



Professional & Graduate Degree Excellence Program

Annual report on expenditure information as
required by section 1004.6498, Florida Statutes

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A photograph of university buildings at dusk. In the foreground, a large brick building with many lit windows is visible. In the background, a taller, modern glass and steel building stands out against the twilight sky. The scene is framed by a purple-to-white gradient on the left and a white-to-purple gradient on the right.

JANUARY 2024

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

January 2024

Introduction

The Florida 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 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 provided recurring funding to SUS institutions for the Professional and Graduate Degree Excellence Program in Fiscal Years (FY) 2017-18 and 2018-19. In March 2018, section 1004.6498, Florida Statutes, was signed into law, establishing the program and the reporting requirements. This report explains how SUS institutions spent \$60 million in recurring program funds during FY 2022-23. 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 benefits to the state often take several years to demonstrate improvements, as data collection and reporting timeframes may lag a year or two behind the academic year.

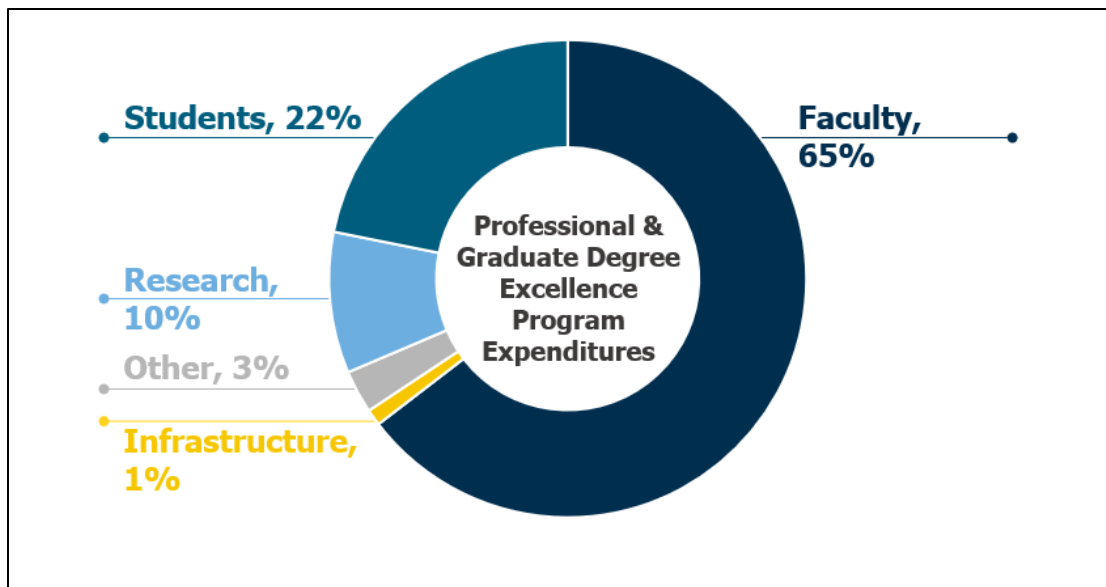
The State University System includes six medical schools, four law schools, and ten institutions with graduate-level business programs.¹ These institutions received funding based on prior performance on indicators such as licensure exam pass rates, employment outcomes, and the number of graduates. In 2022-23, SUS institutions awarded 749 medical degrees, 673 law degrees, and 5,820 graduate-level business degrees. Appendix A provides details of these awards by institution.

¹ 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.

Expenditure Information

Most of the Professional and Graduate Degree Excellence Program funds 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 2022-23 to support the program. Of this, 65% was used to recruit and retain faculty, and 22% was used to support students through various 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 2022-23.

Exhibit 1 Expenditures of Professional and Graduate Degree Excellence Program Funds, 2022-2023



Source: Florida Board of Governors staff analysis of data provided by SUS institutions on the Professional and Graduate Degree Excellence Program, fall 2023.

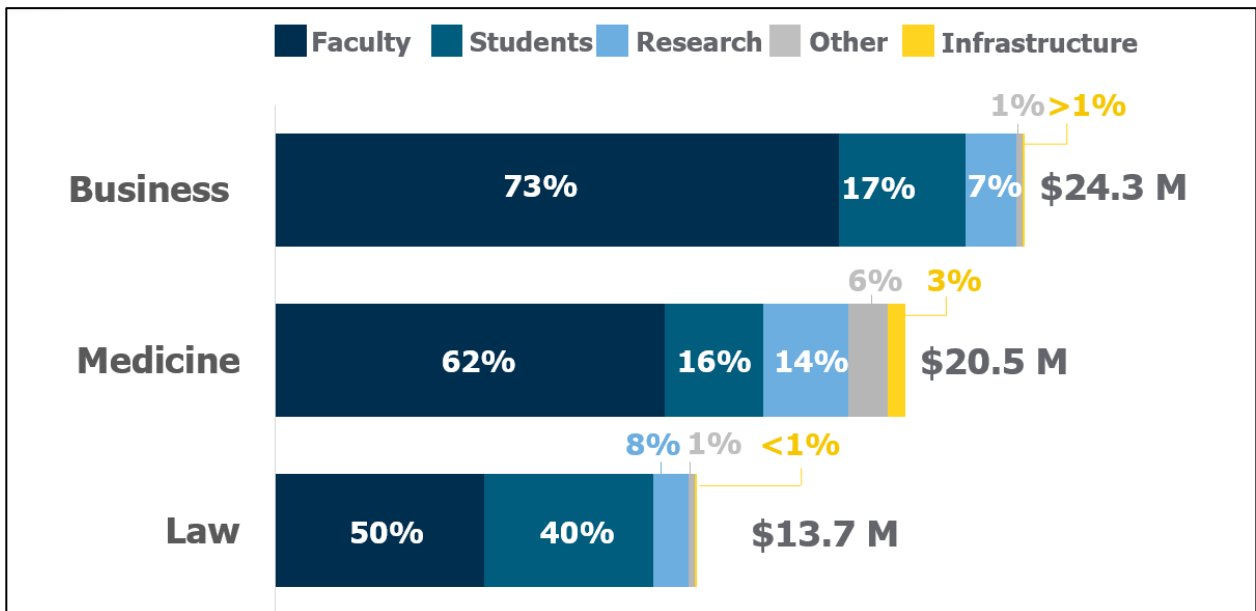
When examining the funds across the program areas of medicine, law, and business, the majority of the funds supported faculty and students. Of the funds spent to recruit or retain faculty across the System, institutions expended 13% of the funds on faculty recruitment efforts and 87% on retaining existing faculty. Faculty expenditures generally supported faculty salaries and hiring faculty where needed in various departments. Examples of student support expenditures for all three areas 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 2022-23.

- **Medicine:** Over the last year, state universities spent approximately \$20.5 million of program funds to support graduate education in medicine. Most

of the funds (78%) supported faculty or students, 14% supported medical research efforts, and 6% supported other initiatives such as outreach efforts in pipeline programs and enhancing student practical experiences.

- **Law:** State universities spent approximately \$13.7 million of program funds on law schools. The majority (90%) of these funds were spent on faculty and students, while the remaining funds were devoted to research, infrastructure, and efforts such as enhancing the university’s infrastructure that supports student success initiatives, recruitment, rankings, and research.
- **Business:** State universities spent approximately \$24.3 million of program funds on graduate business education. Most of these funds (90%) were spent on faculty and students, 7% supported research, while the remaining funds were spent on infrastructure and other graduate student initiatives, including elevating market awareness of the programs and student professional development.

Exhibit 2
Expenditures for Professional and Graduate Degree Excellence by Program Area
2022-2023



Source: Florida Board of Governors staff analysis of data provided by SUS institutions on the Professional and Graduate Degree Excellence Program, fall 2023. Percentages may total to less than 100% due to rounding.

Elevating the National Competitiveness of the State University System

One of the primary goals of the Professional and Graduate Degree Excellence Program is to enhance the quality and excellence of professional and graduate schools in the System. 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.

Exam passage rates

Graduates from the SUS medical schools do very well on the series of medical licensing examinations. As a System, most graduates meet or exceed national exam benchmarks. Exhibit 3 provides the first-time pass rate performance for the last three years on the U.S. Medical Licensing Exam for the six state university medical schools.

Exhibit 3

Summary of U.S. Medical Licensing Exam (USMLE) Performance for the SUS

U.S. Medical Licensing Exam (USMLE)- Step 1 (2 nd year of medical school)								
Year	FAU	FIU	FSU	UCF	UF	USF	SUS	Benchmark
2020	97	100	97	98	99	99	98	97
2021	98	100	95	98	96	99	98	96
2022	89	100	94	93	96	97	96	93

U.S. Medical Licensing Exam (USMLE)- Step 2 Clinical Knowledge (4 th year of medical school)								
Year	FAU	FIU	FSU	UCF	UF	USF	SUS	Benchmark
2019-20	100	99	97	98	100	99	99	98
2020-21	100	100	99	99	100	99	99	99
2021-22	98	99	99	99	99	99	99	99

Source: State University System Accountability Plan, 2023.

Law school graduates from SUS institutions also perform well on the Florida Bar Exam. Four of the five law schools exceeded the benchmark for all exam takers in Florida. Exhibit 4 provides an overview of the first-time pass rate on the Florida Bar Examination for the four law schools in the System for the last three years.

**Exhibit 4
Passage Rates on the Florida Bar Exam**

Year	FAMU	FIU	FSU	UF	SUS	Benchmark
2020	58%	89%	82%	84%	79%	71%
2021	59%	87%	74%	80%	76%	71%
2022	53%	80%	75%	77%	73%	65%

Source: State University System Accountability Plan, 2023.

Employment Outcomes: Masters-Level Business Degree

Section 1004.6498, Florida Statutes, 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. Across the System, 62% of graduate business students met this threshold in 2021-22. Doctoral recipients were excluded from this analysis due to the qualitatively different nature of their education and the earnings outcomes for those graduates.

Exhibit 5
2021-22 Masters-Level Business Graduates Employed in Florida

SUS Institution	2021-22 Graduates*	Job Placement of Graduates Earning more than \$40K in Florida or enrolled**	
		Number of Graduates	%
FAMU	79	35	44%
FAU	591	409	69%
FGCU	140	105	75%
FIU	1,436	895	62%
FSU	507	282	56%
UCF	567	392	69%
UF	1,139	568	50%
UNF	218	163	75%
USF	534	384	72%
UWF	205	126	61%
System	5,416	2,956	62%

*Includes only graduates with valid SSNs.

**Also includes those continuing education. All continuing education outcomes are based on Florida enrollment data for the fall 2021 semester and the preliminary winter/spring 2022 semester. The percent employed includes only those employed in Florida.

Source: Florida Department of Education, Florida Education & Training Placement Information Program (FETPIP) data, provided 11-27-23.

All employment outcomes contained in this table are based on Florida Unemployment Insurance wage data from the October - December quarter of 2022.

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 for seven years as the best state for higher education. U.S. News & World Report also ranked six SUS institutions in the top 100 public schools in the 2024 rankings, with UF ranked 6th, FSU ranked 23rd, USF ranked 45th, UCF ranked 64th, FIU ranked 64th, and FAMU ranked 91st. In addition, 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, many SUS institutions are also recognized in U.S. News & World Report. Exhibit 6 provides an overview of SUS national rankings in these areas compared to all other private and public institutions. In addition, U.S. News & World Report also ranks specific individual programs within these areas, such as Executive Master of Business Administration. However, the rankings provided in Exhibit 6 are the only ones readily available to the public.

Exhibit 6
U.S. News & World Report 2024 Rankings, Specific Graduate Programs

SUS Institution	Medicine (Research)	Law	Business
FAU	106	N/A	Unranked
FIU	106	60	Unranked
FSU	98	56	124
UCF	98	N/A	Unranked
UF	37	22	40
USF	50	N/A	73

Note: These rankings represent only those publicly available. Unranked indicates that the program was listed as unranked. N/A indicates that it is 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, 2024.

Economic Impact

The State University System is an essential contributor to Florida’s economy 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 2023, the System created or supported over 22,000 jobs through external funding in FY 2021-22. Further, the calculated economic impact of state and federal research expenditures was over \$4.6 billion in FY 2021-22. These examples highlight how the State University System has 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 Gulf Coast University’s Lutgert College of Business supported increasing access to critical research databases, raising high-quality research productivity by 60%, and enrollment in essential business programs has doubled in the past four years. Also, Florida International University’s Herbert Wertheim College of Medicine placed over 45% of its residents in primary care fields, addressing the most significant portion of the current shortage. These investments have provided valuable graduates in information sciences and accounting and taxation programs to support Florida’s workforce.

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 to attend an SUS institution, 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

The Professional and Graduate Degree Excellence Program has allowed the State University System to support and enhance professional and graduate education in the state, improve national rankings, and help contribute to Florida's economy.

APPENDIX A

In 2022-23, SUS institutions awarded 749 medical degrees, 673 law degrees, and 5,820 graduate-level business degrees. While degrees awarded in business and medicine have remained relatively stable, the total graduate degrees awarded in law have decreased by 14% in the last three years. Tables 1-3 below provide additional detail of the degrees awarded by an institution for the previous three academic years.

Table 1
Total Graduate Degrees Awarded in Medicine (MD)

Institution	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
FAU	56	64	64
FIU	113	117	118
FSU	119	119	125
UCF	119	107	122
UF	150	130	141
USF	172	165	179
Total MD	729	702	749

Source: Florida Board of Governors, Office of Data Analytics, December 2023.

Table 2
Total Graduate Degrees Awarded in Law

Institution	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
FAMU	153	158	112
FIU	144	174	153
FSU	218	216	188
UF	266	221	220
Total Law	781	769	673

Source: Florida Board of Governors, Office of Data Analytics, December 2023.

Table 3
Total Graduate Degrees Awarded in Business

Institution	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23
FAMU	61	87	43
FAU	609	611	579
FGCU	94	140	191
FIU	1495	1579	1615
FSU	329	516	574
UCF	521	595	542
UF	970	1202	1228
UNF	260	237	205
USF	673	661	605
UWF	212	213	238
Total	5,224	5,841	5,820

Source: Florida Board of Governors, Office of Data Analytics, December 2023.



STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF FLORIDA





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