

# Professional & Graduate Degree Excellence Program Report

January 2022



# **SUMMARY of STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM of FLORIDA PROFESSIONAL & GRADUATE DEGREE EXCELLENCE PROGRAM**

**January 2022**

## **Introduction**

The Legislature established the Professional and Graduate Degree Excellence Program to support the efforts of the State University System of Florida (SUS) institutions to enhance the quality and excellence of professional and graduate schools in the areas of medicine, law, and business. In addition, the program is intended to expand the economic impact of state universities. Section 1004.6498, Florida Statutes, requires the Florida Board of Governors to summarize and submit information from the SUS institutions on the Professional and Graduate Degree Excellence Program by March 15 each year. The statute requires that the report include information on program expenditures; first-time pass rates on the United States Medical Licensing Examination; first-time pass rates on the Florida Bar Examination; the percentage of graduates enrolled or employed that reflects the added value of a graduate-level business degree; the advancement in the rankings of medicine, law, and graduate-level programs; and the added economic benefit of the universities to the state.

The Legislature originally provided recurring funding to SUS institutions for the Professional and Graduate Degree Excellence Program in fiscal years 2017-18 and 2018-19. However, section 1004.6498, Florida Statutes, which established the program and the reporting requirements, was not signed into law until March of 2018. This report provides information on how the SUS institutions spent funds in fiscal year 2020-21. Recruiting faculty and research scholars can often take longer than a year, and the timing of hiring individuals may depend on a variety of factors. Other metrics such as exam passage rates, employment outcomes, rankings, and economic benefit to the state often take a few years to demonstrate improvements as data collection and reporting timeframes may lag a year or two behind the academic year.

The State University System includes six medical schools, four law schools, and ten institutions with graduate-level business programs.<sup>1</sup> These institutions received funding based on prior performance on indicators such as licensure exam pass rates, employment outcomes, and the number of graduates. In 2020-21, SUS institutions

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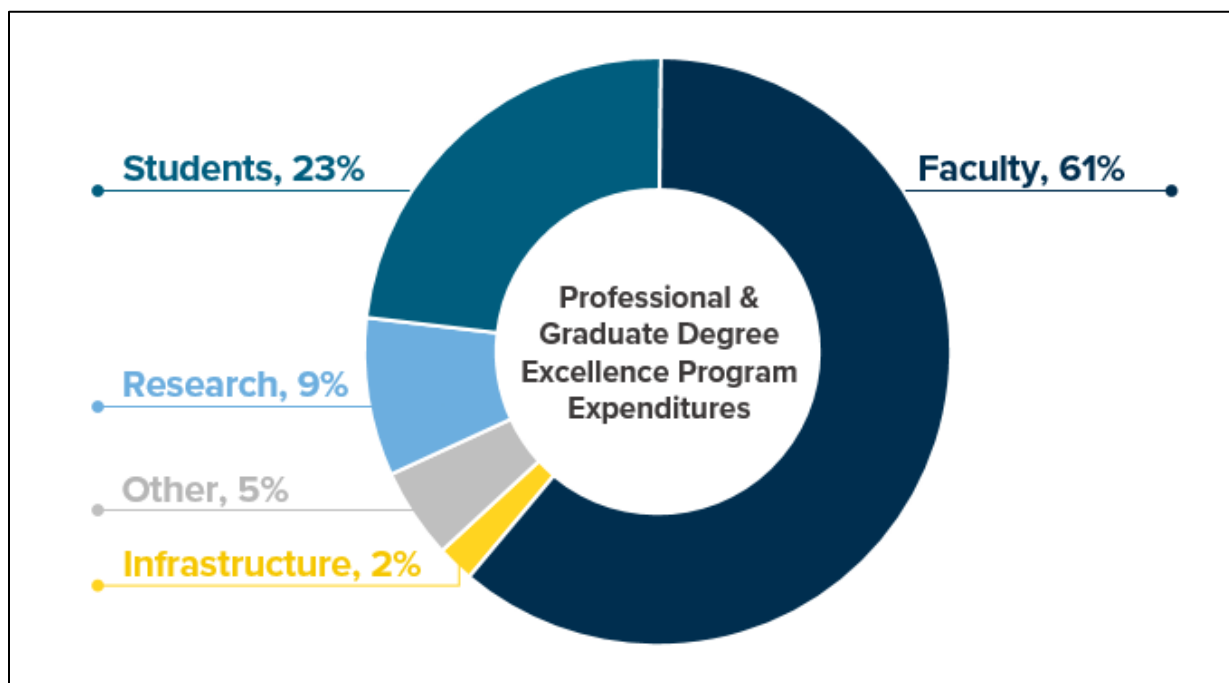
<sup>1</sup> New College of Florida and Florida Polytechnic University did not receive allocations for this program, as neither has a college of medicine, law, or graduate-level business program.

awarded 729 medical degrees, 780 law degrees, and 5,223 graduate-level business degrees. Appendix A provides details of these awards by institution.

## Expenditure Information

Most of the funds from the Professional and Graduate Degree Excellence Program were used to recruit and retain faculty and support student success initiatives. The Legislature provided recurring funding of \$60 million to the SUS institutions in 2020-21 to support the program. Of this, 61% was used to recruit and retain faculty, and 23% was used to support students through a variety of mechanisms. Some examples of student support activities include recruitment, financial aid, licensure examination preparation, and advising. Other activities varied across the medicine, law, and business categories. Exhibit 1 provides an overview of how SUS institutions spent or allocated the funds for the Professional and Graduate Degree Excellence Program in FY 2020-21.

**Exhibit 1**  
**SUS Expenditures of Professional and Graduate Degree Excellence Program Funds, 2020-2021**



Source: Florida Board of Governors staff analysis of data provided by SUS institutions on the Professional and Graduate Degree Excellence Program, fall 2021.

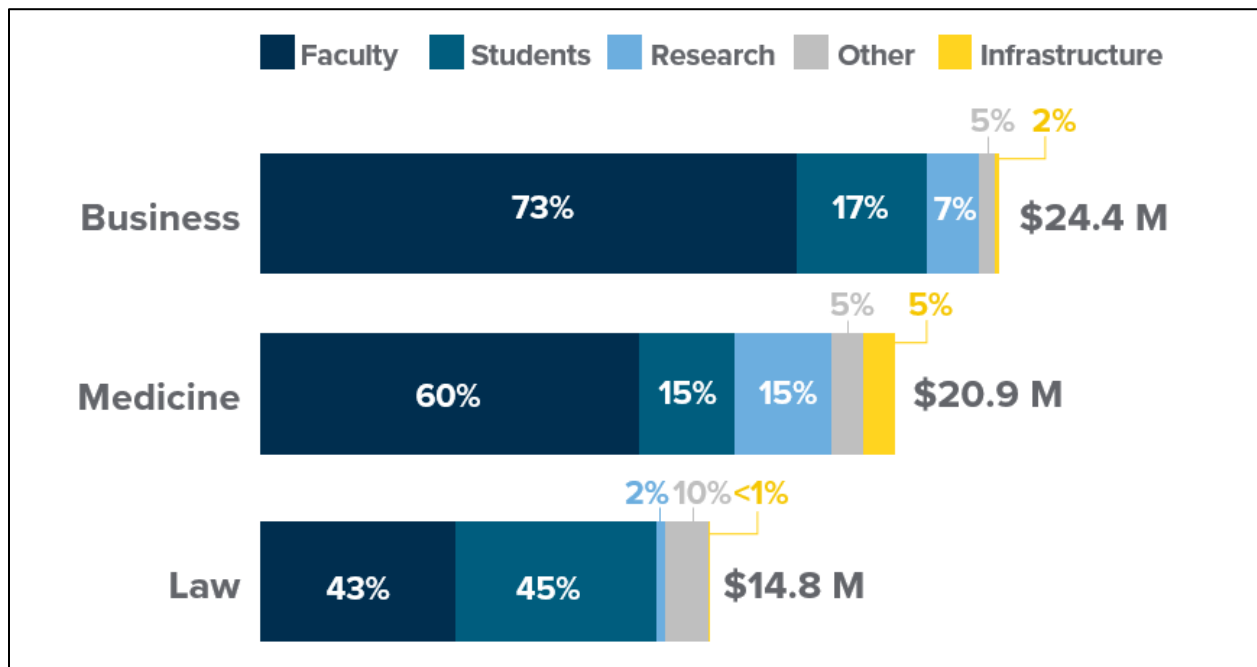
When examining the funds across the program areas of medicine, law, and business, the majority of the funds supported faculty and students. System-wide, institutions expended 29% of the funds spent on faculty on recruitment efforts and the remaining 71% on retaining existing faculty. Faculty expenditures generally supported faculty

salaries and hiring faculty where needed in various departments. Examples of student support expenditures for all three categories included scholarships, fellowships, pay increases for graduate research and teaching assistants, and student recruitment efforts. Exhibit 2 provides an overview of how the funds were spent in FY 2020-21.

- **Medicine:** Over the last year, SUS institutions spent approximately \$20.9 million to support graduate education in medicine. Most of the funds (75%) supported faculty or students, 15% supported medical research efforts, and 5% supported other initiatives such as efforts to improve passage rates on licensure examinations, IT enhancements, and increasing student practical experiences.
- **Law:** SUS institutions spent approximately \$14.8 million on law schools. The majority (88%) of these funds were spent on faculty and students, while the remaining funds were devoted to efforts such as improving national rankings, elevating market awareness of the programs, improving classroom technology, and enhancing instructional delivery mechanisms.
- **Business:** SUS institutions spent approximately \$24.4 million on graduate business education. Most of these funds (90%) were spent on faculty and students, while the remaining funds were spent on other graduate student initiatives, including improving and enhancing the university's infrastructure that supports student success initiatives, recruitment, rankings, and research.

## Exhibit 2

### SUS Expenditures for Professional and Graduate Degree Excellence by Program Area 2020-2021



Source: Florida Board of Governors staff analysis of data provided by SUS institutions on the Professional and Graduate Degree Excellence Program, fall 2021. Percentages may not total to 100% due to rounding.

## Elevating the National Competitiveness of the State University System

One of the primary goals for the Professional and Graduate Degree Excellence Program is to enhance the quality and excellence of professional and graduate schools in the SUS. Section 1004.6498, *Florida Statutes*, requires the Board to report information on the first-time pass rate on the United States Medical Licensing Examination, the first-time pass rate on the Florida Bar Examination, and the percentage of graduates enrolled or employed at a wage threshold that reflects the added value of a graduate-level business degree. While it is still too early to see how this program has influenced metrics, baseline information, where available, is provided below.

## Exam passage rates

SUS medical school graduates do very well on the series of medical licensing examinations. As a System, most graduates meet or exceed national benchmarks on these exams.

### Exhibit 3

#### Summary of U.S. Medical Licensing Exam Performance for the SUS\*

##### U.S. Medical Licensing Exam (USMLE)-Step 1 (2<sup>nd</sup> year of medical school)

| Year | FAU | FIU  | FSU | UCF | UF  | USF | SUS | Benchmark |
|------|-----|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----------|
| 2018 | 95% | 99%  | 99% | 97% | 96% | 98% | 97% | 96%       |
| 2019 | 95% | 100% | 95% | 98% | 97% | 99% | 97% | 97%       |
| 2020 | 97% | 100% | 97% | 98% | 99% | 99% | 98% | 97%       |

##### U.S. Medical Licensing Exam (USMLE)-Step 2 Clinical Knowledge (4<sup>th</sup> year of medical school)

| Year    | FAU  | FIU | FSU | UCF | UF   | USF | SUS | Benchmark |
|---------|------|-----|-----|-----|------|-----|-----|-----------|
| 2017-18 | 98%  | 99% | 96% | 99% | 99%  | 98% | 99% | 97%       |
| 2018-19 | 100% | 99% | 97% | 98% | 100% | 96% | 98% | 98%       |
| 2019-20 | 100% | 99% | 97% | 98% | 100% | 99% | 99% | 98%       |

\*In January 2021, U.S. Medical Licensing Exam discontinued the Step 2 Clinical Skills exam due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Source: State University System Accountability Plan, 2021.

State University System law school graduates also perform well on the Florida Bar Exam. Four of the five law schools exceeded the benchmark for all exam takers in Florida. Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University (FAMU) identified plans to use funds from the Professional and Graduate Degree Excellence Program to improve graduate passage rates on the Florida Bar Exam. As part of the annual Accountability Plan review process, FAMU provided the Board of Governors with an improvement plan for passage rates for the Law program on September 16, 2020, and an update on the status of that improvement plan in January 2022.

#### **Exhibit 4**

#### **Passage Rates on the Florida Bar Exam**

| <b>Year</b> | <b>FAMU</b> | <b>FIU</b> | <b>FSU</b> | <b>UF</b>  | <b>SUS</b> | <b>Benchmark</b> |
|-------------|-------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------------|
| <b>2018</b> | <b>47%</b>  | <b>88%</b> | <b>83%</b> | <b>68%</b> | <b>72%</b> | <b>66%</b>       |
| <b>2019</b> | <b>57%</b>  | <b>94%</b> | <b>85%</b> | <b>88%</b> | <b>84%</b> | <b>74%</b>       |
| <b>2020</b> | <b>58%</b>  | <b>89%</b> | <b>82%</b> | <b>84%</b> | <b>79%</b> | <b>71%</b>       |

*Source:* State University System Accountability Plan, 2021.

### **Employment Outcomes: Masters-Level Business Degree**

Section 1004.6498, *Florida Statutes*, also requires the Board of Governors to report on employment outcomes for graduate-level business programs. Exhibit 5 provides an overview of the percentage of master's degree graduates earning more than \$40,000 in the year following graduation. This exhibit reflects graduates who were found employed in Florida. System-wide, 60% of graduate business students met this threshold in 2019-20, compared to 57% in the prior year. Doctoral recipients were excluded from this analysis due to the qualitatively different nature of their education and of the earnings outcomes for those graduates.

**Exhibit 5**  
**Employment Outcomes for Masters-Level Business Degrees, 2019-20 Graduates**

| SUS Institution | 2019-20 Graduates* | Job Placement of Graduates Earning more than \$40K in Florida or enrolled** |            |
|-----------------|--------------------|---|------------|
|                 |                    | Number of Graduates   | %          |
| FAMU            | 65                 | 21  | 32%        |
| FAU             | 620                | 385   | 62%        |
| FGCU            | 92                 | 74  | 80%        |
| FIU             | 1,259              | 753   | 60%        |
| FSU             | 356                | 195   | 55%        |
| UCF             | 469                | 304   | 65%        |
| UF              | 890                | 452   | 51%        |
| UNF             | 220                | 162   | 74%        |
| USF             | 482                | 323   | 67%        |
| UWF             | 178                | 97  | 54%        |
| <b>System</b>   | <b>4,631</b>       | <b>2,766</b>  | <b>60%</b> |

\*Includes only graduates with valid SSN.

\*\*Also includes those continuing education. All continuing education outcomes are based on Florida enrollment data for the fall 2020 semester and the preliminary winter/spring 2021 semester. The percent employed includes only those employed in Florida.

Source: Florida Department of Education, Florida Education & Training Placement Information Program (FETPIP) data, provided 1-6-21.

All employment outcomes contained in this table are based on Florida Unemployment Insurance wage data from the October - December quarter of 2020.



## National Rankings

In national rankings, the System continues to be recognized by U.S. News & World Report for excellence in higher education. Florida has been recognized five years in a row as the best state for higher education. U.S. News & World Report also ranked five SUS institutions in the top 100 public schools in the 2021 rankings, with the University of Florida ranked 5<sup>th</sup> (up from 6<sup>th</sup> the prior year), Florida State University ranked 19<sup>th</sup>, USF ranked 46<sup>th</sup>, UCF ranked 67<sup>th</sup> (up from 77<sup>th</sup>), and FIU ranked 78<sup>th</sup> (up from 95<sup>th</sup>). In addition, New College of Florida is ranked as the 5<sup>th</sup> best public liberal arts institution in the country, and Florida Agricultural & Mechanical University is ranked as the best public historically black college and university in the country.

Specific to medicine, law, and graduate business, SUS institutions also rank high in the U.S. News & World Report rankings for these areas. Exhibit 6 provides an overview of national rankings compared to all other private and public institutions. U.S. News & World Report does rank specific individual programs within these areas, such as Executive MBA. However, the rankings provided in Exhibit 6 are the only ones readily available to the public.

### Exhibit 6

#### U.S. News & World Report 2022 Rankings, Specific Graduate Programs

| SUS Institution | Medicine (Research) | Law | Business |
|-----------------|---------------------|-----|----------|
| FAU             | 93-123              | N/A | Unranked |
| FIU             | 93-123              | 88  | 110-143  |
| FSU             | 93-123              | 48  | 106      |
| UCF             | 86                  | N/A | Unranked |
| UF              | 36                  | 21  | 26       |
| USF             | 48                  | N/A | 110-143  |

Note: These rankings represent only those publicly available. Unranked indicates the program was listed as unranked. N/A indicates not applicable because the institution does not offer that program.

Source: U.S. News & World Report Rankings of Best Medical Schools: Research, Best Law Schools, and Best Business Schools, 2022.

## Economic Impact

The State University System is an essential contributor to Florida's economy both directly and indirectly through spending for university operations, sales and services of component units, and other purposes. Additionally, the Board maintains a research and innovation dashboard that includes metrics calculating return on investment. As reported in the Board's dashboard in March 2021, the System created or supported over 19,000 jobs in FY 2019-20 through external funding. Further, the calculated economic impact of state and federal research expenditures was over \$3.7 billion in FY 2019-20. These examples highlight how the State University System is a good return on investment.

Through the Professional and Graduate Degree Excellent Program, institutions have enhanced their graduate programs, continued to grow enrollment, and hired additional graduate-level faculty. For example, investments in Florida State University's College of Business bolstered its graduate programs, resulting in higher national rankings and attracting top talent to its business programs. By building the capacity to serve more students, graduate programs are then able to produce more graduates in industries necessary for Florida's economic well-being.

Institutions have also reported utilizing funding from this program to invest in graduate-level student scholarships, which reduces the cost of education to students, lowers student debt, further incentivizes Florida residents, and attracts new talent to attend graduate school in Florida. Finally, funding for this program has contributed to scientific research and discoveries that translate from institutions to the marketplace, improving the lives of Florida residents.

## **Conclusion**

While the full effects of the Professional and Graduate Degree Excellence Program are not yet known, the program has provided an opportunity for SUS institutions to support and enhance professional and graduate education in the state.

## APPENDIX A

In 2020-21, SUS institutions awarded 729 medical degrees, 780 law degrees, and 5,223 graduate-level business degrees. While degrees awarded in medicine and law have remained relatively stable, the total graduate degrees awarded in business has increased by 9% in the last three years. Tables 1-3 below provide additional detail of the degrees awarded by institution for the last three academic years.

**Table 1**  
**Total Graduate Degrees Awarded in Medicine (MD)**

| Institution     | 2018-2019  | 2019-2020  | 2020-2021  |
|-----------------|------------|------------|------------|
| FAU             | 55         | 63         | 56         |
| FIU             | 119        | 120        | 113        |
| FSU             | 114        | 115        | 119        |
| UCF             | 116        | 117        | 119        |
| UF              | 129        | 130        | 150        |
| USF             | 169        | 173        | 172        |
| <b>Total MD</b> | <b>702</b> | <b>718</b> | <b>729</b> |

Source: Florida Board of Governors, Office of Data Analytics, December 2021.

**Table 2**  
**Total Graduate Degrees Awarded in Law**

| Institution      | 2018-2019  | 2019-2020  | 2020-2021  |
|------------------|------------|------------|------------|
| FAMU             | 130        | 172        | 153        |
| FIU              | 143        | 129        | 143        |
| FSU              | 170        | 192        | 218        |
| UF               | 331        | 306        | 266        |
| <b>Total Law</b> | <b>774</b> | <b>799</b> | <b>780</b> |

Source: Florida Board of Governors, Office of Data Analytics, December 2021.

**Table 3**  
**Total Graduate Degrees Awarded in Business**

| <b>Institution</b> | <b>2018-2019</b> | <b>2019-2020</b> | <b>2020-2021</b> |
|--------------------|------------------|------------------|------------------|
| <b>FAMU</b>        | 74               | 65               | 61               |
| <b>FAU</b>         | 568              | 653              | 609              |
| <b>FGCU</b>        | 67               | 92               | 94               |
| <b>FIU</b>         | 1,368            | 1,410            | 1,494            |
| <b>FSU</b>         | 345              | 365              | 329              |
| <b>UCF</b>         | 501              | 489              | 521              |
| <b>UF</b>          | 887              | 961              | 970              |
| <b>UNF</b>         | 223              | 231              | 260              |
| <b>USF</b>         | 600              | 608              | 673              |
| <b>UWF</b>         | 161              | 195              | 212              |
| <b>Total</b>       | <b>4,794</b>     | <b>5,069</b>     | <b>5,223</b>     |

*Source:* Florida Board of Governors, Office of Data Analytics,  
December 2021.



# STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF FLORIDA

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