

Florida Takes Action to Make Civic Literacy Expected and Equitable, with Career Fields Included*

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Summary: Across its secondary and postsecondary education agencies, Florida is committed to the aim of education for democratic citizenship. The 2019 Florida Legislature passed and Governor Ron DeSantis signed into law [House Bill 807](#), which requires Florida Education Commissioner Richard Corcoran to conduct a comprehensive review of Florida's civics education course standards to ensure Florida has the best civics education standards in the nation and to prepare Florida students for the responsibilities of American citizenship as outlined in Governor DeSantis' [Executive Order 19-32](#). [Civics Education Course Standards Review - Required by House Bill 807 \(2019\)](#)

K-12 Civic Learning. The underlying intent of House Bill 807 (2019) is to drastically improve the quality of Florida's civics education throughout its K-12 education system. The bill called for a review of statewide civics education course standards to ensure Florida students have the highest quality civics education courses throughout the nation.

Postsecondary Civic Literacy. With respect to the public postsecondary system, the 2017 Florida Legislature amended [Section 1007.25, Florida Statutes](#), to require students initially entering a Florida College System institution or state university in 2018-19 and thereafter to demonstrate competency in civic literacy. The amendment also requires the Chairs of the State Board of Education and Board of Governors' to appoint a faculty committee to develop a new civics literacy course, or revise an existing U.S. History or U.S. Government course to include the civic literacy content.

However, the 2021 Florida Legislature passed and Governor Ron DeSantis signed into law [Senate Bill 1108](#) which amended 1007.25, F.S. to require all students initially entering a Florida College System institution in 2021-2022 and thereafter to complete a course and pass an assessment to demonstrate competency in civic literacy. Between 2018 and 2021, students have had the option between a course *or* an assessment.

Career Fields Included: The Florida Department of Education has initiated rule development to implement the changes, applying the requirement to *both associate of arts students and associate of science students*. Previously, associate of science curricula rarely included courses designed to foster civic literacy. Both Florida's Governor and Commissioner want to ensure that all students, particularly career and technical education students, graduate as well-rounded, informed citizens. It is not sufficient to graduate a highly skilled workforce with inattention to the habits of mind and heart that ensure a successful democracy.

Moreover, Senate Bill 1108 added a requirement for the Department of Education to develop new or revise existing courses to include, at a minimum, opportunities to engage synchronously in political discussions and civil debates. These discussions and debates should have multiple and competing points of view. The expressed aim is to help students

to master the ability to engage in dispassionate but informed debate so they may make informed decisions.

Governor DeSantis set aside over \$100 million dollars of his discretionary CARES/CRSSA Act dollars to launch a statewide Civic Literacy Initiative. The initiative includes both secondary and postsecondary components, including the creation of a career pathway and three state academies for students interested in civil service, public administration, or an occupation serving local or state government. More information can be found here: <https://www.flgov.com/2021/07/13/governor-ron-desantis-launches-national-model-civic-literacy-initiative/>

The Florida Initiative Builds from Campus Leadership: In addition to these state-mandated activities present across all the state university and college institutions, the Florida postsecondary ecosystem has long been known for its commitment to embedding civic learning and engagement in its curricular and extracurricular programming. Some institutional exemplars (both public and private), best practices and state-wide impact can be found on the Florida Campus Compact website <https://floridacompact.org/>.

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