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SUCCEED, Florida! Grants Show Mixed Results Under Current Funding Structure

at a glance

The Department of Education has refined its process for selecting SUCCEED, Florida! grant recipients, but the timeframes for award disbursement remain lengthy. Institutions have received notification of their grant award halfway through the fall semester, which has limited their ability to implement programs to expand teacher and nurse training programs.

The department should also strengthen its grant monitoring process to ensure that grantees use SUCCEED, Florida! funds to expand teaching and nursing programs.

Surveys of grant recipients show mixed results. Nursing programs that received grants have increased their capacity to serve additional students and have enrolled more first-time students. Teaching programs traditionally do not have capacity limitations. However, enrollment in teaching programs showed a decline at the bachelor's level but an increase at the master's level.   Although the actual number of students completing programs generally increased, the completion rates for half of the funded programs decreased. The mixed results may be because most programs receiving a grant have not had time to graduate its beneficiaries.

The Legislature could consider other funding options to more effectively fund the creation or expansion of programs to produce graduates for critically needed professions.

Scope

The 2007 Legislature directed OPPAGA to evaluate the SUCCEED, Florida! program. This review assesses the program's administration and the extent to which the program's grants have increased registered nurse and certified teacher production and capacity to serve additional nursing students.

A supplemental report (OPPAGA Report No. 08-03) provides detailed information on the outcome measures for each institution that received a SUCCEED grant during the 2005 or 2006 academic year.

Background

Like other states, Florida has a shortage of both registered nurses and K-12 classroom teachers. High turnover and vacancy rates create a high demand for both of these professions. A 2005 employer survey conducted by the Agency for Workforce Innovation found that Florida had 5,969 registered nurse vacancies, with half of these vacancies in hospital settings. [1] As noted in prior OPPAGA reports and by the American

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[1] Number of nursing vacancies reported as of the week of February 20 – 26, 2005, on the Florida Hospital Association Nurse Staffing Survey.

Association of Colleges of Nursing, insufficient faculty and clinical sites limit nursing programs' capacity and directly contribute to the nursing shortage.

Likewise, the Department of Education estimated that Florida required 17,143 new K-12 teachers for the 2008-09 school year due to teacher attrition and retirements, population growth, and class size reduction requirements. Unlike nursing, capacity is not a limiting factor for teaching programs; instead these programs generally do not have enough applicants to fill all of their slots.

To address these and other workforce needs, the 2005 Legislature created the SUCCEED, Florida! program. The program is administered by the Department of Education and provides grants to institutions to expand capacity and enrollment in targeted programs. The program for 2007-08 includes several components that address a variety of professions at the secondary and postsecondary levels. The three current SUCCEED, Florida! levels include:

- Crucial Professionals (teaching, nursing and allied health),
- Career Paths (Secondary Career and Professional Academies), and
- Postsecondary Programs (manufacturing, automotive, and aerospace).

Exhibit 1 shows the number of nursing and teaching programs that have received funding through SUCCEED, Florida! grants since its inception and total funding allocated for these projects each year. In 2005, the Legislature appropriated $21 million to the SUCCEED, Florida! program. Of this amount, $15 million was allocated to teaching and nursing programs. The proviso required that all grant funds were to support new students, and stipulated that grant moneys must not supplant current funding for students.

In 2006 the Legislature appropriated over $23 million for new SUCCEED, Florida! projects, of which $12.2 million was allocated to teaching and nursing programs on a competitive basis. The 2006 proviso language specified that the funds could only support undergraduate nursing programs, although the Legislature made a separate recurring allocation of $3 million specifically for post-graduate programs that would train faculty for nursing programs.

The 2007 Legislature appropriated over $29 million for the SUCCEED, Florida! program, of which $12.6 million was allocated to teaching and nursing programs. The proviso also specified that recipients of teaching, nursing, and allied health programs were to receive grants ranging from $150,000 to $500,000. However, the proviso directed that all grants were to be made on a competitive basis rather than directed to previous recipients. Post-graduate nursing programs were separately appropriated $1.2 million for post-graduate nursing faculty training.

Exhibit 1
Competitive SUCCEED Grants Have Supported More Nursing and Teaching Programs Over Time

| Fiscal Year | Nursing | | Teaching | |
	Funding (Millions)	Number of Programs	Funding (Millions)	Number of Programs
2005-06	$10.0	16	$5.0	26
2006-07	3.6	17	8.6	33
2007-08	4.9	22	7.7	32

Note: Some programs may have received funding for more than one project.
Source: OPPAGA analysis of Department of Education reports.

Grant reports show that these funds have provided between 1% and 100% of the recipients' program operating expenditures. The highest percentage of grant support has been for community colleges that have used SUCCEED, Florida! grants to support new Educator Preparation Institutes, which provide approved training for professionals with a non-education degree to become a certified teacher. Appendix A lists the institutions that received SUCCEED, Florida! teaching or nursing grants and the amount of these grants.

Findings ————————————

The grant selection process has improved but requires a lengthy award disbursement process

The Department of Education has improved its process for awarding SUCCEED grants over time. However, the program's lengthy competitive process has hindered the ability of grant recipients to use the funds to expand teaching and nursing training programs.

The department has refined its grant selection process

The Department of Education has created a competitive grant process consistent with legislative intent. It has included requirements specified in the General Appropriations Act proviso language in its grant process. The department has also collaborated with the community college board, board of governors, and the Independent Colleges and Universities of Florida offices in developing implementation details in addition to those stipulated by the Legislature.

The department has improved its grant selection process. The department has taken steps to improve its review of grant proposals and reduce the potential for bias in its screening decisions. The department uses a team of reviewers to assess grant applications submitted by community colleges and universities, and the reviewers independently score each application. These scores are then combined to produce a summary score for each application, and the highest-ranked applications are awarded funds.

The department has increased the size of its screening teams and implemented a procedure to control against bias in its review teams. During the 2005-06 year, each application was scored by a team of three reviewers; this team was increased to four reviewers per application in 2006-07, and five in 2007-08. The department

dropped the lowest reviewer rating and averaged the remaining scores in 2006-07, and dropped the highest and lowest scores and averaged the remaining three scores in 2007-08. These changes allowed the department to prevent individual reviewer bias from affecting an institution's opportunity to receive a grant.

The department has required grant applicants to report more detailed program statistics. The department also has required grant applicants to report additional outcome information for proposed projects. The department required 2007-08 grant applications to report several important performance measures on their existing teacher and nursing training programs that would be supplemented by grant funds. These measures include nurse licensure exam pass rates, teacher certification exam pass rates, and graduation rates. This information provides the department a better understanding of the applicants' characteristics and ability to produce quality graduates.

The timing of grant awards has hindered timely program implementation

An ongoing problem in the current design of the SUCCEED, Florida! program is that due to the length of the competitive grant process, institutions do not receive funding until at least halfway through their fall semester. As illustrated in Exhibit 2, it took 30 weeks for the Department of Education to award the 2007-08 program grants. [2] As a result, four full months of the grant period had already elapsed before the institutions received funds, and they were unable to use the funds to expand their teaching and nursing programs until the second half of their academic year. Programs that intended to use the funds to recruit students or hire faculty and/or support staff were not willing to undertake these initiatives until they received the funds.

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[2] Department officials report that the 2007-08 process took longer due to an increase in the number of SUCCEED, Florida! grant competitions, staff turnover, and more stringent legislative stipulations. The grant award and distribution process took 23 weeks in 2005-06 and 25 weeks in 2006-07.

Exhibit 2
SUCCEED, Florida! Grants Were Disbursed Halfway Through the Fall Semester
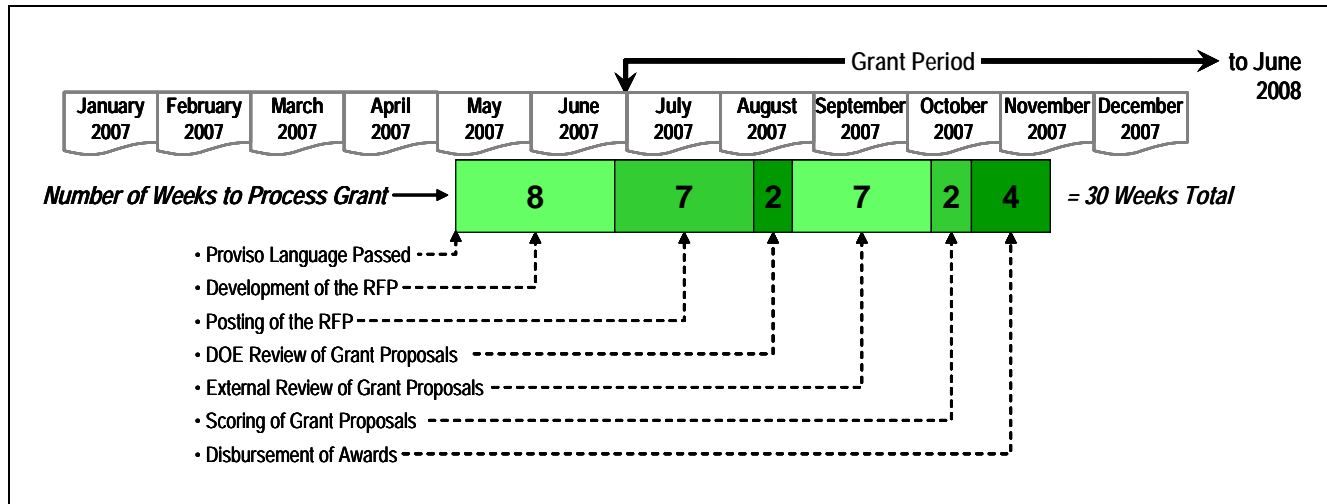
Source: Department of Education.

The department should improve its grants monitoring process

The department should improve its processes for monitoring SUCCEED, Florida! grants by requiring recipients to report baseline data, information on overall student performance, and specific data on sub-grantee performance. The department should also require recipients to submit year-to-date outcomes in their fourth quarter reports so that the department can consider this performance in its subsequent year's award process.

The department lacked baseline enrollment data for most programs during the first two program years. Until the current year, the department has lacked information needed to ensure compliance with proviso language that stipulated that grants could be used only to expand enrollment and could not supplant existing funding. The department did not require both years' nursing applicants or the 2006-07 teaching applicants to submit information about their current enrollment and funding. As a result, it could not determine whether grantees used the funds to increase enrollment. The department did require 2007-08 applicants to report their total nursing and teaching enrollment. While this could enable

the department to ensure that program capacity has increased, it currently does not make this comparison. As a result, the department is not ensuring that grantees use SUCCEED, Florida! funds as required by proviso to expand teaching and nursing programs.

The outcome measures used to monitor grantees should be improved. The department would improve its system for assessing the outcomes of SUCCEED, Florida! grants by taking four steps to improve its performance measures. First, the department should provide more specific definitions for the grantees to use when reporting performance measures. For example, it should specify that recipients should report unduplicated student counts and both total and first-time student enrollment. The department should also specify whether re-admitted students should count as new students, and whether data should be reported for each semester or the entire year. These definitions would enable the department to ensure consistent reporting from the grantees.

Second, the department should require grantees to report on all students in the program where the grant was used rather than only the students specifically funded through the SUCCEED, Florida! grant. Several grant recipients have used the awards for infrastructure and

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technology improvements that affect their overall program, such as purchasing human patient simulators, computers, and video conferencing equipment, and expanding clinical sites and making lab improvements. Currently, the department requires grantees to identify specific students as SUCCEED beneficiaries and it limits outcome reporting to those specific students. However, this does not provide a clear picture of the grant's impact on the overall program's performance and whether the grant is helping the program produce additional nurses and teachers.

Third, the department should require grantees to report separate performance data for sub-grantees. Some nursing grantees have shared part of their funding with other programs. For example, Florida International University partnered with Miami Dade College and the University of North Florida partnered with the University of Florida. The department has required these institutions to report combined outcome information from both the primary and sub-grantees. However, this practice has prevented the department from identifying how many of the students reported for the primary grantee actually attended that institution or sub-grantee programs. As a result, the department cannot determine which institution most contributed to grant outcomes, which is important to know when deciding which institutions should receive future funding.

Finally, the department should require grantees to submit year-to-date outcome information in their fourth quarter report which is due in mid-July, rather than wait for the final report, which is not due until mid-October. This would enable the department to consider this information on the grantee's effectiveness in its subsequent review of applications for the next year's grant funding.

SUCCEED, Florida! grants have shown mixed results

Available data indicates that SUCCEED, Florida! grants have achieved mixed results in increasing teaching and nursing capacity and degree production. Nursing programs increased their capacity to serve additional students. However, degree completion rates for these programs remain relatively unchanged, in part because most students have not yet had time to graduate. [3]

Nursing programs increased their capacity to serve students

Overall, nursing programs that received SUCCEED, Florida! grants that were focused on training nurses for initial registered nurse licensure increased their capacity. [4,5] As shown in Exhibit 3, total student seats available in these programs rose from 3,568 to 4,350 between the 2004-05 and 2006-07 academic years. The most dramatic increase occurred in programs that served students at the associate's degree in nursing level. Twelve of the 15 institutions that applied their SUCCEED award to Associate Degree in Nursing programs increased the seats available for new students.

One reason for this outcome is that most of the programs that increased their capacity through SUCCEED, Florida! grants either purchased clinical simulators or improved their clinical sites. The *Florida Administrative Code* allows programs, with Board of Nursing approval, to substitute for up to 25% of the student's clinical experience with clinical simulation hours. Since the lack of clinical sites can inhibit programs' ability to serve new students, the use of simulators provides a means for program expansion.

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[3] We computed degree completion rates based on academic years that began with the fall semester and concluded with the summer semester of the following year. We chose this timeframe to capture program information that mirrors the grant year and to coincide with the periods institutions used to implement their programs. The 'academic year' institutions use to report data to the state begins with the summer semester and ends with the spring semester of the following year. Most bachelor degree programs admit students to the program at the beginning of their junior year. To obtain comparable data from all institutions, we asked them to report their data using this model; programs that admitted students to the program were asked to base their student cohorts on new juniors in the cohort year.

[4] Nursing programs varied in which tracks they applied their awards.

[5] While nursing programs are restricted by the number of available faculty, clinical sites, clinical preceptors, and classrooms, teaching programs are not limited access and do not have difficulty opening new seats to qualified students.

Exhibit 3
Capacity Increased in Funded Nursing Programs, But the Percentage of Qualified Applicants Denied Admission Remained Relatively Unchanged

Program Tracks	Number of Seats for New Students (Enrollment Capacity)		Number of Qualified Applicants		Percentage of Qualified Applicants Denied Admission [1]	
	2004 Cohort	2006 Cohort	2004 Cohort	2006 Cohort	2004 Cohort	2006 Cohort
NURSING						
Associate degree [2]	2,282	2,910	5,232	6,047	61%	53%
Bachelor's degree	759	819	2,594	3,029	59%	65%
Licensed Practical Nurse to Registered Nurse bridge [3]	527	621	492	670	14%	20%
Total	**3,568**	**4,350**	**8,318**	**9,746**	**58%**	**54%**

[1] The number of students who subsequently enrolled cannot be computed from the percentage who were denied admission because some accepted students turn down the invitation to join the program.

[2] Pensacola Junior College did not admit any associate degree students in 2004, but admitted 238 students in 2006. Their program accounted for 41% of the additional seats in 2006.

[3] Indian River did not admit any Licensed Practical Nurse to Registered Nurse bridge students in 2004, but admitted 22 students in 2006. Their program accounted for 43% of the additional seats.

Note: The above tables only includes those institutions that received a grant for either the 2005-06 or 2006-07 grant years and used it support the reported particular program track.

Source: OPPAGA survey of SUCCEED, Florida! grant recipients.

Exhibit 3 shows that the number of qualified students applying to nursing programs funded by SUCCEED, Florida! grants also increased over this period. As a result, the percentage of qualified students who were denied admission did not decline for most types of programs; over half of applicants for associate degree programs and almost two-thirds of applicants for bachelor's degree programs were denied admission in 2006-07. The only type of funded program that accepted most qualified applicants were those that train licensed practical nurses to become registered nurses (LPN to RN bridge programs).

In contrast, graduate nursing programs generally indicated that they did not have a capacity limitation and could serve more students. These programs are not limited by clinical slots and thus are not constrained when additional qualified students apply. Futhermore, the programs which used their SUCCEED grant on a master's degree level program were able to increase student enrollments from 288 in 2004 to 406 in 2006.

Overall, funded undergraduate nursing programs also increased their first-time student enrollment numbers. Exhibit 4 shows that between the 2004-05 and 2006-07 academic years enrollment increased by 574 students for associate degree programs, 51 students for bachelor's degree programs, and 112 students in Licensed Practical Nurse to Registered Nurse bridge programs.

Exhibit 4
Enrollment Increased in Funded Nursing Programs and Some Teaching Programs

Program Type	Number of Students Enrolled During the Entire Academic Year		
	2004 Cohort	2006 Cohort	Change
NURSING	**3,668**	**4,523**	**855**
Associate degree	2,184	2,758	574
Bachelor's degree	782	833	51
Licensed Practical Nurse to Registered Nurse Bridge	414	526	112
Master's Program	288	406	118
TEACHING [1]	**1,511**	**4,349**	**2,838**
Educator Preparation Institutes [2]	NA	2,951	NA
Bachelor's degree	1,404	1,104	-300
Master's degree	107	294	187

Note: The above tables only includes those institutions that received a grant for either the 2005-06 or 2006-07 grant years and used it support the reported particular program track.

[1] Five of the 14 university teaching programs awarded SUCCEED, Florida! grant funds did not use their money on an Educator Preparation Institute, a bachelor's degree, or a master's degree program and are not captured in the above table.

[2] Funded Educator Preparation Institutes enrolled 1,731 students in 2005, which did not start implementation until the 2005-06 academic year.

Source: OPPAGA survey of SUCCEED, Florida! grant recipients.

Teaching programs showed mixed enrollment results

Over the 2004-05 and 2006-07 period, student enrollment in baccalaureate teaching programs that received SUCCEED, Florida! grants declined by 300 students. However, student enrollment in funded master's degree programs increased by 187 students. The number of students enrolled in community college Educator Preparation Institute programs funded by SUCCEED grants increased from 1,731 new students in the 2005-06 to 2,951 new students in the 2006-07 academic year. However, all of the students enrolled for 2005-06 do not represent an increase in the number of students pursing a teaching certificate. Approximately 12% were already employed as public classroom teachers the year prior to entering the Educator Preparation Institute and could have taken advantage of the alternative certification program offered by the school district.

Attrition and completion rates for funded nursing and teaching programs show mixed results

SUCCEED grant recipients showed mixed attrition and completion results among the funded programs. We analyzed data reported by grant recipients on the number of students who left, completed, or stayed enrolled in their funded program. Our analysis for attrition, completion, and persistence rates focused on those first time students who enrolled in programs funded in the fall of 2005 and would have had time to complete their programs by the end of the 2006-07 academic year.

Attrition rates show mixed results. Attrition rates, the rate at which students left programs without completing, were mixed across the different program tracks. The associate in nursing program had a higher attrition rate during the first SUCCEED grant year as more students dropped out of the program. However, attrition rates for funded master's degree in nursing programs declined. Attrition rates for the bachelor's programs in both teaching and nursing remained about the same after receiving SUCCEED, Florida! grants.

Completion rates decreased for some programs. As shown in Exhibit 5, the percentage of students who completed their nursing or teaching programs decreased for nursing associate degree, Licensed Practical Nurse to Registered Nurse bridge programs and master's degree programs. The completion rate for bachelor's degree programs was relatively unchanged. The actual number of program completions generally increased for all types of funded nursing programs. However, the increased completions for associate degree in nursing programs were almost completely due to one program resuming operation in 2005 that did not operate in 2004.

Completion rates in funded teaching programs increased for master's degree but not bachelor's degree programs; the Educator Preparation Institutes were new in 2005 and thus could not be compared to the prior year. The number of students completing bachelor's teaching programs decreased from 266 for the fall 2004 cohort to 211 students in fall 2005, although over half of these students were still enrolled in the programs after two years. The Educator Preparation Institutes, which started during the 2005-06 academic year, produced 288 completions for the fall 2005 cohort.

Persistence and success rates generally increased. Exhibit 5 shows that the persistence rates—whether students continue to enroll in a program—and success rates—whether students completed or are still enrolled in a program—generally improved over time for funded programs. Both of these rates are considered positive outcomes because the students are still successfully completing courses toward a degree or have already graduated from their programs.

Exhibit 5
After SUCCEED, Completion Rates of First-Time Fall Enrollees Vary Across Programs for 2005 Grant Recipients

			Successful Outcomes					
							Success Rate (Completion and Persistence)	
	Attrition Rate [1]		Completion Rate		Persistence Rate [2]			
Program Tracks	2004 Cohort Prior to SUCCED	2005 SUCCEED Cohort	2004 Cohort Prior to SUCCED	2005 SUCCEED Cohort	2004 Cohort Prior to SUCCED	2005 SUCCEED Cohort	2004 Cohort Prior to SUCCED	2005 SUCCEED Cohort
NURSING								
Associate degree [3]	16% (99)	18% (137)	72% (458)	70% (534)	12% (75)	12% (88)	84% (533)	82% (622)
Bachelor's degree	13% (32)	12% (35)	84% (209)	85% (240)	3% (*)	3% (*)	87% (217)	88% (248)
Licensed Practical Nurse to Registered Nurse Bridge	24% (*)	9% (*)	22% (*)	20% (19)	53% (26)	71% (66)	76% (37)	91% (85)
Master's degree	26% (41)	14% (34)	56% (88)	47% (110)	18% (29)	39% (92)	74% (117)	86% (202)
TEACHIING								
Educator Preparation Institutes [4]	N/A	23% (110)	N/A	60% (288)	N/A	17% (83)	N/A	78% (371)
Bachelor's degree	4% (24)	2% (*)	42% (266)	42% (211)	61% (346)	68% (283)	96% (612)	98% (494)
Master's degree	42% (*)	0%	11% (*)	64% (16)	47% (*)	36% (*)	58% (*)	100% (25)

Note: This table tracks cohorts of students who enrolled in programs in the fall semesters of 2004 and 2005 to see their outcomes. For bachelor's degree programs we tracked juniors entering the program. The above table only includes those institutions that received a 2005-06 SUCCEED, Florida! grant and used it to support the listed program track. An * denotes a cell with 15 or less students.

[1] Attrition rate refers to the percentage of students from the beginning cohort who left the program before completing.

[2] Persistence refers to students still enrolled in the program.

[3] Pensacola Junior College did not have any students enroll in its Associate Degree in Nursing program in 2004. In 2005 Pensacola Junior College accounted for 45 of the 76 additional students who graduated between 2004 and 2005.

[4] The first Educator Preparation Institute did not begin until the 2005-06 academic year.
Source: OPPAGA survey of SUCCEED, Florida! grant recipients.

The percentage of students still enrolled in programs, while generally low, increased for the associate and master's degree level nursing programs and bachelor's degree teaching programs. Success rates were either higher or equivalent to prior rates for all types of funded nursing and teaching programs except for the associate degree in nursing program.

Licensure pass rates. The rate at which nurses passed state licensure tests improved for registered nurse programs receiving SUCCEED, Florida! grants. Between the 2004 and 2006 calendar years the first-time pass rates for those nursing programs increased from 84% to 88%. The rate at which graduates passed the state teacher certification exam rates remained at 100% between the 2004 and 2005 academic years since rates are reported only for program

completers, and the state regulation is that in order to be considered a 'completer', a student must first pass the exam.

Placement rates not yet available. Programs were unable to provide placement rate information for many of the teaching and nursing programs that received SUCCEED, Florida! grants. For example, only half (three of the six) of the associate degree in nursing programs reported employment information for their graduates, and none of the four university teaching programs that used the grants to support bachelor's and master's programs provided employment data for their graduates. Nineteen of the 20 community college Educator Preparation Institutes programs were able to provide placement information because many of these students secure employment prior to

graduation. Data was not yet available from the Department of Education to determine whether students that completed programs funded by SUCCEED, Florida! were placed in jobs.

It should be noted that since the state first awarded these grants in 2005, many recipient programs have not had sufficient time to demonstrate outcomes in producing new nurses and teachers. For most of the programs funded through SUCCEED, Florida!, students typically take more than two years to complete the program. Therefore, only programs that received an award during the 2005-06 fiscal year would have had an opportunity to graduate SUCCEED, Florida! beneficiaries. [6] Since these institutions did not learn whether they received an award until the middle of the fall 2005 semester, the grant typically did not affect their programs until spring 2006, and these students generally would not have time to have graduated by the end of the 2006-07 school year, the most recent data we could analyze.

Performance information for individual grant recipients is available in a supplemental report (OPPAGA Report No. 08-03) which provides detailed information on the outcome measures for each institution that received a SUCCEED grant during the 2005-06 or 2006-07 academic year.

Other funding options may improve program effectiveness

As discussed earlier, the effectiveness of the SUCCEED, Florida! program in addressing critical workforce needs is reduced by the timing of the program's grant process. Due to the time required to solicit, receive, and evaluate grant proposals, institutions receiving these funds have had up to nine months to complete planned activities. Typically, the institutions cannot take the actions to increase capacity of teaching and nursing programs until their

second semester of the academic year. Additionally, the institutions have indicated that increasing enrollments and completions in critical needs programs is dependent to a great degree on recurring funding. Most institutions (93% of those receiving nursing grants and 95% of those receiving teaching grants) reported using their awards to pay salaries, a recurring expenditure. Also, community colleges note that under the state funding model it takes at least two years for increases in student enrollment to become self-sustaining; this occurs because state allocations to community colleges are based on a three-year enrollment average.

The department has attempted to mitigate these issues by requiring institutions to develop sustainability plans for their recurring costs. These plans outline how the institution will fund their programs' recurring expenditures after the grant has ended. Institutions must submit these plans as part of their grant application; however, the sustainability plans are not highly weighted during the proposal scoring process and do not determine whether an institution receives an award. In practice, most grant recipients (91%) have received program grant funding in consecutive years. However, this does not alleviate the institutions' sustainability concerns. For example, if an institution used its grant for scholarships for a two-year degree program, it would not be able to support the students if it did not receive a second-year continuation grant.

The single-year grant process does have some advantages. For example, it enables the state to quickly discontinue funding to poorly performing grantees, and forces programs to re-evaluate their progress in meeting goals on an annual basis. Finally, the single-year grant process enables the Legislature to consider whether the program is a funding priority each year during the appropriations process.

Other options could improve the funding structure

We identified five options that the Legislature could consider in funding programs that serve critical need professions.

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[6] Licensed Practical Nurse to Registered Nurse bridge programs and Educator Preparation Institute(s) programs would be exceptions as their programs last for 12 months or less and the 2006 recipients could have graduated students also.

Option 1: Fund the expansion of critical need programs through the legislative budget request process. Under this option, the Legislature would eliminate the SUCCEED, Florida! program and would direct institutions seeking to expand programs in critical need areas to include this expansion as a budget issue in their annual legislative budget request. This option would resolve the issue with the timing of program funding as approved programs would receive funding on July 1 at the beginning of the fiscal year. This would enable the institutions to immediately implement program expansions, and would eliminate the administrative costs associated with developing, receiving, and approving grant applications. However, this option lacks a rigorous scoring process with evaluations by multiple reviewers, and a method for monitoring and reporting outcomes.

Option 2: Begin the grant application process prior to the annual legislative session. Under this option, the Legislature would direct the department to begin the grant application cycle earlier in the year, and seek proposals from institutions for programs to increase graduates in critical need areas prior to the annual legislative session. The department would submit the highest-rated proposals to the Legislature for consideration during the appropriations process. Approved projects would receive funding at the beginning of the fiscal year. This option would have higher administrative costs than under Option 1, as the department would solicit and evaluate applications and oversee funded projects. It would establish a more structured process for evaluating proposals and would allow the Legislature to fund projects on an annual basis rather than increasing the long-term appropriations base of institutions, as would occur under Option 1. However, this option requires a stable program that would not change focus from one year to the next in terms of the professions targeted.

Option 3: Create a trust fund to provide funding to institutions for critical need programs. Under this option, the Legislature would use non-recurring general revenue to establish a trust fund that would provide grants to institutions that created or expanded degree programs in identified critical need areas. As in the current program, institutions would submit grant applications to the department, which would evaluate and rank the proposals. The department would provide grants to the highest rated proposals as these projects were identified. This option would enable the trust fund to make multi-year awards to institutions to enable degree programs to become self-sustaining through the regular funding process. As the department could make grants throughout the year, this option would also resolve the timing problem with the current program. The statutory language creating the trust fund would need to reference s. 216.301 and s. 216.351, *Florida Statutes*, to prevent the reversion of unexpended trust fund balances unless otherwise indicated in proviso, and to allow for disbursement over multiple years. The disadvantage of this option is that it would require a substantial appropriation of non-recurring general revenue to establish the trust fund, which may not be feasible given the state's current budget constraints.

Option 4: Create a performance incentive to encourage institutions to produce graduates in critical need programs. In this option, the Legislature would establish a mechanism to provide performance bonuses to institutions that increased the number of graduates in critically needed degree programs rather than directly funding program expansions. This option could operate similarly to the performance incentive built into the workforce program funding system, and would encourage institutions to carefully screen students for the designated programs and increase retention and graduation rates. One challenge in implementing this option would be to define graduates to be counted for bonus awards. For example, teaching degree programs include both students seeking initial certification and those who already are in a classroom but are seeking an additional teaching credential.

Option 5: Create a Challenge Grant program for critical need areas. [7] In order to qualify for a Challenge Grant program, an institution would secure matching funds prior to applying for an award. This could be used in conjunction with any of the other funding options. By including this stipulation the Legislature could foster local support for the program and enhance its long-term sustainability. However, it may create a disadvantage for programs located in rural areas that would not have as many local options from whom they could obtain matching funds.

Agency Response

In accordance with the provisions of s. 11.51(5), *Florida Statutes,* a draft of our report was submitted to the Commissioner of Education and the Florida Board of Governors to review and respond. Both written responses are reprinted herein in Appendix B.

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[7] The 2007 Legislature directed the department to give priority in the review process for the SUCCEED, Florida! grants to institutions that could demonstrate cash or in-kind matching funds.

Appendix A

SUCCEED, Florida! Award Grantees and Award Amounts

The following tables provide detailed information about the institutions that received a SUCCEED, Florida! nursing or teaching grant award over the 2005-06 through 2007-08 period. Table A-1 shows that while 30 institutions received a SUCCEED, Florida! nursing grant award, only six institutions received a grant for a new proposal all three years. The average size of a competitive grant award decreased substantially over the past three years from an average of $625,000 in 2005-06 to $222,871 in 2007-08.

Table A-1
Thirty Postsecondary Institutions Received SUCCEED, Florida! Nursing Grants

	Institution	2005-06 Competitive	2006-07		2007-08 Competitive
			Continuation	Competitive	
1	Barry University	$ 1,281,153	$ 450,965		$ 439,656
2	Bethune-Cookman University				263,794
3	Brevard Community College			$220,130	261,222
4	Central Florida Community College			91,608	
5	Chipola College				263,794
6	Daytona Beach Community College				255,027
7	Florida A & M University			224,360	150,000
8	Florida Community College at Jacksonville			226,259	263,794
9	Florida Hospital College Of Health Science			226,259	150,000
10	Florida International University	1,282,500	451,439	226,259	150,000
11	Florida State University	366,300	128,938		
12	Indian River Community College			195,437	245,275
13	Lake City Community College	218,025	76,745	226,259	150,000
14	Lake-Sumter Community College	417,344	212,483		259,018
15	Manatee Community College	427,431	150,456	195,390	263,699
16	Miami-Dade County School District	427,500	150,480		
17	Okaloosa-Walton College	172,337	60,663		
18	Palm Beach Community College			226,189	
19	Pensacola Junior College	157,532	55,451	226,259	150,000
20	Polk Community College	427,500	150,480		
21	Santa Fe Community College			226,259	150,000
22	Seminole Community College			226,259	263,794
23	South Florida Community College			226,259	150,000
24	St. Petersburg College				263,578
25	Tallahassee Community College	254,070	89,433	222,488	
26	University of Central Florida	420,397	147,980		256,591
27	University of Miami	1,282,500	451,439	226,604	150,000
28	University of North Florida	1,194,378	420,420		253,918
29	University of South Florida	1,280,794	450,838	224,831	150,000
30	Valencia Community College	390,240	137,364		
	Total	**$10,000,001**	**$3,585,574**	**$3,637,109**	**$4,903,160**

Source: OPPAGA analysis of Department of Education SUCCEED, Florida! award reports.

Table A-2 shows that a total of 41 institutions received a SUCCEED, Florida! teaching grant award, and 17 of those institutions received a teaching grant all three years. The average size of a competitive grant award remained relatively stable over the past three years, in comparison to the nursing grants, by averaging $192,308 in 2005-06 to $239,621 in 2007-08.

Table A-2
Forty-One Postsecondary Institutions Received SUCCEED, Florida! Teaching Grants

	Institution	2005-06 Competitive	2006-07 Continuation	2006-07 Competitive	2007-08 Competitive
1	Barry University	$ 250,116	$ 88,041	$ 310,368	$ 272,453
2	Brevard Community College	146,918	71,715		275,041
3	Broward Community College			301,167	274,960
4	Carlos Albizu University[1]			299,112	
5	Central Florida Community College	241,309	84,941	274,577	225,667
6	Chipola College	105,252	37,049	311,258	424,656
7	Daytona Beach Community College	184,050	115,033	283,661	275,041
8	Edison College			300,000	150,000
9	Florida A & M University	252,000	88,704		
10	Florida Atlantic University			317,249	275,041
11	Florida Community College at Jacksonville	132,720	46,717	185,258	275,041
12	Florida Gulf Coast University	252,000	88,704	317,250	275,041
13	Florida Keys Community College				150,000
14	Florida Memorial University			317,258	
15	Florida State University	216,224	76,111		
16	Gulf Coast Community College	126,000	44,352	257,258	201,697
17	Hillsborough Community College	162,486	57,195	315,421	150,000
18	Indian River Community College	216,780	76,307	224,587	425,041
19	Lake City Community College	125,686	44,241	218,580	274,679
20	Lake-Sumter Community College	154,151	86,261	285,908	275,041
21	Manatee Community College	241,622	85,051	217,230	248,885
22	Miami-Dade College	251,199	88,422	317,258	275,041
23	North Florida Community College	186,451	65,631	222,387	
24	Palm Beach Community College	167,341	151,100		150,000
25	Pasco-Hernando Community College	242,159	85,240	178,148	275,041
26	Pensacola Junior College	132,738	46,724	163,038	150,000
27	Polk Community College			315,257	266,375
28	Saint Leo University			195,458	271,851
29	Santa Fe Community College	109,607	38,582	169,934	
30	Seminole Community College			297,410	163,710
31	South Florida Community College			203,158	153,473
32	St. Johns River Community College	168,079	59,164		239,060
33	St. Petersburg College	239,881	84,438		274,947
34	Tallahassee Community College			216,991	150,000
35	University of Central Florida	251,396	88,491	275,804	275,046
36	University of Miami			263,348	
37	University of North Florida	252,000	88,704		275,041
38	University of South Florida -Tampa/St.Pete			316,821	
39	University of Tampa			300,000	
40	University of West Florida	191,835	67,526	206,258	150,000
41	Valencia Community College			317,258	150,000
	Total	**$5,000,000**	**$1,954,444**	**$8,694,670**	**$7,667,869**

[1] Carlos Albizu University retuned $25,000 to the state since the funds were awarded late and they did not start recruiting until January.
Source: OPPAGA analysis of Department of Education SUCCEED, Florida! award reports.

Appendix B

FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

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Dr. Eric J. Smith
Commissioner of Education

Just Read, Florida!

January 11, 2008

Mr. Gary R. VanLandingham
Office of Program Policy Analysis
 and Government Accountability
111 West Madison Street, Suite 312
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1475

Dear Mr. VanLandingham:

The attached response regarding the draft report *SUCCEED, Florida! Grants Show Mixed Results Under Current Funding Structure* is for your information.

If you have any questions, please contact Ed Jordan, Acting Inspector General, at 245-0403.

Sincerely,

Dr. Eric J. Smith

EJS/ej/br

c: Theresa Klebacha

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14

Florida Department of Education
Response for Preliminary and Tentative Findings
Office of Program Policy Analysis and Government Accountability
SUCCEED, Florida! Grants Show Mixed Results Under Current Funding Structure

Finding – The Grant Selection process has improved but requires a lengthy award disbursement process. (Page 3)

To put this finding in context, it is important to note that, while the study focused on Nursing and Teaching, these are only two of the seven areas of critical need that are funded by SUCCEED, Florida! grant awards. The others are: Career Paths, Allied Health, Aerospace, Manufacturing, and Automotive. Additionally, the competitive process addresses all of these seven areas of critical need together rather than working on only one area at a time. Over 250 applications were received for all seven areas during the competitive grant process reviewed and grants were awarded in 2007-2008 year. The Department's intent, as demonstrated by the current competitive process, is to fund the most highly qualified applicants from the entire pool of applications to ensure the highest level of quality and success in program awards and implementation.

The timing of grant awards has hindered timely program implementation. (Page 3)

The Department of Education (DOE) has a process by which competitive grants are advertised, evaluated, and awarded to ensure adherence to all statutory requirements. All competitive processes may be challenged and could result in invalidation. However, the DOE's procedures require a fair and comprehensive process for awarding grants to the best applicants; the Division of Workforce Education has never been challenged on its grant awards process.

The average range of weeks to complete the competitive review process is 23-26 weeks. This timeline includes the following requirements: Request for Proposal (RFP) development and approval (4 weeks), advertisement (minimum: 30 days), application intake process (2 weeks), outside evaluation (4 weeks), prioritized funding list development (2 weeks), and grant negotiation, award letters approved and mailed to customer (4-6 weeks).

The Department is sensitive to the timing of grant awards and its potential impact on the start date for projects. Since the inception of SUCCEED, Florida! in 2005, grant recipients were given no-cost extensions to complete their program services through August 31 of the grant year. This no-cost extension action extended the last date for incurring expenditures and obligating project funds. The Department issued all agencies automatic amendment and revised Project Award Notifications (DOE 200s). All Teaching and Nursing grant awardees utilized the no-cost extension option provided by the Department.

Given the recurring need for extensions, the magnitude of the applications received, the available resources, and a commitment to continuous improvement, a review of the competitive processes is warranted. The Department will consider conducting the competition in the prior fiscal year to allow time for award notification by July 1, and provide a prioritized funding list in time for the legislative appropriation process.

The department should improve its grants monitoring process. (Page 4)

In the first year of the grant (2005-06), the appropriation for SUCCEED, Florida! did not include funding for the administration and operational management of the awards. Therefore, separate

departments (Workforce Education, Community Colleges, Universities, and Independent Colleges and Universities) were responsible for monitoring, data collection, quarterly reports, and technical assistance of their grant recipients. The fragmented operations resulted in inconsistencies within the monitoring process.

Experience indicated a need for a more aggressive approach to monitoring local grant recipients. In the 2006-07 year, the appropriation included funds for the SUCCEED, Florida! grant administration. A team of consultants was contracted to address the administration activities, including monitoring. In the 2007-08 year, a full implementation of a monitoring plan is in effect; the aforementioned separate divisions provided technical assistance as appropriate.

The purpose of the enhanced monitoring plan is to establish a systematic approach to the evaluation of the grants' established performance goals and outcomes. The plan included various strategies for monitoring and verification activities.

The outcomes measures used to monitor grantees should be improved. (Page 4)

Since the inception of SUCCEED, Florida!, the data elements which define the performance outcome measures continue to be improved. As the legislative proviso becomes more prescriptive, relevant data information is refined and revised. This continuous improvement process results in enhanced outcome measures. Strategies for improvement include an online reporting system; baseline data was required to be reported at the initiation of the grant award; periodic reports are required; data elements are more clearly defined; reporting on student populations is refined; monitoring fiscal expenditures; separate performance data for sub grantees is required; and, year-to-date outcome data is required in each quarterly report.

Other options could improve the funding structure. (Page 4)

The Department is receptive to conducting the competition in the prior fiscal year to allow time for award notification by July 1, and to provide a prioritized funding list in time for the legislative appropriations process. However, the following cautions are presented to assure that improvements are realized.

Option 2: Begin the grant application process prior to the annual legislation session. (Page 10)

This option would improve the timeliness of the release of funds to the recipients and, thus expedite project implementation. However, no grant awards could be released prior to receipt of the agency's approved operating budget. Further, since proviso language would not be available to identify critical areas of need, the Department of Education would have to be given the discretion to select areas of critical need for the competitive process.

FLORIDA BOARD OF GOVERNORS

325 West Gaines Street - Suite 1614 - Tallahassee, Florida - 32399-0400
(850) 245-0466 - www.flbog.org

January 8, 2008

Dr. Gary VanLandingham
Director
OPPAGA
111 West Madison, Room 312
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1475

Dear Dr. VanLandingham:

Thank you for sending the draft copy of the OPPAGA report, *SUCCEED Florida! Grants Show Mixed Results Under Current Funding Structure,* and for the opportunity to provide input. The report identifies a number of important issues related to the Department of Education's administration of the grant program, and the Board of Governors (BOG) staff would like to comment on the following points:

- The report discusses funding options for the SUCCEED grant programs and expresses the value of recurring funding for the grants that would allow institutions to develop and sustain programs in the critical need areas of nursing and teaching. The BOG staff recommends recurring funding options for the SUCCEED grants that will enable grant recipients to more effectively plan and implement training programs that will increase capacity in these critical need areas.

- OPPAGA found a lengthy period of time for the competitive grant process (up to four months) to identify grant recipients and award the funds. State university grant recipients have verified that the extended process has hindered their ability to effectively utilize the funds to initiate the projects funded and expand capacity in teaching and nursing training programs. Although the Department of Education has made a concerted effort to do so, reducing this time frame has proven to be a challenge due to the complexity of administering a competitive grant process that is open to more than 100 institutions. An additional challenge has been that the actual SUCCEED appropriation and enacting proviso occur at a time when most new program and admission decisions have already been made by institutions for the affected grant period.

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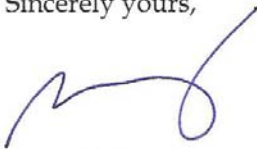
17

Dr. Gary VanLandingham
January 8, 2008
Page 2 of 2

- The report references direct recurring appropriations in 2006 and 2007 to expand graduate nursing program capacity at selected state universities. Data provided in response to proviso for the 2006 appropriation clearly indicate that the funding increased enrollments in programs that will be providing additional nursing faculty in Florida. A follow-up report will be provided to the Legislature on February 1, 2008, in response to 2007 proviso language.

Additionally, the Department of Education's grants management office should be commended for its coordination of an internal work group that meets quarterly to advise the office on all aspects of the SUCCEED grant program. This group consists of representatives of the K-12, community college, state university, and independent postsecondary sectors.

If you have any questions about the above information, please feel free to contact Richard Stevens at richard.stevens@flbog.org or Jon Rogers at jon.rogers@flbog.org in the BOG office (850-245-0466). Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

Mark B. Rosenberg
Chancellor