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The Honorable Linda McMahon
Secretary of Education
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20202

Dear Secretary McMahon:

The leadership of Florida's higher education system, including our Governor, Ron DeSantis, and each of the signatories to this response, received your letter of August 3, 2026, with great enthusiasm and eagerness to respond. Florida has been ranked the number one state for higher education by *U.S. News & World Report* since the inception of the rankings in 2017. Florida achieved these rankings while charging the lowest resident undergraduate tuition in the nation. We remain number one because of our commitment to affordability, accountability, and high-quality postsecondary options. Florida has been marching forward over several years with the renewal and revitalization of higher education, systematically reclaiming its purpose and delivering on its promise. We are continually working to create the conditions in which all Floridians have access to the highest-quality choices for their postsecondary education needs and to ensure that our employers and our economy are equal beneficiaries.

Florida welcomes your call to action on the future of American higher education. Florida is not beginning this work in response to your letter. For more than a decade, our state has deliberately built a public university and college system around academic excellence, affordability, accountability, free inquiry, merit, and economic relevance.

In providing this response to your excellent letter, Florida's higher education system seeks to document forthrightly the progress we have made as a state and within our two systems, distinct in mission, but highly coordinated in approach, and to affirm our

commitment to vigilance in upholding academic rigor, viewpoint diversity, institutional neutrality, open inquiry, education for democratic citizenship, forward-looking use of technology and responsible stewardship of public funds, while continuously improving our delivery on the promise of higher education to the American people and to Floridians, especially.

Florida has demonstrated that access and excellence, rigor and affordability, and intellectual openness and accountability can reinforce one another. For background, the State University System of Florida (SUSFL) is a constitutional body led by the 17-member Board of Governors (BOG) and comprises 12 universities that educate over 430,000 students, making it the second-largest public university system in the nation. The 12 universities, while overseen by the BOG, are administered by local Boards of Trustees. The Florida College System (FCS or “state colleges”) is a constitutional body consisting of 28 public state colleges, supervised by the State Board of Education (SBOE) with each college governed by a local Board of Trustees in accordance with Florida laws and SBOE rules, serving over 700,000 students.

As we address each of your requests, it is important to note that Florida Statutes, along with BOG regulations and SBOE rules, provide clear and effective accountability and oversight of our state universities and colleges.

The public universities of the state of Florida are held accountable by the BOG. Under the university president’s signature, audited data relevant to the performance metrics specified by the BOG are submitted annually. The SUSFL annually conducts a valid, anonymous poll of all state universities, their faculty, students, and staff, providing them with the opportunity to evaluate the university’s performance against these policies and regulations.

The SBOE and the Commissioner of Education have specific authority under Section 1008.32, Florida Statutes, to enforce, through various mechanisms, all education laws and rules applicable to FCS institutions. Compliance with state statutes is verified through regular and random audits by the State of Florida’s Office of the Auditor General. Compliance with BOG regulations is verified through review of the BOG Office of Inspector General, as is the FCS compliance through the Florida Department of Education’s (FLDOE) Office of Inspector General.

Whether through transparent reporting or a structure of awards and consequences specific to the item addressed, accountability is woven throughout each of the areas addressed in our response. Our approach is straightforward: establish high expectations, measure results transparently, hold institutions accountable, and continuously improve.

The record below describes what Florida has enacted and achieved, while clearly identifying the additional steps now under consideration.

1. Transparency and Merit in Admissions

1.1 How will your institution ensure that admissions criteria are transparent and wholly described to prospective applicants? And how will your institution ensure admissions decisions are based on merit, achievement, and your university's educational purpose?

Florida is committed to transparent, mission-driven, merit-based admissions criteria that treat students equally. The whole of Florida's education system is bound by, and each participating entity vigorously upholds, federal and state law prohibiting discrimination. Merit and achievement guide the process. The success of our institutions demonstrates that merit and access can coexist: a university can serve students on an extraordinary scale while continuing to improve academic performance and outcomes. The FCS institutions were established by law as open-access institutions, serving all who can benefit without regard to age, race, sex, creed, or economic or ethnic background. Each FCS institution is reviewed on a cyclical basis by FLDOE staff for its compliance with all federal nondiscrimination laws and regulations.

Each state college and university employs staff dedicated to ensuring nondiscrimination in student recruiting, admissions, and treatment throughout their institutional experience. In accordance with current federal and Florida law, no factor such as sex, ethnicity, race, nationality, political views, sexual orientation, gender identity, religious associations, or proxies for any of those factors is considered, explicitly or implicitly, in any decision related to undergraduate or graduate student admissions or financial support.

The SUSFL university admissions decisions are based upon and evaluated against objective criteria published on each university's website and available to all prospective applicants and members of the public. In terms of transparency, BOG Regulation 6.001 requires universities to post all admission criteria and requirements for all programs, including additional criteria or prerequisites beyond admission to the university, on their website and in the university catalog.

Florida universities require standardized admission tests. The BOG Regulation 6.002(1)(e) requires all first-time-in-college SUSFL undergraduate applicants to take a widely used standardized test (SAT, ACT, or CLT) or program-specific measures for specialized programs, which may include applicant interviews. In keeping with Florida's consistent practice of allowing multiple avenues for demonstrating high standards, the

Florida Legislature added the Classic Learning Test (CLT) as an option for our nation-leading Bright Futures merit-based scholarship program several years ago. The BOG added this assessment in regulation as an option for meeting university admissions requirements, and the SBOE likewise added the CLT in rule as an option for college course placement testing for FCS students.

Florida's merit-based, nondiscriminatory admissions process also allows for consideration of other factors, such as:

- Creativity, talent, and character.
- Past actions of any applicant when such actions have been found to disrupt or interfere with the orderly conduct, processes, functions, or programs of any other university, college, or community college.

Our public universities report anonymized data for admitted and rejected students, including GPA, standardized test scores, and other program-specific measures of accomplishments by sex. This practice helps promote integrity in the process, ensuring the principles of equality and merit in admissions decisions are maintained.

2. Free Speech and Open Inquiry

2.1 How will your institution protect the free exchange of ideas, wide-ranging debate, and open-minded campus discourse?

Florida is committed to promoting free speech and the marketplace of ideas, and creating open and honest debate while ensuring campuses are centers of free thought and civil discourse. Truth-seeking is a core function of higher education. Fulfilling this mission requires maintaining a vibrant marketplace of ideas where different views can be explored, debated, and challenged. Florida fosters a vibrant marketplace of ideas with a broad spectrum of ideological viewpoints, preventing dominance of any single ideology, and prohibits the punishment of opposing viewpoints. The SUSFL and FCS accomplish this objective through multiple efforts.

As an initial act, on April 19, 2019, the SUSFL and the FCS adopted the Statement of Free Expression. Each SUSFL institution President and the FCS Council of Presidents signed it. The Statement reads:

“A fundamental purpose of an institution of higher education is to provide a learning environment where divergent ideas, opinions, and philosophies,

new and old, can be rigorously debated and critically evaluated. Through this process, often referred to as the marketplace of ideas, individuals are free to express any ideas and opinions they wish, even if others may disagree with them or find those ideas and opinions to be offensive or otherwise antithetical to their own worldview. The very process of debating divergent ideas and challenging others' opinions develops the intellectual skills necessary to respectfully disagree through civil discourse. Development of such skills leads to personal and scholarly growth and is an essential component of each of our institutions' academic and research missions. Individuals wishing to express ideas with which others may disagree must be free to do so without fear of being bullied, threatened, or silenced."

Shortly after this leading action, legislation was passed to ensure free expression on campus and required institutions to take specific steps in their policies and practices to uphold free expression while ensuring that the education process for all students was not disrupted.

In January of 2021, the BOG established the Board's Civil Discourse Initiative. The BOG identified best practices across the SUSFL and the nation and committed to advocacy for Civil Discourse. Each university has crafted and implemented a plan for civil discourse. During BOG confirmation hearings for new Presidents, each nominee is asked whether he or she has read the Civil Discourse plan and whether they will support it.

The SUSFL resists ideological takeover of any unit of the university. The SUSFL rejects ideological indoctrination in favor of open discourse and effectively monitors, via the students, the vitality of this discourse within every field, down to the teaching unit. This monitoring occurs organically because, under Section 1004.097(3)(g), Florida Statutes, FCS and SUSFL students are permitted to record classroom lectures without also requiring the professor's permission. We have found, in the setting of this radical transparency, no significant infringement of open discourse due to ideological imbalance or indoctrination.

The SUSFL is confident that our campuses are a marketplace of ideas. This confidence is derived from Section 1001.93, Florida Statutes, which states, "The Florida Legislature finds that the advancement of knowledge is the fundamental purpose of the State University System and that such advancement is facilitated by the fearless sifting and winnowing of a wide diversity of views and that the open discussion and debate of contested public policy issues from diverse perspectives provides essential preparation for mature citizenship and an informed exercise of the right to vote."

Section 1001.93, Florida Statutes, requires each state university within the SUSFL to maintain an Office of Public Policy Events, which organizes, publicizes, and stages debates or group forums. These events are required to address, from multiple, divergent, and opposing perspectives, an extensive range of public policy issues widely discussed and debated in society at large. The SUSFL institutions must sponsor no less than four events each academic year, and the debates and group forums must include speakers who represent widely held views on opposing sides of the most widely discussed public policy issues of the day and who hold a wide diversity of perspectives from within and outside of the state university community.

In January of 2023, the FCS presidents created and read at the SBOE meeting a joint statement addressing intellectual and academic freedom, freedom of expression, viewpoint diversity, and the pursuit of truth in teaching and learning. The statement concluded, in part:

“The FCS presidents reaffirm our commitment to nondiscrimination in hiring, onboarding and professional development, merit, reason, fairness, civil debate, cultivating intellectual autonomy and equality, and evaluating our successes on the achievements of all students. Further, we renew our commitment to the values that are foundational to our mission and, moreover, to maintaining our country’s common good, for which we as public institutions of higher education share the responsibility.”

More recently, on Presidents Day in 2026, to honor America’s 250th anniversary, the FLDOE and the FCS instituted the inaugural FCS Sunshine State Debate. Using the Reagan Presidential style debate, which allows individual students from all institutions to compete, the FCS held rounds of debates on the topic, “Resolved: Freedom of speech should be limited when it threatens the functioning of a representative government.” Numerous FCS professors participated as coaches and the finals of the debate were held in the Senate Chamber of Florida’s Historic Capitol, judged by Florida education leaders. The tremendous response to this first annual debate, which was built on the secondary school-level Florida Civics and Debate Initiative, shows that Florida is ensuring that students practice what they are learning in civics and in civil debate throughout their education.

Florida state colleges and universities have significantly revised and renewed their general education course offerings. Florida’s commitment to teaching foundational American principles in a curriculum free of identity politics and discrimination is nowhere more evident than in its complete overhaul of general education in our higher education institutions. In 2023, Senate Bill 266 required a complete review and revision of Florida’s

general education courses, which form the foundation of all associate and baccalaureate degrees in our public institutions of higher education. This comprehensive review was led by the FLDOE's Office of K-20 Articulation and included faculty committees comprised of SUSFL and FCS faculty in the five disciplines of social science, natural science, communications, humanities and mathematics. Sections 1007.25 and 1007.55, Florida Statutes, set forth standards for each discipline area and specify that general education core courses may not distort significant historical events or include a curriculum that teaches identity politics, promotes discrimination, or is based on theories that systemic racism, sexism, oppression, and privilege are inherent in the institutions of the United States and were created to maintain social, political, and economic inequities. Courses, whenever applicable, must also provide instruction on the historical background and philosophical foundation of Western Civilization and this nation's historical documents.

The state's general education core courses were revised by the faculty committees based on these and other standards in the law and were adopted by both the SBOE and the BOG. Each state college and university then completed a comprehensive review of all its general education course options using these principles and standards, significantly refocusing the courses offered and their content, which were reviewed and ultimately approved by the two respective boards. In Florida, each institution's Board of Trustees now annually reviews and approves its general education courses, as do the SBOE and the BOG for each of their respective institutions, providing enormous benefits to students receiving this foundational American education and seamless institutional transfer.

Florida universities and colleges annually survey our students and faculty on intellectual freedom and viewpoint diversity. The SUSFL and the FCS perform a rigorous, good-faith empirical assessment of a broad spectrum of viewpoints among faculty. We are confident that our SUSFL and FCS students are provided with an intellectually open campus environment. This confidence derives from Sections 1001.706(13)(b) and 1001.03(19), Florida Statutes, which require an annual assessment of the intellectual freedom and viewpoint diversity at each institution. The statutes require the BOG and SBOE, respectively, to "create an objective, nonpartisan, and statistically valid survey to be used by each state university [and FCS institution] which considers the extent to which competing ideas and perspectives are presented and members of the university [and college] community, including students, faculty, and staff, feel free to express their beliefs and viewpoints on campus and in the classroom."

- When asked, "My college or university campus provides an environment for free expression of ideas, opinions, and beliefs," 81% of students agreed.

- When asked, “Students at my college or university are encouraged to consider a wide variety of viewpoints and perspectives,” 79% of students agreed.

All state universities and state colleges are required to conduct this survey annually, and the results must be compiled and published by the BOG for the SUSFL and the SBOE for the FCS. All of these efforts work together to enable the SUSFL to offer a marketplace of ideas, and all SUSFL and FCS institutions to promote intellectual freedom and viewpoint diversity on our campuses and in our classrooms.

2. Free Speech and Open Inquiry

2.2 How will you guarantee that unruly and violent protestors do not harass students or disrupt classes, research, public lectures, and campus operations?

Florida law addresses disruptions, violence, intimidation, or obstruction of campus access while protecting campus speech. For academic freedom to flourish, institutions and their employees bear responsibility for providing a safe and respectful learning environment for all students. Florida’s universities and colleges have policies protecting academic freedom, while state laws prevent discriminatory, threatening, or harassing behaviors. In Florida universities, academic freedom is balanced against explicit prohibitions on threatening and harassing behavior. State and institutional regulations support robust intellectual exchange but draw the line when speech becomes a genuine threat, discrimination, or so disruptive that it impedes the educational environment. Our universities and colleges impartially and vigorously enforce all rights regarding free speech and expression. Section 1004.097, Florida Statutes, prohibits a state university or college from shielding students, faculty, or staff from expressive activities, and prohibits material disruption of previously scheduled or reserved activities on campus occurring at the same time.

Florida requires codes of conduct and prohibits disruptive activities. Florida pairs its protection of lawful expression with an equally clear obligation to maintain safe, functioning campuses. State law and university and college codes of conduct prohibit violence, threats, harassment, and conduct that materially disrupts classes, research, public events, or university operations. Our institutions enforce these rules impartially and with due process. Robust disagreement is protected; conduct that prevents others from teaching, learning, researching, or speaking is not.

Section 1001.706(3)(h), Florida Statutes, and BOG Regulation 6.0105 require each university to adopt by regulation codes of conduct and appropriate penalties for violations

of university and BOG regulations, county and municipal ordinances, and the laws of Florida and the United States.

Further, Section 1006.60(6), Florida Statutes, requires each state university and college to adopt rules or regulations for the lawful discipline of any student who intentionally acts to impair, interfere with, or obstruct the orderly conduct, processes, and functions of the institution. As applicable by law, these rules or regulations may apply to acts conducted on or off campus when relevant to such orderly conduct, processes, and functions.

Upon the conclusion of due process, after it has been determined that a student of a state institution of higher learning has participated in disruptive activities, such a student may be immediately expelled from the institution for a minimum of two years, as authorized in Section 1006.61(2), Florida Statutes.

With regard to university and college faculty and staff, Section 1012.80(1), Florida Statutes, provides that any person who accepts the privilege extended by the laws of Florida of employment at any state university or college shall, by working at such institution, be deemed to have given his or her consent to the policies of that institution, the policies of the BOG or SBOE, respectively, and the laws of this state.

Section 1006.61(1), Florida Statutes, provides a similar provision as to students in Florida law: "Any person who accepts the privilege extended by the laws of this state of attendance at any public postsecondary educational institution shall, by attending such institution, be deemed to have given his or her consent to the policies of that institution, the State Board of Education, and the Board of Governors regarding the State University System, and the laws of this state. Such policies shall include prohibitions against disruptive activities at public postsecondary educational institutions."

After it has been determined that an employee of a public postsecondary educational institution has participated in disruptive activities, the institution may terminate the contract of the employee, and thereafter, such person shall not be employed by any state public school or public postsecondary educational institution.

Florida law supports an institution's ability to both protect and sanction faculty and students for disruptive behavior, including harassing conduct, threats, or other conduct that seriously interferes with a faculty member's ability to teach or a student's ability to learn.

3. Intellectual Pluralism and Academic Vitality

3.1 How will your institution encourage intellectual pluralism in all its academic units?

How will your faculty hiring and evaluation practices support academic vitality and ensure that all relevant perspectives are taken seriously?

Florida is committed to academic excellence that is free from ideological indoctrination and hiring practices, and research inquiry that serves the American People. Florida state universities and colleges embrace meritocratic hiring and reject discrimination in hiring. The public universities and colleges in the state of Florida are committed to rigorous, meritocratic faculty recruitment based on objective, measurable criteria, as a pivotal factor in maintaining academic excellence. Consistent with the requirements of Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and other federal employment discrimination statutes and regulations, no factor such as sex, ethnicity, race, national origin, disability, or religion shall be considered in any decision related to the appointment, advancement, or reappointment of academic, administrative, or support staff at any level, except as otherwise provided by Title VII or other federal employment discrimination statutes and regulations. All FCS Institutions are reviewed on a cyclical basis by the FLDOE for their compliance with all federal nondiscrimination laws and regulations regarding employment practices.

Florida prohibits loyalty oaths and diversity statements. Sections 1001.741(1)(b) and 1001.7415, Florida Statutes, prohibit the state universities and colleges from requiring any diversity statement, pledge, or loyalty oath other than to uphold general and federal law, the United States Constitution, and the State Constitution as a part of any admissions, hiring, employment, promotion, tenure, disciplinary, or evaluation process.

Florida prohibits the use of state funds for political or social activism. Section 1004.06(2)(b), Florida Statutes, prohibits a state university, state college, or its direct support organizations from expending any state or federal funds to promote, support, or maintain any programs or campus activities that promote or engage in political or social activism. BOG Regulation 9.016 and SBOE Rule 6A-14.0718, Florida Administrative Code (F.A.C.), implement this statute, specifically prohibiting the use of state or federal funds for political or social activism.

Florida supports institutional neutrality. Proposed BOG regulation requires SUSFL institutions to “establish policies, practices, and procedures that will maintain institutional neutrality on contentious political and social issues. The policies, procedures, and practices must address:

- Public statements in the name of the university or board of trustees or any of their subunits should be avoided, except where appropriate to address an issue that bears materially and directly on the institution's core mission.
- Faculty, staff, and students are free to express their opinions on these issues as individuals but should not purport to speak on behalf of the institution.
- An institutional neutrality policy does not prevent the institution's representatives from publicly addressing, condemning, or prohibiting expressions or actions that violate the law.

In Florida, the university president and his or her appointed designees are the official spokespersons for the university.

Florida utilizes a comprehensive post-tenure review to maintain academic vitality.

On July 1, 2022, Florida Senate Bill 7044 went into effect, authorizing the BOG to adopt a regulation requiring a uniform post-tenure review process for each tenured faculty member. In 1996, Florida instituted post-tenure review through collective bargaining. Over time, differences in the ten universities with tenure (two Florida universities do not award tenure) developed as each faculty unit bargained their agreement.

The regulation required each tenured faculty member to undergo a comprehensive post-tenure review every five years. The regulation, after rigorous development, was adopted on March 29, 2023. By August 2023, universities began their first reviews, which had outcomes reported to university presidents and Boards of Trustees. Audits are required every three years, beginning in January 2024, with the BOG office staff receiving the first round of results in summer 2024.

During the last three years, more than 2,400 tenured faculty were reviewed; 1,313 (53%) Exceeded Expectations, 994 (40%) Met Expectations, 161 (6%) Needed Improvement, and 19 (<1%) were Unsatisfactory. Universities had 138 faculty members resign before going through their post-tenure review.

Tenure is not provided in the FCS. Florida law provides for annual, multi-year (up to three years) and continuing contracts for full-time faculty, and each college's Board of Trustees must adopt policies for issuing continuing and other employment contracts based on requirements in State Board rule. In accordance with State Board Rule 6A-14.0411, F.A.C., eligibility for a continuing contract must be based on an evaluation of the instructor's performance over a five- to seven-year period using criteria outlined in the rule, including student success criteria adopted by the college. To contribute to the continual growth and development of faculty, the rule also requires that Boards of

Trustees adopt procedures requiring periodic post-award performance reviews for faculty under continuing contract using the same performance criteria.

Academic vitality is maintained when all faculty are incentivized to produce their best teaching, scholarship, and service.

Courses in the SUSFL are ideologically neutral or balanced. Pursuant to Executive Order 25-44, the Florida Department of Government Efficiency team in the Executive Office of the Governor executed an information request in December 2025 and pulled data from publicly available SUSFL websites. The team established a database of 74,000 syllabi across the SUSFL. The courses were then reviewed for ideological bias. The Florida analysis revealed 84.2% of syllabi reviewed are ideologically neutral or balanced.

Florida's results contrast significantly with the national results of a similar review. A working paper by Jon Shields, Stephanie Muravchik, and Yuval Avnur published the results of a study where they utilized Open Syllabus, a national database of millions of course syllabi. The authors examined how three political and moral controversies – racial bias in the criminal justice system, the Israeli-Palestine conflict, and abortion are taught. The professors identified a few major works that are most commonly assigned and then analyzed to see if students were expected to read a wide or narrow range of perspectives. The authors wanted to know how well professors introduced students to dissenting scholarly perspectives. On those three topics, the authors discovered that less than 10% of the time, students were assigned to read both sides of a scholarly controversy. A national review of the three most contentious issues revealed that only around only 10% of the syllabi reviewed were ideologically balanced.

Florida's state colleges and universities have implemented transparency measures in the posting of course syllabi to ensure students make informed choices about their coursework. On Question 2, we documented how the state has significantly revised general education coursework across our public higher education institutions. As a follow-up to those efforts, transparency measures were added for the posting of syllabi, so that students, parents, and the public can easily see what is being taught in all courses in our public institutions.

The BOG Regulation 8.003(3) and FCS Rule 6A-14.092, F.A.C., require universities and colleges to post current course syllabi in a public database. Each FCS and SUSFL institution must make publicly accessible course syllabi for each course section as early as feasible, but at least forty-five (45) days before the first day of class for each term. All course syllabi should be publicly accessible and easily downloadable by current and prospective students. All course syllabi must include the course curriculum; the goals,

objectives, and student expectations of the course; the required and recommended textbooks and instructional materials, and how student performance will be measured and evaluated, including the grading scale and methodology. This transparency provides the means for Florida to conduct periodic reviews of courses to monitor ideological balance. Florida champions intellectual pluralism/diversity and annually measures its results.

3. Intellectual Pluralism and Academic Vitality

3.2 And how will your institution ensure the research enterprise is dedicated to advancing knowledge, deepening understanding, and serving the American people who fund it?

Through the BOG's SUS 30 Strategic Plan, the SUSFL will prioritize research that serves as an economic driver of the state of Florida. The SUSFL will translate research into economic development and work with business and industry to solve problems. The BOG tracks research metrics that translate into new jobs, companies created, and licenses executed, all metrics that help drive our state's economy. The SUSFL aims to be leaders in research for the future of America and Florida, and the people we serve. This includes the strategic goals of addressing life-changing problems, as well as consistently measuring the economic impact of research and using this to demonstrate the economic impact of the System.

In the BOG's SUS 30 Strategic Plan, the universities of the SUSFL are called upon to identify their top research areas and areas of expertise. This is done to focus our efforts on best serving those who fund us. National recognition is expected not only for research activity but also for research productivity.

As an enterprise of public universities, the SUSFL embraces both the obligation and the privilege to improve the lives of the American people through research relevant to present and future opportunities and challenges. This commitment is intrinsic to our construct within the state of Florida. Every day, researchers within the SUSFL institutions are creating and translating new knowledge aimed at positive outcomes for people within the state and nation. In areas that range from agriculture to engineering, from human health to space exploration, researchers within the SUSFL are committed to keeping the U.S. the global leader in innovation.

Guided by the BOG's SUS 30 Strategic Plan, the SUSFL will direct public investment toward research priorities that strengthen the economy and address areas of critical state and national need. The SUSFL will use this plan to focus on leading in research and discovery, advancing products that support the economy and practical solutions,

connecting university expertise to industry and government priorities, and supporting national needs. The Florida research enterprise is accountable to the American taxpayers who fund it. Just as importantly, the SUSFL will use research as a talent strategy by preparing the next generation of innovators who will lead industry, public service, and national progress.

The SUSFL institutions operate some of the nation's strongest public higher education research portfolios, giving the state a powerful platform for innovation and talent development that serves the nation. Across its 12 institutions, the SUSFL ranks fifth nationally in research expenditures, with annual activity exceeding \$3.2 billion in 2024. That performance reflects nearly \$1 billion in growth over five years and positions the SUSFL within reach of its SUS 30 goal of \$3.75 billion. With six institutions designated as Carnegie R1 universities, Florida has built a remarkably strong concentration of top-tier public research capacity within a single state system. These results demonstrate that Florida's universities are competing successfully for investment from across the public and private sectors, allowing the SUSFL to expand the scale and ambition of discovery across disciplines.

The SUSFL's research strength is also distinguished by its alignment with America's complex, high-priority challenges and its commitment to basic research that fills the pipeline for future innovation. Fundamental discovery expands knowledge, creates the intellectual foundation for new technologies, and opens opportunities that may not be immediately predictable but are essential to long-term national competitiveness. Each university's research profile focuses on the needs of its region, statewide objectives, and national priorities. Florida is also home to distinctive research facilities and infrastructure, such as the National High Magnetic Field Laboratory – a national lab that gives the state a unique capacity to support national needs. From coastal resilience and health innovation to space technologies, advanced manufacturing, advanced materials, artificial intelligence, quantum science, agriculture, and cybersecurity, Florida's universities are generating knowledge that impacts the nation's economic strength, public well-being, and competitiveness.

The SUSFL will demonstrate the public value of research by accelerating the movement of discovery into innovation and opportunity. Research advances knowledge; innovation turns that knowledge into solutions and, in turn, into economic development and products that benefit the public. Since 2022, SUSFL's research has directly generated nearly 2,000 patents, launched 159 startup companies, and created thousands of jobs statewide. The BOG will continue to track outcomes that matter to Florida's economy and to taxpayers, including new jobs, companies created, patents, licenses executed, industry partnerships, and other indicators of real-world impact. Five

SUSFL institutions have been ranked among the National Academy of Inventors' top 100 worldwide universities for U.S. utility patents, underscoring that research conducted on Florida campuses is moving into the marketplace and improving lives well beyond the university. Collectively, this innovation enterprise strengthens the nation by advancing the technologies and partnerships that support U.S. global competitiveness.

The SUSFL will protect and grow sustained research funding, because it is the foundation of this public return and the fuel for future innovation. The SUSFL will encourage the pursuit of competitive federal awards, expanded business and industry partnerships, and support both basic and applied research so our universities can translate ideas into practice and educate the talent required to secure America's future. Nearly half of Florida's more than \$3 billion research portfolio is supported by competitive federal awards, demonstrating the SUSFL's ability to perform at a national scale. At the same time, business and industry support has grown by more than 20% System-wide, expanding the partnerships that help move discoveries from the laboratory into practical use for communities and industries.

Going forward, the SUSFL will focus its research enterprise on clear action: prioritize discovery that strengthens national competitiveness, measure outcomes that demonstrate a return on public investment, expand partnerships that move ideas into practice, and develop the talent needed to sustain American leadership. Through disciplined alignment with national priorities, sustained investment in basic discovery, accountability for measurable outcomes, and a relentless focus on translating research into impact, the SUSFL will ensure that public research converts knowledge into economic strength and a more secure future.

4. Affordability, Value, and Student Outcomes:

4.1 How will your institution ensure that families can access affordable, high-return degrees?

Florida is committed to higher education being affordable and efficient so that students have a valuable return on their educational investment. Florida's state colleges and universities are the most affordable, transparent and efficient in the nation.

The State of Florida bears the cost of tuition, not our students. According to the State Higher Education Executive Officers Association for FY 2025 (Four-Year Institutions), Florida received 88.1% of its total education revenue from state appropriations (#1 in the nation), and only 11.9% from net tuition (the lowest in the nation). In addition, the Florida

Legislature contributed nearly double the amount to the FCS in the program fund in 2025-26 than the total collected by FCS institutions in tuition and fees.

Resident tuition and statutorily capped fees have not increased since 2012. Accordingly, Florida has had the lowest undergraduate in-state tuition in the nation. At the public universities in the state of Florida, annual undergraduate in-state tuition and fees are \$6,360. Comparatively, the national average for undergraduate in-state tuition and fees at public four-year universities is \$11,950, nearly double Florida's tuition. In Florida, an in-state undergraduate student can spend the summer break working a minimum wage job for 40 hours a week, and at the end of the summer, have earned enough wages to pay for both the upcoming Fall and Spring semesters' tuition and fees. This makes the SUSFL one of the last public university systems where a student can work their way through college.

In the FCS, the average tuition and fees for 30 semester hours of credit equals \$3,204, the same amount as in 2014. In 2024, 13 FCS institutions held flat or reduced user fees (laboratory, distance learning, parking fees), and 10 colleges eliminated them altogether.

Nearly 80% of SUSFL resident undergraduates and over 90% of FCS students do NOT have student loan debt. The SUSFL and FCS take pride in offering an extraordinary education at the lowest possible cost so that upon graduation, students can flourish personally and professionally free from burdensome debt.

- Nearly 80% of Florida resident undergraduates attend the state universities without student loans. Over 90% of students enrolled in the FCS do not take out loans, and for those who did receive a federal student loan, the average award amount was \$5,555.
- 69.8% of SUSFL students receive either a grant or a scholarship, substantially more than the national average of 41.3%.

4. Affordability, Value, and Student Outcomes:

4.2 And what will your institution do to contain costs, improve pricing transparency, and ensure that every academic program equips students to repay their loans?

Florida has long taken efforts to ensure that textbooks and other instructional materials in higher education are affordable and that costs are transparent to students. Section 1004.085, Florida Statutes, requires that each state college and state university prominently post a hyperlink in the course registration system and on its website, with the lists of required and recommended textbooks and instructional materials for at least 95% of all courses and course sections offered at the institution during the upcoming term. The lists of required and recommended textbooks and instructional materials must be posted as early as is feasible but at least 45 days before the first day of class for each term; remain posted for at least five academic years; be searchable by the course subject, the course number, the course title, the name of the instructor of the course, the title of each assigned textbook or instructional material, and each author of an assigned textbook or instructional material; and be easily downloadable by current and prospective students.

Credits transfer between the Florida College System and the State University System of Florida in Florida's nation-leading 2+2 articulation system. The most recent study by the U.S. Government Accountability Office found that college students who transfer institutions from a public college to a public university lose an average of 37% of their credit hours. This raises the cost of college, as these students must retake those courses at the new institution to earn the necessary credit.

In Florida, the statewide K-20 articulation agreement includes benefits for students from elementary and secondary education through postsecondary education, including multiple opportunities to earn credit for prior learning and to avoid repeating courses. Section 1007.01(2)(b) and (3)(e), Florida Statutes, require the FCS and the SUSFL to utilize a Statewide Course Numbering System (SCNS) to create a unified framework and form the bedrock of Florida's nation-leading articulation system. Courses with substantially similar content, taught by comparable faculty, receive the same prefix and last three digits, ensuring they are treated as equivalent for transfer. These courses with identical prefixes and last three digits must be accepted at any public institution, guaranteeing transfer and preventing the need to retake courses. The BOG also tracks the graduation rate of students who transfer from the FCS to the SUSFL through Performance-Based Funding. During the most recent year, our universities graduated two-thirds of FCS students in three years or less.

Section 1007.271, Florida Statutes, establishes a robust dual enrollment program that is provided at no cost to all eligible secondary students in public and private schools and home-educated students. In 2025-26 in the FCS, which accounts for at least 85% of the state's dual enrollment, over 130,000 students earned college credit while in high school, several thousand of whom completed their entire Associate in Arts degree by the time they earned their high school diploma. Using the standard tuition and fee rates, this saved Florida students and families over \$100 million in postsecondary tuition and fees in one year.

Florida's articulation system also guarantees military veterans and law enforcement officers standardized postsecondary course credit for specific occupations and training completed while serving their country.

The SUSFL and FCS controls costs by avoiding administrative bloat. Section 1011.90(4), Florida Statutes, requires each university to report in the annual Legislative Budget Request, the five-year trend information on the number of faculty and administrators at each university, and the proportion of FTE dedicated to instruction and research compared to administration. Every year, every university is required to report to the SUSFL the five-year trend on the number of faculty and administrators. Over the past five years, FTE administration growth in the SUSFL has been 0.2% annually. Nationally, the administrative growth in higher education averages approximately 3.0% annually (fifteen times the rate of administrative growth in the SUSFL).

In March 2025, the American Enterprise Institute released an analysis of administrative bloat at America's colleges using the most recent IPEDS data. It identified that the highest quintile includes most elite private colleges and many flagship public schools. That quintile has 161 administrators per 1,000 students. The SUSFL has 62 administrators per 1,000 students. The SUSFL remains committed to controlling the administrative growth in our universities and maintaining a lean, efficient, and effective workforce to support our students.

In 2024-25, the FCS institutions reported 666,668 students enrolled in a course, while staffing 1,698 administrators. This equates to one administrator for every 393 students, or 2.5 administrators for every 1,000 students. The system employed 19,538 instructional staff, resulting in an average of 1 faculty member per 34 enrolled students, keeping class sizes low and helping students succeed.

The SUSFL embraces earnings transparency. Pursuant to Section 1001.706(5)(d)1-2, Florida Statutes, the BOG requires that, prior to registration, the state universities must provide each enrolled student with electronic access to the economic security report of

employment and earning outcomes prepared by the Department of Commerce. In addition, each year, prior to registration, the BOG requires the universities to provide each student with electronic access to the following information:

- The top 25% of degrees reported by the university in terms of highest full-time job placement and highest average annualized earnings in the year after earning the degree.
- The bottom 10% of degrees reported by the university in terms of lowest full-time job placement and lowest average annualized earnings in the year after earning the degree.

The SUSFL provides the MyFloridaFuture tool to empower students to make informed decisions. Section 1006.751, Florida Statutes, requires an interactive online dashboard for use by students, families, and policy-makers. It allows users to freely explore program and institution-level data on:

- Earnings over time for graduates of different academic programs (one, five, and ten-year post-graduation).
- Salary ranges by degree and major.
- Student loan debt amounts and proportions of graduates with loans, by program.
- How earning potential might change with the addition of a graduate degree.

All workforce programs in the FCS are evaluated through the Career and Technical Education (CTE) Audit. On January 30, 2019, the Governor's Executive Order 19-31 charted a course for Florida to become number one in the nation for workforce education by 2030. Following this order and with the guidelines outlined in Section 1003.491(5), Florida Statutes, the Commissioner of Education directed the FLDOE to develop a process to annually assess Career and Technical Education (CTE) program offerings throughout the state. This led to the inception of Florida's annual CTE Audit, which evaluates CTE program quality and labor market demand to ensure that Florida's CTE programs are high-performing and align with the state's economic and workforce priorities. Programs are evaluated annually and must meet benchmarks in student retention or success rate, continuing education or employment, and the relationship of the program to an in-demand occupation as defined on the state's Master Credentials List.

Each FCS institution provides a money-back guarantee for specific skill-based workforce programs. Section 1011.803, Florida Statutes, establishes the Money-back Guarantee Program, requiring state colleges to refund the cost of tuition to a student if

the student is unable to find a job in the field in which he or she was trained within six months of completion. Each FCS institution must provide a money-back guarantee for at least three workforce education programs, and the selected programs must prepare students for in-demand, middle-level to high-level wage occupations. Colleges must establish eligibility criteria, including but not limited to: student attendance, student program performance, career service or career day attendance, participation in internship or work-study programs, job search documentation, and the development of a student career plan with the institution's career services department.

5. Academic Standards and Rigor in the Age of AI

5.1 How will your institution incentivize rigor in the age of AI, combat grade inflation, and prioritize excellence in teaching and learning?

Florida is committed to the highest academic standards in teaching and learning that embrace rigorous standards and promote opportunity in the age of artificial intelligence. The public universities of the state of Florida seek to maintain grade integrity and employ meaningful standards for assessing student achievement. Student grading reflects actual achievement, which includes the quality, breadth, and depth of the student's achievement. Non-academic factors can never change a student's evaluation. Grade distribution dashboards with multiyear trend lines are available to the BOG and encourage grade integrity. The BOG utilizes a Performance-Based Funding Model that includes 10 metrics to evaluate institutions on a range of student learning accomplishments. This model includes post-graduation outcomes (employment, continuing education, median wage) to ensure the quality of our education.

These System-wide efforts contribute to the state of Florida's ranking by *U.S. News and World Report* as the top state in the nation for higher education. The SUSFL has a top-10 public university, two top-25 public universities, four top-50 public universities, seven top-100 public universities, and the top public Historically Black College/University. Since 2017, *U.S. News and World Report* has ranked Florida as the number one state in the nation for higher education.

Rather than using surrogate markers for student performance based on classroom performance, the state of Florida requires the universities to collect data and optimize performance on retention, graduation, and post-graduate metrics with meaningful, life-altering endpoints. The goal is student success; the universities are held accountable as funding depends on this success. In addition to these accomplishments, the BOG SUS 30 strategic plan includes benchmarks for continued improvement to ensure that Florida remains the premier destination for students to reach their higher education goals.

Florida is addressing AI comprehensively through required policy development by every SUSFL and FCS institution. Artificial Intelligence, or AI, holds the promise of unimaginable benefits for humankind. It can also deprive a student of the opportunity to truly learn and practice applying information, if not managed with care and courage.

The BOG and the SBOE are in the process of adopting rules to ensure that our institutions address AI from multiple perspectives that influence institutional and student performance. Beyond simple mandatory compliance with federal and state laws, each institution must thoughtfully adopt and enforce policies that integrate with and comply with institution policies for academic integrity and dishonesty, course assignments, and grading.

For the FCS, such policies must prohibit students from using artificial intelligence to work on a graded assignment or assessment for a course or program unless the instructor explicitly permits it. In addition, because of the record number of dual enrollment students reaching over 130,000 in Florida, the policies must include a notification to parents of enrolled minors if their child will be directly using an artificial intelligence instructional tool in their course or program. For the SUSFL, a proposed BOG regulation requires universities to establish policies mandating transparency on all course syllabi to include a disclosure of faculty use and permitted student use of artificial intelligence.

Institutions are encouraged to consult the U.S. Department of Labor's A.I. Literacy Framework as guidance as they develop their policies, and must ensure that they have addressed instructional tools, business tools, and how policies will apply to students, faculty, staff, administrators, and guests.

6. Safeguarding Research Integrity from Malign Foreign Influence

6.1 How will your institutions protect academic programs from foreign influence and safeguard the integrity of the research enterprise?

Florida has been a leader in this area, protecting university research from foreign influence. Florida safeguards the integrity of research and academic programs by requiring the disclosure of foreign funding and agreements, along with screening foreign researchers. Sections 288.860 and 286.101, Florida Statutes, were amended in 2023 to restrict accepting grants or participating in partnerships or agreements with foreign principals, colleges, or universities based in foreign countries of concern without approval by the BOG. Furthermore, Section 1010.25, Florida Statutes, requires the reporting of all contracts with a foreign source, direct or indirect, over \$50,000 to the BOG.

Section 288.860, Florida Statutes, requires an annual report to the Florida Legislature relating to partnerships and agreements between state universities and foreign principals or colleges and universities based in a foreign country of concern. This includes research or academic collaborations. The BOG has submitted two reports since the law was passed. Our 2023-24 report identified 140 engagements with four state universities and foreign countries of concern, with only 16 active agreements. In 2024-25, the total number of engagements was 25, with only three still active. To date, only one agreement has come to the BOG for approval. This request was to participate in a research consortium that included a foreign principal, in addition to several other major research universities in the United States. The university followed the criteria in Florida statute and BOG regulation and demonstrated that there was no risk to the university to participate in the agreement. There are currently no agreements with foreign countries of concern in the FCS.

Section 1010.35, Florida Statutes, and BOG Regulation 9.012 require the SUSFL to screen applicants for research positions who are citizens of foreign countries or who have any affiliation or previous employment with a country of concern. This review process is run through the research integrity office at the university.

SUSFL and FCS are required to report foreign gifts. Florida has implemented stringent state-level oversight, supplementing existing federal requirements, to enhance transparency and mitigate potential foreign influence in its higher education system. Each SUSFL and FCS institution must report gifts, as defined in Section 1010.25, Florida Statutes, valued at \$50,000 or more received from a foreign source directly or indirectly during the fiscal year. If a foreign source provides more than one gift in a single fiscal year and the total value of those gifts is \$50,000 or more, all gifts received from that foreign source must be reported. The SUSFL semi-annual reporting requirement must be made each January 31st and July 31st to the BOG in a manner prescribed by the Chancellor of the SUSFL and a similar reporting requirement is in place for the FCS.

All public universities of the state of Florida, their staff and faculty, or other representatives, are prohibited from soliciting or accepting any gift, including any physical object, loan, reward, promise of future employment, favor, or service, from a college or university based in a foreign country of concern or from a foreign principal.

Florida universities limit and disclose foreign entanglements. Section 117 of the Higher Education Act of 1965 currently requires the reporting of all foreign gifts and contracts that, alone or in combination with others from the foreign source, total more than \$250,000 in a calendar year. Our universities fully comply with federal requirements.

Florida's universities have robust compliance programs. Florida's state universities have robust compliance programs to educate, train, investigate, and prosecute violations of foreign influence laws.

Every state university in Florida has a compliance office or a similar department to ensure the university operates legally and ethically. The compliance offices handle adherence to federal, state, and local laws, regulations, and internal policies. Each university's Board of Trustees must implement a university-wide compliance and ethics program and must designate a senior-level administrator as the chief compliance officer to manage and coordinate the program.

The universities adhere to verification of counterpart identification, retention of identifying and transactional information, designation of a compliance officer to coordinate disclosure to federal agencies, suspicious activity reporting, document retention for any suspicious activity reports and supporting documentation, and training university personnel on their responsibilities under the program.

7. Prioritizing American Interests

7.1 How will your institution answer the national call to action?

Florida is committed to prioritizing American interests so that American prosperity is promoted, supported, and enhanced. Florida prioritizes American interests by imposing a cap on undergraduate enrollment from foreign countries. The SUSFL, through BOG Regulation 7.006, limits out-of-state and foreign undergraduate student enrollment by capping the enrollment of non-Florida residents (both out-of-state and international students) at 10% for the System. Each university reports international enrollment data annually to the BOG. Of the total SUSFL undergraduate enrollment, foreign nationals comprised 4% in Academic Year 2025-2026.

Further, international applicants must:

- Follow the laws and regulations set by the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services of the United States Department of Homeland Security and the United States Department of State.
- Be academically eligible for admission to the program at the level of entrance requested by the applicant. An international student must demonstrate the required level of academic preparation as evidenced by official copies of any academic

records needed to ascertain the comparability of the level and quality of the student's previous education and achievement to that required for other students.

- Demonstrate English language proficiency, as determined by the university.
- Provide documentation showing sufficient resources to cover tuition, fees, books, room and board, health insurance, and other living expenses while enrolled at the university.

In the FCS, in accordance with State Board of Education Rule 6A-14.012,F.A.C., beginning with the spring semester 2027, students must document U.S. citizenship or lawful presence in the United States to be admitted to an FCS institution. The BOG is also proposing an amendment to Regulation 6.001 to provide that, beginning with the 2027-2028 academic year, a person who is present in the U.S. unlawfully is not eligible for initial enrollment at any university that did not admit all academically qualified applicants in the two most recent academic years.

Florida mandates civic literacy for all students. To promote American interests, all students must understand the foundations of our liberties and the functions of our government. Section 1007.25(5)(b), Florida Statutes, requires every undergraduate student, regardless of their state or country of origin, to complete general education requirements, which include mandatory civic literacy competencies. All students must demonstrate proficiency in civics through a combination of specified coursework and assessments that cover topics such as American democracy, the Constitution, founding documents, and landmark Supreme Court cases. Institutions are also required to ensure that students have opportunities to “engage synchronously in political discussions and civil debates with multiple points of view and to master the ability to synthesize information that informs civic decision making.”

Since this requirement was established in statute in 2018, the number of students in the FCS earning credit each year in a civics-approved U.S. History or American Government course to meet the social science general education requirement has increased 110%.

Florida College System institutions are focused on foundational civics education and high-demand workforce skills. Likewise, Section 1004.65, Florida Statutes, describes the FCS's primary mission and responsibilities are “to provide high-quality, affordable education and training opportunities, foster a climate of excellence, and provide opportunities to all while combining high standards with an open-door admission policy for lower-division programs.” This includes “responding to community needs for postsecondary academic and career degree education” and “promoting economic

development for the state.” This mission and responsibility are not focused on ideology, but on excellence and employability skills for high-demand, high-wage jobs.

7. Prioritizing American Interests

7.2 How can your campus and faculty advance American security interests, deliver academic programs that meet urgent workforce needs, and contribute materially to the Nation’s prosperity?

Florida universities advance American security interests by conducting research and developing talent in aerospace, space, defense, autonomous systems, cybersecurity, engineering, energy, semiconductors, and other strategically important technologies. Within the SUSFL enterprise, Florida’s state universities have research institutes focused on national security, several of which conduct classified research. Our commitment to supporting the security interests of the U.S. is unmistakable, with SUSFL researchers seeking insights into the fundamental sciences to advances that apply to the specific needs of our country. From energy security to food and agriculture resource security, to information security, to the physical security that we all enjoy.

The SUSFL is an active participant in the Department of War's Defense Innovation Unit initiatives, which prioritize the development of solutions to real challenges that will have both defense-related and commercial market applications. Florida universities are also prioritizing the construction of secure facilities, expanding the program to get security clearances for students, and pursuing the establishment of University Affiliated Research Centers (UARCs).

Florida universities deliver academic programs that meet urgent workforce needs through Programs of Strategic Emphasis. Section 1001.92, Florida Statutes, establishes the State University System Performance-Based incentive. The SUSFL performance funding model includes two metrics, one for undergraduate degrees and another for graduate degrees, that measure universities on Programs of Strategic Emphasis. Aligning degrees with state workforce needs was completed in partnership with our state Department of Commerce. We identified existing workforce shortages and emerging high-wage jobs, then designated the associated majors as Programs of Strategic Emphasis and included metrics around these programs in our Performance-Based Funding model. Programs of Strategic Emphasis is a tool the BOG uses to ensure our degrees are aligned with Florida’s most critical workforce shortages. The BOG is required to review and update this list every three years to ensure it is still aligned with Florida’s most critical workforce needs.

Florida contributes to the nation's prosperity through postgraduation employment Performance-Based Funding metrics. Section 1001.92, Florida Statutes, establishes the State University System Performance-Based incentive. The SUSFL performance funding model includes two metrics by which the universities are measured on student employment success. The first of the ten metrics measures the percentage of bachelor's degree graduates employed (earning \$40,000+) or continuing their education. The most recent data show that one year after graduation, 74.6% of SUSFL bachelor's recipients are either continuing their education or employed with earnings greater than \$40,000. The second metric measures the median wages of bachelor's degree graduates who are employed full-time. Our most recent data shows that the median wage of a SUSFL bachelor's degree recipient one year after graduation is \$52,600, with a mean wage of \$58,000. The SUSFL produces world-class talent to address Florida's workforce needs. In the BOG's SUS 30 Strategic Plan, our System will be a top producer of world-class talent, and iconic companies will prioritize hiring our graduates. The BOG set a goal for the median wages of bachelor's degree graduates to be \$60,000 by 2030 and for 85% of the graduates to be employed or enrolled in graduate school one year after graduation. This priority, along with the BOG's expectation to have 85% of resident undergraduates graduate from the SUSFL without any loans by 2030, demonstrates how the SUSFL continues to contribute to the nation's prosperity.

The Florida Legislature uses metrics, including program completions and job placements in occupations with certain wage thresholds, to allocate a specified amount of performance-based funding to FCS institutions. More than that, the FCS has performed as the "workforce engine" for Florida's economy, providing key graduates where employers need skilled workforce at the associate degree level (such as engineering technology, nursing and logistics). In the FCS, over 90% of the 2023-24 graduates were employed or continuing their education in Florida in 2024-25. The average annual wages in the year following graduation for Associate in Science degree completers were \$64,732, while those completing a short-term career certificate averaged \$62,260, and completers with a college credit certificate averaged \$56,058. Bachelor's degrees in the FCS are statutorily limited to areas of documented workforce need and to local industry partnership, and those completers averaged \$68,569 in earnings the year after graduation.

In addition, each FCS institution's workforce programs, including certificate programs and Associate in Science degrees, are subject to the state's Career and Technical Education Audit, under Section 1003.491(5) Florida Statutes, which requires that programs meet specific benchmarks in market demand, completion rates, and job placement in in-demand occupations. State Board of Education Rule 6A-10.0342, F.A.C., sets the benchmarks and requires that programs that do not meet them must be closed. Similar

metrics are required for the FCS workforce baccalaureate degree annual accountability reports under Section 1007.33, Florida Statutes, and SBOE Rule 6A-14.095, F.A.C.

The SUSFL embraces both the obligation and privilege we have as public universities to improve the lives of the American people through relevant and impactful academic programs, research, and service. This commitment is intrinsic to our mission. Every day, teachers and researchers within the SUSFL institutions are creating and translating new knowledge aimed at positive outcomes for people within the state and nation. In areas that range from agriculture to engineering, from human health to space exploration, from education to quantum computing, teachers and researchers within the SUSFL are committed to keeping the U.S. the global leader in innovation and prosperity. Strengthening and expanding the workforce, our SUSFL institutions all work to provide unparalleled preparation of students for careers that are meaningful to our state, nation, and individual aspirations. Majors from nursing to medicine, engineering to business, education to agriculture, and many others focus on the needs of our state, nation, and society.

Through the BOG SUS 30 Plan, our SUSFL institutions are expected to maintain close connections with industry and service sectors, solving problems, advancing solutions and the workforce, and innovating the economy of our state and nation. Such connections are strengthened through various formal and informal means, including funded research agreements, industry advisory boards, extension offices, outreach and training programs for practicing professionals, student internships, and many others. These connections ensure our institutions stay abreast of and responsive to the dynamic needs of our state and nation. Further, programs like ROTC and internships are deeply embedded within our SUSFL institutions and provide students with hands-on preparation for advancing our national security and prosperity. Our SUSFL institutions also have educational programs that specifically target students with interests in pursuing careers within our national security and intelligence enterprise.

The statutory mission for the FCS reflects “a commitment to be responsive to local educational needs and challenges,” which our institutions meet in so many ways that are remarkably and expertly focused both internally on each student and externally on employers, families, and communities. This means that we are also uniquely responsive to the needs of America. Proudly, our state colleges enroll more than 43,000 active-duty service members, veterans, reservists, and their families. Teacher education program enrollment is actually growing in the FCS, unlike in the rest of the nation. Our colleges, known for their nimbleness and responsiveness to industry, have started new programs from CDL to semiconductor chip manufacturing, from line-worker to financial technology, and annually produce thousands of nurses, respiratory therapists,

and surgical technicians for our medical facilities. Our fastest growing baccalaureate degrees are in data science, cybersecurity, and elementary education.

Even more than the excellence described for each sector of Florida's higher education system, the collaboration between the SUSFL and the FCS is statutorily crafted and faithfully delivered through the systems and programs described in this response and the people in our institutions that it represents. The resultant benefits to individual students, families, industries, and our nation cannot be overstated.

Closing. Florida is honored to respond to your call to action and sees your letter as both validation of our years-long efforts and support for our continued progress on behalf of our students and our state. Our undersigned institutions have already begun the process of meeting the standards you have set forth individually and ensuring their communication with potential and current students is transparent and promotes their informed decision-making and ultimate success.

Together, we reaffirm to the American People our commitment to academic, research, and operational excellence; affordability, fiscal efficiency, and transparency; the protection of our Western inheritance, viewpoint diversity, and free speech as guaranteed by federal and state law; merit-based decision-making and open competition and access; the forward-looking and responsible use of technology; increased accountability through objective measures of institutional performance focused on student outcomes; and the continued pursuit of beauty and truth.

Florida is proud of its progress, and we do not view this work as finished. We welcome this national conversation and will continue to demonstrate that public higher education can be rigorous, affordable, accountable, intellectually open, and economically consequential.

Sincerely,



Henry Mack, Ed.D.
Commissioner
Florida Department of Education

Ray Rodrigues
Chancellor
State University System of Florida



Torey Alston, President
Broward College

Sarah Clemmons, President
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