

2021  
Annual Report

# Florida Consortium of Metropolitan Research Universities

Submitted for Approval February 2022



## Introduction

Higher Education is supposed to be a serious business purveyed by serious professionals who develop serious solutions to serious problems. However, I think it was the famous actor Peter Weller who summed up the nature of higher education and the Florida Consortium's 2021 year when he said during the 1984 movie, *The Adventures of Buckaroo Banzai Across the 8th Dimension*; "No Matter Where You Go, There You Are." Although meant to be snarky, his line from the movie is a throwback to a religious devotional published in the 1400s by Thomas à Kempis. The purpose was to warn us not to look past what is happening today, that the challenges of now will shape the success of the future and inform our life moving forward. Our work is not to endure but to be aware of the moment and seize on its challenges.

The Florida Consortium marked its sixth year on July 7, 2021, and we continued in our mission to Transform Learning into Talent for the State of Florida. Our work this past year is a testament to our collective desire to ensure every student we recruit, admit, and enroll not only has an opportunity to attain a world-class education but also has access to the best jobs in the State of Florida. As Florida's Metropolitan universities we are committed to access, quality, and affordability so every student, regardless of their zip code, can receive a baccalaureate degree and an opportunity for a career of their choosing. And to celebrate that commitment we are looking toward 2022 as the Year of the Transfer. After all, most of our students start someplace else but find their way to FIU, UCF, or USF to complete their journey.

As we all know, 2021 did not see the end of the global pandemic that disrupted so much in 2020, which had a profound impact on higher education industry. The return to the classroom arrived in fits and starts. When we were ready for full engagement, another wave would sweep in and disrupt our efforts. Delay and regrouping became our standard operating procedure.

However, that did not stop our work in the slightest. As 2021 wore on, we discovered that our collaborative work was even more valued and created better avenues for connection and engagement. As 2021 began, we received a glowing review and assessment delivered by our research partners at [Equal Measure](#). They outlined Transfer Success and Employability as our best opportunity for impact. The evaluation resulted in operationalizing our [Transfer Success Network via a \\$1.25 Million grant by Helios Education Foundation](#). This grant led to the formation of our Career Readiness Team, and they are focused on employer engagement and data-driven avenues for student success.

Thus, fulfilling the promise of understanding; "No Matter Where You Go, There You Are." 2021 was about not trying to endure but rather on embracing the current situation and thriving. The Consortium's work became more important to the overall mission of each university regardless of the constant change and challenge of the moment. We also know that 2022 will provide several surprises of its own. Our member universities are currently seeing large-scale leadership changes which will impact our work and create new opportunities for engagement. The ongoing pandemic may begin to wane, but the promise for sustained changes to our work will provide a real chance to work together and think about what the university of the future will look like in 10 or 20 years.

Sincerely,



Michael Preston, EdD  
Executive Director

## **Vision**

We leverage the unique assets of Miami, Orlando, and Tampa Bay, cities in the State of Florida, to develop talent which enhances community well-being.

## **Mission Statement**

We strengthen the State of Florida's talent pipeline through sharing ideas and scalable solutions which accelerate learner achievement and access to economic opportunity.

## **Statement of Strategy**

The Florida Consortium believes all students, particularly first-generation, minority, and underrepresented students, should have the opportunity to walk across the stage at graduation prepared for a career of their choosing, preferably in the state of Florida. Florida is an incredible place to live, work, play, and raise a family. But where will our citizens go to college, work, and live? What kind of skills and opportunities will they need to help build the State of Florida economy of the future? The members of the Florida Consortium of Metropolitan Research Universities are working together to ensure the State of Florida continues to provide students an opportunity for a world-class and affordable degree that addresses the high skill needs of the state.

The Florida Consortium of Metropolitan Research Universities emerged from a shared commitment to transforming students' lives and the metropolitan areas that we serve in Miami, Orlando, and Tampa Bay. Together our three institutions share:

1. Our shared values are based on serving our student bodies and promoting success in and beyond the classroom for students of all backgrounds, no matter what socioeconomic status.
2. Strengths as public research universities that also have earned the Carnegie Classifications of Community Engagement for Curricular Engagement, and Outreach and Partnerships.
3. We maintain a preference for engaging in collaborative work to improve the lives of Florida's next-generation workforce through innovative programs aimed at career readiness.

The combination of resources, expertise, and commitment allows the Consortium to launch and complete initiatives at a speed and scale that Florida International University (FIU), the University of Central Florida (UCF) and the University of South Florida (USF) could not attain separately. The Consortium accelerates the pace and extent of change by sharing, learning, and applying best practices, policies, and program designs. The Florida Consortium will produce more career-ready graduates with lower debt, better training, and adaptable skill sets. The Consortium drives the economic development in Florida by creating synergies and efficiencies between the state's three large metropolitan public research universities and the public, private, and non-profit sector institutions that rely on them for a steady and growing supply of talented graduates.

## Strengths, Opportunities, and Challenges

Over the previous six years, the Florida Consortium has become the premier state-based higher education consortium. Our ability to work, in concert, on issues and challenges at a speed and efficiency rarely seen in higher education is our key advantage. As we have developed this model, we are supported by our partner at [Helios Education Foundation](#). We can now look beyond our current strategic configuration and bring on new partners to the fold in this partnership. As 2021 unfolded, it became clear ~~that~~ if we are going to achieve ~~our~~ lofty goals, we must expand our reach to include state and local leaders, state college partners, and regional employers. We need to have those organizations ~~that can~~ assist us in creating a cradle-to-career infrastructure that will allow our talented students to find a career of purpose. Partnerships will enable Orlando, Tampa Bay, and Miami, to grow and prosper.

The strength of our collaboration is rooted in our connection to our cities and our state. In 2021 we became more aware that our student body and faculty reflect who is living in our cities. We know that most of our students who attend Florida Consortium member universities intend to stay and work in the state of Florida, most notably in our metro areas. Each year we produce over 30,000 graduates combined, and 76.5% of these graduates stay and work in Florida. More students staying in Florida means over 3,000 more credentialed students contributing to the state than the other institutions in the [State University System](#) combined. And these students are learning from some of the most innovative and creative faculty in the world. Each year our universities issue over 200 utility patents and these projects have been developed and sourced from our students. Our partnerships have led to sustained growth in economic development in cyber security, healthcare, and banking. With researchers at [CAEL \(Center for Adult Education and Learning\)](#) to assist us in developing [data-driven strategies focused on connecting talent with opportunities in our state](#).

There are a few challenges on the horizon that we must address in the coming years. The first is the need to reduce the time to degree for our transfers students and ensure that they are "Transfer Ready" into a major that will assist them in developing their talent. For decades our transfer success teams have created strong partnerships with our state colleges to provide direct access to our universities. However, traditionally, these transfer students are less likely to transfer into their major or graduate on time.

We look forward to the work of the Transfer Success Network to address these shortfalls and improve the transfer experience for all students.

## TRANSFER SUCCESS NETWORK WORK SCHEDULE



Figure 1 2021 Timeline for Transfer Success Network Grant Work

## TRANSFER SUCCESS NETWORK WORK FRAMEWORK



Figure 12 Framework for the Transfer Success and the Florida Consortium Grant Projects.

We are also concerned with the soaring cost of living and stagnant wages in the State of Florida. While we can produce world-class talent for our booming employment market, these jobs need to compensate well enough to provide our students with a high quality of life. Threats to our graduates include affordable housing. The pandemic has created a housing market where few young homebuyers can find a home

under conditions they can afford. Renters are seeing 15-25% rent hikes in a single year. Without a change in these economic conditions, we may see an erosion in our educational gains. As students see opportunities in states with a lower cost of living, this may hurt the state's talent base. Some of these issues may seem out of our control, we must use our amplified voice in places such as the Florida Chamber of Commerce, our state and local lawmakers, and employers of these concerns and offer our assistance in finding solutions.

## Three Keys Initiatives and Investments new to the Florida Consortium 2021

1. **Transfer Success Grant** – ~~Over~~ More than 50% of students who enroll at FIU, UCF, or USF after attending another university, mainly one of our 28 state colleges. Our universities have a deep connection to these students through ongoing programs which guarantee admission to thousands of students via our connect programs. This tradition of being a primary destination has resulted in our universities routinely placing in the top 10 national destinations for transfer students and being the destination for 65% of all state college transfers in Florida. In 2020 the State of Florida instituted a performance funding metric to increase transfer graduation success. While our Transfer students graduate at about the same rate as their First Time in College (FTIC) peers, they do so slower. Transfer students were also less likely to declare for their intended major due to course sequencing and transference issues. To shorten time to degree and increase program fidelity, the Florida Consortium has partnered with Helios Education Foundation to coordinate a four-year project focused on providing students with better, data-driven information, aligned coaching, and access to a transfer-ready database. This work will allow our transfer students to have the tools to succeed with no gaps.
  - a. **Grant Press Release:** <https://floridaconsortium.com/fl-consortium-helios-transfer-success-grant/>
2. **CAEL Cybersecurity Study** – On December 4, 2020, Miami Mayor Suarez tweeted, "How can I help?" when a tweeter posed the question on moving Silicon Valley to Miami. His answer may have been tongue in cheek, but the sentiment was genuine. In the past few years, Miami, Tampa Bay, and Orlando have been a hub for a growing tech sector that creates tens of thousands of jobs in the area. Our universities can barely keep up with the demand. To understand the gravity of the situation, we have paired with CAEL to review the current market in Cyber, how our universities can increase opportunities for students, and to fill talent gaps in central and south Florida. This work has led to the development of our Career Readiness team, which will be tasked with developing relationships with employers, designing solutions with area workforce development groups, and expanding opportunities for students.
  - a. **Blog on Florida Consortium Talent Pipeline Metro Sessions:** <https://floridaconsortium.com/cybersecurity-talent-pipeline-metro-sessions/>
3. **Equal Measure Assessment** – In 2021, we completed our Equal Measure assessment of the current value proposition for the Florida Consortium. Through a 12-month evaluation, the firm measured our previous success and aligned it with future opportunities (understanding that "no matter where we go, there we are") and created an action plan that will guide interaction in the

future. The Equal Measure analysis found the following action areas where we have a decided market advantage because of our partnership. They are:

- a. Align Best Practices for Student Success.**
- b. Think Big, Beyond our Individual University Climate.**
- c. Convene and Lead Regional Conversations on Student Success and Economic Development.**
- d. Have the capacity to write up and communicate the results of our work.**
- e. Align proper solutions which our universities can negotiate at a scale not seen in higher education.**
- f. Communicate the impact and importance of regional metropolitan research universities.**

Equal Measure Florida Consortium Evaluation Report:

<https://floridaconsortium.com/equal-measure-evaluation/>

## 15 Key Achievements in the Past Year

1. Produced the Equal Measure assessment report, which featured a comprehensive accounting of Florida Consortium advances and information on future capacity and priorities.
2. Completed a study by CAEL (Center for Adult Education and Learning) that focused on regional opportunities for students in cybersecurity.
3. Coordinated employer engagement summits in Miami, Tampa Bay, and Orlando with over 20 employers, university, and city leadership.
4. Sponsored the fifth annual [Transfer Success Summit online](#) with over ten sessions, a student panel, and a keynote from Gardner Institute CEO Dr. Drew Koch. See it on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VmOchV-fpm0>
5. Began our fifth year as a member of the Florida Chamber of Commerce's Foundation Board of Trustees. The Florida Consortium sponsored the annual Learners to Earners Summit.
6. Coordinated a joint contract between FIU, UCF, and USF to sign a three-year agreement with [Burning Glass / EMSI](#) to provide workforce data to our universities. Our first jointly negotiated service contract.
7. Published a chapter entitled Using Design Thinking to Develop and Guide Institutional Strategy in a book on Design Thinking and Student Affairs.
8. Co-Sponsored, along with USF, our sixth [National Student Success Conference](#) as a webinar series during 2021. Due to the ongoing pandemic, the session was moved online but engaged over 500 unique participants.
9. [Coordinated two sessions focused on Emotional Intelligence](#) featuring USF faculty Doreen McCauly, and FIU's Michael Creeden. We have over 100 participants and offered training in empathy, communication, and other Emotional Intelligence functions such as baseline for good

teaching practice, working with students who are experiencing stressful situations, and assists staff to engage with each other empathically.

10. Searched and hired two new team members in our new [Associate Director for Communications and Strategy, Scott Mauro](#), and our new [Office Manager, Darlene Durham](#).
11. Organized and convened our first groups of student affairs graduate students as part of our Student Affairs Collective.
12. Secured a [Transfer Success Network grant](#) for \$1.25 million to develop a transfer success strategy to improve transfer readiness and shorten time to degree.
13. Organized and convened the Student Accessibility Collective that focused on sharing best practices and efficiencies for campus accessibilities for students and faculty.
14. Published the white paper - [Improving Online Delivery of STEM Labs through Collaboration in Remote Learning via Three Large Metropolitan Universities in Florida](#) with USF faculty [Ashley Reese and Kevin Yee](#).
15. Published the white paper - *Utilizing Targeted Micro-Grants to Support Student Persistence and Completion for Students Under Duress During a Global Pandemic* with Paul Perrault of Helios.

## **Florida Consortium by the Numbers – Metrics**

### **Statewide Impact**

Percent of State University System (SUS) Undergraduate Enrollment	51%
Percent of SUS Pell Eligible Students	56%
Percent of SUS State College Transfers	66%
Percent of SUS Minority Enrollment	57%
Percent of SUS Degrees Earned by Minorities	61%
Percent of Graduates who Stay and Work in Florida	76%
Percent of Graduates Employed or Continuing Ed – 1 Year	71%
Six-Year Minority Graduation Rate	63%
Average Starting Salary for Graduates	\$41,415
Number of Bachelors-Degrees Awarded in 2020	36,371



## Student Success Metrics

Metric	Year	FCMRU	SUS AVG
Percent of Graduates Employed	2018-2019	71	72
Median Wages	2018-2019	\$41,415	\$41,900
Average Cost (120 Hours)	2019-2020	\$3,483	\$3,020
Four Year Graduation Rate	2016-2020	52.6	58.8
Academic Progress Rate	2019-2020	90.6	89
Programs of Strategic Emphasis	2019-2020	55.6	54
University Access Rate	2018-2019	42.1	37.1
Percent of Degrees W.O./ Excess Hours	2019-2020	82	82
Percent of Freshmen in top 10% of class	2020	32	38
Time to Degree – 120 Hours	2019-2020	4.3	4.1
Six Year Graduation Rate	2014-2020	71	76
Bachelor's degrees Awarded	2019-2020	36,371	72,214
Percent of bachelor's Awarded to Black and Hispanic Students	2019-2020	52	43
Percent of students age 25+	2020	19	15
Percent of FTE Undergraduates Enrolled in Online Courses	2019-2020	37	33
Percent of bachelor's degrees in STEM and health	2019-2020	37	37
Total undergraduate Enrollment	2020	139,285	280,355
Full-Time Enrollment (FTE)	2019-2020	129,479	266,737

## *Faculty Success Metrics*

<i>Metric</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>FCMRU</i>	<i>SUS AVG</i>
National Academy Members	2021	30	36
Faculty Awards	2018	20	40
Total Research Expenditures (\$M)	2019-2020	830	1,451
Percent of Research Dollars from External Sources	2019-2020	57	55
Utility Patents Awarded/Avg	2019-2020	246/82	200/22
Number of Licenses Awarded/Avg	2018-2019	133/44	289/32
Number of New Start-Ups	2018-2019	12	17