahoma, whose mission is to “provide the public with a distinctive and accessible liberal arts and sciences education,” bears an interdisciplinary curriculum with rigorous requirements in six out of seven core subjects—with an in-state price tag \$2,000 less than its counterpart in Florida.¹⁸

An address earlier this year by System Board of Governors chairman Dean Colson emphasized the board’s recognition of the importance of a foundational liberal arts education:

Everyone in the state, including me, has been pushing our universities to produce more STEM graduates. From my viewpoint, that is not to suggest that the humanities are not important. I don’t think anyone is interested in raising a generation that has no appreciation for literature, history or the arts.¹⁹

What remains to be seen is whether the Board of Governors will seize the initiative to broaden System-wide general education requirements to include all of its institutions, and also to address the critical gaps in such core subjects as U.S. history, economics, and foreign language.



■ Intellectual Diversity

2. Do schools promote a free exchange of ideas?

The university should be a place where free expression of diverse views is the first and most sacred principle, even when those viewpoints are perceived as unwelcome or even offensive. It is this very principle which is at the heart of a university education and which underscores the statement issued in 2006 by the Association of American Colleges and Universities—a national organization whose members include virtually every school in the State University System of Florida: “In any education of quality, students encounter an abundance of intellectual diversity.”

To make this possible, AAC&U maintains, students should learn to think critically—so that they understand “the inappropriateness and dangers of indoctrination . . . see through the distortions of propaganda, and . . . [can] assess judiciously the persuasiveness of powerful emotional appeals.” Students then “require a safe environment in order to feel free to express their own views.” They “need the freedom to express their ideas publicly as well as repeated opportunities to explore a wide range of insights and perspectives.”²⁰

At the state university level, several schools have published broad policy statements declaring the right to free expression on campus. The University of Florida’s Student Conduct Code “recognizes that the transmission of knowledge, the pursuit of truth, and the development of individuals require the free exchange of ideas on any subject whether or not controversial, self-expression, and the challenging of beliefs and customs.” Florida A&M’s due process policy affords students “[t]he right of freedom of expression and peaceful assembly as defined and governed by the constitutions of the United States and the State of Florida and the regulations of the University.” And Florida State University’s conduct code fully recognizes the “right of all students to seek knowledge, debate ideas, form opinions, and freely express their ideas” and explicitly states that the “Student Conduct Code . . . will not be used to discipline the lawful expression of ideas.”²¹

Yet despite these broad promises, Florida institutions have equally broad policies that punish so-called “offensive” speech or restrict expression to designated “free speech zones.” A close review of Florida schools by the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE) has found that state colleges and universities are failing to protect legitimate expression and free speech and are actively discouraging a robust exchange of ideas.

Dedicated to defending and sustaining individual rights at America’s colleges and universities, FIRE examines speech codes and assigns a “red light,” “yellow light,” or “green light” rating to indicate whether a given school protects or restricts freedom of expression. According to FIRE, 11 four-year undergraduate institutions in the State University System have restrictive policies in place.²² Four schools earned “yellow light” warnings for potentially banning or excessively regulating protected speech, while seven schools are on the “red light” list for clear and substantial restrictions of free speech.

SPEECH CODES AT PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES*

RED LIGHT SCHOOLS

7 out of 11

Institution has at least one policy that clearly and substantially restricts freedom of speech.

YELLOW LIGHT SCHOOLS

4 out of 11

Institution policies restrict a limited amount of protected expression or could too easily be used to restrict protected expression.

GREEN LIGHT SCHOOLS

0 out of 11

Institution policies do not seriously imperil free speech.

● Florida Gulf Coast University	● Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University
● Florida International University	● Florida Atlantic University
● Florida State University	● University of Central Florida
● New College of Florida	● University of Florida
● University of North Florida	
● University of South Florida	
● University of West Florida	

**Research and evaluation for this chart completed by The Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE), www.thefire.org.*

Until public exposure prompted it to abandon the code, the University of Florida in fact ranked on FIRE’s ignominious Speech Codes of the Year list. The offending code warned of disciplinary action against those who “adversely upset the delicate balance of communal living,” and was criticized by FIRE as being so unconstitutionally vague as to afford “absolutely no way for students to know what this policy actually prohibits, so they can only guess at what speech or expression might lead to discipline.” Yet more distressing is the

discrimination policy still in place at the University of North Florida, where students, faculty, and staff may be disciplined based on their *unintentional* acts.²³

Florida State University students are required to promise to “learn from and about those who are different and work to make the University inclusive.” Students who violate school policy can be subject to discipline such as “reeducation and rehabilitative activities” in order to treat “attitudes, misconceptions, and emotional crises” deemed responsible for such violations. FIRE addressed these protocols in a memorandum to Florida State in November 2012 arguing:

Students at FSU should be allowed to disagree strongly and passionately when debating the issues of the day without worrying whether they could potentially face disciplinary action for allegedly “disrespectful” or “undignified” expression.²⁴

Like so many things in life, overly broad speech and sensitivity codes emerge because of good intentions. As some thinking goes, we should not offend; we should not make people uncomfortable. We need to get along. But in mounting this argument, those who look favorably toward speech codes miss an important point: speech codes often create a chilling atmosphere, effectively empowering the institution to silence students and faculty on the grounds that a person, or even a group, has been, or may be, “offended.” When faced with speech codes or harassment policies (whatever the name and whatever the guise), students will hold back from expressing controversial opinions or making forceful arguments, worried that they might face administrative or disciplinary repercussions for constitutionally protected speech.

Speech codes are not a benign attempt to encourage civility and sensitivity. They are a threat to all of us in a democratic society that depends upon citizens evaluating multiple perspectives in order to determine what is in the country’s best interest.

As the intellectual health of a university is dependent on the free exchange of ideas and the freedom to explore any topic, schools must foster an atmosphere of free inquiry. It is clear that the Florida public universities have failed in this obligation. Clearly, administrators and governing boards still have much to do to ensure that all students experience an intellectual climate open to a robust exchange of ideas.

Institutional trustees—who are charged by the System Board of Governors to establish student codes of conduct—have a critically important role to play in ensuring the free exchange of ideas on their campuses. In their role as fiduciaries, they have both the authority and the duty to see that their institutions do everything possible to guarantee the free exchange of ideas. Students, faculty, and the taxpayers who support public institutions depend upon those in charge to make sure the intellectual climate is healthy.²⁵



■ Cost & Effectiveness

3. How much are students paying?

The cost of higher education has gone up all over the country. Nationwide, during the five-year period ending in 2012-13, inflation-adjusted tuition and required fees at four-year public colleges increased by an average of 27%.²⁶

The charts on page 18 show the tuition and fees at four-year campuses in the State University System of Florida for 2006-07 and 2011-12 in constant 2011 dollars, along with the percent change over those years. The four-year institutions have historically had low in-state tuitions combined with a state educational appropriation per FTE just under the national average. Over the five-year period from 2006-07 to 2011-12, tuition has risen on average 52.5% across campuses. The five-year trend exceeds the national average—all schools increased tuition by a minimum of 39.1%, and as much as 88%, even after adjusting for inflation.

State law establishes a common per-hour in-state undergraduate tuition rate which is determined on an annual basis by the state legislature. However, institutions may, with the approval of the System Board of Governors, charge students additional fees including a “tuition differential” fee that they can apply to undergraduate programs, but which must reserve 30% for need-based scholarships. By state law, institutions cannot increase the tuition differential by more than 15% per year.

In 2012, all 11 System universities sought permission to raise the tuition differential, with eight seeking the maximum allowed by statute. The board commendably resisted, by approving smaller percentages than requested, or by putting express conditions on its approval—requiring one institution to produce a detailed plan on graduation rates, retention rates, and a financial analysis of student debt, and requiring another institution to designate a larger portion of revenue to need-based aid than that required by statute. However, overall it largely approved institutions’ requests to raise the tuition differential.

In addition to the 15% cap on the tuition differential, under state law, schools cannot raise tuition beyond the national average of four-year degree-granting public postsecondary institutions. Yet there is growing pressure to modify these caps. In 2012, Governor Rick Scott vetoed a bill that would have given selected research institutions the ability to charge “market rates” in addition to the 15% cap.²⁷

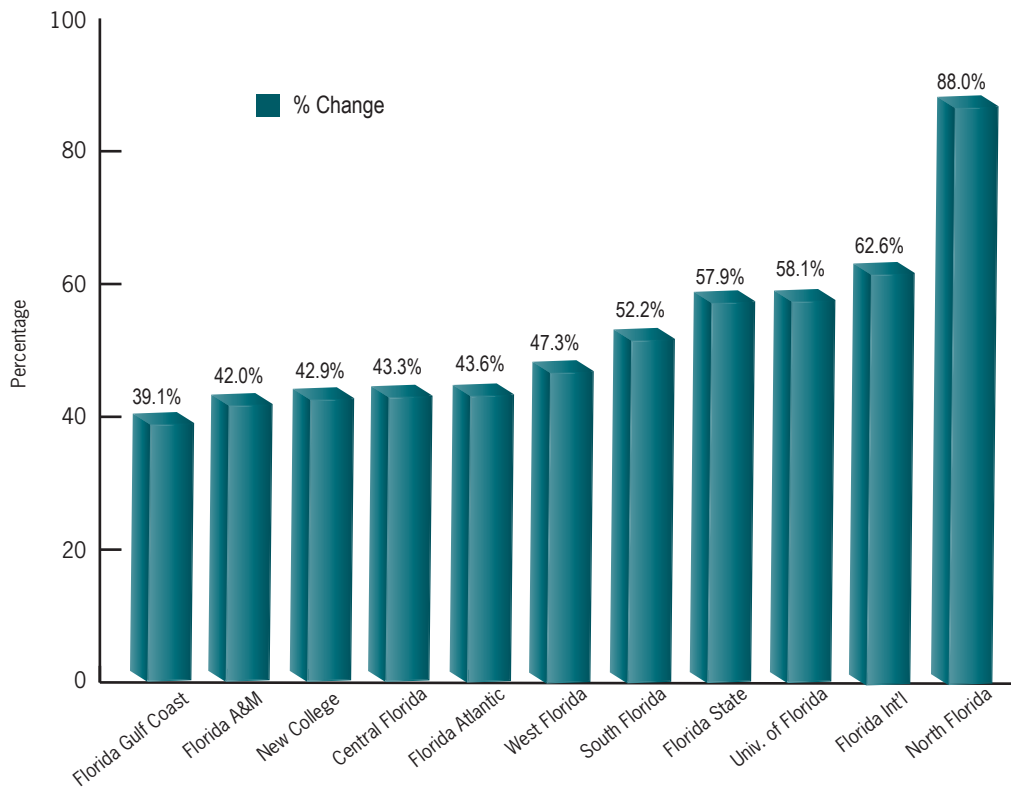
Florida can only maintain its historically low tuitions if policymakers view tuition increases, especially increases to market rate, as actions of last resort. This is a critical moment for Florida, particularly since families are already having to spend a substantial percentage of income on higher education.

TRENDS IN UNDERGRADUATE TUITION & FEES

INSTITUTION	2006-07	2011-12	5-Year % Change
Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University	\$3,653	\$5,187	42.0%
Florida Atlantic University	2,970	4,264	43.6
Florida Gulf Coast University	3,978	5,532	39.1
Florida International University	3,492	5,678	62.6
Florida State University	3,690	5,826	57.9
New College of Florida	4,240	6,060	42.9
University of Central Florida	3,896	5,584	43.3
University of Florida	3,577	5,657	58.1
University of North Florida	2,992	5,627	88.0
University of South Florida	3,811	5,800	52.2
University of West Florida	3,191	4,701	47.3

Source: Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS)

Note: Dollar amounts are expressed in 2011 inflation-adjusted numbers. Until 2009-10, University of South Florida campuses reported data as one combined institution. University of South Florida – Sarasota-Manatee and University of South Florida – Polytechnic did not admit first-time full-time students in 2011-12. 2011-12 data listed for the University of South Florida are for the main campus only.



4. How does tuition compare to family income?

Increases in college costs place a heavy burden on families that, in many cases, are already straining to pay mortgages and put food on the table. The charts on page 21 illustrate the problem by showing the rise in tuition and fees as a percentage of Florida’s median household income—the share of income demanded by the “sticker price” of tuition and fees. Over the five-year period studied, undergraduate tuition and required fees at all of the colleges and universities in this study demanded an increasing percentage of household income.

In 2006-07, tuition at Florida four-year campuses represented on average a modest 7% of the state’s median household income. By 2011-12, that amount jumped by over half at every school, and in the case of the University of North Florida, it more than doubled. At all 11 institutions, one year’s required tuition and fees now would constitute on average 12% of household income. To put this in context, in 1970, tuition at a four-year college or university cost on average 4% of median income nationwide. By 2010, the nationwide average was 11%, according to the Delta Cost Project.²⁸

Florida offers a range of financial aid programs, and three-quarters of State University System undergraduates receive some form of financial aid, coming from state, federal, university, or private sources. And while Florida ranks 41st among states in the proportion of students who graduate with college debt, students and their families still cover, on average, 83% of the total cost of attendance for a full-time, in-state undergraduate at a state university in Florida.²⁹

The largest of these programs, Bright Futures, is based on student merit and can be used at any public or private institution in Florida. ACT or SAT scores, combined with grade point average, determine what level of award the applicant will receive. Students in the highest award category, Florida Academic Scholars, receive \$100 per credit hour; the next categories, Florida Medallion Scholars and Gold Seal Vocational Scholars, receive \$75 per credit hour. The top student in each district receives an additional \$43 per semester hour.

This large program has disbursed over \$3.9 billion in state aid between 1997 and 2012 with grants to over 1.8 million students. Florida’s average state grant aid per student of \$795 ranked in 2009–2010 as 12th largest in the nation. It is arguable that the definition of “merit” adopted by Bright Futures was, until recently, insufficiently rigorous for its Florida Medallion Scholar-

ship, the category that accounted in 2009–2010 for over three-quarters of the Bright Futures awards. Recent legislation addresses this issue, by raising SAT and ACT score requirements.

Prior to academic year 2010–2011, the SAT/ACT eligibility for a Florida Medallion Scholarship grant was 970 SAT or 20 ACT, combined with a weighted GPA of 3.0—indicators which are below the national averages. SB 2150 of 2011, however, specified that the qualifying scores would rise over the following three years to 1170 for the SAT and 26 for the ACT. The rising qualification level coincided with a slight reduction in the number of awards made in 2011–12; advocates of higher academic standards point to studies that show that merit based aid encourages better high school performance and stems out-of-state student migration. The prestigious Florida Academic Scholars category had qualifying scores of 1270 for the SAT or 28 for the ACT, with a 3.5 weighted GPA. These qualifying scores will gradually rise to a 1290 SAT or 29 ACT.³⁰

Overall, Florida has done well in encouraging college-ready students to enroll in its universities. A 2012 study by the Brookings Institution’s Brown Center on Education Policy, based on 2009–2010 data, compared Florida’s average tuition of \$4,444 for four-year public institutions, with a U.S. average of \$7,050. Florida’s average state grant per student of \$795 again compares favorably with a U.S. average of \$627. Florida’s programs, like Georgia’s, focus on merit rather than need: Florida’s percentage of grant aid based on need is 26%, compared to a U.S. average of 73%.³¹

It is sobering that despite financial indicators that are better than most in the nation, those who graduate from Florida four-year institutions will leave with tens of thousands of dollars of college debt, which may take many years to pay, calling into question the much-vaunted income dividend of a college degree. The Federal Reserve Bank of New York reports that nationwide nearly 12 million individuals 40 or older still owe money on student loans. Astonishingly, almost 2 million individuals 60 and over still owe money. The recession has created hard times throughout the nation, underscoring the importance of recent initiatives at Florida’s colleges and universities to develop cost efficiencies that meet the demands of the economy’s “new normal.”³²

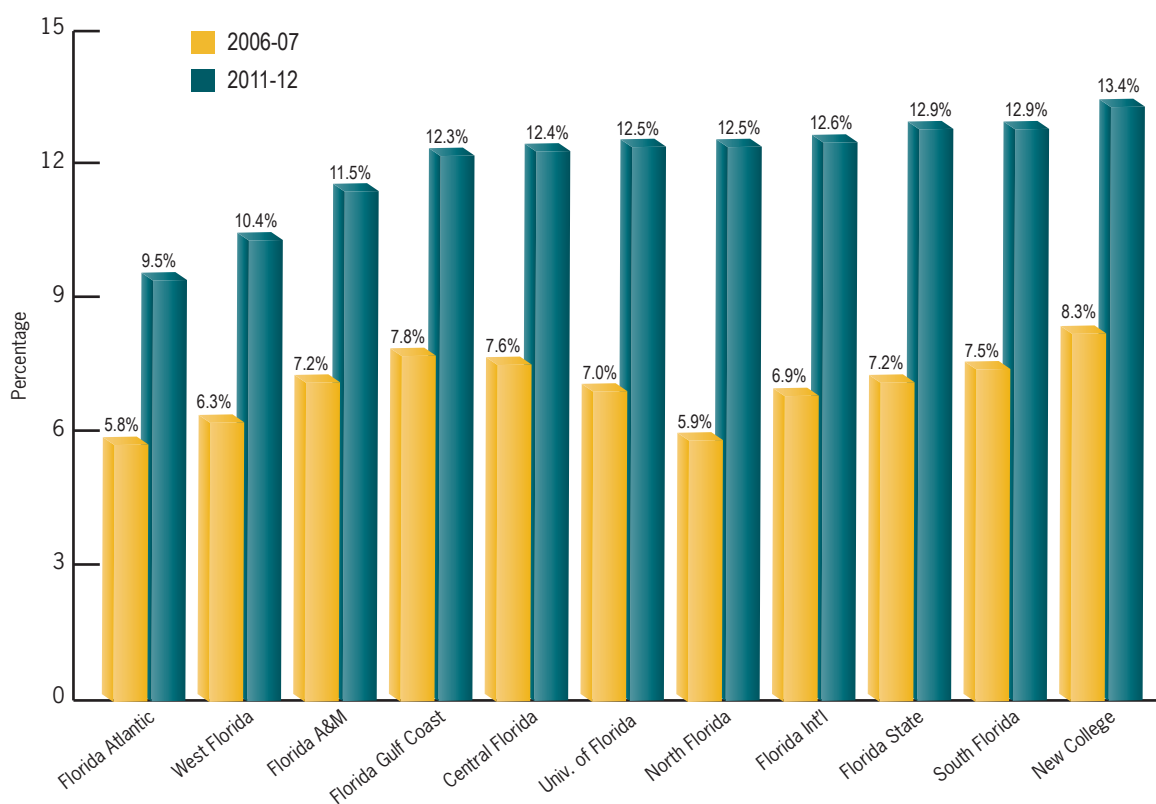
UNDERGRADUATE TUITION & FEES AS A PERCENTAGE OF MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME

INSTITUTION	2006-07	2011-12	5-Year Change in % Points*	5-Year % Change
Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University	7.2%	11.5%	4.3%	60.4%
Florida Atlantic University	5.8	9.5	3.6	62.2
Florida Gulf Coast University	7.8	12.3	4.5	57.1
Florida International University	6.9	12.6	5.7	83.7
Florida State University	7.2	12.9	5.7	78.4
New College of Florida	8.3	13.4	5.1	61.5
University of Central Florida	7.6	12.4	4.7	61.9
University of Florida	7.0	12.5	5.5	78.7
University of North Florida	5.9	12.5	6.6	112.5
University of South Florida	7.5	12.9	5.4	71.9
University of West Florida	6.3	10.4	4.2	66.5

Source: IPEDS and U.S. Census Bureau

Note: Until 2009-10, University of South Florida campuses reported data as one combined institution. University of South Florida – Sarasota-Manatee and University of South Florida – Polytechnic did not admit first-time full-time students in 2011-12. 2011-12 data listed for the University of South Florida are for the main campus only.

* All figures in this chart are rounded to the nearest tenth of a percent. Due to this, the 5-Year Change in % Points column may not reflect the exact difference between the first two columns.



5. Where is the money going?

Nationwide, a growing share of school funds is going to pay for layers and layers of administration. Some support staff are integral to the process of instruction. However, the long-term trend nationwide is simply unsustainable. A 2010 study of higher education costs at 198 leading colleges and universities showed a 39.3% increase in expenditures per student for instruction, a 37.8% increase for expenditures in research and service, but a 61.2% increase per student for administration from 1993–2007.³³

The study, conducted for the Goldwater Institute by Jay Greene, head of the Department of Education Reform at the University of Arkansas, found that at the six System schools studied, the number of administrative employees per 100 students increased between 17% and 81.3%, while the change in the number of instructional, research, and service faculty per 100 students ranged from a 29.2% decrease to a modest 9.7% increase. While there is a healthy debate as to the value added by staff members with nominally administrative titles, the growth of administrative staffing is unmistakable.³⁴

Administrative Spending

The charts on pages 24 and 25 gather data submitted by Florida’s public universities to the U.S. Department of Education. In large part, the findings are quite encouraging. In the five-year period ending in 2010-11, the most recent year for which financial data are publicly available, instructional spending grew faster than administrative spending (or decreased at a slower rate than administrative spending) at seven institutions. Notably, Florida A&M University decreased administrative spending by the most of any school (38.4%), and Florida Gulf Coast University combined its administrative cuts with an over one-third boost in spending on instruction. On the other hand, four institutions—New College of Florida, the University of Central Florida, the University of Florida, and the University of South Florida—grew administrative spending more than instructional spending, with University of Central Florida increasing administrative expenditures by 51.3%.

Findings are similar when one analyzes trends in administrative spending as a share of Educational and General (E&G) expenditures—a key indicator of the size of administrative

spending relative to the rest of the institution's budget. Those schools that slowed administrative spending relative to instructional spending also saw a corresponding change in the share of E&G expenditures that administrative and instructional costs represent.

Although Florida public universities have done well in controlling growth in overall administrative spending, salaries for top administrators are conspicuously high. Ironically, faculty salaries at Florida public universities lag behind the national average for their peers, but the same is not true of their top administrators. According to a survey of public universities by the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, compensation for campus presidents varies from \$277,436 at the University of West Florida, to \$741,500 for the president of the University of Central Florida. Among the eight Florida institutions that participated in the survey, the median total compensation was \$509,727 (above the national median of \$421,395), with a median base pay of \$395,000 (above the national median of \$383,800). In addition to the financial considerations attendant to presidential salaries, the disparity between the compensation of top administrators and of faculty, relative to their respective peers, can have discouraging effects on campus morale and public perception.³⁵

INSTRUCTIONAL VS. ADMINISTRATIVE SPENDING

INSTITUTION		2005-06 FY Expenditures	2010-11 FY Expenditures	\$ Change	% Change
Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University	<i>Instruction</i>	\$116,385,142	\$118,467,434	\$ 2,082,292	1.8%
	<i>Administration</i>	55,066,741	33,900,526	-21,166,215	-38.4
Florida Atlantic University	<i>Instruction</i>	165,459,684	186,779,994	21,320,310	12.9
	<i>Administration</i>	49,258,190	44,694,193	-4,563,998	-9.3
Florida Gulf Coast University	<i>Instruction</i>	50,037,381	68,835,135	18,797,754	37.6
	<i>Administration</i>	14,808,893	13,523,531	-1,285,362	-8.7
Florida International University	<i>Instruction</i>	213,952,009	297,975,361	84,023,352	39.3
	<i>Administration</i>	59,636,337	75,059,367	15,423,030	25.9
Florida State University	<i>Instruction</i>	305,185,177	345,324,810	40,139,633	13.2
	<i>Administration</i>	64,832,967	56,140,842	-8,692,124	-13.4
New College of Florida	<i>Instruction</i>	9,905,280	10,798,935	893,655	9.0
	<i>Administration</i>	4,837,263	5,652,963	815,700	16.9
University of Central Florida	<i>Instruction</i>	250,101,793	296,788,093	46,686,300	18.7
	<i>Administration</i>	50,228,987	75,977,874	25,748,887	51.3
University of Florida	<i>Instruction</i>	742,669,567	837,351,458	94,681,891	12.7
	<i>Administration</i>	110,157,915	126,555,524	16,397,609	14.9
University of North Florida	<i>Instruction</i>	78,709,676	70,400,438	-8,309,238	-10.6
	<i>Administration</i>	22,972,328	17,587,290	-5,385,038	-23.4
University of South Florida	<i>Instruction</i>	387,478,174	393,448,105	5,969,930	1.5
	<i>Administration</i>	72,506,767	75,228,240	2,721,473	3.8
University of West Florida	<i>Instruction</i>	68,168,000	66,783,058	-1,384,942	-2.0
	<i>Administration</i>	29,278,263	27,425,815	-1,852,448	-6.3

Source: IPEDS

Note: Data are reported in 2011 inflation-adjusted numbers, and are for the most recent five-year span of data available. Until 2009-10, University of South Florida campuses reported data as one combined institution. FY 2010-11 data for the University of South Florida are combined from data reported by all campuses that year.

INSTRUCTIONAL VS. ADMINISTRATIVE SPENDING AS A PERCENTAGE OF EDUCATIONAL & GENERAL EXPENDITURES

INSTITUTION		2005-06 FY as % of E&G	2010-11 FY as % of E&G	Change in % Points*	% Change
Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University	<i>Instruction</i>	46.6%	50.1%	3.5%	7.4%
	<i>Administration</i>	22.1	14.3	-7.7	-35.0
Florida Atlantic University	<i>Instruction</i>	51.4	57.6	6.2	12.0
	<i>Administration</i>	15.3	13.8	-1.5	-9.9
Florida Gulf Coast University	<i>Instruction</i>	53.5	56.0	2.5	4.8
	<i>Administration</i>	15.8	11.0	-4.8	-30.5
Florida International University	<i>Instruction</i>	46.1	53.8	7.6	16.5
	<i>Administration</i>	12.9	13.5	0.7	5.3
Florida State University	<i>Instruction</i>	44.5	48.3	3.7	8.4
	<i>Administration</i>	9.5	7.8	-1.6	-17.0
New College of Florida	<i>Instruction</i>	47.3	39.8	-7.5	-15.8
	<i>Administration</i>	23.1	20.8	-2.2	-9.7
University of Central Florida	<i>Instruction</i>	50.5	48.4	-2.1	-4.1
	<i>Administration</i>	10.1	12.4	2.3	22.2
University of Florida	<i>Instruction</i>	41.7	38.5	-3.3	-7.8
	<i>Administration</i>	6.2	5.8	-0.4	-6.1
University of North Florida	<i>Instruction</i>	48.4	47.9	-0.5	-1.0
	<i>Administration</i>	14.1	12.0	-2.2	-15.2
University of South Florida	<i>Instruction</i>	46.5	45.0	-1.5	-3.2
	<i>Administration</i>	8.7	8.6	-0.1	-1.1
University of West Florida	<i>Instruction</i>	48.7	48.8	0.1	0.3
	<i>Administration</i>	20.9	20.0	-0.9	-4.1

Source: IPEDS

Note: Data are reported in 2011 inflation-adjusted numbers, and are for the most recent five-year span of data available. Until 2009-10, University of South Florida campuses reported data as one combined institution. FY 2010-11 data for the University of South Florida are combined from data reported by all campuses that year.

* All figures in this chart are rounded to the nearest tenth of a percent. Due to this, the Change in % Points column may not reflect the exact difference between the first two columns.

Athletic Spending

And what about athletic spending? Universities are not required to report their athletic department's expenditures to the Department of Education as a separate item, so it's harder to say what exactly is going on. However, based on information obtained by *USA Today* through a Freedom of Information Act request, it appears that eight out of the nine Florida schools in Division I of the NCAA have allowed their athletic spending to grow at a higher rate than their instructional spending.³⁶ Student athletic fees also continue to rise—by as much as 71.5% in a five-year period. (See the chart on the following page.) In other words, athletic budgets are rising relative to educational spending, and in many cases drawing significant support from general university funds. Students are being forced to shoulder an even greater burden of the cost.

More broadly, athletic spending has a negative impact on institutions' abilities to grow in areas pertinent to their academic mission. Attracting and retaining prominent faculty—critical to Florida's goal of “building world-class academic programs and research capacity”—requires not only offering competitive salaries, but often requires investment in technologically sophisticated, and costly, research facilities. And while Florida has the 2nd largest state university system in the country, it ranks only 17th in the number of faculty who are members of the National Academy of Sciences, National Academy of Engineering, or the Institute of Medicine, as has been noted by the System Board of Governors. Governing boards have the duty to ensure that the rapid growth of non-academic budgets relative to those of other functions of the university is not a signal of misaligned priorities.³⁷

TRENDS IN ATHLETIC SPENDING

INSTITUTION	Student Fees			Total Operating Expenses		
	2005-06	2010-11	% Change	2005-06	2010-11	% Change
Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University	\$ 3,550,170	\$ 5,062,596	42.6%	\$ 7,343,465	\$11,592,239	57.9%
Florida Atlantic University	9,002,443	10,754,433	19.5	16,966,914	17,234,568	1.6
Florida Gulf Coast University	2,827,625	4,848,671	71.5	3,279,794	9,523,714	190.4
Florida International University	13,482,720	17,466,449	29.5	17,507,506	25,382,841	45.0
Florida State University	6,924,166	7,765,630	12.2	68,543,727	89,694,399	30.9
New College of Florida	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
University of Central Florida	14,554,687	19,412,827	33.4	28,958,491	44,157,311	52.5
University of Florida	2,880,892	2,559,799	-11.1	90,604,201	110,540,299	22.0
University of North Florida	5,444,095	5,987,164	10.0	6,998,694	8,856,179	26.5
University of South Florida	11,779,491	15,712,501	33.4	27,915,654	44,867,154	60.7
University of West Florida	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

Source: USA Today (<http://www.usatoday.com/sports/college/ncaa-finances.htm>)

Note: The USA Today study covered only those schools in NCAA Division I. The New College of Florida and University of West Florida are not NCAA Division I schools. The University of North Florida transferred to NCAA Division I in 2010. Dollar amounts are expressed in 2011 inflation-adjusted numbers.

6. Are students graduating and doing so on time?

According to the most recent national data publicly available from the U.S. Department of Education, less than 59% of the first-time, full-time students who begin college earn a degree from that school in six years: 56% of the students in public institutions and 65% of the students in private, non-profit colleges and universities. Even allowing for students who transfer and finish at another institution, these low rates put the U.S. behind global competitors. Despite spending more per student on higher education than any other Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) country, the U.S. ranks 14th in the percentage of young adults who have completed college. Students who enter college but do not graduate represent a failed investment, with consequences for the student, the institution, and taxpayers.³⁸

The charts on page 30 show the four- and six-year graduation rates in Florida for first-time (full-time and part-time) students graduating in the year 2012 (the cohort that entered in 2008 for the four-year rate, and the cohort that entered in 2006 for the six-year rate), as reported in the most recent edition of the State University System’s Accountability Report.³⁹ Over half of Florida schools failed to reach the national six-year graduation standard for public institutions, which is already quite low.

Across the System, 66% of first-time students graduate in six years. This exceeds the national average for public institutions; indeed, the System’s overall graduation rate is 4th among the ten largest public university systems nationwide. Yet the picture at individual campuses is less encouraging: fewer than half of System institutions graduate even half of their students in six years. These findings are discouraging in light of the fact that students tend to start well at college, with a System-wide freshman retention rate of 88%, with 84% of students keeping a 2.0 grade point average or higher. Admirably, the Board of Governors itself has identified this as an issue for focused attention.⁴⁰

Of course, a baccalaureate degree is supposed to take only four years, not six. Members of the Class of 2012 who took six years to graduate should have graduated in 2010 and moved forward with careers or further training. But if we look at the cohort of students which was supposed to graduate in 2012, only three Florida institutions—Florida State University, New

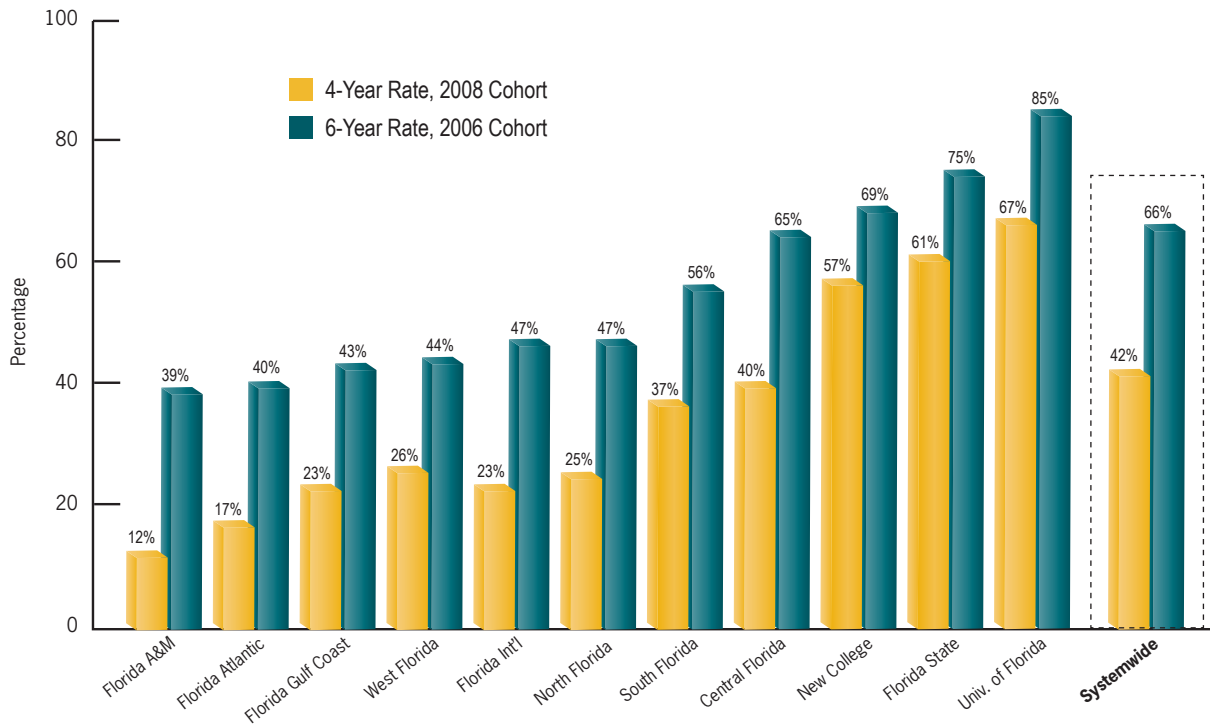
College of Florida, and the University of Florida—graduated at least half of their students in four years.⁴¹ At five schools, only a quarter of students or less graduated in four years. An innovative state law in 2009 establishing an “Excess Credit Hour Surcharge” for credit hours above those required for a baccalaureate degree has not yet provided sufficient incentive for students to complete their degrees quickly: in 2011-12, only 64% of graduating students did so without excess hours.⁴²

BACCALAUREATE GRADUATION RATES FOR FIRST-TIME-IN-COLLEGE STUDENTS

INSTITUTION	4-Year		6-Year		Change in % points	
	2004 Cohort	2008 Cohort	2002 Cohort	2006 Cohort	4-Year	6-Year
Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University	12.0%	12.0%	40.9%	39.0%	0.0%	-1.9%
Florida Atlantic University	15.3	17.0	37.7	40.0	1.7	2.3
Florida Gulf Coast University	26.7	23.0	40.6	43.0	-3.7	2.4
Florida International University	18.3	23.0	46.9	47.0	4.7	0.1
Florida State University	50.3	61.0	69.5	75.0	10.7	5.5
New College of Florida	56.4	57.0	62.4	69.0	0.6	6.6
University of Central Florida	34.6	40.0	63.3	65.0	5.4	1.7
University of Florida	59.1	67.0	81.7	85.0	7.9	3.3
University of North Florida	19.7	25.0	45.5	47.0	5.3	1.5
University of South Florida	23.2	37.0	46.9	56.0	13.8	9.1
University of West Florida	18.1	26.0	42.5	44.0	7.9	1.5
State University System of Florida	35.9	42.0	63.8	66.0	6.1	2.2

Source: State University System of Florida Accountability Report

Note: Data reported are for full-time and part-time, first-time-in-college students. Institutional graduation rates are based on graduation from the same university, and the System rate is based on graduation anywhere in the System. Data for University of South Florida campuses reported as one combined institution.





■ Governance

7. How are the governing boards structured?

The State University System of Florida is established by Article IX, Section 7 of the Florida Constitution. The System is operated by a 17-member Board of Governors: 14 are appointed by the governor with senate confirmation and serve for staggered seven-year terms. The state commissioner of education, the chair of the advisory council of faculty senates, and the president of the Florida student association, serve as *ex officio* members of the board. By statute, the board, or its designee, “has the duty to operate, regulate, control, and be fully responsible for the management of the whole publicly funded State University System.” The Board of Governors’ specific enumerated duties include accounting to the state legislature for the System’s use of public expenditures, “[a]voiding wasteful duplication of facilities or programs,” and issuing final approval for the creation or termination of degree programs at the System’s institutions.⁴³

The Board of Governors selects a System chancellor as its chief executive officer, who reports to the board and serves as its liaison to internal and external constituency groups including “boards of trustees, university presidents and other university officers and employees, the Legislature, other state entities, officers, agencies, the media, and the public.” The chancellor is also responsible for preparing the System’s legislative budget requests (subject to board approval), and for “prompt and effective execution of all Board regulations, policies, guidelines and resolutions.” The chancellor has broad powers over the System’s general office, including the authority “to take any other actions as deemed appropriate by the Chancellor to foster efficient and effective Board operations.”⁴⁴

Each member institution has its own board of trustees to which the System board may delegate certain duties. Campus boards of trustees have 13 members each: six are appointed by the state governor with senate confirmation, and five are appointed by the Board of Governors with senate confirmation. All appointed trustees serve for staggered five-year terms. In addition, the chair of the institution’s faculty senate and the president of its student body serve as *ex officio* trustees.

The Board of Governors has delegated a substantial amount of control to institutional campus boards. Current System policy delegates to boards of trustees the responsibility to set policies governing areas that include authorization and discontinuance of degree programs,

student conduct, and personnel. Boards of trustees are responsible for selecting their university's president, subject to approval by the Board of Governors, which has the prerogative of rejecting a board of trustees' selection by a two-thirds vote. Institutions' policies must remain consistent with regulations issued by the Board of Governors, which also maintains ultimate authority in approving plans for construction of new facilities and boards of trustees' annual budget requests.⁴⁵

Selecting a president is a board's most important decision, and while the decision-making process should be inclusive of a variety of constituencies, a governing board should not delegate its authority over this critical choice.⁴⁶ A governing board must be responsible for all aspects of the search and decision-making process. A Blue Ribbon Task Force established by Governor Rick Scott echoed this sentiment, recommending expansion of the current presidential selection process to include "direct involvement" of the Board of Governors. In its rationale, the Task Force stated that Board involvement "represent[s] a contribution to establishing the positive working relationship necessary between a new college or university president and the constitutionally authorized body established to govern it."⁴⁷

Although not required by System policy, recent practice by System institutions is to include at least one member of the Board of Governors on the presidential search committee, in effect a liaison to the Board. Such practice enables the Board of Governors to fulfill its fiduciary duty, while affording boards of trustees the autonomy needed to select a presidential candidate most appropriate to the institution.

8. What have boards done to improve academic quality?

Evidence is mounting that a number of colleges do a poor job of ensuring that graduates have the basic collegiate skills that employers expect. Demands from the public, the press, and policymakers for better results are increasing—rapidly, too.

The *National Adult Literacy Survey* and the *National Assessment of Adult Literacy*, conducted by the U.S. Department of Education in 1992 and 2003, revealed that most college graduates fall below proficiency in verbal and quantitative literacy. They cannot reliably answer questions that require comparison of viewpoints in two different editorials or compare the cost per ounce of food items. These shocking findings were confirmed in 2006 with an analysis conducted by the prestigious American Institutes for Research.⁴⁸

Then in 2011, the University of Chicago Press published *Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses*, by Professor Richard Arum of New York University and Professor Josipa Roksa of the University of Virginia. Working with the Social Science Research Council, these distinguished sociologists tested over 2,300 college students at 24 accredited institutions, and their findings have rattled the nation. 45% of the students showed no significant intellectual gains after the first two years of college, and 36% showed no improvement after four years. The study showed that “high- and low-performing students can be found at each institution and within each level of selectivity.”⁴⁹

The Board of Governors is clearly aware of the urgency to ensure a high level of student learning. The State University System’s strategic plan indicates as one of its guiding principles a focus on “enhancing [students’] learning, development, and success.” Given the disturbing national trends that provide evidence of limited learning on so many campuses, graduation and retention rates do not serve as a sufficient proxy for academic quality. The System’s annual Accountability Report contains thorough metrics including professional licensure exam passage rates, but it does not include sufficient data on undergraduate progress in acquiring core collegiate skills. A number of System campuses have taken steps to make use of nationally-normed assessments of general education skills, such as the Collegiate Learning Assessment, the ETS Proficiency Profile, or the ACT Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency, discussed on page 37.⁵⁰

Grade Inflation

How systemic is the problem of grade inflation in higher education? According to “The American Freshman: National Norms Fall 2012,” 69% of the 192,912 first-time, full-time, first-year students polled at 283 colleges and universities rated their academic abilities above average; 66.4% expect at least a B average in college.

Yet that expectation would seem to be an ambitious one for recent high school graduates, in light of the finding that only one out of four members of the Class of 2011 were ready for college, according to ACT admissions test scores. Student expectations of high grades often drive course enrollment—and combined with the growing reliance on student satisfaction surveys in evaluating faculty—create incentives for professors to issue higher grades.⁵¹

As such, over the past 15 years, the definition of “average” has changed. According to a large institutional study of grade inflation, the average undergraduate GPA at a public college or university in 1991–1992 was 2.85. By 2006–2007, that average jumped to 3.01. Meanwhile, as noted above, recent studies such as *Academically Adrift* show that “on average, gains in critical thinking, complex reasoning, and writing skills (i.e., general collegiate skills) are either exceedingly small or empirically non-existent for a large proportion of students.”⁵²

Is this a problem among System campuses? The State University System’s Accountability Report, which contains so many valuable statistics—from retention and graduation rates, to passage rates for professional licensure and certification exams—does not currently include data on grade distribution at System universities that might serve as a monitor for grade inflation within the System. However, the limited amount of grade distribution data that is publicly available from individual institution websites suggests that Florida’s public universities are not immune to the nationwide trend.

During the Fall 2007 semester, nearly half (45.9%) of all grades at the University of South Florida were “A” grades, a percentage that crept even higher in five years (48.7% in Fall 2012). The University of Central Florida provides more fine-grained data, which reveal how grade distributions vary by discipline. At the university’s School of Teaching, Learning and Leadership, 64.6% of grades issued in Fall 2011 were “A” or “A-”, compared to, e.g., 36.5% for the Anthropology department, 33.5% for the History department, or 24.5% for the Biology department. Overall, out of 74 departments at UCF, 41 issued a “B+” or higher for over half of their grades in Fall 2011. Meanwhile, 58.9% all grades issued at the University of Florida were “B+” or higher in Spring 2011—and 70% were “B” or higher. This data indicates that the State University System and each individual board of trustees would benefit from maintaining data on grade distributions as part of a comprehensive evaluation of academic quality.⁵³

An increase in average GPA to the point where nearly half of the student body received an evaluation of “excellent” for coursework might be acceptable if expectations of student academic performance rose concurrently. Yet the evidence is that classroom standards of academic rigor have not kept pace with grades over time. In recent years, Florida’s public universities have administered the *National Survey of Student Engagement* (NSSE), a student survey documenting a variety of data related to academic quality. The nationwide trends in this survey are disturbing, as the majority of students report spending 15 or fewer hours per week studying, and taking on coursework with minimal reading or writing requirements.

Florida’s colleges and universities are no different. Over 60% of the freshmen and seniors surveyed at Florida Gulf Coast University, for example, reported that they spend 15 or fewer hours per week preparing for class. Nearly six out of ten students at Florida Atlantic University had not written a single paper of 20 pages or more all school year. One out of five seniors at the University of North Florida had not completed a single homework assignment that took more than an hour to complete—almost half (49%) had completed fewer than three all year. Meanwhile, 31% of freshmen at UNF had never given a classroom presentation. These are indications of a potential weakness in academic rigor, a cause for governing board concern.⁵⁴

Assessing Learning Outcomes

Board of Governors Regulation 1.001, which describes the powers and duties of boards of trustees, delegates to institutional boards the responsibility over “minimum academic performance standards for the award of a degree.” Moreover, the System board requires that universities review the effectiveness of each of their academic programs every seven years, the current cycle ending in 2014.⁵⁵

The criteria for institutional review of academic programs are based on each program’s “Academic Learning Compact,” a document created by department faculty identifying “the expected core student learning outcomes for program graduates in the areas of (i) content/discipline knowledge and skills; (ii) communication skills; and (iii) critical thinking skills.” These compacts became requirements by a Board of Governors regulation promulgated in 2007, directing boards of trustees to implement at their institutions “a process for certifying that each baccalaureate graduate has completed a program with clearly articulated core student learning expectations” in certain key areas.⁵⁶

The department-specific nature of Board of Governors-mandated Academic Learning Compacts leaves the boards of trustees who rely upon them with no means by which to assess their general education program on an institution-wide basis. To compensate for this, some schools have elected to use one of the three nationally-normed assessments in wide use—the

Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA), ETS Proficiency Profile, or the Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP)—to measure academic progress in core collegiate skills. Instruments such as these can be used to show the value-added factor of a college education and to show attainment of skills relative to other institutions.⁵⁷

The chart on the following page shows which institutions have joined the Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA), developed by the Association of Public and Land-grant Universities (APLU) and the American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU), and which have plans to implement student learning outcomes testing.

Of the eight System campuses that are VSA members, only four have fully implemented student learning outcomes assessment and reported test results. The University of North Florida sets a commendable example: its publicly-posted results show that its students score “well above” what is expected in critical thinking skills and “above expected” in written communication skills. Half of the eight VSA members have not published results, or in some cases, even what test they use. Florida International University did not post results because “campus leaders/faculty believed the test results weren’t representative due to the limited (but statistically sound and/or publisher recommended) sample sizes.” And others—including the University of Florida—have not yet indicated plans to measure student learning outcomes on an institution-wide basis.⁵⁸

USE OF NATIONALLY-NORMED INSTRUMENTS OF STUDENT ASSESSMENT AT PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES IN FLORIDA

INSTITUTION	Member of VSA*?	Has or plans to have learning outcomes testing?	Data are publicly available?
Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University	Yes	Yes	Yes
Florida Atlantic University	No	N/A	N/A
Florida Gulf Coast University	Yes	Yes	Yes
Florida International University	Yes	Yes	No
Florida State University	Yes	Yes	No
New College of Florida	Yes	Yes	No
University of Central Florida	No	N/A	N/A
University of Florida	No	N/A	N/A
University of North Florida	Yes	Yes	Yes
University of South Florida – Sarasota-Manatee	No	N/A	N/A
University of South Florida	No	N/A	N/A
University of South Florida – Polytechnic	No	N/A	N/A
University of South Florida – St. Petersburg	Yes	Yes	Yes
University of West Florida	Yes	Yes	No

Source: College Portraits Website
 *Voluntary System of Accountability (VSA)

The Problem With Accreditation

It is a mistake to assume that accreditation can always serve as a proxy for academic quality and least of all for academic rigor. The body originally intended to ensure the soundness of the academic programs for federal funding purposes, the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS)—the accrediting agency for the region—has too often focused its attention in intrusive ways on non-academic matters of university governance. In December 2012, SACS placed Florida A&M University on one-year probation status for apparent “integrity” violations. These stemmed from misconduct by a former university auditor, despite the fact that the university had already started a comprehensive review of accounting practices over a year prior, and from the 2011 hazing death of a student, even as the school began the process of hiring new compliance staff and established new anti-hazing requirements for student organizations. Indeed, when Governor Scott publicly suggested that Florida A&M University suspend its then-current president following the hazing incident, SACS threatened the institution’s accreditation status out of perceived institutional interference by the state governor. And in 2013, SACS launched an investigation into the University of Florida’s governance practices, when the chair of the board of trustees arranged for Governor Scott to meet with a candidate being considered as the university’s next president.⁵⁹

Frustrated with the existing time-consuming focus on input and processes, at least one institution has considered an “alternative model for accreditation” or reform of SACS to make its accreditation more focused on results. It is fair to note that the Board of Governors already has, through its existing accountability metrics, developed a far more transparent and consumer-friendly system than the existing accreditation system.⁶⁰

9. What have boards done to control costs and increase efficiency?

In these difficult economic times when state governments face pressure to exercise strict fiscal prudence, Florida's public four-year universities are under challenging funding constraints. According to a 2012 report by the National Science Foundation, Florida ranks below the national average in appropriations of state tax funds for operating expenses of higher education as a percentage of gross domestic product, as well as in state funding for major public research universities per enrolled student. And according to the annual Grapevine survey, a joint project of the Center for the Study of Education Policy at Illinois State University and the State Higher Education Executive Officers (SHEEO), Florida ranks 39th in state support for higher education per capita.⁶¹

College and university trustees have two choices in these circumstances: compromise student access by raising tuition, or take an exacting look at the costs that comprise the institution's budget priorities. The preceding sections of this report showed that the affordability of higher education in Florida is already at risk, leaving governing boards with the daunting task of further managing costs without compromising academic quality or further jeopardizing student access. Like many institutions of higher education, the System's primary challenges include limiting unnecessary growth, maximizing use of existing resources, and learning how best to leverage emerging opportunities such as distance education.

Mission Creep

Article IX, Section 7 of the Florida Constitution vests the Board of Governors with the responsibility for "defining the distinctive mission of each constituent university." Indeed, the System's most recent Accountability Report describes the System as "a coordinated system of institutions, each having a distinct mission and each dedicated to meeting the needs of a diverse state and nation."

The State University System reflects the geographic expanse of Florida's population, with each of its four institutions with Carnegie classifications of "very high research activity" (University of Florida, University of South Florida, Florida State University, University of Central Florida) serving unique sections of the I-10 and I-75 corridors. Meanwhile, the System's two

“high research” institutions, Florida Atlantic University and Florida International University, serve as hubs to the Miami area.⁶²

Nonetheless, the danger is always present that institutional missions will develop conflicting roles, leading to unnecessary—and inefficient—competition for state resources. There are signs of this already, such as vague strategic focus: the University of Florida outlines on the institution’s website its focus on “teaching, research and service,” leaving unclear its distinctive mission within the Florida university system. Another sign is that of institution strategic plans that contemplate drawing from constituencies served by other System institutions: Florida Gulf Coast University seeks not only to serve students in southwest Florida, but to also “increasingly become a preferred choice for students from beyond the region,” while two of the University of Central Florida’s strategic goals are to offer “the best undergraduate education available in Florida” and to be “America’s leading partnership university.”⁶³

Recognizing the imperative of specifying appropriate missions, the governor’s Blue Ribbon Task Force had several recommendations, including:

Universities should align their annual and strategic plans with the Board of Governors’ strategic goals and report individual progress annually or more frequently through its normal reporting cadence. In return, the Board of Governors should remain committed to a system that allows the individual institutions to innovate, evolve and respond to their unique missions.⁶⁴

Recent events surely underscore the challenges any such effort to bring cohesion the Board of Governors’ best efforts will face. In 2011, the Board considered a request by the Lakeland campus of the University of South Florida to seek independence from the USF system, and permission to operate as an independent institution—a move supported by members of the state senate, but unanimously opposed by USF’s board of trustees. As part of an attempt at compromise, the Board of Governors voted 16-3 to grant USF-Lakeland’s petition, contingent on its meeting benchmarks for full-time enrollment and implementing key administrative functions. Yet the following year, the Florida legislature passed a bill immediately declaring USF-Lakeland independent and removing the conditions set by the board. USF-Lakeland is scheduled to become Florida Polytechnic University, the 12th institution in the State University System.⁶⁵

Program Prioritization and Productivity

The most evident implication of mission creep is the proliferation of academic programs, a major cost driver for university budgets. In *Prioritizing Academic Programs and Services*,

former University of Northern Colorado president Robert C. Dickeson describes the problem: “[F]or the most part, adding academic programs results in a *substantial diminution of resources for existing programs*,” and that the “*price for academic bloat for all is impoverishment of each*.” (Italics are in original.) Dickeson recommends that governing boards take the lead in the important job of academic prioritization, and, where appropriate, the closing of programs. The Blue Ribbon Task Force, citing advice from a former System chancellor, put it succinctly: “*An effective Board of Governors means having the will to say no.*”⁶⁶

The homogenous strategic plans of Florida’s four-year institutions are not the only reason for concern that mission creep could result in serious pressure on the cost of public higher education in the state. The state’s community college system, the Florida College System, has been expanding its scope into functions normally served by four-year colleges and universities. In 2001, the Florida legislature passed legislation allowing community colleges to develop bachelor’s degree programs in certain “high-demand” vocational areas. For the first seven years of the program (2003–2004 to 2010–2011), the number of baccalaureate degrees produced by the community colleges rose from 123 to 2,729. As of October 2012, the Florida College System offers 147 bachelor’s programs. This development has advantages and disadvantages. In some cases, the state colleges are indeed adding capacity in high-need areas. But there will inevitably be personnel and facilities costs for bachelor’s programs at the two-year institutions. And such growth may leave the four-year institutions with the task of serving the needs that would be more effectively met at two-year institutions.⁶⁷

Notwithstanding these challenges, governing boards in the State University System have been commendably exacting in their consideration of proposed new degree programs. Under System regulations, institutional boards of trustees are responsible for determining whether to approve a new degree program prior to implementation, with the exception of professional and research doctoral degree programs, for which Board of Governors approval is also required. Board policy sets forth particular criteria that boards of trustees must adopt in reviewing any proposed degree program, including ensuring that the program is consistent with university and System mission, does not unnecessarily duplicate existing programs within the System, and that the institution has sufficient resources to accommodate the program.

System policy also requires boards of trustees to adopt formal processes for identifying and evaluating candidates for program termination, and for accommodating students and faculty of programs scheduled for termination. Institutional trustees are charged with the responsibility and authority to terminate degree programs, with the exception of professional and doctoral-level programs, for which trustees have the responsibility to recommend termination to the Board of Governors.⁶⁸

According to the System's latest Accountability Report, in 2011-12, university boards approved only 12 new baccalaureate degree programs (while declining to approve three more), compared to terminating or suspending 27 programs. Examples of these include the University of Central Florida's decision to decline to approve a new bachelor's program in Women's Studies. Meanwhile, the University of South Florida and University of West Florida each discontinued at least a half-dozen education programs. The Florida State University board approved a request to terminate several degree programs upon a finding that they had "experienced low enrollments for quite some time, and some have been replaced with degree options that better serve students' needs."⁶⁹

At the System level, the Board of Governors has shown that it will not be a rubber stamp to proposed program additions. In November 2011, in response to a joint proposal from the University of Florida and Florida A&M University to expand access to the UF College of Dentistry, the System board's strategic planning committee, in light of the high cost per student, commendably directed the universities to clarify the budget numbers and to resubmit their proposal, as members of the Board of Governors Strategic Planning Committee expressed concern about the projected sources of the program's funds. No action has yet occurred.

Overall—including both baccalaureate and graduate programs—institutions approved the addition of only 21 new programs (rejecting six), while terminating or suspending 49 programs. The previous year, the System added 27 programs (rejecting 10) while eliminating 52. Florida's prudent and responsible governance puts it in the company of a handful of other boards: from 2007–2009 the Minnesota State Colleges & Universities System board closed 345 programs while approving only 191 new programs. The University of Hartford last fall completed a comprehensive review of over 250 academic and administrative programs, identifying 109 programs for restructuring or divestment—generating \$7 million of savings out of a \$150 million operating budget.

Board of Governors' policy requires boards of trustees to ensure that new degree programs are consistent with the institution's role within the System, and not duplicative of programs offered at other state institutions, but there are also arguments for greater Board of Governors oversight. In particular, the addition of new baccalaureate and master's level programs would benefit from its review. In addition, in light of the System's existing role in maintaining an academic program inventory for articulation purposes, the Board could consider amending Board of Governors Regulation 8.012 to allow the Board of Governors to bring duplicative courses to boards of trustees to review, and, if appropriate, terminate.

At the institutional level, fixed-length contracts for faculty rather than tenured appointments allow a far greater level of agility in responding to changing programmatic priorities. The board of trustees of the new Florida Polytechnic University wisely approved establishing a non-tenure model through which faculty will be offered fixed-term, multi-year, renewable contracts. This is a highly innovative approach to academic staffing and has great potential for helping the university to meet the needs of students and the state in the most cost-effective manner.⁷⁰

Building Utilization

Making full use of existing building resources is not only a matter of containing capital expenditures, but also one of maximizing enrollment capacity—and tuition revenue. Moreover, it comprises an issue of primary importance to students: course availability. Nearly half of the students surveyed in Florida Atlantic University’s College of Arts and Letters rated the availability of courses in their degree program as “fair” or “poor,” while 51% of students at Florida International University complained that their desired courses were not offered on a continued basis—the one area cited with the most dissatisfaction by those surveyed.⁷¹

With four-year graduation rates at 42%, and barely six out of ten students graduating without incurring excess credits, the System should consider all available course scheduling options to remove possible impediments to on-time graduation.

State law mandates that public postsecondary institutions use classrooms a minimum of 40 hours per week, with 60% student station occupation, a standard exceeded by System institutions because of their additional use of buildings during evening hours. Nonetheless, a 2009 report by the state Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability analyzed classroom utilization rates at all Florida public institutions of higher education and found that there is indeed still room for fuller utilization of physical facilities. The report stated, “[t]he highest utilization rate for state universities (70.3%) occurred between Monday and Thursday from 9 AM to 1 PM” and that the universities and community college system “both . . . continue to underutilize classrooms on Fridays and in the evenings.”⁷² (See charts on pages 46 and 47).

The report noted that the Board of Governors’ capital improvement guidelines for 2010-11 required institutions to meet board standards for classroom utilization prior to seeking funding to build additional classrooms, and suggested that campuses meet these standards “through expanded evening and weekend programs, more intense use of existing facilities during the summer, or scheduling more classes during the early morning or late afternoon.” The following year, the Board of Governors and the Florida State Board of Education jointly adopted the findings of a *Florida Higher Education Classroom Utilization Study*, with recommendations

including developing system-uniform utilization standards, and requiring students to take a minimum number of off-peak, night or weekend, and online courses prior to graduation.⁷³

In a unique approach to make full use of existing facilities, the University of Florida became one of the first universities to offer enrollment into a “spring and summer cohort,” in which students may participate in on-campus activities, take online courses, or study abroad in the fall, but may only live on campus and take classes on campus during the spring and summer semesters. The program, which is in its opening year, will ultimately expand enrollment by 2,000 students per year, while increasing tuition revenue, without requiring the construction of additional facilities.⁷⁴

Despite these improvements, as the second chart on page 47 shows, more recent data from the University of South Florida suggest that building use on Fridays continues to be sparse: room use at 8:00 AM on Friday is only 68% of the average from Monday-Thursday. Likewise, Friday afternoons see a precipitous drop-off, with 2:00 PM use at 28% the Monday-Thursday average, and 4:00 PM use at 10% the average. Commendably, the school uses its rooms effectively during weekday evenings, with Monday-Thursday use between 6:00 PM and 8:00 PM similar to that during peak hours.⁷⁵

Efficient room scheduling can in the short-term relieve the need for classroom capacity without incurring costly expenditures in infrastructure. Yet even more potential lies with what Clayton Christensen and Henry Eyring have characterized as “disruptive innovation,” including the scalability of online education to reach more students. Indeed, public university systems such as the Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education have already begun to implement such measures as academic consortia in order to broaden student access to courses while mitigating costs.⁷⁶

Florida’s four-year colleges and universities have individually taken commendable initial steps toward exploring these possibilities; in Fall 2011, the System offered 127 baccalaureate degree programs primarily through distance education, along with an additional 188 master’s degree and doctorate programs. In 2011–2012, over half of all students (52%) in the System took at least one distance learning course, compared to only 31% of all students nationwide in 2010–2011.

In April 2013, the state governor signed into law a bill paving the way for the University of Florida to “develop an institute of fully online baccalaureate programs at a lower cost . . . than that of traditional universities,” while System institutions “work together to better coordinate all the system’s existing offerings in the most efficient way.” The bill incorporates recommendations submitted by the Board of Governors after it examined several options for expanding online education, as proposed in a study commissioned by the board’s strategic planning committee.⁷⁷

**CLASSROOM UTILIZATION AT PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES
IN FLORIDA — SPRING 2008**

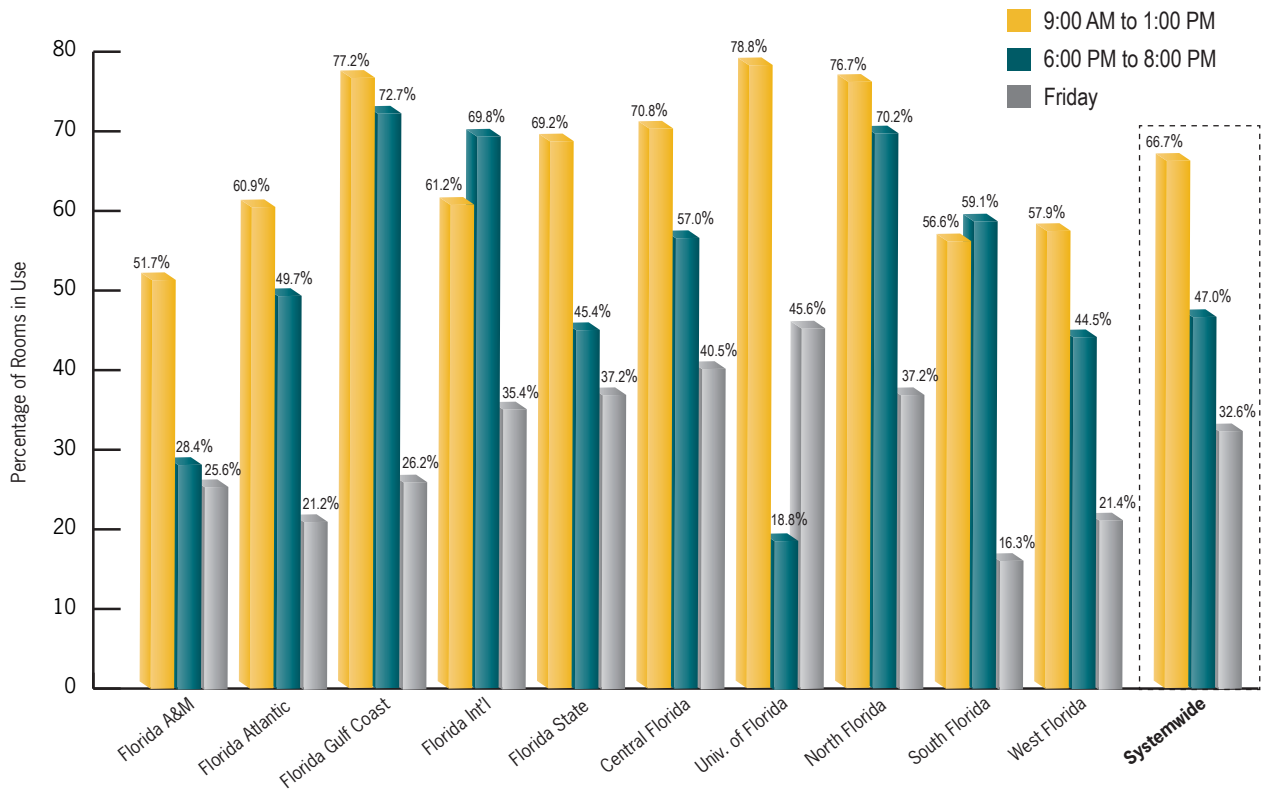
INSTITUTION	Overall Utilization*	9:00 AM to 1:00 PM	6:00 PM to 8:00 PM	Friday	Saturday
Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University	40.3%	51.7%	28.4%	25.6%	2.6%
Florida Atlantic University	52.2	60.9	49.7	21.2	22.4
Florida Gulf Coast University	70.5	77.2	72.7	26.2	12.5
Florida International University	57.7	61.2	69.8	35.4	11.7
Florida State University	59.9	69.2	45.4	37.2	0.7
New College of Florida	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
University of Central Florida	61.2	70.8	57.0	40.5	1.9
University of Florida	57.8	78.8	18.8	45.6	0.0
University of North Florida	70.4	76.7	70.2	37.2	6.0
University of South Florida	49.2	56.6	59.1	16.3	4.0
University of West Florida	48.5	57.9	44.5	21.4	8.0
State University System of Florida	56.1	66.7	47.0	32.6	5.3

Source: Office of Program Policy Analysis & Government Accountability (OPPAGA)

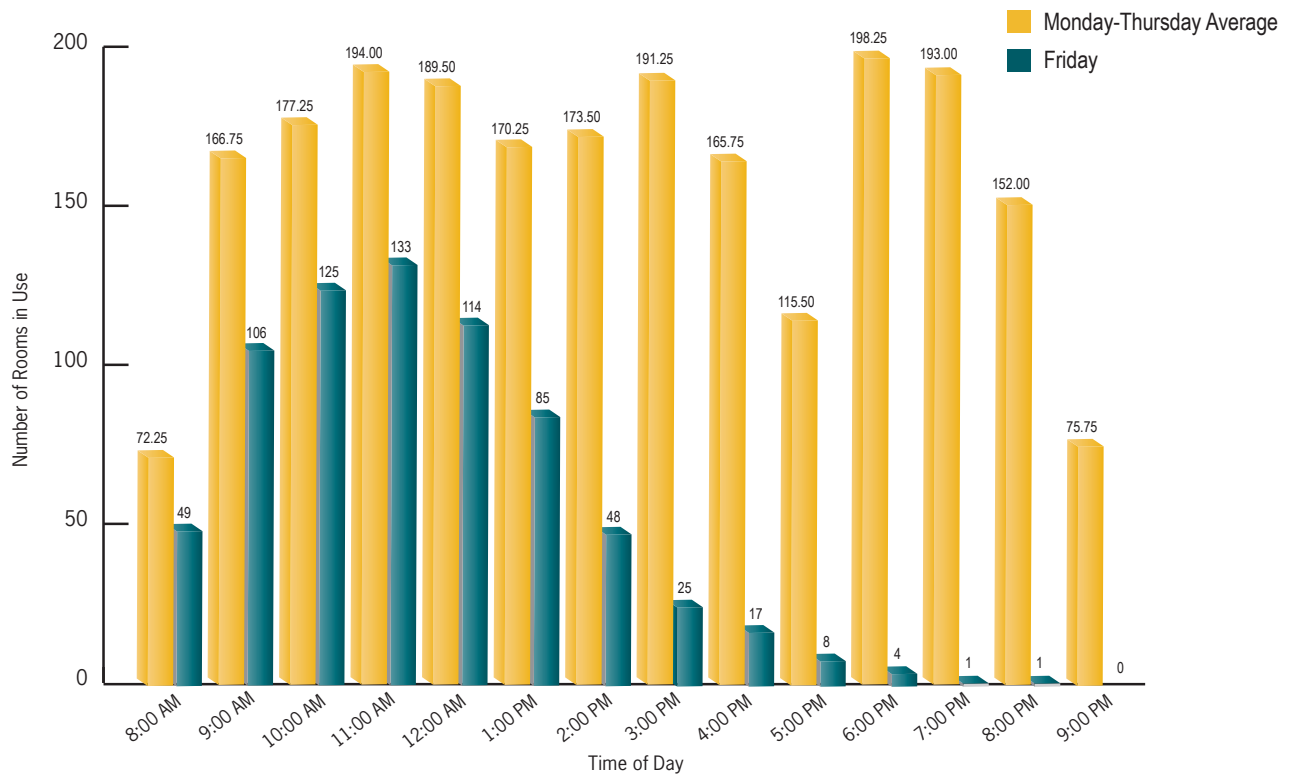
Note: New College of Florida was not included in the OPPAGA study. Data for the University of Central Florida are for the main campus only.

* Overall utilization is for 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM, Monday through Friday.

CLASSROOM UTILIZATION AT PUBLIC UNIVERSITIES — SPRING 2008



CLASSROOM UTILIZATION AT UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH FLORIDA — FALL 2012



Teaching Loads

To take advantage of this excess capacity, there must be faculty available to teach during those hours. Florida law requires that “[e]ach full-time equivalent teaching faculty member at a university who is paid wholly from state funds shall teach a minimum of 12 classroom contact hours per week at such university.” However, there are many exceptions to this rule, including one allowing a “departmental chair or other appropriate university administrator” to reduce the 12 hour minimum by assigning faculty with other “professional responsibilities and duties in furtherance of the mission of the university.” Moreover, the statute provides: “In determining the appropriate hourly weighting of assigned duties other than classroom contact hours, the universities shall develop and apply a formula designed to equate the time required for non-classroom duties with classroom contact hours.”

In practical terms, the expectation of 12 hours—or four three-credit courses—is in many instances not a factor for the determination of teaching loads. For example, Florida State University’s philosophy department prescribes a teaching load of four courses per year for ranked faculty actively engaged in research and service. Furthermore, the department chair “may alter this normal assignment in recognition of special circumstances.” The chair determines teaching loads of non-ranked faculty on a case-by-case basis. Guidelines for FIU’s Department of Music reveal that the university “recommends that in their first three years, Assistant Professors be given no more than six credits per semester (a 2/2 load) and that service in the first three years be kept to a minimum,” suggesting an institution policy that strongly incentivizes research over teaching.⁷⁸

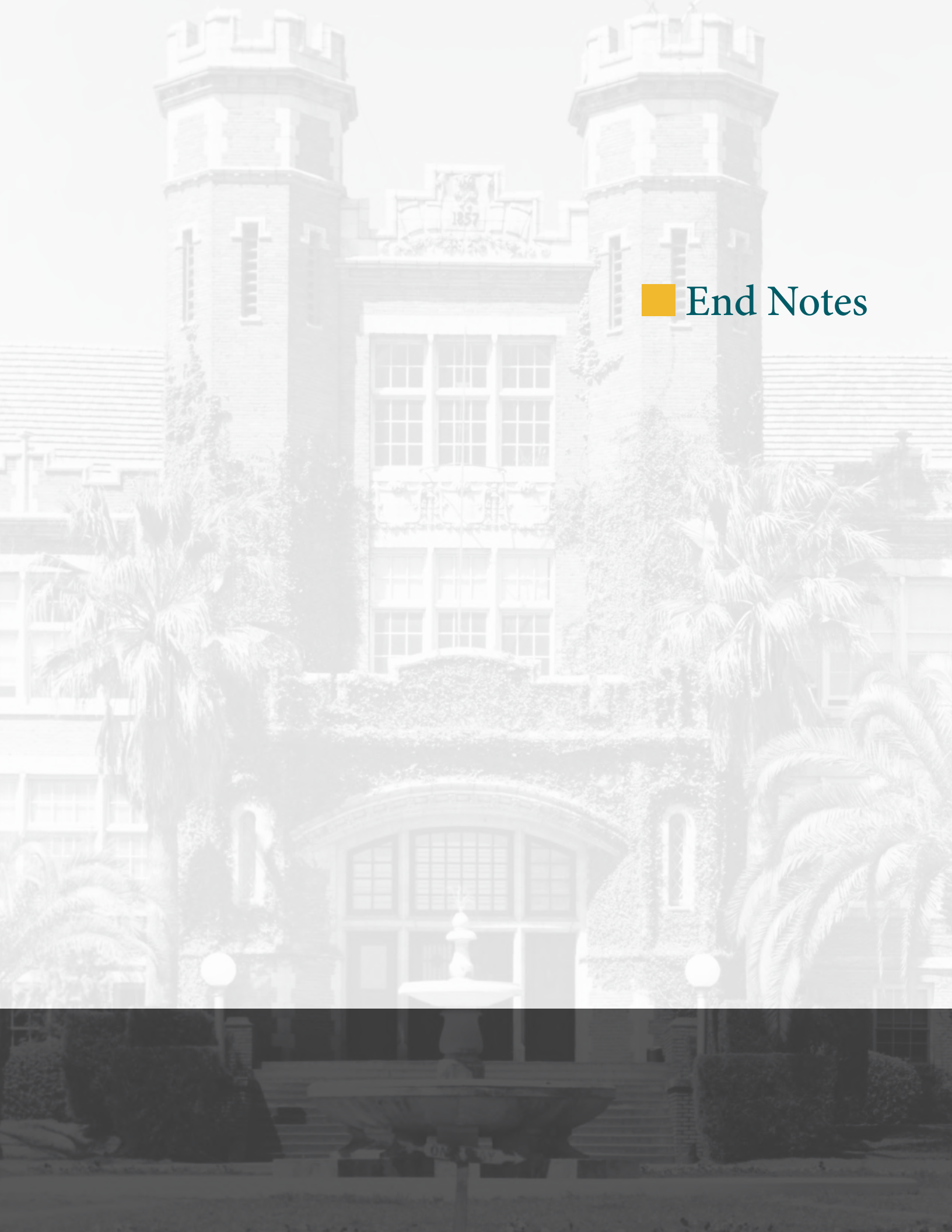
There is no overarching System policy that requires departments to establish a baseline teaching load for tenured and tenure-track faculty—indeed, it appears that there are guidelines at institutions that impose a *maximum* number of hours that some faculty may teach. Moreover, there is no indication in recent Board of Governors meeting minutes that the Board actively monitors data on faculty teaching loads. As a result, a significant percentage of the supply of institutions’ most prized asset—the instructional value of its most esteemed senior faculty, may be limited at the discretion of department chairs. It would be highly advantageous if any discussion by the Board of Governors or institutional boards of trustees regarding increasing student access also had consideration of policies on faculty teaching loads, supported by institutional data on this important metric.

10. What should governing boards do now?

Florida has demonstrated remarkable boldness in addressing issues of cost-effectiveness and has set a high standard for transparency and accountability. Given the challenges outlined in the report that Florida higher education still faces, trustees and members of governing boards must use their authority to address urgent issues of academic quality, academic freedom, and institutional priorities.

1. **Require coursework in the history and institutions of America.** A requirement for a foundational course in U.S. history and/or U.S. government is an emerging best practice, already adopted in Texas and Georgia. It goes a long way toward ensuring that graduates are ready for engaged, effective citizenship. Florida has a solid basis of general education requirements that can be revised and strengthened at the Board of Governors level to include such a requirement.
2. **Strengthen the core curriculum.** Florida public universities should also work toward implementing requirements for intermediate foreign language proficiency and for basic economics, both of which are necessities in a dynamic marketplace and increasingly global community.
3. **Strengthen general education at New College of Florida.** It does gifted students no service to grant them alternatives to the clear general education requirements that the Board of Governors and Florida legislation have established for state universities.
4. **Build upon the excellent clarity and effective presentation of the Accountability Report.** It will be strengthened by adding key metrics for grade distribution, classroom and laboratory utilization by hour and by day of the week, average number of classes taught per term by tenured and tenure-track faculty, and job placement rates (as already envisioned by the System).

5. **Involve trustees more fully in presidential selection and evaluation.** Involvement of the Board of Governors at the beginning of presidential searches will strengthen the selection process.
6. **Protect free speech on campus.** It is a national best practice to place free speech front and center in official policies. Statements of the university's commitment to free speech and intellectual diversity should appear in college catalogs and in course syllabi; convocation and freshman orientation ceremonies should articulate these principles.
7. **Eliminate speech codes that violate constitutionally-protected free expression.** It is urgently important, as both a matter of principle and to protect the campus from costly litigation, that boards of trustees and the Board of Governors scrutinize carefully campus speech codes to be certain that they do not violate the constitutionally-guaranteed rights of the university community. The Board of Governors should develop policies that enhance and protect intellectual diversity and academic freedom on all System campuses.
8. **Focus on the essential.** The Board of Governors should amend its policy on program termination and give itself the ability to recommend classes for campus boards of trustees to review for possible termination.
9. **Assess core collegiate skills and value-added.** Robust data from nationally-normed assessments of student learning gains in core collegiate skills, such as the Collegiate Learning Assessment (CLA), the ETS Proficiency Profile, and the ACT Collegiate Assessment of Academic Proficiency (CAAP) are essential to supplement Academic Learning Compacts. Portfolio-based systems are not a substitute for these assessment instruments. The Board of Governors can use performance based funding to encourage full use of these assessments and to reward institutions that meet appropriate benchmarks for student learning gains.
10. **Hold the line on tuition.** Florida has a favorable position as a national leader in low tuition and fees, and this advantage for its citizens deserves to be maintained. University boards of trustees should continue to restrain the growth in tuition and fees in order to provide good value for college students.
11. **Take the lead in reforming college accreditation.** The Board of Governors has the opportunity to assert national leadership by taking up a pilot program for an alternative, state-based system of college accreditation.



■ End Notes

End Notes

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7. *2011-2012 Annual Accountability Report*, 23, 36, 46; University of Central Florida Office of Institutional Research, “The Online Fact Book AY 2011–2012,” accessed April 18, 2013 <<http://www.iroffice.ucf.edu/factbooks/2011-2012/index.html>>; USF Info Center, “Grade Distribution Trends,” accessed April 18, 2013 <http://usfweb3.usf.edu/infocenter/?silverheader=26&report_category=STU&report_type=GGDIT>; University of Florida Office of Institutional Planning and Research, “University of Florida Fact Book - Grade Distribution,” accessed April 23, 2013 <http://www.ir.ufl.edu/oirapps/factbooktest/grade_info/grades_default.aspx>; Florida Department of Education, “Florida Higher Education Classroom Utilization Study,” December 19, 2011 <http://www.fldoe.org/board/meetings/2011_12_19/study.pdf>; USF Info Center, “Room Utilization Trends,” accessed April 23, 2013 <http://usfweb3.usf.edu/infocenter/?silverheader=27&report_category=STU&report_type=GUTIL>.
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The policy in question at North Florida reads:

For the purposes of this regulation, discrimination is defined as the intentional or unintentional treatment of any member of the university community, or any unfair

treatment based solely upon genetic information, race, color, religion, age, sex, disability, gender identity/expression, sexual orientation, marital status, national origin or veteran status.

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■ Appendices

Appendix A

CRITERIA FOR CORE COURSES

Distribution requirements on most campuses today permit students to pick from a wide range of courses that often are overly-specialized or even outside the stated field altogether. Accordingly, to determine whether institutions have a solid core curriculum, ACTA defines success in each of the seven subject areas as follows:

Composition

An introductory college writing class focusing on grammar, clarity, argument, and appropriate expository style. Remedial courses and SAT/ACT scores may not be used to satisfy a composition requirement. University-administered exams or portfolios are acceptable only when they are used to determine exceptional pre-college preparation for students. Writing-intensive courses, “writing across the curriculum” seminars, and writing for a discipline are not acceptable *unless* there is an indication of clear provisions for multiple writing assignments, instructor feedback, revision and resubmission of student writing, and explicit language concerning the mechanics of formal writing, including such elements as grammar, sentence structure, coherence, and documentation.

Literature

A comprehensive literature survey or a selection of courses of which a clear majority are surveys and the remainder are literary in nature, although single-author or theme-based in structure. Freshman seminars, humanities sequences, or other specialized courses that include a substantial literature survey component count.

Foreign Language

Competency at the intermediate level, defined as at least three semesters of college-level study in any foreign language. No distinction is made between B.A. and B.S. degrees, or individual majors within these degrees, when applying the Foreign Language criteria.

U.S. Government or History

A survey course in either U.S. government or history with enough chronological and topical breadth to expose students to the sweep of American history and institutions. Narrow, niche courses do not count for the requirement, nor do courses that only focus on a limited chrono-

logical period or a specific state or region. State- or university-administered, and/or state-mandated, exams are accepted for credit on a case-by-case basis dependent upon the rigor required.

Economics

A course covering basic economic principles, preferably an introductory micro- or macroeconomics course taught by faculty from the economics or business department.

Mathematics

A college-level course in mathematics. Specific topics may vary, but must involve study beyond the level of intermediate algebra and cover topics beyond those typical of a college-preparatory high school curriculum. Remedial courses or SAT/ACT scores may not be used as substitutes. Courses in formal or symbolic logic, computer science with programming, and linguistics involving formal analysis count.

Natural or Physical Science

A course in astronomy, biology, chemistry, geology, physical geography, physics, or environmental science, preferably with a laboratory component. Overly narrow courses, courses with weak scientific content, and courses taught by faculty outside of the science departments do not count. Psychology courses count if they are focused on the biological, chemical, or neuroscientific aspects of the field.

Half-Credit

If a requirement exists from which students choose between otherwise qualifying courses within two What Will They Learn™ subject areas (e.g., math or science; history or economics, etc.), one-half credit is given for both subjects.

Appendix B

SCHOOL EVALUATION NOTES FOR CORE COURSES

Below we explain, as applicable, why we did not count as core subjects certain courses that might appear, at first glance, to meet core requirements. The colleges are listed alphabetically.

Florida Atlantic University

No credit given for Literature because the “Foundations of Creative Expression” requirement may be fulfilled with non-literature courses. No credit given for Foreign Language because students may fulfill the requirement with elementary-level study. No credit given for U.S. Government or History because survey courses in American government or history are options, but not required, to fulfill the “Foundations of Society and Human Behavior” and “Foundations in Global Citizenship” requirements. No credit given for Economics because an economics course is an option, but not required, to fulfill the “Foundations of Society and Human Behavior” requirement.

Florida Gulf Coast University

No credit given for Foreign Language because students may fulfill the requirement with elementary-level study.

Florida International University

No credit given for Foreign Language because students may fulfill the requirement with elementary-level study. No credit given for Mathematics because the “Quantitative Reasoning” requirement may be satisfied by courses with little college-level content.

New College of Florida

No credit given for Composition because students may test out of the “English Language Proficiency” requirement through SAT or ACT scores. No credit given for Mathematics because students may test out of the “Mathematics Proficiency” requirement through SAT or ACT scores. No credit given for Natural or Physical Science because the “Natural Sciences” requirement may be satisfied by courses with little science content.

University of Central Florida

No credit given for Foreign Language because the requirement may be fulfilled with elementary-level study and applies only to select degree programs. One-half credit given for U.S.

Government or History and Economics because both subject areas are folded into the “Social Foundation” requirement, thus students may choose between one or the other.

University of Florida

No credit given for Foreign Language because students may fulfill the requirement with elementary-level study.

University of North Florida

No credit given for Foreign Language because students may fulfill the requirement with elementary-level study. No credit given for U.S. Government or History because a survey course in American government or history is an option, but not required, to fulfill the “Social Sciences” requirement.

University of South Florida

No credit given for Foreign Language because students may fulfill the requirement with elementary-level study. No credit given for Natural or Physical Science because the “Natural Sciences” requirement may be satisfied by courses with little science content.

University of West Florida

No credit given for Foreign Language because students may fulfill the requirement with elementary-level study. No credit given for U.S. Government or History because a survey course in American government or history is an option, but not required, to fulfill the “Social Sciences: Historical Perspectives” requirement.



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