

**EDUCATIONAL PARTNERSHIP CONTINUUM:
PreK - 20**

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RESPONSE TO THE HIGHER EDUCATION COORDINATING COUNCIL’S (HECC) REQUEST FOR INPUT ON ISSUES “VITAL TO THE STATE OF FLORIDA”

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The 2011 legislative mandate for the Higher Education Coordinating Council (HECC) to make detailed recommendations regarding the core mission of public and nonpublic postsecondary education institutions opens the door to two fundamental opportunities: to break with the past and to escape the futility of another “plan” talked to death on its way to a shelf coffin. In the 2007 “Blueprint” for Florida higher education Alceste Pappas put the issues at that time in stark perspective by saying . . . *each of the players will have to make difficult choices concerning the: relinquishing of power; financial choices including increasing resources and expanding fiscal flexibility; and demanding more fiscal discipline. If that willingness is not present, future conversations on the blueprint and the emerging master plan will be an interesting academic exercise but little else.*

The following comments do not align with specific questions on the survey but include in context pertinent connections to many of them. The ideas presented are certainly not a comprehensive roadmap to solving all the education challenges Florida faces. They are intended to spark serious consideration for substantive positive change in how education is delivered and what form it takes to meet Florida’s vital educational, social, workforce, and economic development needs.

Issue: Primary core mission of public and nonpublic postsecondary education institutions in the context of state access demands and economic development goals.

Major Premise: the missions and operations of Florida postsecondary education institutions, public and private, cannot be determined in isolation from the entire education fabric: PreK through 20.

Educational Partnership Continuum: PreK - 20

Four main sectors deliver education: public school systems; public community/state colleges; public universities; and the private/independent institutions across all levels. For decades a goal has been to create a “seamless” educational pathway of access, quality, and affordability that efficiently meets the state’s essential educational, social, workforce, and economic development needs. Despite many good faith efforts it is an ideal that has yet to be reached. It is very difficult to flip vertical silos into horizontal links (especially in a fragmented governance structure). Certainly, Florida has been the leader in establishing articulation policies and pathways among both public and private institutions, from technical institutes and schools to community/state colleges to universities. This linear progression works especially well for traditional students who can move among institutions. It is a laudable system that should continue and get even better.

But the changing workplace and community demands for targeted workforce education and economic development initiatives, along with growing numbers of place-bound citizens who have full-time jobs and want and require further education, have created the need for an educational continuum that contains quality resources and options at the local level. In this complex environment of competing priorities *what is needed is a connection center, a linchpin, at the community level that can connect all of the points in the continuum--from the schools to universities to local workforce and economic development needs.* Among its functions this “linchpin system” would

- provide education on multiple levels (collegiate schools, associate degrees, and workforce baccalaureates);
- establish partnerships with schools, universities, and other selected institutions, public and private, to meet local and state needs; and
- serve as a central node for student movement across all sectors.

One way of thinking about this is to take what exists and refashion it into an entirely new *connected system of partnerships that most effectively and efficiently allows different sectors to do what they do best.* The Florida College System is in a position to take on this central role.

The Concept

Expand the mission of the Florida College System to be the linchpin that binds together the schools and universities, public and private, in the best interests of Florida’s citizens. In this innovative role it would become the adapted mid-tier system Florida needs.

The community college sector, as it transforms into a state college system, has undergone the most substantial change in core mission and has exhibited the creativity, ability, versatility, and nimbleness to do so very successfully. Historically, Florida community colleges have roots in the school systems and for good reasons have evolved into baccalaureate institutions. At the center of articulation from schools to universities, they have been and continue to be the primary open access points to higher education in the state. The 28 institutions with 62 campuses and 180 sites touch every education sector in the state and have a longstanding record of quality, accountability, and cooperation as a consistent link between K-12 and universities. Today, they are in a position to play a central role in Florida education by

- advancing access and economic development at the local level
- forging partnerships across all sectors of education—prekindergarten through doctorate
- continuing and strengthening the community college mission by providing high quality associate degrees for transfer and workforce education
- expanding baccalaureate degrees to meet identified workforce education and economic development needs in local communities and increasing the number of baccalaureate degrees in the state
- establishing and housing collegiate schools (middle to high school currently) that increase student success and accelerate time to an associate degree by providing students the opportunity to graduate concurrently with a high school diploma and an AA degree, thus reducing family costs and taxpayer support by two years

- serving as brokers in recruiting and partnering with other institutions, public and private, in-state and out-of-state, to meet identified community education and economic development needs.

Committed to open access, quality, and cost-effective education, their successful expansion of core mission can alter the traditional hierarchical structure of higher education to that of a web. In becoming linchpins in an educational partnership continuum they are emerging as new models of higher education for the nation.

New Model of Education

This educational partnership continuum promises to be a new model for education. It creates an educational stream on the college campus from middle and secondary school to associate degrees to workforce baccalaureate degrees—including those of selected partnership institutions. At the same time it maintains the strong 2+2 articulated relationship with universities and its role of economic growth engine for its community. Several institutions in the Florida College System are already headed in this direction.

A good example of this new continuum is State College of Florida, Manatee-Sarasota. It has developed a unique charter/collegiate school starting with the sixth grade. Upon collegiate school graduation students obtain a high school diploma and concurrently an A.A. degree (and through an agreement with Florida Gulf Coast University every collegiate school graduate has access to a full tuition and mandated fees scholarship for a FGCU baccalaureate degree). The traditional community college associate degree programs and community service continue unabated. As a baccalaureate institution, students can get SCF's Associate degree in nursing and Bachelor of Science in Nursing (BSN), and continue through a partnership with Florida State University to obtain the FSU master's in nursing and the Doctor of Nursing Practice (DNP). Through this educational partnership continuum students can start at the sixth grade and go all the way to a doctorate without having to leave the area.

Additional Components of the FCS Expanded Mission

School Partnerships

Florida College System institutions become responsible for improving prekindergarten through secondary education across the state.

Major Premise: While higher education deserves and requires attention, one of the most critical needs is to improve the ways Florida treats its children, beginning with prekindergarten education, and that includes much greater application and engagement of higher education resources. The most efficient and best results are achieved through collaboration at the local level.

Community/state colleges have a presence in every school district. Thus, they exist “right next door” to get involved in direct, effective, and sustainable means to help improve education in the

schools. While they are already involved with dual enrollment, remedial instruction, programs such as CROP and other connections, much more is possible:

Florida College System Institutions Should Play a Major Role in Teacher Preparation

In Florida, colleges of education in universities have for years monopolized teacher education. While a few baccalaureate education programs have been installed at state colleges they are mostly copies of what exists in colleges of education. It is time to establish additional programs in state colleges with the express purpose of creating new and innovative ways to educate and train teachers:

- A community/state college campus or site is located in every school district (in fact in the beginning the “junior” colleges were part of the school systems), thus greatly increasing local access to teaching degrees.
- Through dual enrollment and other programs the community/state colleges have active and close working relationships with the schools.
- Proximity, history, and experience create the opportunity for the schools and state colleges to expand their partnerships into a real and productive approach for teacher education. The schools will be full partners in the education and training with input into what their needs are and with the willingness to try new initiatives.
- This partnership will include not only the degree programs but also professional development and other support initiatives toward improvement of teacher and student success.
- State college education programs will be expected, even mandated, to experiment, innovate, and try new ways to prepare teachers, especially engaging the schools in the conception, planning, and implementation of the programs.
- This freedom to innovate will result in new curricula and ways to focus on critical needs, such as early childhood education, science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM).
- Predominantly, the curriculum will be subject-matter based and emphasis will be on hiring faculty with subject matter degrees.
- Time spent in study of theory will be reduced in favor of time in actual classrooms gaining practical experience--an apprenticeship or medical school model.
- Methods curriculum will be revamped/re-invented based on the idea that students should be responsible for their own learning with opportunities for self-paced achievement (for example, as is being done in the State College of Florida Collegiate School).
- Instead of “seat time” learning, teacher preparation programs should not be bound by traditional credit hour definitions and teacher skills should be assessed more by observed teaching ability than by course work.
- Other examples of innovation and change will be investigated.
- Innovation and creativity are to be hallmarks but based on practical results.
- State college education faculty will have a primary mission of teaching, including working directly with the schools to develop and assess what works best.
- Having education degrees in the state colleges will create a seamless pathway and intensified support in those colleges for students to move successfully from first year to education degree completion.

- The success of the program will be measured ultimately by the teaching ability of the graduates as measured by the success of their students.

The idea of allowing and supporting state colleges to become teacher education providers in no way is intended to replace the university colleges of education. Obviously, many of the state college faculty would be Master's and doctoral graduates of the university programs. If the quality issue is raised one could point to the condition of Florida schools today. While all the criticism should not fall on the colleges of education, they are the primary source of teacher preparation in the state. Obstacles to significant changes and innovative initiatives in colleges of education, even if they wanted to change, are substantial and would take a long time to materialize. In fact, implementing another system of teacher education could have positive impacts on the colleges of education:

- Increased enrollment in the state college programs would increase the demand and need for graduate education, thus enhancing the graduate education mission of the universities.
- Innovative initiatives implemented in the state colleges would create fertile opportunities for university professors to engage in research and scholarship, thus creating a synergy between the two systems and bolstering the research function of the university.
- Success of the state college programs would create real competitive incentives for change in colleges of education.
- Florida would continue boldly its quest not only to improve education for its citizens but also to get out in front on national and international education reforms.

Florida College System institutions should be focused on school improvement strategies and initiatives in collaboration with the schools.

In addition to teacher preparation through innovative and successful baccalaureate education programs community/state colleges are greatly positioned to bring other resources to bear in partnership with their local schools to meet improvement needs. Examples of this collaboration would include:

- professional development for teachers who are identified through the new evaluation system to need more training or education
- working together to raise low grades based on state measurement (an excellent example is the case of St. Petersburg College and Gibbs High School in which intensive collaboration was very successful in improving the performance measurements of the high school.)
- finding innovative ways to improve college readiness of secondary students (including assisting with the implementation of SB 1255 by providing, for example, summer remedial instruction for those students who test below the cut-off scores on the Postsecondary Education Readiness Test (PERT).
- removing bureaucratic obstacles to achieving common sense collaborative goals for student success
- establishing effective communication
- staying open to new ideas.

Florida College System institutions should add more collegiate schools beginning with middle grades, and legislation should be passed to allow for elementary schools on college campuses.

Five FCS institutions already have collegiate schools chartered through their local school districts. All the collegiate schools are high schools beginning at the 10th grade, except for the State College of Florida, Manatee-Sarasota. In 2010 it opened with a middle school. At this time, the state does not allow colleges to have elementary schools.

- FCAT and other data show that students in these collegiate schools consistently score considerably above the statewide cumulative scores and measurements.
- Being on a college campus the schools foster a “going-to-college” attitude with emphasis on college readiness, the “power of the site” being very important especially to first generation and minority students.
- The collegiate school model allows students through the dual enrollment process to complete requirements for a high school diploma and an associate’s in arts degree concurrently, thus creating a win-win situation for parents and Florida tax payers by not having to pay for two years of college. At the same time it reduces taxpayer costs by eliminating the need for remedial classes at the college level. (An exemplary partnership is an agreement between Florida Gulf Coast University and the State College of Florida, Manatee-Sarasota in which FGCU provides a full tuition and mandated fees scholarship for up to 72 hours for any graduate of the SCF collegiate school to obtain a FGCU baccalaureate degree. As of now a student can enter the 6th grade at SCF and obtain a baccalaureate degree from FGCU without paying any tuition.)
- Collegiate schools have more freedom to be innovative in curricula and structure. For example, State College of Florida’s collegiate school has adapted a Swedish instructional model based on self-paced, individualized learning that is proving very successful. It is a model that can be replicated.
- The establishment of collegiate schools would be greatly enhanced through legislation allowing Florida state colleges (and public universities) to charter their own schools in consultation with the school districts.

University and Other College Partnerships

Major Premise: Florida College System Institutions have the experience, history, flexibility, and nimbleness to forge advantageous partnerships to meet student, community, and state needs better than any other educational sector.

Such policies as common course numbering and mandated articulation have made Florida the national leader in establishing articulated pathways among both public and private institutions. While these processes must be reviewed in light of current circumstances, such as sustainable capacity and state population growth, articulation has worked very well. Almost 50% of students who enter the Florida public universities come through the gateway of the Florida community colleges.

But in addition to this 2+2 model, community colleges have also become adept at becoming educational “brokers.” Rather than creating and owning degrees and programs, and incurring the subsequent costs, they can meet identified local economic and community needs by recruiting and partnering with other quality educational institutions to provide strategically selected programs both in residence and virtually. This allows academic institutions, private and public, state and out-of-state, to physically reside in multiple communities without creating permanent or duplicate programs or silos that are unable to adapt and change with future demands and needs from the local community. Students, especially place-bound students, can live and work in the community while earning their degrees, and are more likely to remain as productive citizens in the community. Administrative costs to the host institution are minimal; the partner institution provides instruction: students get expanded access to degrees; the community reaps educational returns; and the state is not invested in additional campuses and the concomitant recurring costs.

Educational Partnership Continuum Implications

The ideas presented have focused on the state college movement and its potential to serve a central role as linchpin to connect all sectors of education in response to access, workforce education, and community economic development needs. It relates directly to HECC’s legislative mandate in the areas of core mission, performance outcomes, articulation requirements, and the alignment of school district and Florida College System workforce development education programs. Implications and advantages include but are not limited to the following conditions:

- FCS institutions are pervasive throughout the state and are best situated with the ability and flexibility to create productive partnerships with all education sectors, public and private, including ICUF and other independent institutions.
- As emerging new models of education they are versatile, creative, innovative, nimble, adaptable, and willing to take reasonable risks.
- The state colleges could become chief providers of teacher education with programs that would create bold and innovative new ways to prepare students to be teachers. Community centered they would work closely with their school districts to develop and try out new methods. As new teacher evaluation processes are put in place the state college teacher preparation programs could also serve to improve the skills and performance of teachers whose evaluations determined they needed help.
- Core mission change is not mission creep (or leap) but a commonsense and necessary means of creating and expanding community-based workforce baccalaureate degree opportunities without the creation of new baccalaureate institutions or additional costly and poor-return-on-investment university branch campuses.
- According to former senator Don Sullivan, who co-sponsored the bill giving community colleges authority to become state colleges and offer workforce baccalaureate degrees,

the question at the time (and still true today) was how best to provide increased access to community-based baccalaureate workforce degrees. Obviously, the state could not afford to build a new extensive mid-tier system of baccalaureate institutions. The existing universities could not meet adequately the local access needs of communities. Even if they were amenable to going into the workforce degree business it was not consistent with their essential roles of basic and applied research, graduate education, undergraduate BA programs and economic development. Adding university branch campuses would be as cost prohibitive as a new system and would primarily expand a university culture that was not a good fit for the characteristics of workforce degrees.

- Workforce degrees differ from other college and university degrees in several ways: identification of need originates at the local level; program design includes constituent participation in planning and maintenance; program curricula feature more hands-on learning; programs must be up and running in a timely manner; adaptability to change and revision in skills and knowledge is essential and must be unobstructed by layers of academic bureaucracy; course offerings must be stable, predictable, and scheduled at times convenient to students, many of whom work fulltime; and availability of the programs must be easily accessible within the local vicinity. This profile is much closer to the nature of the community/state college than to the culture of other public state educational institutions.
- With Florida College System institutions, cost-effectiveness with quality and return on investment are extraordinary in comparison to other higher education institutions. An example: for the 2010-11 academic year the State College of Florida, Manatee-Sarasota generated approximately 9,000 lower and upper-level FTE and received \$22.5 million dollars in state funding, not including tuition. The branch campus of the University of South Florida—University of South Florida, Sarasota-Manatee, had approximately 1,006 upper-level and graduate FTE and received \$19.3 million dollars in state funding, not including tuition. That equates to state tax dollars paying approximately \$2,500 per FTE at SCFMS and \$19,000 per FTE at USFSM.
- State colleges do not aspire to become research universities, the monolithic university model. Without the research/scholarship priority, state college baccalaureate faculty members concentrate on teaching.
- As for concerns about quality, or branding, the record of baccalaureate programs already established in state colleges demonstrates the commitment to quality and the success of graduates (many starting at higher salaries than university baccalaureate graduates). These programs must meet the same rigorous SACS accreditation standards as university programs.
- The state college movement does not adversely compete with state universities or private institutions. By expanding workforce baccalaureate education it does not detract from, nor should it distract, universities from their traditional and fundamental mission of research/scholarship, graduate and professional education, economic development

ventures and opportunities, search for truth, and the crucial creation of intellectual prestige for the state. In fact, it removes from universities the type of applied degrees that are normally outside their purview and attention.

Educational Partnership Continuum Advantages

- If developed carefully, the state college system is a masterfully efficient way to create a mid-tier of workforce baccalaureate institutions as part of, and without damaging, the effectiveness and mission fulfillment of the highly productive and successful community college system.
- It creates an innovative new model of academic institution with the flexibility to meet educational and economic development needs at the community level with the greatest return on investment and the most comprehensive promise to improve Florida education.
- It provides existing statewide infrastructure of facilities and administrative resources for cost-effective implementation of needed initiatives.
- Its justification and approval process for workforce baccalaureate programs targets local demand, serves local employment needs and growth, and increases the likelihood of graduates remaining in Florida.
- It is organized to more easily scale back or dismantle programs for which demand has declined.
- It is best situated in experience, nimbleness, and mission to establish strategic partnerships with all educational sectors, especially with ICUF and other independent institutions.
- It could partner more extensively with SUS institutions, as well as ICUF programs, to provide B.A. degrees, thus expanding university access and increasing baccalaureate production.
- Its teacher education programs would be integral partnerships with schools opening up new and more effective ways to improve teaching, including uses of digital technology, extended internships, and critical need areas such as STEM and early childhood.
- Its expansion of collegiate schools (K-12), especially aimed at first generation and underserved populations, would create pathways to student success and accelerate time-to-degree with students obtaining concurrently a high school diploma and an AA degree.
- It has great potential to accomplish things not thought of yet.
- It makes fiscal and educational sense in a time that calls for re-forming education delivery and improvement in Florida, and would continue to put Florida in the forefront of educational innovation.

Recommendations

- Recognize, accept, and support this new Florida College System model of education.
- Prevent traditional ways of thinking, perceived threats to entrenched authority and funding, institutional and system egos, academic hierarchical bias, unfounded intellectual arrogance, and political shortsightedness to block or impede the successful innovation and growth of the state college movement.
- Allow and provide with funding and legislative support expanded access to baccalaureate workforce education and training at the community level by state colleges and hold them

accountable for meeting annual and long-term state goals of increased student access, preparedness, retention, transfer, and completion.

- Create authority for state colleges and universities to establish and have oversight of their own charter schools preK through 12.
- As with businesses and other enterprises, create conditions that encourage, allow, and support educational institutions to be innovative and entrepreneurial.

Response to Final Questions

What recommendations do you have for the efficient delivery of high quality postsecondary education that can be addressed by HECC?

The SUS and the FCS are the two major higher education systems in the state. As HECC deliberates its legislative mandate, a key question is how best to use these two systems short and long term in the context of mission, access, economic and workforce development, student completion and success, increased baccalaureate degrees, and return on investment.

SUS

Unless drastic alterations are imposed, which would involve staunch resistance and likely litigation, the core mission of the universities is not going to change, nor should it. Its basic foundation of academic freedom, tenure, and reward system based primarily on research and scholarship has made it the destination for the brightest students and the workplace of the best minds of creative and innovative thinkers, researchers, and teachers for centuries. It is easy to criticize the institutional value bestowed on “useless” scholarship as found in the liberal arts in comparison to discovering a cure for cancer. But in terms of academic vibrancy and intellectual prestige the two extremes are part and parcel of what a university is. In short, if HECC should arrive at the decision to alter the core mission or identity of the universities, it has its work cut out for it. (The only example of a non-tenure institution is Florida Gulf Coast University, which upon its founding had agreement in collective bargaining to establish a contract process for faculty employment). On the other hand, given examples of university systems such as California and North Carolina that have been so successful in transforming knowledge into economic value, the core mission of the Florida universities should be strengthened and supported. The research function of the universities is fundamental to economic development and the provision of graduate and professional degrees is essential.

FCS

Unlike the university model the junior/community college is a unique American creation of the 20th century. Its historical pedigree is short and humble. Florida has established one of the best systems in the country. Being open access the system was designed specifically with the core mission of providing the first two years of college for students to transfer into the universities and to provide workforce education for local communities. Data show the system has done the job extremely well. For example, close to 50% of students in the state university system enter through the community colleges, and annual documentation shows these students consistently perform as well, or better than, the native students (those who entered the universities in the first year).

Likewise, the change to state colleges delivering workforce baccalaureate degrees has resulted in substantial success. The Florida College sector has undergone the most changes in core mission and has demonstrated the leadership, creativity, flexibility, and adaptability to do so very successfully. They have been and continue to be essential in the educational continuum.

The New Hybrid Model

Part of the question boils down to what is to be the future of this new hybrid model of the state college. Much of the dilemma results from not having a mid-tier of baccalaureate institutions. A strong SUS exists. A strong but changing FCS covers the state. In the middle are still the long-standing issues of access, return on investment, economic development and increased production of baccalaureate degrees. It was the vacuum created by the lack of institutions with specific missions aimed at providing baccalaureate degrees that was in large part responsible for the legislative action to authorize Florida Community Colleges to offer workforce baccalaureate degrees.

It seems a given that the “community college” function of the state colleges is essential, and it is absolutely necessary for Florida to have a comprehensive and vibrant university system. However, in the face of the new hybrid institutions, especially as it relates to the baccalaureate degree, more urgency has grown around the question of what is the SUS role (especially in terms of governance and competition). Should the universities expand their reach into more communities, including not only expanding programs at, or creating new, branch campuses, but also offering lower-level courses--1000 and 2000 level, which heretofore they have not done? (The obvious question this raises is could it be done cost-effectively without distracting from or diluting support for the core research and scholarship mission of the university? After all, the state has only one AAU member.) In fact, the SUS has under consideration a regulation that gives considerable latitude in establishing courses/degrees, including lower-level courses, at sites other than the main campus. While the university would “consult” with the local community/state college in the instance of establishing what is defined as an “instructional site,” if agreement is not reached within 60 days then the university board of trustees could go ahead and approve the site regardless. Ironically, it appears the SUS wants the authority to create de facto community college programs as the community colleges are creating baccalaureate degrees.

If the universities expand to create a “sort of” mid-tier, as their new regulation seems to aim at, where will the funding come from? At the “instructional sites” will traditional full-time, tenure track faculty be required, which would be very expensive in salary and reduced teaching loads, or would a new category of non-tenured teaching faculty be created. Is access to additional BA degrees needed (psychology, history, English, etc.), or is it workforce 4-year degrees.

If the latter, then the state colleges are making a strong case through their successful workforce baccalaureate programs that they can do the best job, both in quality and return on investment. The Florida College System already has the infrastructure (28 colleges, 62 campuses, 180 sites), the academic flexibility to be nimble in adapting to workforce needs, a successful history of quality education, and without the research/scholarship requirements or graduate programs (and no aspirations to be universities) the commitment to focus on teaching and student success. They

are the only sector that has connections with all the other sectors—public and private. As such, they are in a central position to be a linchpin in a continuum of education that forms a connected system of partnerships that most effectively and efficiently allows different sectors to do what they do best. The FCS is at a point in its development and history that makes it ideal to serve in the adapted mid-tier role.

What does your institution/organization perceive to be obstacles to Florida's excelling in postsecondary education/workforce development?

As indicated above, it has excellent universities and community/state colleges and leads the nation in articulation policies and success. But obstacles include: unfunded mandates; morass of regulations; multiple layers and divisions of governance; institutional inefficiencies; turf protection; political interference; failure to implement improvement plans and strategies; growing criticism and blame of public institutions beyond what is justified.

Do you have any other suggestions related to the work of HECC?

Recognizing the daunting yet vital responsibility the Higher Education Coordinating Council has been given to improve Florida education, we at State College of Florida, Manatee-Sarasota are grateful for the opportunity to respond to HECC's request for comments and ideas. *We encourage thinking beyond the horizon of the status quo without regard to the typical barriers of competing agendas and territorial boundaries.*

In short: Be bold, and good luck.