

World Class Faculty & Scholar Program Report

January 2022



SUMMARY of the STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM of FLORIDA WORLD CLASS FACULTY & SCHOLAR PROGRAM REPORT

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Introduction

The Legislature established the World Class Faculty and Scholar Program to fund and support the efforts of the State University System of Florida (SUS) institutions to recruit and retain exemplary faculty and secure additional research funding. The intent of this program is to elevate the national competitiveness of Florida's state universities through faculty and scholar recruitment and retention. Section 1004.6497, Florida Statutes, requires the Florida Board of Governors to summarize information from the SUS institutions on the World Class Faculty and Scholar Program. The statute requires that the report include information on program expenditures, success in recruiting research faculty, the four-year graduation rate, the number of undergraduate courses offered with fewer than 50 students, and the increase in the national academic standing of targeted programs.

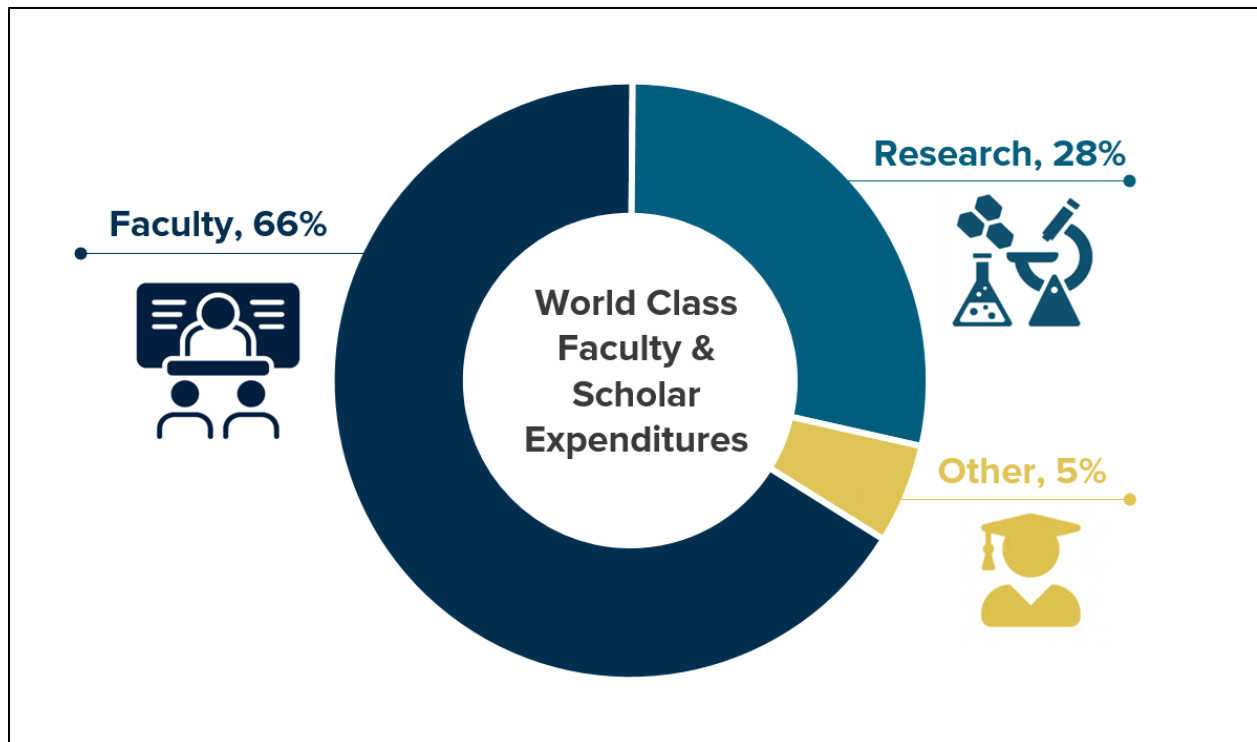
The Legislature originally provided recurring funds to SUS institutions for the World Class Faculty and Scholar Program in fiscal years 2017-18 and 2018-19. Section 1004.6497, Florida Statutes, which established the program and the reporting requirements, was signed into law in March of 2018. Therefore, the program is still relatively new, and recruiting faculty and/or research scholars can often take a considerable amount of time. The timing of hiring individuals depends on a variety of factors. In addition, unless individuals bring existing research contracts with them, it could take several years to realize the full potential of research dollars awarded to individuals who are recruited to the SUS through this program. Other metrics such as four-year graduation rates and academic program rankings may also take several years before any advancements are realized as a result of this program.

The State University System continues to make great strides to elevate its national research profile to the top echelon. With support from the Legislature and Governor, the SUS is 5th in the country for public institution research expenditures, and over the past five years, system-wide research expenditures have increased by 19%. The Board of Governors recently increased the System's goal for annual research expenditures in its strategic plan to \$3 billion by 2025. The World Class Faculty and Scholar Program is one mechanism that provides resources for the System to continue to elevate its research.

Expenditure Information

While expenditures of the World Class Faculty and Scholar Program varied in how these funds were utilized, most of the funds (95%) were used to recruit and retain faculty and increase research efforts. The Legislature provided recurring funding of \$90.5 million in 2020-21 to the SUS institutions to support the program. Some examples of faculty recruitment and retention efforts include: research-centric cluster hires, awards for outstanding performance, professional development, and overall hiring/retention of faculty. Examples of research efforts include instruction and research infrastructure enhancements, student research initiatives, and postdoctoral fellowships. Exhibit 1 provides an overview of how SUS institutions spent or allocated the funds for the World Class Faculty and Scholar Program in FY 2020-21.

Exhibit 1 Most World Class Faculty and Scholar Funds Supported Faculty and Research



Source: Florida Board of Governors staff analysis of data provided by SUS institutions on the World Class Faculty and Scholar Program, fall 2021.

In a short amount of time, this program has enhanced and improved SUS institutions' efforts to recruit and retain faculty. System-wide, institutions expended 23% of the funds spent on faculty on recruitment efforts and the remaining 77% on retaining existing faculty. In 2020-21, institutions reported recruiting approximately 106 faculty (FTE) and retaining over 3,000 faculty (FTE) as a result of this program. The faculty turnover was generally lower (5% or less) for faculty hired through this program compared to the faculty turnover rate for faculty not funded through the World Class

Faculty and Scholar Program; in fact, eight institutions reported a 0% turnover rate for faculty hired through this program. These retained and newly hired faculty transferred roughly \$27.1 million in research funding to the institutions and have more than \$384 million in research proposals under development or review. If this trend continues, this program will continue to increase the research profile and national ranking of the SUS. The System includes many universities that are relatively young in terms of research, and they will only continue to grow over the next several years.

Elevating the National Competitiveness of the State University System

The intent of the World Class Faculty and Scholar Program is to elevate the overall national competitiveness of the System through faculty and scholar recruitment and retention. While it is still too early to know how this program has impacted metrics such as a four-year graduation rate, the number of undergraduate courses offered with fewer than 50 students, and academic rankings, baseline information for each of these metrics is provided below.

- In the last five years, the System four-year graduation rate has improved from 47% to 59%. Exhibit 2 provides details by institution. It should be noted that the four-year graduation rate is not yet available for students who enrolled at state universities when the World Class Faculty and Scholar Program funding was first received.
- Increasing the number of faculty should also help to reduce class size. Again, it is not yet known how all the hires from the World Class Faculty and Scholar Program have affected this metric. However, in fall 2020, the System has improved on this metric, with 87% of undergraduate courses having fewer than 50 students, an improvement from 86% in the prior year. Exhibit 2 provides details by institution.

Exhibit 2

Summary of Four-Year Graduation Rates and Undergraduate Courses with Fewer than 50 Students

Institution	Four-Year Graduation Rate		% of Undergraduate Courses with Fewer than 50 Students
	2015-19	2016-20	Fall 2020
FAMU	27.7%	34.6%	94%
FAU	37.4%	47.5%	78%
FGCU	35.7%	41.4%	93%
FIU	42.8%	49.3%	95%
POLY	39.5%	34.3%	99%
FSU	69.5%	73.8%	89%
NCF	57.9%	53.9%	100%
UCF	46.3%	47.7%	75%
UF*	70.9%	70.7%	91%
UNF	44.6%	48.3%	89%
USF	59.4%	60.9%	99%
UWF	34.8%	36.4%	93%
System	55.1%	58.8%	87%

*The undergraduate course enrollment data only represents the UF main campus.

Source: Florida Board of Governors, 2021 System Accountability Plan and institutional responses to the 2020-21 Common Data Set (CDS) survey.

In national rankings, the System continues to be recognized by U.S. News & World Report for excellence in higher education. Florida has been recognized as the best state for higher education for the past five years. U.S. News & World Report also ranked five SUS institutions in the top 100 public schools in the 2022 rankings, with the University of Florida ranked 5th (up from 6th the prior year), Florida State University ranked 19th (held position from prior year), USF ranked 46th (held position from prior year), UCF ranked 67th (up from 77th), and FIU ranked 78th (up from 95th). In addition, New College of Florida is ranked as the 5th 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. Exhibit 3 provides a list of SUS institutions on the U.S. News & World Report top 100 national public university rankings for both 2021 and 2022.

Exhibit 3
U.S. News & World Report Public University Rankings

SUS Institution	U.S. News & World Report Ranking (Public)		
	2021	2022	1-Year Change
UF	6	5	+1
FSU	19	19	0
USF	46	46	0
UCF	77	67	+10
FIU	95	78	+17

Source: U.S. News & World Report Rankings of National Universities, Top Public Schools, 2021 and 2022.

Specific to research, the System is the 5th largest public system in terms of research expenditures, and the System has five institutions ranked in the top 100 public institutions for research.¹ The System is also the leading producer of utility patents in the state and has five universities ranked in the top 100 in the world for patents.²

¹ Source: National Center for Science and Engineering Statistics, Higher Education Research and Development Survey, Downloaded 12/07/2021.

² *Top 100 Worldwide Universities Granted U.S. Utility Patents 2020*, The National Academy of Inventors.

Return on Investment

Funding for the World Class Faculty and Scholar Program has allowed institutions to realize a positive return on investment to the state. Since the program's inception, institutions have received multiple years of support, which has contributed to the System's ability to attract new research awards. Expenditures associated with these research awards contribute to the state's economy and often result in a positive economic return. For example, Florida Atlantic University (FAU) reported receiving \$30.8 million in research awards directly attributable to World Class Faculty & Scholar faculty in 2020-21. Compared to the \$5.7 million program allocation to FAU during the same period, this represents a return of over five to one on the dollars invested in the program. Additionally, faculty hired by the University of South Florida through this program have generated \$59 million in research expenditures to date from federal, state, and other sources, contributing to the institution's national ranking and reputation. Further, the increased research opportunities have spurred innovation that allows institutions to engage in local and regional economic development activities. Faculty associated with this program engage students in undergraduate research, which enhances students' academic experience and better positions them to enter the workforce with applied knowledge and skills. Better prepared students provide a long-term strategic and competitive benefit to the state. Finally, institutions have improved their faculty-student ratios, which helps faculty engage students in active learning and create opportunities for discussion. Together, these program benefits strengthen the quality of education offered by SUS institutions, which help attract highly competitive, new students, faculty, and businesses to the state of Florida.

Conclusion

While the full effects of the World Class Faculty and Scholar Program are not yet known, the program has enhanced the ability of SUS institutions to successfully recruit and retain high-quality faculty and support research efforts in a short amount of time. As a result, institutions recruited more than 100 faculty who transferred over \$27 million in research funding to Florida in 2020-21. These successes put the System on a trajectory to enhance national competitiveness relative to both quality postsecondary education and research.



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