

Florida

Affordability in Action

With access to the lowest in-state undergraduate university tuition in the country, a Florida student can complete a degree for roughly half the tuition and fee cost of the national average.

Strategies to make college more affordable can include policies that directly reduce the cost of college (e.g., tuition and fee policies maintaining or prioritizing low to no increases), limit the time needed to complete a degree (e.g., accelerated degree programs or access to dual-enrollment courses), or cost-sharing models that reduce the cost burden on learners and families (e.g., investment in need-based financial aid or by covering the cost of dual-enrollment courses).

A combination of these interventions can provide a wider range of opportunities for learners seeking to complete a lower cost pathway to college. Florida provides an example of policy and practice interventions focused on ensuring low costs and accelerated pathways for learners.

- ➔ Florida has implemented a long-term focus on maintaining college affordability for traditional-aged and adult learners.



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Florida's approach

Florida offers the lowest university tuition in the country to its in-state undergraduate students. According to the 2024 Trends in College Pricing report, Florida universities have the lowest tuition and fee rates in the nation, the third straight year the state was recognized for this achievement.¹ The 2024–25 average published tuition and fees for full-time in-state undergraduates in Florida was \$6,360, compared to a national rate of \$11,610. This means a student in Florida can complete an undergraduate degree at a university for roughly half the tuition and fee cost of the national average.²

Florida also enables equitable participation in dual-enrollment opportunities by covering the cost of these courses for all students, and the state offers a broad range of alternative pathways to a bachelor's degree through lower-cost programs at the 28 State College System (formerly community college) institutions.

Alignment with goals of state leadership

Florida leaders from both parties continue to prioritize affordable education policies. About 6 percent of the total state budget (\$7 billion) was appropriated to public institutions in fiscal year 2024–25. This included about \$1.1 billion to support student financial aid programs for undergraduate students.³ Of this financial aid investment, about 25 percent (\$295 million) directly supports low-income students.⁴ These investments continued to support a decade-long tuition freeze for students attending public institutions.⁵

In fiscal year 2024, the state provided public institutions with about \$11,100 of operating support per FTE, in alignment with the national average of \$11,700.⁶ Further, full-time undergraduate students received an average state-funded financial aid award of about \$1,375, ranking just outside of the top 10 states in the nation.⁷ Overall, Florida institutions receive about \$13,500 in total revenue per FTE, compared to a national average of \$19,200. Of note, the state share of total revenue is the highest in the nation (82 percent compared to the national average of 61 percent).⁸

I Strategy and implementation

Florida has implemented a long-term focus on maintaining college affordability for traditional-aged and adult learners. This affordability policy framework uses three main intervention strategies:

- **Centering low net price for undergraduate learners.** Researchers have found that tuition freezes often result in increased costs to low-income students as institutions will decrease the amount of institutional aid awarded to students to “backfill” net tuition revenue lost due to the tuition freeze.⁹ This does not appear to be the case in Florida, where the proportion of total education revenue at public institutions in Florida attributable to students (the “student share” of education revenue) has not increased since 1980.¹⁰ In fact, Florida is one of only five states to have a lower student share of education revenue in 2023 than 20 years ago. While the student share nationally is about 40 percent, in Florida, students bear only 20 percent of total education revenue.¹¹ As Florida has prioritized freezing tuition at institutions over the last decade, state leaders have ensured any costs from that foregone tuition revenue have not been placed on the backs of students.
- **Reducing time to credential completion.** For more than 20 years, Florida has identified dual enrollment as an accelerated mechanism to shorten the time necessary to complete high school and college simultaneously.¹² Further, the state has invested in strategies to incentivize participation in dual enrollment, including covering the cost of dual-enrollment course tuition, fees, and materials for students; providing funding to colleges for summer dual-enrollment opportunities; and educator stipend scholarships to assist public school teachers in obtaining the necessary qualifications to provide dual-enrollment coursework directly at the high school level.¹³

The 2024–25 Long Range Program Plan, which sets five-year objectives for the Florida Department of Education, included a goal to increase student participation and performance in meaningful accelerated pathways.¹⁴ One objective of the plan sets a five-year goal of increasing the number of high school students who pass at least one dual-enrollment course to 33 percent by 2028–29.¹⁵ In recent years, between 60,000 and 70,000 students, or about 7 percent of high school students, annually participate in dual enrollment. In fact, about 15 percent of all students enrolled at state colleges in Florida were dually enrolled high school students. This is compared to about 1 in 5 community college students nationally.¹⁶ Based on an average course cost of \$320, dual-enrollment participation may save students more than \$20 million each year.¹⁷

Another strategy for reducing time to completion is by minimizing how many credits are lost when students transfer schools. Robust and streamlined articulation agreements ensure credits for comparable coursework are recognized across institutions. Florida's seamless articulation system guarantees the effective and efficient transfer of postsecondary credits, using statewide 2+2 articulation agreements, a statewide common course numbering system, and standardized prerequisites across all public colleges and universities.^{18,19,20}

- **Reducing cost to credential completion.** Florida leads the nation in the implementation of four-year degree programs offered at state colleges (commonly called community colleges elsewhere in the U.S.), allowing students to pursue workforce-aligned degrees (e.g., education, nursing) closer to home and at a lower cost.²¹ Beginning in 2001, Florida began offering bachelor's degrees at the state colleges, initially to address critical regional workforce shortages in education. In an effort to maximize the impact of these lower-cost degree opportunities, state legislators authorized all 28 state colleges to offer workforce-aligned bachelor's degrees in 2008.²²

Today, all 28 state colleges in Florida offer at least one bachelor's degree. In the 2021-22 academic year, state colleges enrolled more than 45,600 students in a bachelor's degree program, graduating more than 10,600 students.²³ Bachelor's degrees awarded at state colleges added nearly 15 percent more to the 72,000 degrees awarded at universities.²⁴ By comparison, Washington community colleges, the second-largest producer of community college baccalaureate degrees, added only 7 percent more to the bachelor's degrees awarded at the state's public universities. Florida awarded more than 75,000 bachelor's degrees in the first decade of the program to state college students in high-need fields, including business, education, nursing, computer and information sciences, and health professions.²⁵

- All 28 state colleges, Florida's term for community colleges, offer at least one bachelor's degree, many of them in high-need fields such as nursing and health professions.



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I Measuring success

Florida requires the publication of an annual statewide affordability report for its college system.²⁶ The Report for the Florida College System, more commonly referred to as the Florida College Factbook, is published annually by the state college system to ensure “timely, accurate, and comparative information” about FCS is available to the public.²⁷

Additionally, success measurements are available for these affordability interventions in Florida:

➤ **Community college baccalaureate degrees.** Based on the average cost of attending a state college versus a state university, a student in a state college bachelor’s degree program can be expected to save more than \$3,100 annually in tuition and fees. Assuming a student completes this bachelor’s degree in four years, this means a state college bachelor’s degree student would save about \$12,500 in tuition and fees. A 2014 Florida College System report found that in the first 12 years of the community college baccalaureate program, students saved an estimated \$23 million in reduced tuition costs compared to their university-attending peers.²⁸ In 2024–25, state college tuition averaged \$72 compared to \$105 at a state university. Therefore, a student completing a community college bachelor’s degree in Florida would save about \$4,000.

An analysis of the impacts of the community college baccalaureate degree program in Florida found that state college bachelor’s degree graduates earn \$10,000 more on average than their associate degree peers.²⁹ A 2024 update on this work found that students who completed these degrees earned first-year wages that trailed students who completed similar degrees at a public university. However, in four of the five program areas compared, the wage difference was less than one year of annual savings by attending a Florida state college.³⁰

➤ The 2024–25 average published tuition and fees for full-time in-state undergraduates in Florida was \$6,360, compared to a national rate of \$11,610.



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➤ **Dual-enrollment opportunities.** A recent report that investigated outcomes for dual-enrollment students who graduated from high school between 2019 and 2022 and enrolled in a Florida college³¹ found that more than 163,000 dual-enrollment graduates continued on at a public college or university over this time period. Key findings identified potential barriers to opportunities to participate in more than five dual-enrollment courses for certain student demographic groups. This is important, as the researchers found that students who took five or more courses were more likely to enroll in a postsecondary pathway than those who took fewer than five courses.³²

- **Reduced time to degree for transfer students.** The Southern Regional Education Board has collected information on the average years to degree completion for transfer students as part of its SREB-State Data Exchange collection process for nearly 20 years.³³ This data collection includes the 16 member states of the Southern region, including Florida.³⁴ These data show a consistent pattern of reduced time to degree completion for transfer students in Florida compared to other Southern states. In 2010–11, the average years to degree completion for transfer students at associate degree-granting institutions for reporting Southern Regional Education Board states was 4.5 years. In Florida, those same students completed in 3.4 years. A decade later, time to degree for transfer students across the region has decreased slightly to 4.4 years, while in Florida transfer students completed their degree in 3.2 years in 2020–21, the most recent year of available data.³⁵

TOOLS AND RESOURCES

Florida has developed several tools and resources to support its efforts:

- **[Florida ScoreBoard](#)** provides information on the university metrics, including net cost of attending college, annual student debt, employment, or continuing education successes.
- **[Florida College Access Network](#)** offers a customized view of access, completion, and affordability initiatives in the state focused on opportunity for everyone and devoted to improving college access and success for minority and other underrepresented postsecondary education students.
- **[FloridaShines](#)** mobile app is a unique tool for students and families that provides access to free online tools and resources, including a transfer comparison tool and career planning system. It is designed to help learners succeed, graduate, and find a career.
- **[The Student Success Center](#)** supports state college system efforts to develop student-centered pathways and increase student completion. The success center acts as a repository of evidence-based best practices that maximize resources and return on the state's investment.

Endnotes

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