

Professional & Graduate Degree Excellence Program Report

January 2026



State University System of Florida

Professional & Graduate Degree Excellence Program Report

January 2026

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 Board of Governors to submit a report 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 began providing recurring funding to SUS institutions for the Professional and Graduate Degree Excellence Program starting in Fiscal Year (FY) 2017-18. This report explains how SUS institutions spent \$60 million in recurring program funds during FY 2024-25.

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 fiscal year.

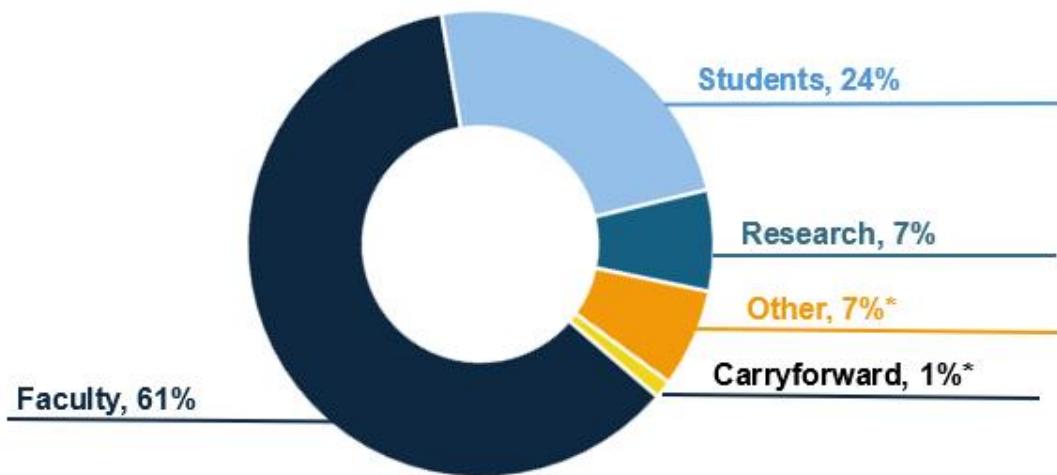
The State University System includes six medical schools, four law schools, and ten institutions with graduate-level business programs.¹ These universities received funding based on prior performance indicators such as licensure exam pass rates, employment outcomes, and the number of graduates. In 2024-25, SUS institutions awarded 764 medical degrees, 620 law degrees, and 5,390 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, as well as support student success initiatives. The legislature provided recurring funding of \$60 million to the SUS institutions in 2024-25 to support the program. Of this, 61% was used to recruit and retain faculty, and 24% was used to support students through various mechanisms. Some examples of student support activities include recruitment, preparation for licensure examinations, and advising. Specifically, six universities reported that funds directed to scholarships and stipends aided in recruiting top graduate students and increased enrollment. Florida International University invested nearly \$9 million in student scholarships, contributing to a 24% increase in degrees awarded in Programs of Strategic Emphasis within its College of Business. Other expenditure activities varied across the medicine, law, and business categories. Exhibit 1 provides an overview of how SUS institutions spent the funds for the Professional and Graduate Degree Excellence Program in FY 2024-25.

Exhibit 1 **Expenditures of Professional and Graduate Degree Excellence Program Funds, 2024-2025**



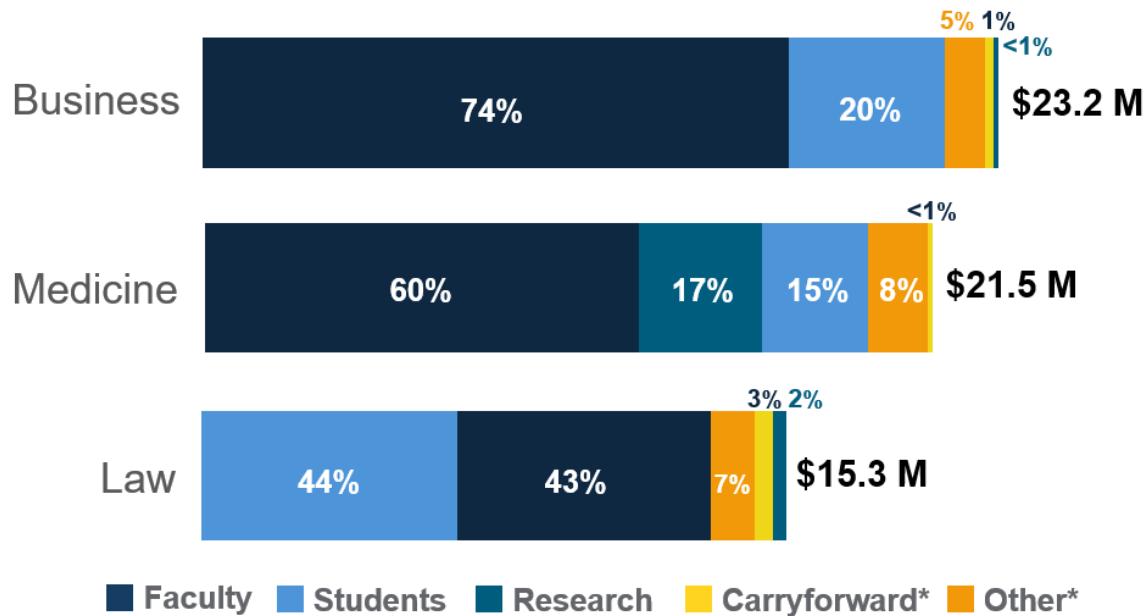
Source: Florida Board of Governors staff analysis of data provided by SUS institutions on the Professional and Graduate Degree Excellence Program, fall 2025.

*Other includes costs associated with conferences, data submission, journal submission, software, computers, space upgrades, and infrastructure. Universities reported that carryforward funding will be used on student financial aid and student services.

Of the funds spent to recruit or retain faculty across the System, universities expended 6% on faculty recruitment efforts and 94% to retain existing faculty. Faculty expenditures generally supported faculty salaries and hiring faculty where needed in various departments. Exhibit 2 provides an overview of how the funds were spent by the program area in FY 2024-25.

- **Business:** State universities spent approximately \$23.2 million of program funds on graduate business education. Most funds (74%) were spent on faculty recruitment and retention, and 20% was used for student recruitment, scholarships, and professional development for students. The remaining funds were spent on research, infrastructure, and engagement, including elevating market awareness of the programs.
- **Medicine:** Over the last year, state universities spent approximately \$21.5 million of program funds to support graduate education in medicine. Most funds (60%) supported faculty, 17% supported medical research, 15% supported student initiatives, and 8% supported other initiatives such as lab fees, outreach efforts in pipeline programs, and enhancing student practical experiences.
- **Law:** State universities spent approximately \$15.3 million of program funds on law schools. The focus of these funds (87%) supported faculty and students, while the remaining funds were devoted to research and infrastructure. The other category includes program funds spent on Bar Exam preparation tools, diagnostic testing, data analytics, and upgrades to classrooms and other law school facilities.

Exhibit 2
Expenditures for Professional and Graduate Degree Excellence by Program Area
2024-2025



Source: Florida Board of Governors staff analysis of data provided by SUS institutions on the Professional and Graduate Degree Excellence Program, fall 2025. Percentages may total to less than 100% due to rounding.

*Other includes costs associated with conferences, data submission, journal submission, software, computers, space upgrades, and infrastructure. Universities reported that carryforward funding will be used on student financial aid and student services.

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 all six state university medical schools.

Exhibit 3

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

USMLE - Step 1 (2nd year of medical school)

Year	FAU	FIU	FSU	UCF	UF	USF	SUS	Benchmark
2022	89%	100%	94%	93%	96%	97%	96%	93%
2023	94%	96%	95%	96%	97%	97%	96%	92%
2024	97%	99%	94%	96%	97%	99%	97%	91%

USMLE - Step 2 Clinical Knowledge (4th year of medical school)

Year	FAU	FIU	FSU	UCF	UF	USF	SUS	Benchmark
2021-22	98%	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%	99%
2022-23	100%	98%	99%	100%	99%	99%	99%	98%
2023-24	100%	100%	99%	99%	99%	100%	100%	98%

Source: State University System Accountability Plan, 2025.

Law school graduates from SUS institutions also perform well on the Florida Bar Exam. Of the four law schools, three 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
2022	53%	80%	75%	77%	73%	65%
2023	41%	89%	82%	79%	77%	70%
2024	63%	89%	81%	88%	83%	77%

Source: State University System Accountability Plan, 2025.

Employment Outcomes: Master's-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 in 2023-24. Across the System, 61% of graduate business students met this threshold and were employed in Florida in 2023-24. 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
Employment Outcomes for Master's-Level Business Degrees, 2023-24 Graduates

SUS Institution	2023-24 Total Graduates*	Job Placement of Graduates Earning more than \$40K in Florida or enrolled**	
		Number of Graduates	%
FAMU	59	19	32%
FAU	601	398	66%
FGCU	305	197	65%
FIU	1,202	751	62%
FSU	405	217	54%
UCF	412	298	72%
UF	1,050	506	48%
UNF	153	112	73%
USF	396	288	73%
UWF	258	169	66%
System	4,841	2,955	61%

*Includes only graduates with valid SSNs.

**Also includes those continuing education. All continuing education outcomes are based on Florida enrollment data for the fall 2023 semester and the preliminary winter/spring 2024 semester. The percentage employed includes only those employed in Florida.

Source: Florida Department of Education, Florida Education & Training Placement Information Program (FETPIP) data, provided 11-24-25. All employment outcomes in this table are based on Florida Unemployment Insurance wage data from the October - December quarter of 2024.

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 the ninth consecutive year as the best state for higher education. U.S. News & World Report also ranked seven SUS institutions in the top 100 public schools in the 2026 rankings, with UF ranked 7th, FSU ranked 21st, USF ranked 43rd, FIU ranked 46th, UCF ranked 57th, FAMU ranked 92nd, and FAU ranked 100th. 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 degrees in business, many SUS institutions are also recognized in U.S. News & World Report. The system used by U.S. News & World Report includes four tiers, with Tier 1 medical schools being the highest-performing and Tier 4 the lowest-performing. The system uses federal research activity and National Institutes of Health research grants as the criteria to determine the tiers. Exhibit 6 provides an overview of SUS's national rankings in medicine, law, and business, compared to those of all other private and public institutions. Additionally, U.S. News & World Report ranks specific individual programs within these areas, such as the Executive Master of Business Administration.

Exhibit 6

U.S. News & World Report 2025 Rankings, Specific Graduate Programs

SUS Institution	Medicine (Research)	Law	Business
FAMU		178-195	Unranked
FAU	Tier 3		Unranked
FGCU			Unranked
FIU	Tier 3	84	122-133
FSU	Tier 3	38	105
UCF	Tier 3		Unranked
UF	Tier 2	38	38
UNF			Unranked
USF	Tier 1		105
UWF			Unranked

Note: Unranked indicates that the program was listed as unranked due to incomplete submissions or beyond the ordinal ranking system.

Source: U.S. News & World Report Rankings of Best Medical Schools: Research, Best Law Schools, and Best Business Schools, 2025. Reported by US News & World Report.

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. The System created or supported over 27,000 jobs through external funding in FY 2023-24. Further, the calculated economic impact of state and federal research expenditures was nearly \$5.9 billion in FY 2023-24. Through the Professional and Graduate Degree Excellence Program, universities have enhanced their graduate programs, continued to grow enrollment, and hired additional graduate-level faculty. For example, Florida Gulf Coast University used funding to hire high-profile graduate faculty in business and purchase databases necessary for research, contributing to a significant increase in top-ranked journal publications and enrollment in the Master of Business Administration program, the Master of Science in Information Systems and Analytics program, and the Master of Science in Applied Technology programs over the last four years.

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. Florida International University reported that nearly \$9 million in funds were dedicated directly toward students, funding improvements in the university's Office of Scholarships and supporting more competitive student scholarship packages.

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. The University of Central Florida utilized the funding to enhance its talent pipeline, addressing the workforce demands of Florida's expanding biomedical industry. Similarly, the University of South Florida has used funding to support groundbreaking medical research into cancer diagnosis and bloodless heart-liver transplant surgery. The university has partnered with Medical Microinstruments, Inc. to bring new cutting-edge surgical technology to the southeast United States, positively impacting cancer patients in Florida and beyond.

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 2024-25, SUS institutions awarded 764 medical degrees, 620 law degrees, and 5,390 graduate-level business degrees. Tables 1-3 below provide additional details of the degrees awarded by the institution for the previous three academic years.

Table 1
Total Graduate Degrees Awarded in Medicine (MD)

Institution	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
FAU	64	56	61
FIU	118	114	137
FSU	125	110	113
UCF	122	116	119
UF	141	141	153
USF	179	176	181
Total	749	713	764

Source: Florida Board of Governors, Office of Data Analytics,
December 2025.

Table 2
Total Graduate Degrees Awarded in Law

Institution	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
FAMU	112	100	113
FIU	153	170	160
FSU	188	191	132
UF	220	265	215
Total	673	726	620

Source: Florida Board of Governors, Office of Data Analytics,
December 2025.

Table 3
Total Graduate Degrees Awarded in Business

Institution	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
FAMU	43	61	58
FAU	579	633	609
FGCU	191	305	328
FIU	1,616	1,369	1,439
FSU	574	414	322
UCF	542	440	498
UF	1,228	1,154	1,104
UNF	205	166	158
USF	605	532	599
UWF	238	269	275
Total	5,821	5,343	5,390

Source: Florida Board of Governors, Office of Data Analytics,
December 2025.



STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF FLORIDA





Board of Governors
State University System of Florida
325 West Gaines Street, Suite 1614
Tallahassee, Florida 32399
Phone: (850) 245-0466
www.flbog.edu