

HIGHER EDUCATION COORDINATING COUNCIL

2017 Annual Report

Section 1004.015(5), Florida Statutes



STATE
UNIVERSITY
SYSTEM
of FLORIDA
Board of Governors



Comments and inquiries should be directed to:

Diane McCain
Director, External Relations
Board of Governors
State University System of Florida
diane.mccain@flbog.edu
850.245.9632

OR

Todd Clark
Director, Office of Articulation
Florida Department of Education
Todd.clark@fldoe.org
850.245.0764

www.floridahighereducation.org

CONTENTS

Introduction	5
Executive Summary 2017 Recommendations	7
Annual Report	13
Priority #1 - Increase Educational Attainment in Florida	14
Priority #2 - Civic and History Literacy	19
Priority #3 - Technology Access and Distance Learning Including Reciprocity	21
Priority #4 - Align/Prioritize Education Funding	30
Members, Higher Education Coordinating Council	33
Appendix (A study: Florida's Internet Infrastructure to Advance Educational Attainment, Economic Development, Health Care, and County Growth.)	

INTRODUCTION

Established by the Florida Legislature in 2010, the work of the Higher Education Coordinating Council began in earnest fall of 2011. The Council groups the chief executives from Florida's delivery systems with business sector appointees by the House Speaker, Senate President, and Governor. This is perhaps the first truly organized approach to grapple with the new crush of proprietary demands each executive and his/her respective governing board face. Florida has a lot at stake and the full discussion must be had for current and future students, and the quality of life for all of our citizens.

Florida's leaders have expressed high hopes for the work of the Council and each of the education sectors and the Legislature have a strong desire to fully use the Council as the primary and most timely tool we have in order to ensure bold ideas are vetted while legal obligations are met. All meetings are open and the public is encouraged to attend.

The mission of the Council is accomplished through working meetings with targeted strategy sessions including policy experts, educators, and recognized speakers sharing solutions for improving Florida's higher education delivery for all students. Applicable research and the latest available data are fundamental to inform the members. The consequential determinations of the members are intended to serve as strategic recommendations and collaborative solutions for leaders who want to improve and transform postsecondary education policy to aid Florida's students, K-20.

Workforce projections reflect that the fastest growing jobs in the future for Florida will require postsecondary education and training. For the benefit of students and to better meet the demands of the 21st century workforce, we must adapt to the changing needs of society. Florida must align our academic offerings with a broader perspective, the needs of the job market, and the complexities of the future of work.

In 2017, building on the foundation addressed in the Council's 2014 Report and subsequent years, the Higher Education Coordinating Council continued to address three key issues: (1) performance evaluation and funding of higher education institutions; (2) efficient and effective production of undergraduate degrees statewide; and (3) connecting degree and certificate production with industry talent needs.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A well-educated population leads to a higher quality of life, a stronger economy and a stronger workforce. The goal of Florida's higher education sectors has always been to increase the number of Floridians that have earned higher education credentials. For more than 6 years, the Council has focused on aligning the growing supply of degrees awarded with the growing demand of Florida employers.

There are four areas the Council considers are priorities for meeting workforce demands and to better serve Florida's citizens and students K-20, now and in the future: **Increasing educational attainment; civic and history literacy; technology access and distance learning; and the alignment and prioritizing of education funding.** Each of these priority areas are clarified in more detail in this *2017 Annual Report*.

Increasing educational attainment is considered a priority for our citizenry by the Council. The first crucial step to motivating increases in student access and degree completion is a statewide goal and in November 2016, the Council unanimously voted to adopt a postsecondary attainment goal for the state of Florida. A strategic plan was also adopted that includes community collaboration. *"Rise to 55"* is the brand for the *Strategic Plan for the Attainment Goal Initiative*.

Florida's Goal: Increase the percentage of working-age adults (ages 25 – 64) who hold a postsecondary degree or high quality credential to 55 percent by the year 2025.

Currently only 47 percent of Floridians age 25 to 64 have a post-secondary degree or certificate. This is not acceptable for our citizens and the future well-being of our families and communities. The Council specifically emphasizes the needs and challenges of Florida's rural districts and urges support for continued collaborative efforts and incentives that recognize and align our statewide delivery sectors to ensure success of a higher level of education attainment.

Throughout 2017, working with education and business partners, the Council has piloted regional workshops to accelerate awareness of the value and benefit of degree attainment and credentials, and stimulate involvement and leadership by stakeholders in raising their local levels of education attainment. Blending both student-credential-completion performance accountability with targeted-population-first-credential-attainment performance accountability requires clarification of data, effective policy, strategy, and scale issues. Statewide and district collaboration, research, and germane community data will inform regional goals and strategic initiatives for each of Florida's communities. With support from two grants awarded by the Lumina Foundation and the

Helios Education Foundation, funding is provided to facilitate these constructive workshops, valuable informational resources, and materials.

Going further, the Council recognizes that Florida's smaller and rural school districts face difficult challenges which affect the delivery of quality educational services. From a low tax base and fewer staff, to transportation costs and an economy of scale – these issues impact students and their future. Strong attention and consideration must be paid to rural districts. We urge the Legislature to support and continue to encourage local and regional collaboration for strategic initiatives to raise education levels.

Civic and history literacy matters. It matters to economic development and the world of work. For communities to thrive and for our state to compete in the global era requires Floridians across all boundaries to be informed, aware and engaged. Our students have access to information, but often face challenges to become civically literate. Knowing how our economy functions, how our government institutions are designed to operate, how our rights and constitutional liberties apply in our lives and what we have learned from history are valuable tools for helping our citizens actively participate and initiate change for the benefit of their communities and or society. This awareness is a skill that must be taught to a level of proficiency which ensures continuity of this knowledge and sustainability of our form of government and economic structure.

Quoting Thomas Jefferson, "*An educated citizenry is a vital requisite for our survival as a free people,*" the Council recommends and supports increasing civic and history literacy, in addition to degree and certification attainment. Civic literacy and participation requires a contextual understanding of the important issues affecting individuals and communities, and thus, proficiency in the basic tenets of our economic system, system of governance, constitutional liberties and U.S. History provide a contextual consciousness about how issues affect individuals, communities and our nation. These issues are the foundation by which a democratic society functions and is able to survive.

We commend the Florida Legislature for the 2017 passage of legislation amending Florida Statutes Section 1007.25, to designate the month of September as "American Founders' Month" and authorizing the Governor to annually issue a proclamation.

The amendment revised the priorities of the state's K-20 education system to include civic literacy. (s. 683.1455, F.S.) and requires all *initially entering students* to demonstrate competency in civic literacy upon entering a Florida College System institution or State University System of Florida institution in 2018-2019, or thereafter. Also required is the appointment of a faculty committee by the Chairs of the State Board of Education and Board of Governors to develop a new civic literacy course, or revise an existing U.S. History or U.S. Government course to include the civic literacy content. The committee would also establish course competencies and identify outcomes. Faculty workgroups have been meeting this fall on the *Postsecondary Civics Literacy Project*. More details regarding the work of the project members are included in the **2017 Annual Report**.

Another priority area is **technology access and distance education** to provide greater opportunities and affordability for students of all ages. Distance education may be the only access point for large populations of learners of multiple ages who do not have colleges and universities or other institutions in their communities.

To advance educational attainment, economic development, health care, and county growth the Council is recommending the expansion of residential access to the internet infrastructure and locally customized distance learning in schools. The Council also commends the Legislature for authorizing Florida's participation in the National Council for State Authorization Reciprocity Agreements, a decision which will result in greater choices for students.

Among the most pressing issues higher education faces right now are access and affordability. The Board of Governors asked the Higher Education Coordinating Council to review the digital accessibility issues in Florida.

Beginning on page 20 of the *2017 Annual Report* we have provided an expanded summary which outlines suggestions for statewide collaboration to develop implementation strategies to finish Florida's residential and school Internet Infrastructure and utilize it fully to provide access to customized/higher education distance learning programs in all 67 Florida counties. The entire review study of digital access issues is included at this end of the report.

Further, to provide more access to postsecondary education, lower costs, and enable students to raise their level of educational attainment, the Council supported participation in the State Authorization Reciprocity Agreement (SARA). This agreement establishes a state-level reciprocity process and is intended to make it easier for students to take online courses offered by postsecondary institutions based in another state.

National research indicates that K-20 students' use of technology greatly enhances education. Students are able to take learning into their own hands and are able to personalize their education experience. It can no longer be assumed the traditional classroom, faculty and text books, by themselves, in a knowledge economy driven by technology, are the most effective way to teach all children the skills they will need in tomorrow's economy. The lack of, or limited access to, emerging technology tools will hold back education and may disengage young people from learning opportunities.

Many Florida counties face challenges when it comes to technology and distance learning. Though we fare better than some in the nation, within the state 29 counties are considered underserved or trailing in sufficient internet access. Nearly 700,000 Floridians do not currently have sufficient access to distance learning programs. These programs also require greater download and upload speeds. Access, affordability of quality equipment, and connection costs are just some of the challenges faced by students.

Subsequent to the Florida Legislature's authorization for the state's participation in SARA, Florida was approved by the Southern Regional Education Board in August 2017. The state joined 47 other participating states, plus the District of Columbia and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Florida began accepting applications from institutions for SARA participation on October 17, 2017.

Also created in the legislation is the **Postsecondary Reciprocal Distance Education Coordinating (PRDEC) Council**. Members of the PRDEC include members of the Higher Education Coordinating Council. The role of the PRDEC is to provide oversight and guidance to postsecondary institutions in the State of Florida that elect to follow the national standards for interstate offering of postsecondary distance education courses and programs. An in-State institution seeking approval to participate in SARA shall submit an application to the Council.

The Council Members are:

The Commissioner of Education,
 also serves as the Council's chair
 The Chancellor of the State University System
 The Chancellor of the Florida College System
 The Executive director of the Commission for Independent Education,
 The President of the Independent Colleges and Universities of Florida
 also serves as the Council's Vice Chair

A function of PRDEC is to recommend rules to the State Board of Education for approval. The rules are necessary in order for Florida to join the entity that administers a reciprocity agreement among 47 states. The rules govern Florida institutions' participation in distance education through NC-SARA's agreement.

Our fourth priority is **accountability**. Since its inception the Council has concentrated on accountability which is fundamental to quality access, and affordability. Going forward from 2017, we must continue to carefully consider how limited public dollars are spent on higher education. The Council remains strongly committed to the concept that each institution or sector that receives either direct, or through student merit or need-based financial aid, state appropriations should annually submit to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House a report that represents the institution or sector's performance in achieving students access, retention, graduation rates, and student employment or continued study within one year of graduation.

The Council further suggests that these reportable variables be reviewed periodically and adjusted to accommodate variations, modifications and innovations in the delivery systems and institutions engaged in providing higher education.

In Florida performance-based funding has focused the discussion about higher education's alignment with the state's highest priorities in terms of "outcomes." Both the university system and the college system have performance funding models with metrics adopted for the universities by the Board of Governors and for the colleges by the State Board of Education. Under the formulas for both systems, the state funding appropriated by the Legislature for performance funding will be matched by an equal amount reallocated from each institution's base funding.

The following *Report* expounds on each of these four priority areas.

2017 ANNUAL REPORT

This 2017 Annual Report provides actionable recommendations to the Governor, Legislature, higher education sectors, state agencies and the Articulation Coordinating Committee. The Report is submitted in fulfillment of Section (S.) 1004.015(5), Florida Statutes and outlines recommendations relating to:

- (1) The primary core mission of public and nonpublic postsecondary education institutions;
- (2) Performance outputs and outcomes;
- (3) The state's articulation policies and practices; and
- (4) Workforce development education.

The Council's annual recommendations are consistent with the following guiding principles:

- To achieve within existing resources a seamless academic educational system that fosters an integrated continuum of kindergarten through graduate school education for Florida's students;
- To promote consistent education policy across all educational delivery systems, focusing on students;
- To promote substantially improved articulation across all educational delivery systems;
- To promote a system that maximizes educational access and allows the opportunity for a high quality education for all Floridians;
- To promote a system of coordinated and consistent transfer of credit and data collection for improved accountability purposes between the education delivery systems.

2017 RECOMMENDATIONS

Priority #1 Increase Educational Attainment in Florida

A well-educated population leads to a higher quality of life, a stronger economy and a stronger workforce. The goal of Florida's higher education sectors has always been to increase the number of Floridians who have earned higher education credentials. And for more than 6 years, the Council has focused on aligning the growing supply of degrees awarded with the growing demand of Florida employers. In 2016, the Council established a statewide goal for the state of Florida: Increase the percentage of working-age adults (ages 25 - 64) who hold a postsecondary degree or high quality credential to 55 percent by the year 2025. Included in the Council's Strategic Plan for the Attainment Goal Initiative (Rise to 55) is community collaboration.

A primary objective of the strategic plan is to identify ways to work with the state's rural and underserved populations to increase the attainment levels statewide and within specific counties. In recent months and to continue in 2018, the Council will be working with stakeholders to build community networks and identify champions to increase educational attainment articulating a clear message about what attainment is and what it means for Floridians.

In 2014, Florida's educational attainment rate was estimated to be 45.9 percent. Florida recognizes that 55 percent is a stretch goal for several reasons. One reason is the large influx of new residents (ages 25 to 64) moving to Florida. In 2015-16 the annual population change was 334,155 people with just over 300,000 people migrating to the state. Florida is also home to a diverse array of communities and populations that data suggest are underserved. The Lumina "A Stronger Nation" policy brief for Florida reports that of the 67 counties in Florida, 21 have an educational attainment level of less than 20 percent, 39 counties have an attainment level between 20 and 40 percent, and only 7 counties have an educational attainment level above 40 percent with only Leon county being at the goal of 55.01 percent. We also are aware that there are achievement gaps in education that need to be closed.

The State Board of Education's newly adopted Strategic Plan recognizes these gaps and is committed to closing them. These shifts in population and uneven levels of educational attainment for populations within Florida reinforce the need for potential changes to the state's economy to provide greater opportunities for citizens with high quality education credentials.

The Higher Education Coordinating Council intends to encourage leadership and engagement of the Florida Legislature, Governor's office and policy makers for supporting this goal. In addition, the Council will continue to obtain and review data

and resources, as well as conduct community and regional meetings with heads of business and industry and sector leaders. Respecting and supporting the existing efforts and initiatives that have been instituted by various sectors we recognize that it is crucial to prioritize resources and align our statewide delivery efforts to ensure success of this goal. Postsecondary education sectors must have a common message that is supported by all of our governing boards and elected officials.

Rural Districts

The Florida Legislature and the Council recognize that being small and rural has an impact on the delivery of quality educational services throughout the State of Florida. Some of the influencing factors including a low tax base affecting funds for instruction and capital outlay needs; few district administrators and staff to implement state and federal initiatives; and high transportation costs in sparsely populated areas.

The Legislature has responded with several initiatives to assist these counties in overcoming some of the challenges such as sparse funding to offset the economy of scale, specialty facility construction funding, base level funding with grant programs, including technology and safe schools programs; and compression and equalization of millage provisions to offset fiscal limitations within the Florida Education Funding Program. The Council appreciates the support from the Legislature and encourages efforts to assist small and rural districts to overcome challenges and provide for a quality education.

Florida's Attainment Goal Initiative

According to the Lumina Foundation, 60 percent of Americans will need a college degree, workforce certificate, industry certification or other high-quality postsecondary credential. Florida's Department of Economic Opportunity estimates Florida will add six million more residents by 2030, and will need to create two million net new jobs. There are educational attainment gaps that must be closed in order to prepare for the anticipated economic shifts Florida will experience. Florida has a strategic opportunity to close attainment gaps that will have economic and generational benefits for Florida's residents.

The Higher Education Coordinating Council understands the most powerful indicator of economic development and healthy communities is educational attainment, and is committed to ensuring Florida has the talent needed to meet the growing economy and population. On November 28, 2016, the Council approved a motion to establish a statewide attainment goal of 55 percent to be reached by the year 2025. Members asked Chancellor Pumariega to lead the Council's effort to increase Florida's attainment level from 47 percent to 55 percent by 2025.

Representatives from Florida attended a national Lumina Attainment meeting, including the president of the Florida Philanthropic Network; a representative from the Florida College Access Network; and the Board of Governors. At the same meeting the

Florida delegation had the opportunity to share the Higher Education Coordinating Council's work plan with the Chief Operating Officer for the Helios Foundation.

Florida was then invited to submit an application for an Attainment Challenge Grant from the Lumina Foundation. The foundation's program is committed to support states with up to \$100,000 for developing and implementing evidence-based policies to improve student success, close equity gaps, and help states reach a robust postsecondary attainment goal. An application on behalf of the Higher Education Coordinating Council was submitted by The Florida College System Foundation. The \$100,000 Attainment Challenge Grant was awarded from Lumina to engage in efforts from March 2017 through April 2018 that promotes the state's attainment goal. In addition to the Lumina Grant, the Helios Education Foundation awarded a \$100,000 Attainment Match Grant to support the Council's attainment efforts.

Four strategies were applied to conduct this work (1) Research, (2) Regional Convenings, (3) State Convenings, and (4) Communications to build stakeholder support networks and identify champions to increase educational attainment and the importance for the State of Florida. Financial support from the Lumina Attainment Challenge Grant and the Helios Florida Partnership for Attainment Match Grant allowed the Higher Education Coordinating Council to conduct research to identify key drivers of attainment, conduct convenings to engage business and community leaders across the state, and develop communications to inform business and communities of the importance of attainment.

Research was conducted in conjunction with Department of Economic Opportunity, Office of Economic and Demographic Research and the Florida Chamber of Commerce Foundation to assess the impact of the approximately 1,000 new Floridians each day. The research expanded on county-level analyses contained in Lumina's *A Stronger Nation* report, and provided information needed to make attainment relevant at local levels. The outcome of this work helped formulate the communications campaign around the goal and reaffirmed all efforts related to increasing attainment. In addition, this research is shared at local regional convenings.

On April 6, 2017, the Florida College System Chancellor, Madeline Pumariega, convened college system presidents, college administrators, community partners, and funders to participate in the Chancellor's Best Practice summit. The summit provided a unique opportunity to disseminate the attainment message from the HECC to the institutional level and gain buy-in from the colleges who will have a significant role in increasing the state's attainment level and ultimately reaching the goal. Representatives from the 28 Florida College System institutions attended this convening, and learned more information about attainment and the economic benefits of attainment.

The Florida Department of Education Commissioner, Pam Stewart, held a convening with K-12 superintendents and the 28 Florida College System presidents on May 24, 2017. This convening provided an opportunity for superintendents and

presidents to discuss collaborative partnerships to increase attainment and reduce achievement gaps. Superintendents sat with their respective college presidents, reviewed regional attainment and achievement data, and began to develop targeted partnerships to increase attainment. For many, this was the first opportunity for key leaders to review and discuss attainment in their region. The outcome of this meeting was an expanded set of knowledgeable stakeholders who support the educational attainment goal of Florida through actionable steps to create change in their communities.

On July 31, 2017, on behalf of the Higher Education Coordinating Council, the Florida College System Foundation contracted with a communications firm to produce a marketing strategy and materials to support outreach activities, convenings and local work plan efforts. The “Rise to 55” logo and templates for publications were developed to communicate information and activities of the attainment work. The firm also coordinates the issuance of press releases for statewide and regional convenings to engage communities and raise awareness of Florida’s attainment goal. Public-friendly reports and publications will be developed to promote the outcomes of statewide and regional convenings. At the conclusion of the last convening, a report and toolkit will be developed to summarize outcomes, provide information on the importance of attainment, offer strategies for increasing attainment rates, and supply resources on how to establish local college access networks.

On October 20, 2017, the first regional convening took place in the North Florida region at North Florida Community College in Madison, Florida. Business leaders from across the North Florida Region learned about the importance of Florida’s educational attainment goal and discussed strategies to increase attainment rates in their local counties. Council members Michelle Dennard (CareerSource Florida) and Representative Elizabeth Porter also attended and participated in the event.

The Gulf Coast Regional convening took place on November 13, 2017 at Florida State University-Panama City in Panama City, FL. Business and education leaders from across the Gulf Coast Region were invited to discuss the importance of Florida’s educational attainment goal and discuss strategies to increase attainment. In addition to representation from the Lumina Foundation and Florida College Access Network, area industry leaders participated on panels to share insights on attainment and its importance for the local economy.

The regional convenings have shown indicators of success with local communities who are communicating with Florida College Access Network for assistance in establishing local college access networks in the North Florida and Gulf Coast regions. Business owners have also expressed interest in hosting meetings on attainment to inform their colleagues and communities members on the importance of educational attainment. There was also a legislative request, and Florida College Access Network presented to the Higher Education and Workforce House Subcommittee. In addition, Representative

Elizabeth Porter further discussed what occurred at the North Florida Regional convening during the Subcommittee Meeting.

Planning for the Tampa, Orlando, and Miami regional convenings are underway. Higher Education Coordinating Council staff are working with consultants and community partners such as the United Way and local college access networks to host the remaining convenings.

Priority #2 Civic and History Literacy

The Council commends the 2017 Florida Legislature for amending Section 1007.25, Florida Statutes, to require *initially entering students* to demonstrate competency in civic literacy upon entering a Florida College System institution or state university in 2018-2019 or thereafter. The amendment also requires the Chairs of the State Board of Education and Board of Governors to jointly appoint a faculty committee to develop a new civic literacy course, or revise an existing general education course to include the civic literacy content.

The committee is charged with establishing course competencies and identifying outcomes that include, at minimum, the following:

- An understanding of the basic principles of American democracy and how they are applied in our republican form of government.
- An understanding of the U.S. Constitution.
- Knowledge of the founding documents and how they have shaped the nature and functions of our institutions of self-governance.
- An understanding of landmark Supreme Court cases and their impact on law and society.

The established faculty committee has been meeting this fall on the *Postsecondary Civics Literacy Project*. Their recommendations are included below.

Faculty Committee Recommendations

Course options for students to demonstrate civic literacy

- 1) AMH X020, INTRODUCTORY SURVEY SINCE 1877, modified to include approved course competencies for civic literacy
- 2) POS X041, AMERICAN GOVERNMENT, modified to include approved course competencies for civic literacy
- 3) A new course (course prefix and course number to be determined) that would be available statewide and would not be part of the General Education Core and would include the approved course competencies for civic literacy

Course competencies and outcomes

- 1) Understanding of the basic principles and practices of American democracy and how they are applied in our republican form of government
- 2) An understanding of the United States Constitution and its application
- 3) Knowledge of the founding documents and how they have shaped the nature and functions of our institutions of self-governance
- 4) An understanding of landmark Supreme Court cases, landmark legislation, and landmark executive actions, and their impact on law and society

The Council recommends a continued strong emphasis on history knowledge and the active participation in community and society, to increase awareness in civic and community affairs across economic, racial and regional boundaries.

A Nation at Risk, the 1983 report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education:

“Our concern . . . includes the intellectual, moral, and spiritual strengths of our people which knit together the very fabric of our society. . . For our country to function, citizens must be able to reach some common understandings on complex issues, often on short notice and on the basis of conflicting or incomplete evidence. Education helps form these common understandings.”

The Florida Legislature has it right, and must continue to push not only for exposure to civic education, but ensure proficiency in its basic tenets. As the 1983 Report of the National Commission on Excellence in Education states, our citizens must be able to deconstruct complex issues and reach consensus on those issues. An understanding of how our economic system functions, how it benefits society and the consequences of alternative systems is critical in its applicability to helping put today’s problems in context. A working knowledge of U.S. History and America’s place in the world, combined with a comprehension of the U.S. Constitution and its implications on the evolution of our nation are key ingredients to our nation’s continued ability to confront problems. And finally, a working knowledge of how our government institutions are designed to work is not only practical, but essential, in order for society to fulfill the constitutional intent of ensuring the appropriate limits to government which preserve individual liberty.

The Council urges the Legislature to continue monitoring the progress of our students in order to ensure not only exposure to these tenets, but a proficiency which will provide the best chance for our form of government and economy to thrive.

Priority #3 Technology Access and Distance Learning - Including Reciprocity

To advance educational attainment, economic development, health care and county growth the Council is recommending the expansion of residential access to the internet infrastructure and locally customized distance learning in schools.

For centuries, higher education has required a classroom, an instructor and students. Today, a second higher education design has emerged ... distance learning. Scores of Florida colleges and universities offer more than a thousand fully online certificates and degrees. Tens of thousands of Floridians are using this new second design.

The Federal Communication Commission (FCC) found that higher education distance learning programs are most successful when a student can connect using a fixed-line Internet connection, not a mobile phone or tablet. The FCC determined that the minimum Internet access speed of 25 Mbps (Mega-Bits-Per-Second) for downloading and 3 Mbps for uploading is necessary for successful residential access to distance learning programs. Based on this FCC standard, nearly 700,000 Floridians cannot currently access higher education distance learning programs from home. Many more students statewide do not have the technology or training to take courses online successfully. Those students need a nearby site for support like a school, technology center or library.

The FCC has also determined that the current minimum goal for a school's connection to the Internet should provide 100 Kilo-Bits-Per-Second (Kbps) per student. Ten school districts in Florida have not yet reached this goal, according to the *Education Superhighway*, a national distance learning research group.

Fortunately, Florida's growth along its coastlines and inter-state highways has induced Private Sector Internet Service Providers to finance and construct Florida's Internet Infrastructure. It is nearly complete and currently reaches more than 95% of Florida residences with fixed-line connections.

Fortunately, the State of Florida and school district leaders have been developing Digital Classrooms that access distance learning for students in public PreK-12 schools. Potentially, other distance learning students in the community could use those Digital Classrooms after school, in the evening, on weekends and during the summer.

RECOMMENDATION: Based on the Council's review and consequent report, the Council recommends that a statewide team of educator, employer, county and state leaders, working with Private Sector Internet Infrastructure and Technology Providers

should develop implementation strategies, recommend best practices, identify other resources and convene regional meeting to boost Florida's residential and school Internet Infrastructure and utilize it fully to provide access to customized/higher education distance learning programs in all 67 Florida counties.

The Board of Governors of the State University System asked the Higher Education Coordination Council (HECC) to review the status of Florida's distance learning accessibility challenge. This distance learning challenge is a critical **intra-state challenge** that follows-up on HECC's **inter-state NC-SARA work**. HECC asked Dr. Ed Moore, ICUF President and a member of HECC, to undertake a detailed review of connectivity in Florida. The report to HECC found the following:

Florida's higher education sectors could deliver higher education certificates and degrees to hundreds of thousands of working adults, as well as traditional high school and college students, who currently cannot find a campus or an educational program to advance their job prospects in their community. School districts could provide support and coaching in their Digital Classrooms to these post-secondary education students. Florida is one of the few large states that can do this. Florida is poised to be a national leader.

The state has unique demographics that induced private sector investment and rapid development of Internet service throughout the state. The state's Internet Infrastructure for residents and schools is nearly completed. The addition of hundreds of thousands of new customers from their homes and schools is a powerful inducement to Internet Service Providers to expand and complete the state's Internet Infrastructure.

Florida could be the state with the most ambitious, aggressive and advanced distance learning strategy and future in the nation. This would offer higher education opportunities to every motivated Floridian to upgrade their education, their skills and their future. Along with Florida's site-based education programs, distance learning could boost Florida's workforce in every county, providing access to hundreds of thousands of Floridians in higher-education/under-served communities. Florida counties would be able to customize their workforce, to support economic development, use online medical and health care services in underserved counties and to grow their populations.

This report presents the 14 implementation strategies of a study, *Expanding Residential Access to the Internet Infrastructure & Locally Customized Distance Learning at Schools to Advance Educational Attainment, Economic Development, Health Care, and County Growth*. *The full study is in the appendix of this report.

The implementation strategies outline affordable and immediately available options to boost educational attainment, economic development, health care services and growth in each of Florida's 67 counties, beginning in 2018.

- 1) Convene an Internet Connection Team to finish Florida's residential and school Internet Infrastructure
- 2) Invite local partners to develop 67 County/School District Customize Distance Learning Plans
- 3) Use school Digital Classrooms to provide coaching/support for high school, college and adult students
- 4) Employ funding resources from federal, foundation, state, local and corporate donors
- 5) Explore and develop with Internet Service Providers lower-cost, unlimited data education plans
- 6) Use state and local government's purchasing leverage with service providers to advance these efforts
- 7) Encourage Career Source Florida to open Transitional Distance Learning Centers at One-Stops
- 8) Enlist Public Broadcasting & the Sunshine State Network to expand content for distance learners
- 9) Identify other fixed-line Internet Infrastructure priorities in under-served communities.
- 10) Have DMS & the Office of State Technology explore multi-sector contracting
- 11) Have higher education sectors create training courses for educators on distance learning instruction
- 12) Design, develop & disseminate multilingual tools for physically challenged & multi-lingual students
- 13) Periodically review emerging technology & advances that may alter existing distance learning plans
- 14) Work with Private Sector Internet Service Providers & state/local leaders to affect these advances

IMPLEMENTATION STRATEGIES

STRATEGY 1:

Statewide Internet Connection Team - Mark Wilson, president of the Florida Chamber of Commerce, has stated in the Chamber's Cornerstone Series Report *Florida Jobs 2030*, "Talent is quickly replacing the tax incentive as the economic development tool of choice." He is correct. For Florida and the 67 counties, a knowledgeable and highly skilled workforce is rapidly becoming the best route to success. That means twenty million Floridians and six million soon to arrive future residents will need knowledge and skills updates and upgrades. Florida's Education System can deliver those updates and upgrades. To do that, it will need to engage all of its current educators, schools and campuses, as well as distance learning programs. Campuses cannot be near everyone. Campus schedules cannot accommodate every working adult's schedule. Campus programs cannot adapt rapidly to meet each county's changing emerging needs. Distance learning can. It can fill in education accessibility gaps. It can boost educational attainment in educationally under-served communities. It can reach students not yet served statewide. Florida has a unique demography along its coasts and interstate highways. This has induced private sector investments and rapid development of the state's Internet Infrastructure. That Internet Infrastructure for residents and schools is nearly completed.

A **Statewide Internet Connection Team** of school district, college, university, employer, county and state leaders should work to have fixed-line, high-speed Internet connections for distance learning programs accessible by all Floridians in their homes and nearby technology centers and schools. This will deliver huge educational, economic development, health care and county benefits to every county and school district in the state. The time to finish that infrastructure and use it innovatively is now. Florida should be a national leader. This team should outline parameters to guide local efforts to ensure local options and control yet follow guidelines.

STRATEGY 2:

Sixty Seven County/School District Plans - This Statewide Team should design a model memorandum of understanding that each county's leadership (education, employer and government) could use to develop their distance learning development plan. That plan should augment existing local educational capacities to boost educational attainment, economic development, health care and county growth. Each plan could include distance learning courses and degrees for high school dual enrollment, traditional college students, and non-traditional college students that would prepare graduates for

employment and careers in that county. A provision of each plan could allow additional courses and degrees proposed by economic developers and employers to prepare residents for emerging workforce needs. The plans could outline a procedure to enlist the providers of online programs to deliver these priority courses and degrees. The plans could describe the agreements with distance learning providers to use school district's schools and technical centers to provide, academic coaching, technology support and testing services, as well as to provide district teachers with on-line continuing education, credential coursework and advanced degrees.

Impressive school district Digital Classroom progress positions district schools as potential hubs to expand higher education distance learning programs. Potentially, every school district could host a distance learning university for dual enrollment, traditional, non-traditional, active military, military veteran and military family students. Much like school districts hire coaches each season for each sport offered, every school could develop IT coaches to be available after school, evenings, weekends, and during the summer to "coach" distance learning students. These "distance learning coaches" could be compensated through distance learning scholarships. After-hours security and facility maintenance could likewise be provided by deputy sheriffs and facility custodians compensated through distance learning scholarships.

STRATEGY 3:

School District Schools and the FCC E-Rate – In higher education/under-served communities, schools could be a "distance learning service hub" for several reasons. They are the most widely available and accessible educational facilities in every county. They have an ongoing and successful Digital Classroom Plans. They are already providing K-12 distance learning programs to students. They are available after K-12 classes each day, in the evening, on weekends and during the summer. They are, already staffed with educators from the community, who are, already educating residents. These services and facilities could, also earn funds for the school district. In addition, there is the E-rate from the Federal Communication Commission (FCC). The FCC launched the E-rate program in 1996 to connect the nation's schools and libraries to broadband. It is the federal government's largest educational technology program.

When E-rate was established, only 14 percent of the nation's K-12 classrooms had access to the Internet. Today, virtually all schools have Internet access. As technology and distance learning changes, updating and upgrading continues through this well-funded federal program. The E-rate program can support innovative digital learning technologies that connect students, teachers and consumers to jobs, life-long learning and information.

In Florida, this program is coordinated through the Department of Management Services. Working with the Department, the Statewide Team should explore this funding source to boost county/school district plans and services from schools districts, as well as potentially libraries.

STRATEGY 4:

Other Federal, Foundation, State, Local, and Corporate Support - Local students preparing for local jobs and careers through distance learning benefits local students, employers and counties. Students will be able to attain higher education from their homes and sites in their community instead of relocating. In many communities, when students must relocate to continue their education, they must break their employment and community ties. They often do not return. This situation can lead to a constant exodus of the brightest minds that a community most needs, leaving a void of knowledgeable individuals and skilled workers.

These county/school district plans will also reduce student travel costs and lost time, as well as missed classes at a distant college or university, often 30 minutes or more away. These students are already community invested, often already employed there. They will most likely reinvest their acquired knowledge and skills in their communities. With expanded higher education program possibilities, smaller counties will be able to expand and enhance their economic development project proposals to new, expanding and relocating employers. They will be able to offer tailored, local education programs for new jobs creators. Connecting to Telemedicine services and distance learning health care programs is an emerging opportunity to boost health care and to address chronic shortages in the health care workforce of every county.

The Statewide Team should explore and develop federal, foundation, state, local and corporate funding opportunities, resources and grants to advance these local plans.

STRATEGY 5:

Unlimited Data Educational Plans - If the installation of “wired” infrastructure is impractical or not recommended in some county plans, the required high-speed internet might be delivered using cellular carriers through a specialized education data plan. Current barriers to this technology revolve around the consumer’s cost for data plans and the reach/capacity of wireless infrastructure currently in place. Online courses require large data downloads. Cellular companies struggle to provide enough capacity for unlimited downloads. That results in “throttling” or slowing down use by power users. Possible solutions to explore could include, but not be limited to, providing incentives to

carriers across the state to develop unlimited data education plans. These users would pay lower rates for unlimited data access to limited educational-only content. Students in urban and rural communities would benefit from reduced cost & increase access.

STRATEGY 6:

Using State Government to Promote Local Access - The State of Florida and local government are the largest consumer of Internet Infrastructure connections from private sector Internet Service Providers. State government should work to leverage relationships with private sector Internet Service Providers for the expansion of high-speed Internet connections to all Floridians.

Florida's executive and legislative branch leaders should coordinate various state government efforts that affect the Internet Infrastructure to extend, expand and enhance its use to boost educational attainment, economic development, health care and county growth statewide. These leaders should enlist the Public Service Commission, Agency for State Technology, Department of Management Services and other agencies to help.

STRATEGY 7:

Career Source Florida Engagement - The CareerSource Florida network should be asked to review the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act Eligible Training Provider List, state and local to evaluate opportunities to expand access to online training by adding where appropriate, approved training providers (whose services meet WIOA job-driven training guidelines and deliver high-value certificates or other postsecondary credentials that address in-demand occupations as identified by local workforce development boards and are aligned with county/school district distant learning development plans).

STRATEGY 8:

Other Public Communication Tools - The Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) should review with the Florida Public Broadcasting Network the possibility of off-hour statewide broadcast of distance learning programs that schools, technology centers, colleges, universities, libraries and *Career Source Florida* could record and use. FLDOE should also review the possibility of the Sunshine State Television Network broadcasting college and university courses during off-hours that schools, technology centers, colleges, universities, libraries and **Career Source** could record and use. The Governor & Space Florida should initiate discussions with Amazon to develop future satellite Internet Infrastructure for Florida.

STRATEGY 9:

Other Internet Infrastructure Upgrade Priorities - The Office of Planning & Budget should develop an inventory of high-priority targets for expansion of Florida's Internet Infrastructure. Hospitals should be on this high-priority target list and could be included in County/School District plans to expand the reach of distance learning to health care/hospital staff and to promote Telemedicine.

STRATEGY 10:

Contracting - Working with the Agency for State Technology and the Department of Management Services, the Statewide Internet Connection Team should explore the cost savings for the higher education sectors, educational institutions and students from multi-sector contracts or purchasing plans for digital equipment and Internet access.

STRATEGY 11:

Training Educators In Technology Instruction - A work group of educators and distance learning staff from the education sectors, working with technology and employer groups should identify or create courses, industry certifications, and degree programs that prepare school, college and university educators and technology staffs to deliver distance learning instruction to students successfully.

STRATEGY 12:

Multi-lingual and Challenged Students - The State should launch an enterprise that would include staff members from state and independent and private colleges and universities, the School for the Deaf and Blind, the Able Trust and *Career Source Florida*. This enterprise would design, develop and disseminate multi-lingual tools (digital content, training & aps) that would expand and enrich distance learning online services and support for challenged and multi-lingual learners.

STRATEGY 13:

Staying Caught Up to Technology's Future - A group that includes the Governor, legislators, educators, employers and county reps should convene periodically to discuss Florida's Technology Future with Private-Sector Internet Service Providers and Technology Experts. They would identify and discuss Internet Technology Advancements that could render current statewide and local designs, policies and plans obsolete, could require alterations of current strategies, design, policies and plans or could trigger additional new Internet Infrastructure or technology possibilities.

At these sessions, for example, they could monitor development and sufficiency of Fixed-Wireless Cellular to connect a student's computer, tablet or mobile phone to

distance learning courses and degrees. They could explore ways to increase cellular capacity across the state, particularly in under-served rural areas. The goal of these sessions would be to determine needed changes in Florida's Internet Infrastructure and its use, keeping Florida a regional, national, and hemispheric Internet Infrastructure and distance- learning leader.

STRATEGY 14:

Catch up, Stay Caught Up, Move Ahead, Take the Lead – Previous smart work by private and public decision-makers positions Florida to rapidly and affordably craft the nation's most ambitious and advanced use of distance learning. The building of this second statewide higher education design is nearly completed. Private Sector Internet Service Providers have nearly completed fixed-line connections to all Florida residences. Florida colleges and universities have completed thousands of distance learning courses and more than a thousand fully online degree programs. Public school districts have nearly completed Digital Classroom Plans, connecting every public school to the Internet infrastructure and those courses and degrees.

A remaining challenge for the Statewide Internet Connection Team is to work with the Private Sector Internet Service Providers and complete residential and school Internet connections in each county. County leaders would lead these efforts supported by their school districts, employers and state partners. This will make Florida the first state that can successfully deliver distance learning statewide to all its residences and schools.

The Higher Education Coordinating Council believes this will bring Florida to forefront of higher education distance learning in the nation, boost educational attainment, promote economic development, expand health care services and trigger county growth in all Florida Counties.

Priority #4 Align/Prioritize Education Funding

The Council continues to support that each institution or sector that receives either direct, or through student merit or need-based financial aid, state appropriations should annually submit to the Governor, the President of the Senate, and the Speaker of the House a report that represents the institution or sector's performance in achieving students access, retention, graduation rates, and student employment or continued study.

Further, the Council suggests that reportable variables be reviewed periodically and adjusted to accommodate variations, modifications and innovations in the delivery systems and institutions engaged in providing higher education. By systemically addressing areas of need, institutions can ensure that the educational standing and thereby the workforce of the state continues to improve.

An excellent example is the TEAm Grant Initiative. With the support of Governor Rick Scott and the Florida Legislature awarding \$15 million in 2014, for the Targeted Educational Attainment Grant Program (known as the TEAm Grant Initiative) the State University System and the Florida College System are responding to the state's workforce and closing the state's job gaps at a pace that has produced more high-demand graduates than projected. Through this initiative, universities and colleges were awarded competitive grants to help close the job gaps in computer information and technology and accounting and finance. Both areas were identified by the Commission on Florida Higher Education Access and Degree Attainment as having 1,000 or more annual openings unfilled. To date the programs have exceeded both enrollment and degree attainment projections.

- The University of Central Florida, the University of South Florida and Florida International University received \$4.9 million for An Urban University Coalition Response to Florida Computer Information Technology Workforce Needs.
- The University of South Florida, the University of Central Florida and Florida International University received a combined \$3.6 million for An Innovative and Collaborative Approach to Increasing the Supply of Quality Accounting Graduates in Florida.
- Florida State University and Florida Agricultural and Mechanical University received a combined \$3 million for Expanding North Florida's IT Career Pathways.
- Florida Atlantic University, Broward College and Palm Beach State College received a combined \$3.5 million for a Computer Accelerated Pipeline to Unlock Regional Excellence.

IN ADDITION TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR 2017

The Council suggests key issues to be continued by the Governor, Legislature, higher education sectors, state agencies, and the Articulation Coordinating Committee that include:

1. Encourage and support all education sectors in defining key performance metrics to align with statewide higher education policy and fiscal goals, recognizing that performance benchmarks might differ by delivery sector and program.
2. Broaden the commitment to seamless articulation pathways by incentivizing higher education institutions to increase the number and proportion of transfer students receiving credit towards their intended program of study always keeping in mind issues of accreditation and quality.
3. Expand incentives to promote collaboration between the business community and the education system, utilizing our higher education assets as a component of our economic development activities.
4. Align, prioritize and incentivize education funding to better meet Florida's industry talent needs through the use of the best available labor market intelligence and industry data.

###

HIGHER EDUCATION COORDINATING COUNCIL

Section 1004.015(1), F.S., establishes the membership of the Higher Education Coordinating Council.

One member of the Board of Governors, appointed by the chair of the Board of Governors	Mr. Alan Levine - Chair
The Chancellor of the State University System	Mr. Marshall M. Criser III
The Chancellor of the Florida College System	Ms. Madeline M. Pumariega
One member of the State Board of Education, appointed by the chair of the State Board of Education	Mr. Andy Tuck
The Executive Director of the Florida Association of Postsecondary Schools and Colleges	Mr. Curtis C. Austin
The president of the Independent Colleges and Universities of Florida	Dr. Ed H. Moore
The president of CareerSource Florida, Inc., or his or her designee	Ms. Michelle Dennard
The president of Enterprise Florida, Inc., or a designated member of the Stakeholders Council appointed by the president	Mr. Peter Antonacci
Three representatives of the business community:	
One appointed by the President of the Senate	Mr. Al Stimac, President, Manufacturers Association of Florida
One appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives	Representative Elizabeth Porter
One appointed by the Governor	Kenneth "Ken" Burke, CPA Vice Chair Clerk of the Circuit Court and Comptroller



STATE
UNIVERSITY
SYSTEM
of FLORIDA
Board of Governors



FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION
fldoe.org



ENTERPRISE
FLORIDA™

