

Professional & Graduate Degree Excellence Program Report

January 2021



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

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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 FY 2019-20. 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.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 2019-20, SUS institutions

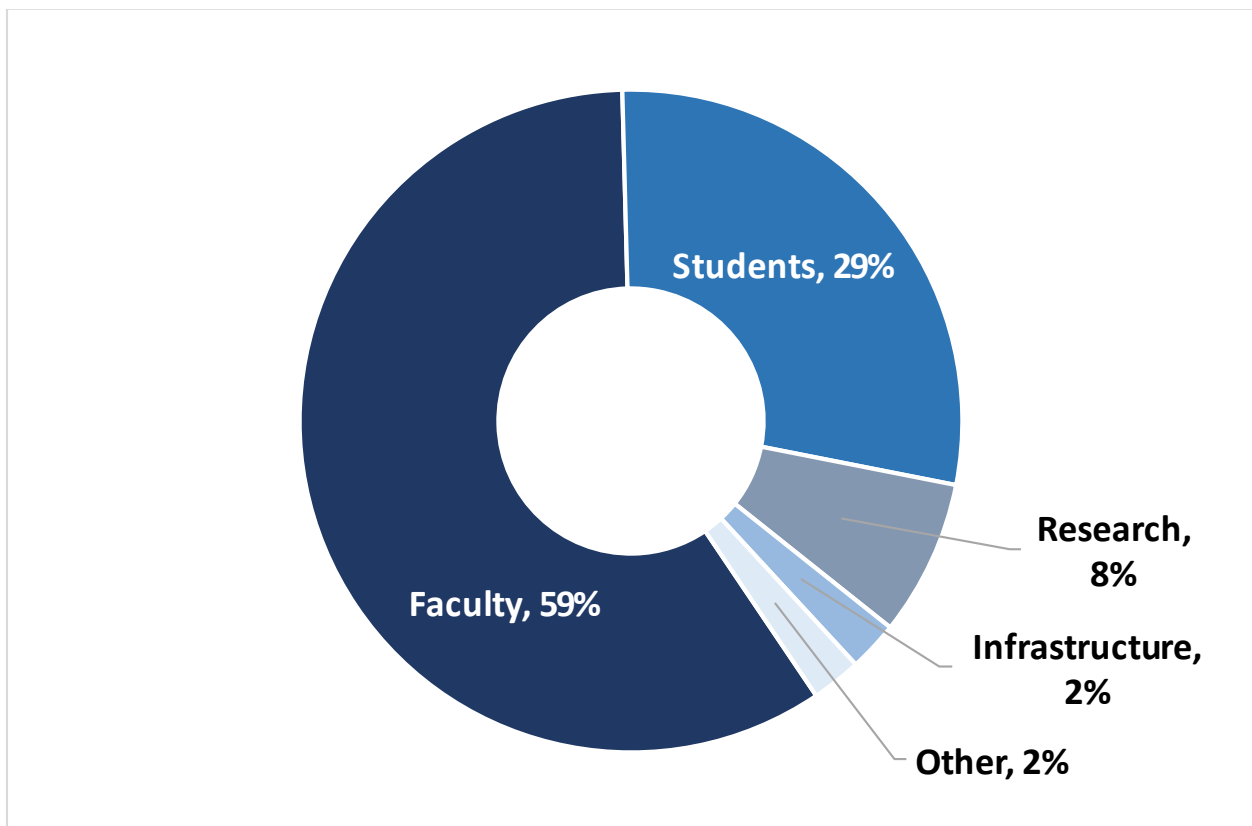
¹ New College of Florida and Florida Polytechnic University did not receive allocations for this program, as neither has a college of medicine, law, or graduate-level business program.

awarded 718 medical degrees, 798 law degrees, and 5,065 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 2019-20 to support the program. Of this, 59% was used to recruit and retain faculty and 29% was used to support students through a variety of mechanisms. Some examples of the student support activities include financial aid, licensure examination preparation, career placement, 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 2019-20.

Exhibit 1
SUS Expenditures of Professional and Graduate Degree Excellence Program Funds, 2019-2020

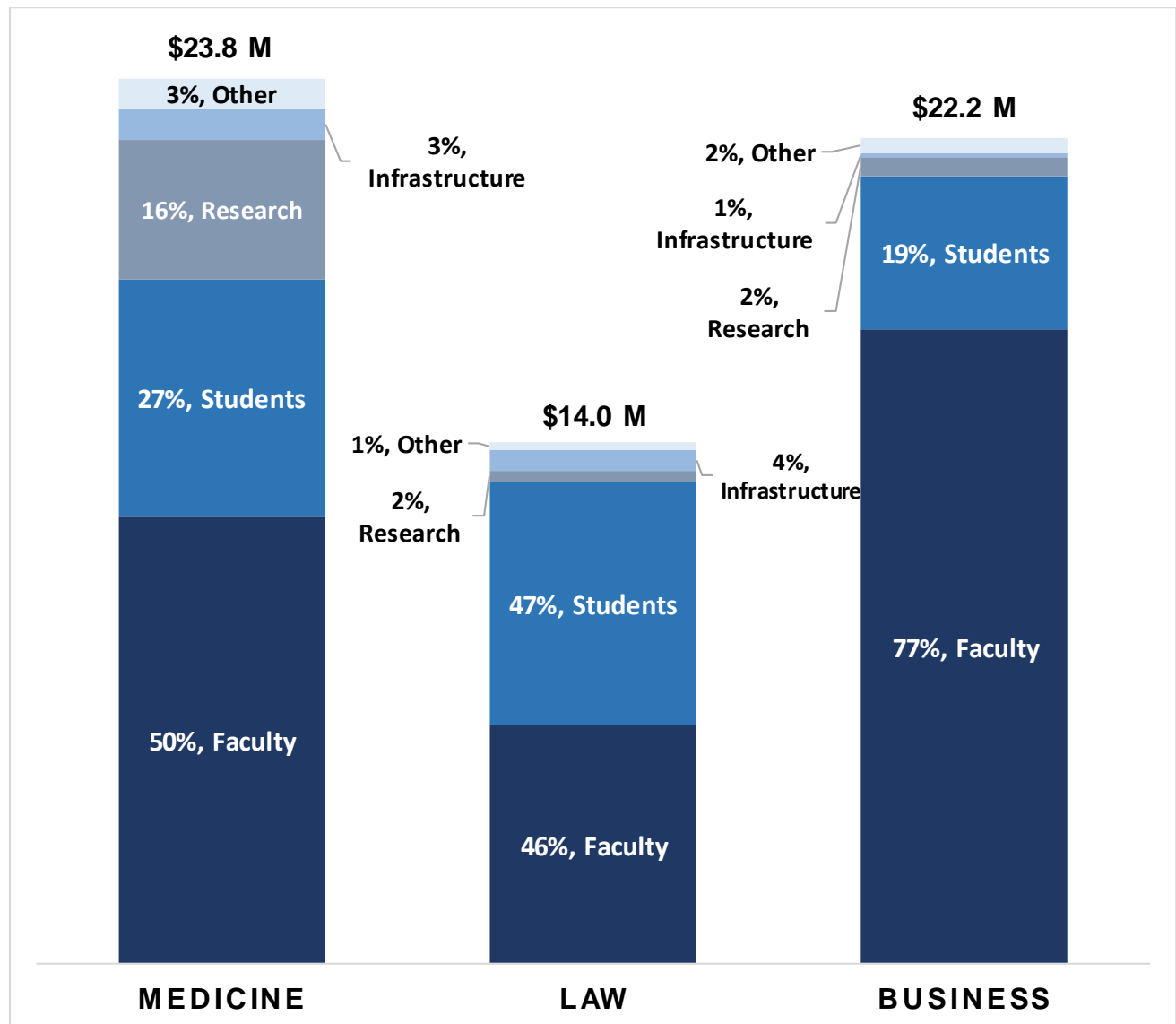


Source: Florida Board of Governors staff analysis of data provided by SUS institutions on the Professional and Graduate Degree Excellence Program, fall 2020.

When examining the funds across the program areas of medicine, law, and business, the majority of the funds supported faculty and students. Faculty expenditures generally supported faculty salaries and investments to support faculty scholarship. 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 2019-20.

- **Medicine:** Over the last year, SUS institutions spent approximately \$23.8 million to support graduate education in medicine. Most of the funds (77%) supported faculty or students, 16% supported medical research efforts, and 3% supported other initiatives such as efforts to improve passage rates on licensure examinations, IT enhancements, and support staff.
- **Law:** SUS institutions spent approximately \$14 million on law schools. The vast majority (93%) 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 \$22.2 million on graduate business education. Most of these funds (96%) were spent on faculty and students, while the remaining funds were spent on other graduate student initiatives, including enhanced advising, providing career specialists, and efforts to improve professional program national rankings through data analytics.

Exhibit 2
SUS Expenditures for Professional and Graduate Degree Excellence by Program Area
2019-2020



Source: Florida Board of Governors staff analysis of data provided by SUS institutions on the Professional and Graduate Degree Excellence Program, fall 2020. 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. 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 (2nd year of medical school)

Year	FAU	FIU	FSU	UCF	UF	USF	SUS	Benchmark
2017	97%	99%	93%	97%	95%	92%	96%	96%
2018	95%	99%	99%	97%	96%	98%	97%	96%
2019	95%	100%	95%	98%	97%	99%	97%	97%

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

Year	FAU	FIU	FSU	UCF	UF	USF	SUS	Benchmark
2016-17	100%	97%	98%	98%	94%	95%	97%	96%
2017-18	98%	99%	96%	99%	99%	98%	99%	97%
2018-19	100%	99%	97%	98%	100%	96%	98%	98%

U.S. Medical Licensing Exam (USMLE)-Step 2 Clinical Skills (4th year of medical school)

Year	FAU	FIU	FSU	UCF	UF	USF	SUS	Benchmark
2016-17	97%	97%	96%	99%	97%	96%	97%	96%
2017-18	96%	97%	95%	97%	98%	97%	97%	95%
2018-19	98%	97%	96%	97%	98%	94%	97%	95%

Source: State University System Accountability Plan, 2020.

SUS 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. Additionally, 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.

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

Year	FAMU	FIU	FSU	UF	SUS	Benchmark
2017	50%	87%	81%	76%	75%	69%
2018	47%	88%	83%	68%	72%	66%
2019	57%	94%	85%	88%	84%	74%

Source: State University System Accountability Plan, 2020.

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 2018-19 graduates who were found employed in Florida. 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, 2018-19 Graduates

SUS Institution	2018-19 Graduates*	Job Placement of Graduates Earning more than \$40K in Florida or enrolled**	
		Number of Graduates	%
FAMU	74	21	28%
FAU	535	365	68%
FGCU	67	46	69%
FIU	1,200	726	61%
FSU	329	166	50%
UCF	488	295	60%
UF	816	344	42%
UNF	206	133	65%
USF	423	272	64%
UWF	153	75	49%
System	4,291	2,443	57%

*Includes only graduates with valid SSN.

** Also includes those continuing education. All continuing education outcomes are based on Florida enrollment data for the fall 2019 semester and the preliminary winter/spring 2020 semester. The percent employed includes only those employed in Florida.

Source: FLDOE Florida Education & Training Placement Information Program (FETPIP) data, provided 11-17-20.

All employment outcomes contained in this table are based on the Florida UI wage data from the October - December quarter of 2019.

National Rankings

In national rankings, the System continues to be recognized by U.S. News & World Report for excellence in higher education. While the organization did not publish a state ranking for the most recent year, Florida was previously recognized three 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 6th (up from 7th the prior year), Florida State University ranked 19th (from 18th), USF ranked 46th (from 44th), UCF ranked 77th (up from 79th), and FIU ranked 95th (up from 105th). In addition, New College of Florida is ranked as the 6th 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 (up from 2nd).

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 2021 Rankings, Specific Graduate Programs

SUS Institution	Medicine (Research)	Law	Business
FAU	94-122	N/A	Unranked
FIU	94-122	90	Unranked
FSU	94-122	50	85
UCF	84	N/A	Unranked
UF	40	24	28
USF	47	N/A	99-131

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, 2021.

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 May 2020, the System created or supported over 19,000 jobs in FY 2018-19 through external funding. Further, the calculated economic impact of state and federal research expenditures was over \$3.6 billion in FY 2018-19. These examples highlight how the State University System is a good return on investment.

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 2019-20, SUS institutions awarded 718 medical degrees, 798 law degrees, and 5,065 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 8% 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	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
FAU	64	55	63
FIU	114	119	120
FSU	109	114	115
UCF	116	116	117
UF	137	129	130
USF	158	169	173
Total MD	698	702	718

Source: Florida Board of Governors, Office of Data Analytics, November 2020.

Table 2
Total Graduate Degrees Awarded in Law

Institution	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
FAMU	127	130	171
FIU	145	143	129
FSU	197	170	192
UF	324	331	306
Total Law	793	774	798

Source: Florida Board of Governors, Office of Data Analytics, November 2020.

Table 3
Total Graduate Degrees Awarded in Business

Institution	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
FAMU	58	74	65
FAU	559	568	653
FGCU	53	67	92
FIU	1,348	1,368	1,408
FSU	322	345	365
UCF	491	501	489
UF	960	887	961
UNF	177	223	231
USF	562	600	606
UWF	149	161	195
Total	4,679	4,794	5,065

Source: Florida Board of Governors, Office of Data Analytics, November 2020.



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