

## Colleges & Universities Bachelor's Degree Routes

When you step into any airport in the world, there are hundreds of planes headed in hundreds of directions but all have a destination in mind. Similarly, no matter what a student's career path, there are a number of routes to get there. Let's explore a few here.

### How Careers Take Flight

Some students start earning college credits in high school, others in college and still others later in life after a time in the workforce or traveling abroad. Some students attend only one college or university while others attend several. Navigating a route to a student's future career often begins with a bachelor's degree and there are three primary challenges to taking flight: direction, velocity and fuel.

### Direction

Students that know their destination can navigate their route, whether they are in high school, or a current college student; whether they are full-time or part-time; whether they are a traditional or non-traditional student. Whatever individual challenges they may have, deciding on a destination is essential to chart their direction - the first step on their route to a career.

### Velocity

How long will earning a degree take; how fast must a student go? Many factors can slow down a student that is on the right route: family issue, military service, medical complications, working full or part-time and others. Taking a wrong course, withdrawing from a course, failing a course, repeating a course, and taking a course that does not transfer to an intended degree are velocity-killers.

### Fuel

Both an individual's fuel (the funding that an individual brings to pay educational and living expenses) and donors' fuel (the funding that federal, foundation, state, institutional and local donors provide) complete the equation. Besides a student's expenses, there are also hidden costs, if students lack direction or velocity. Each additional semester, term or course costs students and postpones post-graduation employment income increases. Direction and velocity require sufficient fuel. How to pay education and living expenses is an essential challenge.

Colleges and universities offer many different routes to degrees, careers and success. This Student GPS focuses primarily on routes to a bachelor's degree that may require transferring college credits earned in high schools and various colleges and universities toward completion of a bachelor's degree.

### On-Campus/On-Site Options

Florida has a robust State University System with 42 main, branch and educational sites throughout the state. The Florida College System, one of the nation's largest with 175 campuses, serves every county in Florida. Florida's independent colleges and universities have 135 main campus, collaborative sites on state college campuses and branch educational sites in 35 of Florida's 67 counties.

Many of the bachelor's degrees offered by independent colleges and universities are on the state college campuses where general education students have completed their AA degrees. The longest established partnership is the University Partnership Center of St. Petersburg College. This Center delivers 28 bachelor's degree, 48 master's degree and five doctoral degree programs in Pinellas County There are other similar centers at many partnering state colleges.

### On-Line Options

Florida has an extensive fully on-line bachelor's degree completion infrastructure that could be used by high school students, traditional students and non-traditional students to complete their bachelor's degrees. Forty-one ICUF, FCS and SUS institutions deliver bachelor's degree programs that can reach every motivated student in Florida with degree programs and counseling. These courses can be transferred among these Florida institutions easily.

## Student Route Finder

(Under Construction)

Find Your Route to a College, University & Career

## Military Veterans College Network

(Under Construction Establish a new Subpage)

Support That the Military Community Has Earned

## Independent Higher Education

Simple, Swift, Sure & Affordable Routes to Degrees

## American Student Assistance

Free On-Line Assistance on Money, Student Debt & Careers

## My Career Shines

Sign in Page to Open Free Education & Career Planning System

Available fully on-line degrees at independent colleges and universities can be found online at <http://www.icuf.org/newdevelopment/distance-learning-program-search/>.

On-line courses can, also be part of an on-campus degree strategy. Blending on-campus and on-line courses has three advantages.

1. Lectures available on-line can be taken or reviewed anytime instead of only on the day they are delivered in a classroom.
2. On-campus students can take courses when they go home during the summer after a fall and spring semester on campus.
3. Students can take an on-line course that is not available at their institution.

### **Deciding on a College or University**

Deciding on a college or university initially depends on a student's mobility. Family responsibilities, jobs and finances often require students to explore and enroll initially or only at a college or university in or near their home. Students that can move to a main campus can find out more about independent higher education at <http://www.icuf.org/newdevelopment/schools/> to visit their websites and contact admissions offices.

After determining various location options, there are three possible on-campus routes to a bachelor's degree.

**Route 1 – ONE COLLEGE OR UNIVERSITY:** Students enroll at one college or university where they complete their bachelor's degree. There are many advantages to this route.

- A student starts and finishes their degree at one college or university.
- Students work only with the counselors and faculty at that one institution.
- They can assess the various degree majors at their institution as they take their general education courses.
- They can begin taking the courses of their major earlier.
- They can ensure they take all the required prerequisite courses of their future major before beginning their major.
- They are often preferred applicants at their college or university for limited-enrollment majors such as engineering and nursing.
- They often graduate more quickly than transfer students.

**Route 2 – MULTIPLE COLLEGES OR UNIVERSITIES:** Students enroll at a first college or university and then transfer to one or more colleges and universities to complete their bachelor's degree.

The National Student Clearinghouse Research Center's latest report found more than one third of first-time-in-college students in 2008 had transferred to a different institution by 2014. Almost half of those who had moved did so more than once.

There are many potential reasons to transfer.

- They did not like their initial college or university.
- They were accepted at the college or university that they really wanted to attend.
- They were not ready for college-level coursework.
- They had to move or attend to family responsibilities.
- They found a college or university with a better degree major program for them.
- They had financial problems.

There are also potential downsides to transferring.

- They have to re-establish their past coursework and learning experiences at the next institutions and so on at the next.
- Courses and credits may be lost in the process.
- Courses may have to be repeated and additional new requirements met.
- It often takes longer and costs more to complete their degree.

## **ON-LINE RESOURCES & INFORMATION**

### **FROM THE COLLEGE BOARD**

**Getting Into College - Big Future by the College Board**

### **FROM FLORIDA SHINES**

**Getting Ready For College**

### **College Prep Courses**

Many Florida high schools offer rigorous college preparatory courses with end-of-course exams that are eligible for college credit.

**Advanced Placement** - courses are rigorous college-preparatory courses in 34 subjects offered in classrooms and on-line in middle and high school. Students who pass the end-of-course exam with a score of 3 or higher, on a scale of 1 to 5, can earn college credit for the course.

**The International Baccalaureate** - program is a rigorous academic program offered in some public high schools. Students who pass an end-of-course exam in the program with a score of 4 or higher, on a scale of 1 to 7, can earn college credit for the course.

The **Advanced International Certificate of Education**- is a rigorous academic program offered in some public high schools. Students who earn an A, B, C, D or E on an end-of-course exam in the program can earn college credit for the course."

### **Dual Enrollment**

"**Dual Enrollment** allows students to earn simultaneously credits toward their high school diploma and a college degree. Students in 10<sup>th</sup>, 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> grades can enroll in courses offered, on campus or online, at state colleges and universities. Credit earned by successfully completing the course applies to both high school and college graduation requirements. School districts may pay independent and state colleges and universities partial tuition for a student through articulation agreements. The courses and all instructional materials are free to students in public and private schools and home education programs. Books and instructional materials for the courses are free for public school students, but students in private schools and home education programs must pay for their own books and instructional materials.

### **College Course Work Coaching - Florida Shines**

[Managing Your Time \(PDF\)](#)

[Note Taking Skills \(PDF\)](#)

[Developing Study Skills \(PDF\)](#)

[Test Taking Strategies \(PDF\)](#)

**Route 3 – FLORIDA'S 2+2 TRANSFER SYSTEM:** Created over 50 years ago, Florida's 2+2 AA Degree System fueled the successful growth of Florida's colleges and universities, as well as independent and some private colleges and universities.

A student earns a 60-credit Associate of Arts (AA) degree, usually in 2 years. That degree completes their general education course work. The student then transfers to a partnering college or university to complete their 60-credit major coursework, usually in 2 years. This transfer route design avoids complex transfers.

Sixty-five percent of Florida's high school graduates enroll in state colleges that award AA degrees. Partnership agreements between Florida's 28 state colleges and 30 independent colleges and universities enable students to take this 2+2 bachelor's degree completion route.

#### **Accreditation & Transferring Credits**

Whether a student is taking on-campus, on-site or on-line courses, they should know that courses accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS) transfer most easily. At the request of a college or university, an accrediting agency reviews an institution to ensure that an institution's academic and management practices meet the same standards as other colleges and universities that they have accredited. Many private and other states' colleges and universities are accredited by other accrediting agents. Those course credits can be transferred most easily to other colleges and universities that have met those accreditation requirements.

#### **Degree Decision-Making**

When a student begins their college or university course work, they are not required to decide the bachelor's major or degree then intend to take while completing their general education courses. A student that knows their major and degree destination however can align their general education coursework with the requirements of their intended major and degree.

If a student has not decided on their degree or major, they should save their elective courses until they make that decision or realize they may have to take extra courses later on. Smart first general education course choices are general education courses from five required areas of study: Communication, Math, Humanities, Social Sciences and Natural Sciences.

#### **Education & Living Costs**

Florida's state colleges and universities have tuitions and various fees set by the Legislature. Student financial aid options include:

- federal grants and loans;
- state grants;
- Bright Futures awards;
- pre-paid scholarship plans;
- scholarships;
- their own funds

Independent colleges and universities set their own tuition and fees. Those costs, generally start out higher than state colleges' and universities' costs, but these independent colleges and universities work with each student to make educational costs affordable for their students. Overall, the average student debt of a bachelor's degree graduate from an independent college or university is only slightly higher than the average student loan debt of a graduate from a state university.

The total cost of a bachelor's degree has other components, as well. There are tuition, fee and book expenses but there are, also, expenses related to living on campus or at home. Oftentimes, these expenses and working to pay them means going to college or a university part-time. On-line courses often fit better with working students' schedules. They sometimes cost less than on-campus expenses, as well.

#### **FROM MY CAREER SHINES FOR HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS**

**Sign in page to open a free account**

**MyCareerShines** is a free on-line education and career planning system that gives students the tools they need to build a foundation for lifelong career success.

Students will learn what their interests, skills and work values are and how to apply them to a career plan for their future.

This website also helps students with real-world skills such as how to write resumes and cover letters,

how to research employers, and how to prepare for job interviews.

Students can even create an electronic profile that they may choose to share on-line with prospective colleges or employers.

#### **FROM AMERICAN STUDENT ASSISTANCE (SALT)**

**Students & Alumni: Your Money, Student Debt, and Career**

Saltmoney.org is a free on-line program dedicated to simplifying everything from budgeting for college to FAFSA Federal Student Aid Applications to student loan repayment options to internships and job searches, with articles and tools that are easy to use, and even easier to understand.

#### **FROM BEYOND EDUCATION**

**Key facts about Higher Education Outcomes in Florida.**

Higher Education is an investment. Understanding the costs and benefits is helpful when choosing a degree. This website provides information to help students make informed higher education and career choices.

#### **FROM THE COLLEGE BOARD**

**Explore Careers** - Big Future by the College Board

#### **JOB MARKETS**

#### **FROM THE INDEPENDENT COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES OF FLORIDA**

**About Florida's 30 Independent Colleges and Universities in Florida**

**Websites & Profiles of Independent Colleges and Universities in Florida**

**Financial Aid Offices at Independent Colleges and Universities in Florida**

**On-Line Certificates, Courses and Degrees**

It is important that working students and those returning to college explore college credits they can obtain for lifetime and workplace experience. That can reduce the credits needed to complete their degree because they have already learned coursework lessons

For both full-time and part-time students, course selection is very important as it relates to costs. Taking courses that do not contribute to bachelor's degree requirements add both educational and living-costs. That postpones increased employment income after degree completion. The swiftest route to a bachelor's degree for every student is to take all but only the courses needed to complete their bachelor's degree.

### **Jobs & Careers**

Students at a college or university do not need to know the degree and major they are seeking immediately. The sooner the better, however for a simple, sure, swift and affordable route to their bachelor's degree.

While at college or a university, coursework prepares students; so too does workplace experience and exposure. The resume that a graduate presents to potential employers includes education and experience.

There are many options to develop a "Jobs & Career Strategy."

- Arrange "informational interviews" with individuals or friends already in jobs and careers of interest.
- Spend a day "shadowing" someone at work to see what a job entails.
- Volunteer at business or non-profit organization in the community
- Work part time
- Get a paid or unpaid Internships

When deciding on a bachelor's degree major, students should know the jobs that a potential major prepares them to get. There are on-line tools to do that. Often faculty, academic counselors and career counselors at colleges and universities can help with national, state and local job prospects. Career counselors can also help with resume drafting and job interviews.

### **Final Thoughts and Decisions**

Each student must make 5 challenging decisions, once or several times, as they navigate their way to a degree. It can be a good idea for a student to write down their five decisions and check that document as they proceed, following that plan or changing it as they proceed.

Decision 1 - Which college or university is the right college or university for me now?

Decision 2 - Will I be taking only in-classroom courses, on-line courses or a blend of both?

Decision 3 - What degree "major" will I pursue?

Decision 4 - How will I pay my educational and living expenses?

Decision 5 - What jobs and careers will my degree make possible for me?







