



# Programs of Strategic Emphasis Waiver Implementation & Guidance Document for State University System Institutions

*June 28, 2024*

## Background

In 2021, the Florida Legislature amended Section 1009.26, Florida Statutes, to create the Programs of Strategic Emphasis Waiver. This waiver was first available to resident undergraduate students enrolled in the 2021-2022 academic year who completed at least 60 semester credit hours towards a baccalaureate degree within two academic years after initial enrollment at a Florida public postsecondary institution and were enrolled in upper-division courses required for eligible academic programs. The remainder of this document outlines the student eligibility requirements and provides guidance for the State University System institutions in implementing this new waiver program.

## Student Eligibility

Students must meet the following requirements to be eligible for the Programs of Strategic Emphasis waiver.

1. Is a resident for tuition purposes.
2. Has earned at least 60 semester credit hours towards a baccalaureate degree within two academic years after initial enrollment at a Florida public postsecondary institution.
  - a. Initial enrollment will use the same definition used to define FTIC, which begins with the first registration after earning a high school diploma.
  - b. Dual high school enrollment credits count towards the 60 credit requirement. Timing related to credit earned from accelerated mechanisms should not count against a student or be used as a basis to disqualify a student from receiving the waiver. Any accelerated credit earned should be counted as of the first day of the student's first semester.
3. Enrolls and is accepted into one of twelve Programs of Strategic Emphasis as adopted by the Board of Governors. The Board of Governors shall adopt eight programs in science, technology, engineering, or math, two programs in the critical workforce gap analysis category, and two state-approved teacher preparation programs for which a student may be eligible to receive the tuition and fee waiver authorized by this subsection. The programs identified by the board must reflect the priorities of the state and be offered at a majority of state universities.

- a. Enrolls means the student registers as an FTIC or transfer student and is accepted into one of the twelve selected programs. The eight selected programs in science, technology, engineering, or math for the 2024-25 academic year are:

	CIP	CIP Title
1.	11.0101	Computer and Information Sciences
2.	11.0103	Information Technology
3.	14.0801	Civil Engineering
4.	14.0901	Computer Engineering
5.	14.1001	Electrical and Electronics Engineering
6.	14.1901	Mechanical Engineering
7.	27.0101	Mathematics
8.	52.1201	Management Information Systems

	40.0801	Physics*
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\*Beginning in the 2024-25 academic year, Physics will no longer be included in the list of approved programs. Students who have previously been granted the waiver for Physics will continue receiving the waiver until they graduate, exceed the number of allowable credit hours, or withdraw from the program.

- b. The two selected programs in the critical workforce gap analysis category for the 2024-25 academic year are:

	CIP	CIP Title
1.	52.0301	Accounting
2.	52.0801	Finance

- c. The two selected state-approved teacher preparation programs for the 2024-25 academic year are:

	CIP	CIP Title
1.	13.1001	Special Education & Teaching
2.	13.1202	Elementary Education & Teaching

- d. The waiver applies only to students that are enrolled in one of the twelve selected programs as their primary major/degree. Minor courses, regardless of discipline, may be eligible for the waiver only if the minor is required to complete the eligible degree. Second majors, minors, or pre-majors that are associated with the eligible CIP codes are not eligible for the waiver simply by virtue of that association.

## Implementation

Institutions shall award the Programs of Strategic Emphasis waiver according to the following guidance.

1. **Applicable fees:** The waiver applies to tuition and the following fees specified in Board Regulation 7.001 Tuition and Associated Fees and in Board Regulation 7.003 Fees, Fines, and Penalties.
  - a. Student Financial Aid Fee
  - b. Capital Improvement Fee
  - c. Health Fee
  - d. Athletic Fee
  - e. Activity and Service Fee
  - f. Technology Fee
  - g. Other fees approved by the Board of Governors pursuant to Regulation 7.003(26)
  - h. Tuition Differential
  - i. Transportation fees
  - j. Distance learning fees
  - k. Facilities fees
  - l. Lab fees/equipment fees/material and supply fees
  - m. Student life/Student affairs fees

A university may waive other student fees associated with the eligible courses. The university should notify Board of Governors staff of the additional waived fees. Board staff will review any additional waived fees to determine eligibility for reimbursement.

2. **Credits earned from accelerated mechanisms:** Credits earned by all acceleration mechanisms count towards eligibility for the waiver as long as they are earned/granted/applied within the specified 2-year window from initial enrollment.
  - a. Timing related to credit earned from accelerated mechanisms should not count against a student or be used as a basis to disqualify a student from receiving the waiver. Any accelerated credit earned should be counted as of the first day of the student's first semester.
  - b. Accelerated credits count towards the 110 percent limitation specified in the statute.
3. **Eligible courses (fall/spring/summer):** Upper-division courses required to complete the program, including required electives and required courses offered by other departments, for up to 110 percent of the number of required credit hours. The waiver does not apply to courses that are not required for the degree program.
  - a. An eligible **upper-division course** is defined as a 3,000 or 4,000-level course required for the degree using the common course numbering designation.
    - i. New College does not use the Statewide Course Numbering System. For this waiver, all courses attempted by New College students who have completed the equivalent of 60 credit hours (15 units) are upper-

- division courses. This item applies only to New College of Florida.
- b. An eligible **equivalent course** is defined as a 3,000 or 4,000-level course required for the degree using the common course numbering designations.
    - i. An equivalent course is any New College of Florida course attempted by a student who has completed the equivalent of 60 credit hours (15 units). This item applies only to New College of Florida.
  - c. The 110 percent will be calculated in the same way as other existing waivers. For example, 110% of total degree hours.
4. **Calculating the amount to be waived:** In each term, the tuition and fees for all eligible upper-division courses, defined in item 3.a. above, and all eligible equivalent courses, defined in item 3.b. above, should be added together and then divided by 2.
- a. This calculation results in the amount that should be waived, which equals fifty percent of the tuition and fees for the eligible upper-division and equivalent courses. For students taking an even number of eligible courses in any given term, the calculation will result in a "free" course(s) in the same term. For students taking an odd number of eligible courses in any given term, they will get a 50% discount on all eligible courses during the same term. This will alleviate the need to track "tuition and fee credits" to be applied in future semesters.
  - b. Waivers must be used at the same institution where the eligible course was taken. Waivers may not be transferred between institutions.
5. **Bright Futures:** A student receiving Bright Futures will receive a full disbursement of Bright Futures. Existing policies and procedures governing the application and disbursement of established waivers and financial aid will apply.
6. **Limitations**
- a. The Programs of Strategic Emphasis waiver will not be applied if a student's tuition and fees are being covered/waived by any other statutory waiver.
  - b. Since the Programs of Strategic Emphasis waiver is a state-mandated waiver, it does not count towards any discretionary waiver caps or limits.
  - c. The Programs of Strategic Emphasis waiver can only be applied towards a first bachelor's degree.
  - d. The Programs of Strategic Emphasis waiver cannot be applied retroactively to a prior academic year.
7. **Withdrawals/failing grades/changing majors:** Existing policies and procedures governing the application and disbursement of established waivers and financial aid will apply.

8. **Changes to academic programs:** Institutions may not be allowed to request or process the following changes to the eligible programs during an academic year. If a change is deemed necessary, the provost or their designee should contact Board staff to discuss prior to making any changes.
  - a. CIP codes
  - b. Program terminations or suspensions
  - c. Specialized admissions status
  - d. Required credit hours
  - e. Admission requirements