

# Professional & Graduate Degree Excellence Program Report

January 2023



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

**January 2023**

## **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 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 (FY) 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 2018. This report provides information on how the SUS institutions spent funds in FY 2021-22. 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 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.<sup>1</sup> These institutions received funding based on prior performance on indicators such as licensure exam pass rates, employment outcomes, and the number of graduates. In 2021-22, SUS institutions

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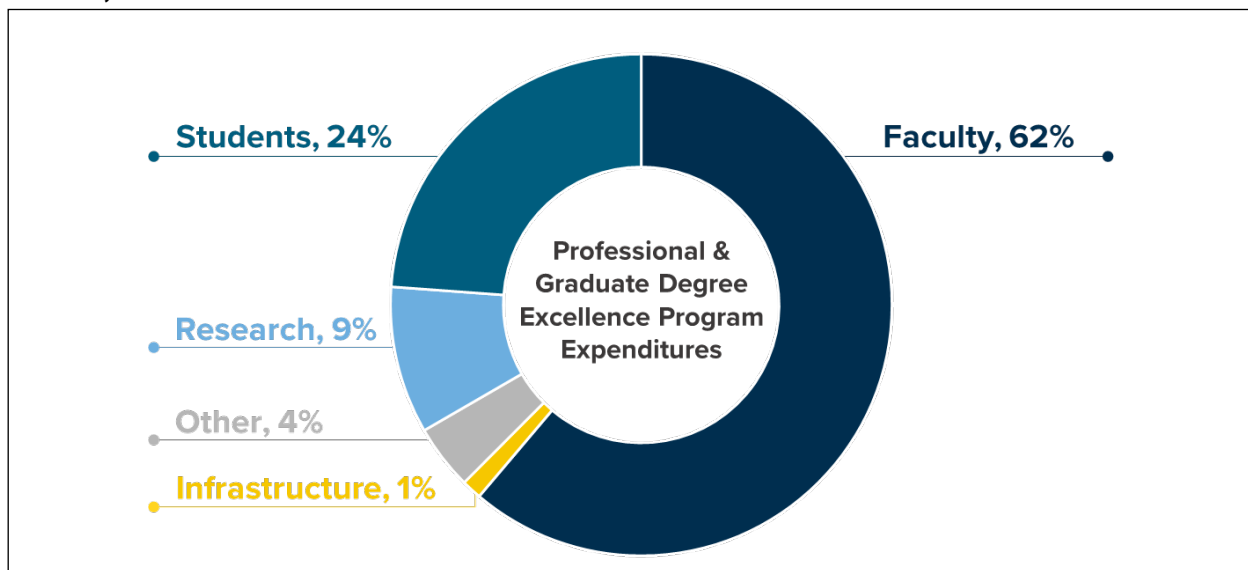
<sup>1</sup> New College of Florida and Florida Polytechnic University did not receive allocations for this program, as neither has a college of medicine, law, or graduate-level business program.

awarded 702 medical degrees, 766 law degrees, and 5,844 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 2021-22 to support the program. Of this, 62% was used to recruit and retain faculty, and 24% was used to support students through a variety of 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 2021-22.

**Exhibit 1**  
**SUS Expenditures of Professional and Graduate Degree Excellence Program Funds, 2021-2022**

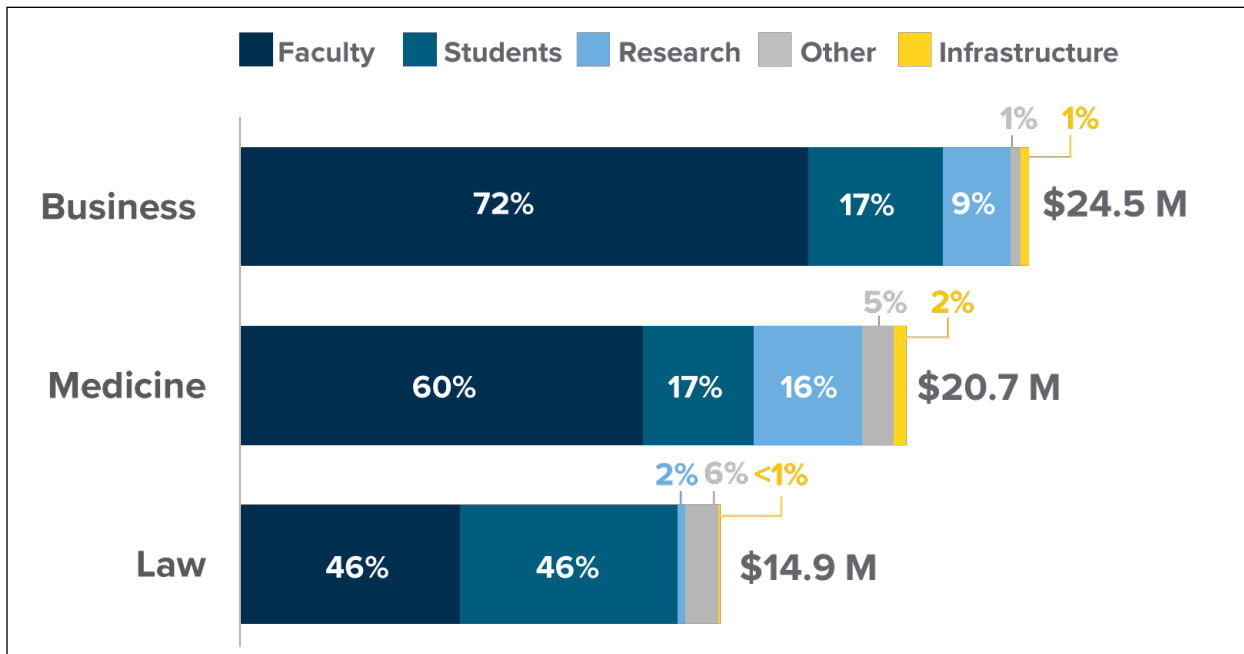


Source: Florida Board of Governors staff analysis of data provided by SUS institutions on the Professional and Graduate Degree Excellence Program, fall 2022.

When examining the funds across the program areas of medicine, law, and business, the majority of the funds supported faculty and students. System-wide, institutions expended 8% of the funds on faculty recruitment efforts and the remaining 92% 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 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 2021-22.

- Medicine:** Over the last year, SUS institutions spent approximately \$20.7 million to support graduate education in medicine. Most of the funds (77%) supported faculty or students, 16% supported medical research efforts, and 5% supported other initiatives such as outreach efforts in pipeline programs and enhancing student practical experiences.
- Law:** SUS institutions spent approximately \$14.9 million on law schools. The majority (92%) 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:** SUS institutions spent approximately \$24.5 million on graduate business education. Most of these funds (89%) were spent on faculty and students, 9% 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**  
**SUS Expenditures for Professional and Graduate Degree Excellence by Program Area 2021-2022**



Source: Florida Board of Governors staff analysis of data provided by SUS institutions on the Professional and Graduate Degree Excellence Program, fall 2022. Percentages may not total 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 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 (2 <sup>nd</sup> year of medical school)								
Year	FAU	FIU	FSU	UCF	UF	USF	SUS	Benchmark
2019	95	100	95	98	97	99	97	97
2020	97	100	97	98	99	99	98	97
2021	98	100	95	98	96	99	98	96

U.S. Medical Licensing Exam (USMLE)-Step 2 Clinical Knowledge (4 <sup>th</sup> year of medical school)								
Year	FAU	FIU	FSU	UCF	UF	USF	SUS	Benchmark
2018-19	100	99	97	98	100	96	98	98
2019-20	100	99	97	98	100	99	99	98
2020-21	100	100	99	99	100	99	99	99

Source: State University System Accountability Plan, 2022.

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. 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. FAMU provided the Board of Governors with an improvement plan for passage rates for the Law program on September 16, 2020, and provided a status update on this plan in the fall of 2022.

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

<b>Year</b>	<b>FAMU</b>	<b>FIU</b>	<b>FSU</b>	<b>UF</b>	<b>SUS</b>	<b>Benchmark</b>
<b>2019</b>	<b>57%</b>	<b>94%</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>88%</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>74%</b>
<b>2020</b>	<b>58%</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>84%</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>71%</b>
<b>2021</b>	<b>59%</b>	<b>87%</b>	<b>74%</b>	<b>80%</b>	<b>76%</b>	<b>71%</b>

Source: State University System Accountability Plan, 2022.

**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 graduates who were found employed in Florida. System-wide, 62% of graduate business students met this threshold in 2020-21, compared to 60% in the prior year. 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 Masters-Level Business Degrees, 2020-21 Graduates**

SUS Institution	2020-21 Graduates*	Job Placement of Graduates Earning more than \$40K in Florida or enrolled**	
		Number of Graduates	%
<b>FAMU</b>	61	22	36%
<b>FAU</b>	590	401	68%
<b>FGCU</b>	94	62	66%
<b>FIU</b>	1,339	806	60%
<b>FSU</b>	326	176	54%
<b>UCF</b>	504	382	76%
<b>UF</b>	903	468	52%
<b>UNF</b>	246	171	70%
<b>USF</b>	522	365	70%
<b>UWF</b>	204	103	50%
<b>System</b>	<b>4,789</b>	<b>2,956</b>	<b>62%</b>

\*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 12-13-22.

All employment outcomes contained in this table are based on Florida Unemployment Insurance wage data from the October - December quarter of 2021.

## 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 five consecutive years 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 2022 rankings, with the University of Florida ranked 5<sup>th</sup>, Florida State University ranked 19<sup>th</sup>, USF ranked 42<sup>nd</sup> (up from 46<sup>th</sup>), UCF ranked 64<sup>th</sup> (up from 67<sup>th</sup>), and FIU ranked 72<sup>nd</sup> (up from 78<sup>th</sup>). 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 2023 Rankings, Specific Graduate Programs

SUS Institution	Medicine (Research)	Law	Business
FAU	95-124	N/A	Unranked
FIU	95-124	98	Unranked
FSU	95-124	47	Unranked
UCF	87	N/A	Unranked
UF	37	21	29
USF	46	N/A	102-134

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, 2023.

## 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 March 2022, the System created or supported over 20,000 jobs in FY 2020-21 through external funding. Further, the calculated economic impact of state and federal research expenditures was over \$3.9 billion in FY 2020-21. These examples highlight how the State University System is 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 Atlantic University's College of Medicine support cutting-edge research efforts for faculty, who in turn recruit outstanding medical students to the program. By building the capacity to attract top talent in the area of medicine, graduate programs can help ensure that Florida communities are thriving and healthy. Additionally, the University of West Florida increased faculty research capacity in their College of Business's Center for Supply Chain Management, which in turn provides graduate research opportunities to collaborate with corporate partners to deliver timely solutions to supply chain issues affecting Florida citizens and businesses.

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 a 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 provided an opportunity for SUS institutions to support and enhance professional and graduate education in the state, improve national rankings, and help contribute to Florida's economy.

## APPENDIX A

In 2021-22, SUS institutions awarded 702 medical degrees, 766 law degrees, and 5,840 graduate-level business degrees. While degrees awarded in medicine and law have remained relatively stable, the total graduate degrees awarded in business have increased by 15% 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	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-22
FAU	63	56	64
FIU	120	113	117
FSU	115	119	119
UCF	117	119	107
UF	130	150	130
USF	173	172	165
<b>Total MD</b>	<b>718</b>	<b>729</b>	<b>702</b>

Source: Florida Board of Governors, Office of Data Analytics, December 2022.

**Table 2**  
**Total Graduate Degrees Awarded in Law**

Institution	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-22
FAMU	172	153	158
FIU	129	144	172
FSU	192	218	216
UF	306	266	220
<b>Total Law</b>	<b>799</b>	<b>781</b>	<b>766</b>

Source: Florida Board of Governors, Office of Data Analytics, December 2022.

**Table 3**  
**Total Graduate Degrees Awarded in Business**

<b>Institution</b>	<b>2018-2019</b>	<b>2019-2020</b>	<b>2020-2021</b>
<b>FAMU</b>	65	61	87
<b>FAU</b>	653	609	611
<b>FGCU</b>	92	94	140
<b>FIU</b>	1410	1495	1579
<b>FSU</b>	365	329	516
<b>UCF</b>	489	521	595
<b>UF</b>	961	970	1202
<b>UNF</b>	231	260	237
<b>USF</b>	608	673	660
<b>UWF</b>	195	212	213
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,069</b>	<b>5,224</b>	<b>5,840</b>

Source: Florida Board of Governors, Office of Data Analytics, December 2022.



# STATE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF FLORIDA





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