FLORIDA COLLEGE

STRATEGIC ENROLLMENT PLAN · 2026–2031

1 Mission.
6 Initiatives.

Six integrated initiatives built to expand enrollment, strengthen financial sustainability, and grow long-term, mission-aligned impact between 2026 and 2031.

2026–2031	6	2
PLAN HORIZON	CORE INITIATIVES	ON-DECK STRATEGIES

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01 · OVERVIEW

Executive Summary

Florida College's 2026–2031 Strategic Enrollment Plan is centered on six integrated initiatives designed to expand enrollment, strengthen financial sustainability, clarify institutional identity, and build long-term mission-aligned growth.

1. New Academic Programs

This initiative explores new academic programs, including a flexible, interdisciplinary Bachelor of General Studies degree designed to serve transfer students, adult learners, multi-credit dual enrollment completers, and students seeking customizable academic pathways.

STRATEGIC PURPOSE
Explore degrees that will both add and retain students.

2. Alumni Communication & Segmentation Model

This initiative transforms alumni engagement from broad communication to a segmented, data-driven relationship model. By organizing alumni by graduation era, giving capacity, engagement level, geography, and affinity groups, Florida College can strengthen giving, referral pipelines, mentoring programs, and brand advocacy.

STRATEGIC PURPOSE
Convert alumni goodwill into measurable enrollment support and financial sustainability.

3. Online Degree Pathway Expansion

This initiative develops scalable online degree pathways that extend Florida College's reach beyond its residential footprint. By building fully online or hybrid completion programs, the College can serve adult learners, geographically distant students, and stop-outs.

STRATEGIC PURPOSE
Broaden market reach, stabilize enrollment volatility, and capture online learner demand.

4. New Sports Programs

This initiative strategically expands intercollegiate athletics through selected new programs. Athletics serves as a proven enrollment driver, particularly for mission-fit students who value a Christ-centered athletic environment.

STRATEGIC PURPOSE
Increase on-campus enrollment, strengthen student experience, and expand donor engagement.

5. Institutional Cost Structure Optimization

This initiative establishes a comprehensive cost-per-student financial model to align tuition pricing, scholarship strategy, and enrollment targets with long-term fiscal sustainability.

STRATEGIC PURPOSE
Strengthen financial sustainability, improve net tuition margin, and support data-informed enrollment growth.

6. Fortress Christian School Marketing Strategy

This initiative develops a focused marketing, recruitment, and enrollment strategy for Fortress Christian School. By targeting specific geographic regions and Christian school networks, Fortress becomes both a revenue stream and a long-term feeder system into Florida College.

STRATEGIC PURPOSE
Build early student pipelines, expand online enrollment, and increase long-term matriculation into Florida College.

Additional Potential Strategies

While the six core initiatives represent the institution's primary strategic focus, Florida College has also identified additional opportunities that may be accelerated as capacity and resources allow.

1. Florida College Trade and Tech

This initiative explores the development of trade and technical pathways that complement Florida College's liberal arts identity while responding to increasing demand for career-oriented education. It provides a potential expansion strategy to reach new student segments, strengthen workforce alignment, and deliver programs with clear, measurable outcomes.

2. First-Year Experience (FYE) Program

This initiative establishes a structured first-year experience designed to improve student retention, academic success, and long-term outcomes. By providing early, intentional support and guidance, it strengthens student transition, builds confidence, and connects students more effectively to resources, community, and career direction.

02 · CONTEXT

Introduction

Florida College was founded in 1946 with the primary purpose of serving as an institution of higher education for students from churches of Christ. For much of its history, the college focused exclusively on offering the Associate of Arts (A.A.) degree, which became deeply embedded in its identity and alumni experience.

In 1994, Florida College received approval to offer its first bachelor's degree, marking a significant institutional shift. However, this transition came after nearly 50 years of operating solely as a two-year college. As a result, generations of alumni developed a strong connection to Florida College as an A.A.-focused institution.

Higher education in the United States is going through a period of significant change, and institutions that plan will be far better positioned than those that do not. For Florida College, understanding the landscape is vital to informing our Strategic Enrollment Plan (SEP) goals and decision-making. Several trends deserve close attention: a coming decline in the number of college-going students nationally, a shift in how and why students choose a college, changes within the non-instrumental churches of Christ that bear directly on Florida College's primary student pool, and a rapidly evolving K-12 landscape that is reshaping the pipeline of future college students.

The Enrollment Cliff

The phrase “enrollment cliff” gets used frequently in higher education circles these days, and the concern behind it is real. A decline in high school graduates is expected over the next 10 to 15 years. The cause traces back to the Great Recession of 2007–2009, one of the worst economic downturns since the Great Depression. As unemployment climbed, household incomes fell, and financial uncertainty spread, birth rates dropped significantly. More than 3.4 million fewer babies were born between 2008 and 2015 than would have been expected based on prior trends. Those children are now approaching college age.

The downstream impact is evident: fewer births mean fewer high school graduates, which means fewer traditional college students. Projections show an 11-year downward trend in graduates from 2026–2037, with national graduation totals expected to fall by roughly 10.4%. That translates to about 3.52 million high school graduates by 2037, down from today's level. Nearly three-quarters of U.S. states are expected to produce fewer graduates in 2037 than they did in 2019.

Great Recession → 3.4M fewer births → Fewer graduates → Enrollment cliff

Nathan Grawe's *Demographics and the Demand for Higher Education* is an important resource for thinking through what this means for individual institutions. Grawe's core insight is that the impact will not be uniform. Institutions in different regions, serving different student populations, will feel the pressure in significantly different ways. That nuance matters to Florida College.

The chart below shows projected changes in high school graduates between 2019 and 2037 for the states that send the most students to Florida College.

STATE	PROJECTED CHANGE 2019 → 2037
Florida	+17.9%
Texas	+4.2%
Tennessee	+1.6%
Indiana	−6.5%
Missouri	−6.9%
Arkansas	−7.6%
Georgia	−7.5%
Alabama	−8.2%
Kentucky	−12.9%
California	−15.2%

Source: Texas A&M University System; NCES Projections of Education Statistics to 2033

Florida is the standout on the positive side, projecting a 17.9% increase in graduates. This is driven largely by the state's continued population growth. Texas shows modest growth as well, but several other key Florida College feeder states are heading in the opposite direction: Alabama down 8.2%, Kentucky down 12.9%, California down 15.2%. Knowing where the student population is growing and where it's shrinking should directly shape where and how Florida College recruits.

What Today's Students Are Thinking

Beyond the raw numbers, it's worth paying attention to how the college-going mindset has shifted. Ruffalo Noel Levitz's (RNL) 2024 High School Student College Planning Report offers some useful data points on what students and families are *actually* thinking as they approach the college decision.

93%
concerned about the cost of college

80%
say final cost is the most important enrollment factor

50%
wonder if they can make a good living without a college degree

63%
don't know how to choose the right college

59%
want college to equip them with specific workplace skills

90%
say the student's own research influenced the final decision

Source: RNL 2024 High School Student College Planning Report

It cannot be overstated; cost anxiety is real and widespread. Most students are worried about whether college is affordable, and most say the final cost is the single most important factor in their enrollment decision. At the same time, half of students are genuinely questioning whether a college degree is worth it at all, and nearly two-thirds don't feel equipped to navigate the college search process confidently. Students want practical outcomes: jobs, skills, and a clear sense of what they're getting for their money. This is the environment in which Florida College is recruiting. Institutions must be able to communicate their value clearly, early, and in terms that resonate with a cost-conscious, outcomes-focused generation of students and their families.

The Church of Christ Context

For Florida College, there's an additional demographic consideration that goes beyond the national picture. Because the non-instrumental churches of Christ represent the institution's primary student community, what's happening within these demographics should be noted.

Research by Stan Granberg and Tim Woodroof, published in *Churches of Christ in 2050*, documents a fellowship that has been declining since its peak in the mid-1980s. As of 2010, there were approximately 1.6 million adherents in 12,584 congregations. Granberg's projection for 2050 is striking: roughly 400,000 members in about 4,000 congregations. The concentration of coC congregations in a handful of states (nearly half are in Texas, Tennessee, Alabama, Arkansas, and Kentucky) means that many of Florida College's historically strongest recruitment territories are also facing both a shrinking fellowship and a declining graduate pool.

Church of Christ affiliation as a percentage of state population declined across every major state measured between 2010 and 2020. As the chart shows, coC affiliation as a percentage of state population declined across every major state between 2010 and 2020. This trend, layered on top of the national enrollment cliff, represents a compounding challenge.

The Changing K–12 Landscape

The shifts happening in higher education do not exist in isolation. The K-12 world is changing rapidly as well, and those changes have real implications for where tomorrow's college students are coming from and how they've been educated.

Homeschooling in the United States has grown dramatically in recent years. Census data shows the percentage of school-age children being homeschooled increased from 2.8% in 2019 to 4.2% in 2024, representing a 51% increase since 2017. In Florida, the trend is even more pronounced: the state's homeschool population grew nearly 70 times faster than public school enrollment between 2017 and 2022. Nearly two-thirds of parents nationally believe K-12 education is currently on the wrong track, a sentiment that continues to drive families toward homeschooling, online schooling, and private Christian school alternatives. As one virtual educator described it in *Newsweek*, what we are witnessing is nothing short of “the greatest mass exodus in education we've seen since public school began.”

METRIC	2019	2024	CHANGE
% school-age children homeschooled (national)	2.8%	4.2%	+51% since 2017
Florida homeschool growth vs. public-school enrollment, 2017–2022	—	—	70× faster

Source: U.S. Census Bureau; Tampa Bay Times, 2024

This matters for Florida College in two important ways. First, a growing share of future college students will arrive having been educated outside of traditional school settings, potentially with strong faith commitments that align well with Florida College's mission. Second, the growth of non-traditional K-12 education has driven significant demand for dual-enrollment partnerships. Florida College's dual enrollment program grew 228% in just two years, from 65 students in Spring 2024 to 213 students in Spring 2026. With 383 private Christian schools in Florida alone representing potential partners, the runway for continued growth is significant.

Florida College's Position Going Forward

With the current landscape now described, it is important to highlight that Florida College is in a strong position to handle the enrollment pressures that seem to be on the horizon.

RNL's enrollment projections suggest that first-year enrollment in the U.S. is expected to remain relatively stable through around 2028, with a more gradual decline in the early 2030s. That means there is time to act strategically rather than reactively.

YEAR	BEST CASE	MAINTAIN AVERAGE	LOWER MARKET SHARE
2022	150	138	138
2023	129	137	122
2024	152	138	120
2025	150	135	122
2026	151	129	122
2027	146	125	116
2028	140	124	111
2029	136	119	108
2030	133	118	106
2031	131	116	104
2032	132	115	106
2033	130	—	104
2034	129	—	—

Source: RNL Enrollment Projection Model, 2025 · First-year students only

More importantly, Florida College's market research reveals an encouraging trend in the institution's standing with its core audience. In RNL's 2025 Florida College Price Sensitivity Analysis, Florida College ranked first in institutional preference among church of Christ respondents. And while coC-affiliated institutions broadly have seen the proportion of students coming from within the fellowship fall sharply (from 66% of new freshmen in 2000 to just 28% in 2022), Florida College has held its ground. It remains one of only a few institutions in this category that has maintained strong church of Christ enrollment. That's not an accident. It reflects a genuine, sustained connection to the fellowship that is both a point of institutional pride and a strategic asset worth leaning into and building on.

The trends outlined in this section make clear that the enrollment environment is changing, and that Florida College is not immune to those changes. But they also make clear that the institution has real strengths to work from. The strategies in this plan are built around making the most of those strengths while being clear-eyed about what the next decade is likely to bring.

In recent years, the college has made measurable progress in both new student enrollment and retention. These gains reflect intentional efforts in recruitment strategy, program development, and enhancements to the advising model. This will be examined in the next section.

03 · DATA

Enrollment Trends

Five-Year Averages

CATEGORY	2016–2020 AVG.	2021–2025 AVG.
New Students	209	226
Returning Students	306	353

The increase in new student enrollment represents meaningful progress in recruitment efforts and pipeline development. Even more significant growth can be seen in returning students, indicating improved retention outcomes.

These retention gains are largely attributed to the introduction of new academic programs and a shift to a shared advising model—pairing centralized advising in the lower division years with faculty advising in the upper division.

As reflected in the college's enrollment trends, full-time undergraduate enrollment has shown steady, incremental growth in recent years, surpassing 600 students in Fall 2025. More importantly, this growth reflects a shift toward greater stability, with enrollment building year over year rather than experiencing significant fluctuations.

Undergraduate Enrollment Trends

METRIC	2016–2020 AVG.	2021–2025 AVG.
Total Undergraduate Enrollment	515	579

This increase shows progress toward sustainable enrollment and improved recruitment and retention.

Application Source Breakdown (Fall 2025)

Florida College's main recruitment comes from its summer camp system, followed by athletics; other sources contribute in a lesser way.

SOURCE	% OF APPLICATIONS
Summer Camp Attendees	43%
Athletics	20%
Other Sources	37%

This highlights strong pipelines and opportunities to diversify recruitment.

First-Time Freshmen Entering with College Credit

As a former two-year college, retention and time-to-degree remain key focuses. Dual enrollment is shortening students' time to degree.

YEAR	% WITH PRIOR CREDITS
2024	39%
2025	42%
2026*	43%

**2026 data is from an ongoing recruitment cycle.*

More students enter with credits, reducing time to degree: A.A. often in one year, bachelor's in about 3–3.5 years.

Transfer Applicant Trends

Transfer students, mainly athletes or those dissatisfied elsewhere, are a smaller focus but present growth opportunities.

YEAR	% OF APPLICANTS (TRANSFER)
2024	20%
2025	18%

Transfer students are underdeveloped strategically, suggesting potential for growth with better policies and recruitment.

Building Earlier Pipelines

Unlike many institutions expanding graduate programs, Florida College launched an online K–12 private school to build early, mission-aligned pipelines. Starting with 40 students (grades 8–12), the school aims for over 100 students (K–12) by Fall 2026, reflecting a strategic shift toward earlier engagement and mission-aligned enrollment pipeline over time.

04 · PROCESS

SEP Process & Methodology

The SEP selection was a year-long process assessing the college's current and future state.

Strategic Enrollment Planning Timeline (2024–2026)

01 · Exploration & Alignment	Researched consultants; presented SEP concept; Florida College Academy declined; Fortress Christian School accepted.
02 · Campus Engagement & Discovery	Faculty/staff sessions; higher education insights; identified challenges; built alignment.
03 · Strategic Planning	Partnered with RNL (Encoura); data analysis; working groups; strategy development.

SEP Governance Structure

Leadership Team

Dr. John Weaver, Virginia Wickerham, Roxanne Wilson, Alyssa Johnson, Dr. Tom Hamilton, Alex Hale, Stan Baston, Dr. Nathan Ward, Dr. Suzanne Roberts, Todd Snapp, Phil Robertson, Mike Benson, Joel West, Matt Dickey, Scott Grogan.

Steering Committee

Leadership team plus working group chairs, including Virginia Wickerham, Josh Jones, Roxanne Wilson, Dr. Jason Longstreth, Dr. Tom Hamilton, Sierra Schmidt, Alyssa Johnson, Ryan Shutt, Alex Hale, Matt Dickey, and Stan Baston.

Working Groups

- Admissions & Marketing
- Finance & Financial Aid
- Athletics
- Retention & Student Success
- Academic
- Alumni Success
- Fortress Christian School
- Data Team

SEP Process Cadence

Six visits from August 2025 to April 2026 covered phases of Preparation, Data Analysis, Strategy Development, Goal Development, and Implementation. Regular meetings between visits included the Steering Committee, Working Groups, Working Group Chairs, and Leadership Team updates.

SEP Final Selections

12 strategies were presented, feedback gathered via survey, and six prioritized strategies were selected:

1. New Academic Programs
2. Alumni Communication & Segmentation Model
3. Online Degree Pathway
4. New Sports Programs
5. Institutional Cost Structure
6. Fortress Christian School Marketing

Two “on deck” strategies

- Trade and Technical Programs
- First Year Experience Program

Other recommended strategies that did not make the cut

- Regional Remote Admissions Counselor
- Dual Enrollment Investment
- Athletic Storytelling and Messaging

05 · FRAMEWORK

Strategic Initiatives Overview

The following section translates Florida College's Strategic Enrollment Plan into an actionable plan. Each initiative is presented as a defined effort with clear ownership, measurable outcomes, and a structured path from strategy to results.

To support consistency and accountability, each initiative is organized using a common framework. This allows for clear communication, cross-initiative coordination, and ongoing evaluation of progress.

Common Framework

Overview

- Define the initiative and its core focus
- Explain the timing and strategic importance
- Outline the anticipated impact on enrollment

Goals

Establish clear, measurable outcomes to be achieved over a five-year period related to each initiative. In addition, each initiative includes an accountability component that identifies responsible leaders, key performance indicators, and regular evaluation checkpoints. This structure ensures that progress is measurable, transparent, and sustained over time.

Together, these plans form the operational foundation of the Strategic Enrollment Plan, moving Florida College from stated priorities to disciplined, accountable execution.

INITIATIVE 01 OF 06

01 New Academic Programs

Explore degrees that will both add and retain students.

Overview

This initiative explores new degrees at Florida College. This goal begins with the identification of new academic degree programs. Based on a 2026 survey conducted by Encoura and administered to high school prospects, the following majors were at the top of the interest list.

High-interest new majors

- Computer Science
- Accounting
- Art and Design
- Civil Engineering
- Data Analytics
- Healthcare Administration

The 2026 Encoura Custom Market Research Survey indicated that many of the degrees that Florida College has invested in over the past several years are viable degrees that are still in high demand in the market. These include:

Validated current programs

- Nursing
- Biology
- Mechanical Engineering
- Psychology
- Finance

In 2026, Encoura conducted a survey to assess the importance students place on various college attributes, ranging from academic offerings and student experience to spiritual life. The survey also measured perceptions of how well Florida College delivers on each attribute. The following two attributes emerged as important to Florida College's core constituents but received comparatively low ratings for the college's performance. This gap highlights areas where student expectations and perceptions of the Florida College experience may not be fully aligned.

- A strong record of job placement for graduates
- High-quality academic programs

While Florida College was found to be ranked higher in spiritual attributes such as being a highly religious campus, families rank this attribute lower in their decision-making. A focus of this goal should be to increase these ratings and make our offerings competitive.

The Bachelor of General Studies

One early strategy that was identified is the addition of a Bachelor's of General Studies. The BGS is a 120-credit-hour, interdisciplinary undergraduate degree built upon Florida College's existing General Education core, its liberal arts foundation, and its required Bible curriculum. Beyond those shared requirements, the degree allows students to draw elective hours from across the college's course offerings rather than fulfilling the concentrated requirements of a declared major. Completion of the BGS requires a minimum cumulative GPA of 2.0.

The BGS is not a new concept in American higher education, and it is already offered at a few Florida institutions:

- University of South Florida (Public)
- University of Central Florida (Public)
- University of North Florida (Public)
- University of West Florida (Public)
- Florida Atlantic University (Public)
- University of Miami (Private)
- Southeastern University (Private)

The degree is designed to serve multiple student populations who need a flexible, academically credible pathway to complete their education.

- Students exploring academic interests without a declared major
- Students unable or unwilling to complete their original program
- Transfer students with significant non-aligned credits
- Students combining a Florida College education with vocational, trade, or job training credentials

Why now?

Florida College is in a period of enrollment growth, surpassing 600 full-time undergraduate students in Fall 2025, and is actively seeking to diversify its enrollment pipelines. As new and challenging programs are being added, the college must be ready to accommodate students who desire the environment but do not desire a specific or challenging degree.

Much of the enrollment stabilization that Florida College has seen over the past several years has come because of the addition of new programs. However, Florida College is dealing with an ever-changing market that needs to be addressed.

The National Student Clearinghouse Research Center released a report in May 2025 indicating that undergraduate enrollment has not reached pre-COVID numbers. Florida College recruits students interested in a specific Christian environment and while many of the students are well prepared for college, not all are as well equipped to take on the classroom. This makes it imperative to be constantly evaluating the college's degree offerings.

The challenge: Florida College's current degree structure does not always have a place for students whose academic trajectories shift during their enrollment. A student who entered pursuing one degree but cannot meet the GPA or course requirements of that program faces a difficult situation: there is currently nowhere for that student to go within Florida College.

Expected enrollment impact

New programs have been a significant driver in enrollment over the past 5 years. This can be seen in the improved graduation rates.

COHORT	GRADUATION RATE
Class of 2016	28%
Class of 2021	39%

New programs will focus on content, rigor, and outcomes and will be attentive to both recruiting and retention challenges and opportunities.

02

INITIATIVE 02 OF 06

Alumni Communication & Segmentation Model

Convert alumni goodwill into measurable enrollment support and financial sustainability.

Overview

This initiative is a comprehensive, three-year Advancement and Alumni Engagement strategy designed to build a lifelong, relationship-based alumni network that strengthens engagement, increases giving, and supports enrollment growth. It creates a scalable system where data, relationships, and outcomes are aligned to drive long-term sustainability. This plan builds an alumni ecosystem where records are continuously updated with life events, relationships, career progress, and giving history, enabling more personalized outreach and stewardship.

This is not simply a fundraising initiative; it is a system-wide engagement model that connects alumni identity, institutional mission, and measurable outcomes. Execution of this strategy requires dedicated Advancement operations capacity (FTE) to manage data, segmentation, and reporting.

Key Definitions

Alumni	Person who attended Florida College, regardless of degree completion.
Engagement	Meaningful interaction (event attendance, communication, giving).
Participation Rate	Percent of alumni who give annually.

Situational Analysis

Florida College benefits from a closely connected alumni community with strong loyalty and willingness to give and serve. However, fragmented data, limited communication channels, and past inconsistencies reduce effectiveness and affect the perception of trustworthiness.

At the same time, there are significant opportunities. Florida College is positioned to:

- Formalize reunion and class-based engagement strategies
- Build stronger alumni-student connections

- Leverage recent institutional growth to rebuild pride and confidence
- Expand scholarship funding through endowment growth
- Re-establish trust with constituents through clear, achievable, and communicated plans

External pressures, including increased competition in Christian higher education and internal alignment challenges, underscore the urgency of building a more unified and strategic approach.

Advancement – Enrollment Alignment

A key feature of this initiative is the intentional alignment between Advancement and Enrollment through shared data and outcomes. Both functions rely on similar success indicators and can reinforce each other when coordinated effectively.

METRIC	DESCRIPTION AND RELEVANCE
Enrollment Growth	Record enrollment of 621 (Fall 2025) signals institutional momentum.
6-Year Graduation Rate	Target of 60% reflects long-term student success.
4-Year Graduation Rate	Goal of 35% by 2026 (up from 23%) indicates improved retention.
Retention Rates	Strengthened by scholarships and student support.
Scholarship Impact	Direct connection between giving and student access.
Program Expansion	New programs (nursing, psychology, finance) drive both giving and enrollment.

These shared metrics allow Advancement to tell a compelling donor story, while Enrollment uses the same outcomes to attract prospective students, creating a reinforcing cycle of growth.

Alumni Giving and Engagement Context

Nationally, Florida College's alumni giving participation averages around 7.7% and is declining, especially among younger alumni. This decline is often tied to a lack of meaningful engagement rather than financial capacity. Donors increasingly prefer cause-based giving, smaller recurring gifts, and flexible vehicles like donor-advised funds, reinforcing the need for a more personalized and engagement-driven strategy.

Engagement Benefits Framework

BENEFIT	YEAR 1	YEAR 2	YEAR 3
Events	Reunions, events	Regional gatherings	VIP donor events
Career Services	Job board	Mentorship	Workshops & networking
Professional Development	Webinars	Leadership sessions	Continuing education
Merchandise	Welcome packs	Discounts	Legacy items
Athletics	Discount tickets	Priority access	Premium seating

These benefits reinforce the idea that alumni engagement is not transactional; it is relational and value-driven over time.

Why now?

- Data fragmentation and system limitations are actively restricting growth.
- Alumni engagement is strong but lacks structure and scalability.
- Enrollment momentum requires expanded scholarship and donor support.
- Donor trust must be rebuilt through consistent execution and communication.
- National trends show engagement, not solicitation, is the key to increasing participation.

Expected enrollment impact

- Increased scholarship funding improves access, retention, and completion.
- Alumni mentorship and involvement strengthen student outcomes.
- Alumni serve as recruiters, referrals, and advocates.
- Stronger storytelling enhances institutional positioning.
- Alignment between Advancement and Enrollment creates a unified growth engine.

03

INITIATIVE 03 OF 06

Online Degree Pathway

Broaden market reach, stabilize enrollment volatility, and capture online learner demand.

Overview

This initiative explores Florida College's first online bachelor's degree pathway, beginning with a pilot program for which the specific degree will be determined through research and leadership discussion. The program is designed primarily to serve non-traditional students: adult learners with accumulated college credit who have not completed a degree, former Florida College students who left before finishing, and mission-aligned students unable to relocate to Temple Terrace. The online degree pathway is not intended to replace or compete with Florida College's residential experience. It is a complementary access point that extends the college's reach to students drawn to its mission but whose life circumstances make campus attendance impossible.

The program will operate on a structured course rotation model, ensuring predictability for students managing work, family, and other obligations while maintaining the academic rigor and biblical foundation that defines a Florida College education. Online bachelor's degree programs are now common among faith-based peer institutions (including Grand Canyon University, Liberty University, Southeastern University, and Harding University), and exclusively online enrollment has held steady at approximately 28% of all undergraduates nationally (NCES, 2025). Florida College currently captures none of this population despite documented demand.

Why now?

The case for an online degree pathway rests on both external trends and internal evidence. Nationally, demand for flexible degree options has grown significantly and shows no sign of reversing. Adult learners (broadly defined as students 25 and older, those with prior college credit, working students, and students with family responsibilities) are not well served by traditional residential models. They need flexibility, clear pathways to completion, and programs that acknowledge credit already earned.

The internal data makes this gap concrete. Over the past three years, Florida College has had 330 prospective student records for individuals aged 25 or older. Of those, 102 never advanced beyond inquiry, and 212 never advanced beyond applicant status, meaning the college lost 95% of this population.

These were not disinterested students. They reached out, then encountered a model that could not accommodate them.

There is also a population of former Florida College students who left without completing their degrees and did not complete them elsewhere. These students bring prior credit, institutional familiarity, and in many cases continued affinity for the college. An online completion program creates a natural re-entry point for them and represents one of the most cost-effective forms of enrollment growth available to the institution.

As detailed in the Current Trends section of this plan, Florida College faces a converging set of demographic pressures. Expanding access to new student populations is not optional. It is a strategic necessity. An online degree pathway is one of the most direct ways to broaden enrollment without compromising institutional identity or requiring significant investment in campus infrastructure.

Expected enrollment impact

The immediate goal is a pilot cohort of 10 to 20 students, targeted for launch in August 2029. A 30-student cohort would represent approximately a 3% enrollment increase, meaningful at an institution of Florida College's size. Beyond the pilot, adult learners and completion-focused students tend to exhibit strong persistence once enrolled, particularly when the academic model is structured, and student support is adequate. Online programs also generate predictable, recurring net tuition revenue as cohort sizes stabilize and grow. This initiative is designed for intentional, sustainable growth, not rapid scaling. The goal for the planning period is to validate the model, demonstrate mission consistency, and build the infrastructure required to expand responsibly.

Goals

By the end of Year 3, the Online Degree Pathway initiative is intended to deliver:

- A data-informed understanding of the target online student market, including stop-out populations and new student segments.
- Successful selection, approval, and launch of an online degree program aligned with institutional strengths and market demand.
- Fully developed online infrastructure, including delivery platform, academic standards, and student support systems.
- A dedicated staffing model supporting online instruction, enrollment, and student services.
- A validated pilot cohort with measurable performance across enrollment, financial, and student experience metrics.

04

INITIATIVE 04 OF 06

New Sports Programs

Increase on-campus enrollment, strengthen student experience, and expand donor engagement.

Overview

This initiative expands Florida College's intercollegiate athletics program by adding new varsity sports and a Title IX-compliant companion program. Sports under consideration include baseball, softball, flag football, and pickleball. These programs will compete in the NAIA's Continental Athletic Conference (CAC) and are designed to drive enrollment and retention while deepening campus life, alumni engagement, and institutional visibility.

Florida College currently fields eight varsity sports (men's and women's soccer, men's basketball, women's volleyball, men's and women's golf, and cross country / track and field) with approximately 110 student-athletes. The proposed expansion targets a roster of nearly 200 student-athletes, a projection supported by the enrollment and financial modeling in the 2025–2026 athletics situational analysis. Each new program was identified based on its alignment with the college's faith-based mission, market demand in Florida and the Southeast, enrollment potential, and operational feasibility.

This expansion is not growth for its own sake. Florida College athletics operates on a $1.8M budget, below that of many peer institutions, and has demonstrated exceptional efficiency within those constraints. The goal is disciplined, mission-aligned expansion that generates a measurable return in enrollment, retention, and community engagement.

Why now?

Athletics is already one of Florida College's most productive enrollment channels. As of Fall 2025, athletics accounts for approximately 20% of the college's application pipeline, second only to the summer camp network. A September 2025 student survey found that 83% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that athletics positively supports their academic experience, with satisfaction increasing the longer students participate. Athletics is not a peripheral activity at Florida College; it is central to the student experience and to the institution's ability to attract and retain mission-fit students.

The external market reinforces the case for expanding now. The Southeast is one of the strongest talent pipelines for collegiate baseball and softball in the country. According to the National Federation of State

High School Associations (NFHS), high school baseball and softball participation reached record levels in 2024–2025, with approximately 474,000 baseball and 370,000 softball participants nationally; Florida alone accounts for more than 26,000 high school baseball players. NCAA roster compression has also displaced approximately 1,800 athletes nationally, increasing demand for NAIA opportunities and creating a favorable recruiting environment for institutions like Florida College.

Flag football and pickleball are also expanding. Flag football has grown to 2.4 million youth players nationally, with female participation up 63% between 2019 and 2023, and dozens of colleges have already added programs. Pickleball offers a low-cost entry point with strong existing campus interest and an active on-campus club, and NAIA varsity status appears to be a realistic near-term target. Both sports offer enrollment value, low operational costs relative to their impact, and strong alignment with Florida College's student culture.

Goals

By the end of Year 3, the New Sports Programs initiative is intended to deliver:

- Successful approval and launch of new athletic programs.
- Completed athletic facilities supporting new programs, including fully operational competition fields.
- Established coaching staff and recruiting pipelines capable of sustaining competitive rosters.
- Enrollment growth driven by student-athletes, contributing to overall headcount and retention.
- A scalable model for future athletic program expansion aligned with institutional capacity and demand.

INITIATIVE 05 OF 06

05 Institutional Cost Structure

Strengthen financial sustainability, improve net tuition margin, and support data-informed enrollment growth.

Overview

The Institutional Cost Structure Strategy is a comprehensive, three-year effort designed to align tuition pricing, financial aid discounting, and donor-funded scholarships with the institution's true cost structure, enrollment realities, and mission priorities. The initiative focuses on moving from intuitive and historically driven decisions toward a transparent, rational, and data-informed model that strengthens both financial sustainability and student access.

Key components of the initiative

- Refining the tuition model, including evaluation and potential modification of the current block tuition approach.
- Transitioning from a general, uniform discounting to a segmented financial aid strategy based on ability to pay, enrollment likelihood, academic profile, and program demand.
- Establishing a clear stewardship framework that improves transparency for students and donors regarding the impact of institutional and donor-funded aid.
- Creating predictable, sustainable net tuition revenue while protecting mission alignment.

Why now?

The institution is facing a convergence of financial and enrollment pressures that make this work both urgent and necessary.

Current challenges identified

- A shift in the FC student persona, with more students entering with prior college credit and a growing number of transfer students.
- Lack of a strategic financial aid framework, leading to inconsistent application of aid.
- Competitive tuition discounting practices by peer institutions to influence student choice.

- Pressure on operating margins, driven by misalignment between pricing, financial aid, and actual cost structures.
- Limited transparency in scholarship allocation and donor funding impact, making it difficult to connect aid decisions to mission outcomes and enrollment goals.

At the same time, many internal and external stakeholders continue to view Florida College through a traditional two-year school lens, even as student enrollment patterns evolve. Addressing these realities now ensures the institution builds a financial foundation that supports long-term student success and aligns with broader strategic enrollment planning initiatives.

Expected enrollment impact

This initiative is designed to support enrollment stability and improvement, not restrict access. While specific enrollment projections are not defined at this stage, the expected enrollment-related impacts include:

- Improved alignment between tuition pricing and students' actual enrollment duration, particularly for transfer students and those entering with prior credit.
- Enhanced ability to support student retention by ensuring pricing and financial aid structures reflect varying student pathways.
- Increased predictability in net tuition revenue, enabling more intentional reinvestment in student success initiatives.
- Stronger mission alignment by targeting discounts and scholarships toward students who best align with institutional priorities and enrollment objectives.

By grounding tuition and aid decisions in data rather than intuition, the institution positions itself to better serve students with diverse enrollment patterns while maintaining fiscal responsibility.

Goals

By the end of Year 3, the Institutional Cost Structure Strategy is intended to deliver the following outcomes:

- A transparent and rational pricing model that reflects true cost structure and program-level contribution margins.
- A sustainable, segmented discount strategy aligned with enrollment likelihood, mission priorities, and net revenue goals.
- Data-driven segmentation by ability to pay, enabling targeted use of institutional and donor-funded aid.
- A clear stewardship framework that provides students with transparency around how donor funding supports their success and gives donors meaningful visibility into the impact of their gifts.
- Improved alignment between tuition, financial aid, advancement, and student success outcomes.

Collectively, these outcomes aim to strengthen clarity, stewardship, and institutional impact while improving operating margins and long-term financial health.

INITIATIVE 06 OF 06

06 Fortress Christian School — Strategic Marketing

Build early student pipelines, expand online enrollment, and increase long-term matriculation into Florida College.

Overview

This initiative serves as a core pillar within the institution's broader strategic plan by strengthening brand clarity, expanding market reach, and supporting sustainable enrollment growth. It advances common institutional priorities - mission impact, program growth, financial resilience, and stakeholder engagement by establishing a repeatable, scalable recruitment engine aligned with academic expansion. The first step is to hire a full-time Marketing and Enrollment Strategist dedicated to Fortress Christian (with alignment to Florida College online efforts). This role will design and execute a coordinated, data-informed marketing program to increase awareness, generate inquiries and applications, and improve enrollment outcomes through digital campaigns, community outreach, and event-based recruitment.

Within the strategic plan, this role functions as the owner of an “enrollment growth workstream,” translating institutional goals into actionable marketing and enrollment strategies. Core responsibilities include:

- Clarifying and communicating Fortress Christian School value proposition.
- Building and managing the inquiry-to-enrollment funnel.
- Establishing consistent measurement to inform leadership decisions.

Scope and operating model

The strategist will collaborate across academics, admissions, student services, technology, and advancement to ensure alignment between marketing and the student experience. Key rhythms include a shared campaign calendar, weekly funnel reviews (lead volume, conversion, follow-up timeliness), monthly performance reporting, and quarterly strategic reviews tied to institutional priorities.

Stakeholders and decision rights

Leadership defines enrollment targets, budgets, and brand guardrails. The strategist recommends and executes marketing strategies within those parameters and reports results. Admissions provides pipeline updates and ensures follow-up standards; academic leaders contribute program messaging; and finance supports ROI tracking.

Why now?

Fortress has launched successfully, with early feedback highlighting strengths in academic rigor, live instruction, and biblical integration. However, marketing capacity is currently limited, while demand for structured homeschooling and online education continues to grow. With expansion to a full K–12 curriculum planned for fall 2026, strengthening the marketing and enrollment strategy now is essential to build awareness and scale intentionally.

From a strategic perspective, enrollment growth lags awareness and inquiry generation by one or more recruitment cycles. Investing in marketing capability in 2026 ensures that messaging, channels, and follow-up processes are mature before demand peaks with the K–12 expansion.

Market dynamics further reinforce urgency. Families evaluating online education compare multiple providers and make decisions based on discoverability (search, social, referrals), trust signals (testimonials, outcomes, accreditation), and responsiveness during inquiry. A dedicated strategist will enable Fortress Christian School to compete effectively in these decision moments while maintaining mission alignment.

RISK OF INACTION

Without dedicated strategy and execution, Fortress risks limited visibility in key markets, inconsistent follow-up, and enrollment volatility. The opportunity cost includes lost tuition revenue, reduced mission reach, constrained program investment, and misalignment between academic expansion and actual demand.

Expected enrollment impact

Initial impact will appear in leading indicators - website traffic, inquiries, applications, conversion rates, engagement metrics, and event participation - followed by measurable enrollment growth and increased geographic diversity. The long-term goal is to grow to approximately 300 students within five years through consistent marketing execution and improved conversion.

Enrollment projections should be based on a simple funnel model (inquiries → qualified leads → applications → accepted → enrolled), refined over time. Establishing baseline conversion rates in Year 1 enables realistic goal-setting and informed decisions about key levers: increasing lead volume, improving conversion, strengthening yield, or expanding offerings.

Measurement approach

Track leading indicators monthly and enrollment outcomes each recruitment cycle, with quarterly strategic reviews aligned to institutional goals. This ensures growth remains aligned with mission, capacity, and student experience.

Goals

By the end of Year 3, the initiative aims to deliver:

- A clearly defined and consistently applied value proposition across all audiences and channels.
- A data-driven enrollment funnel with baseline metrics and improved conversion rates.
- A repeatable, scalable marketing and recruitment engine across digital, events, and partnerships.
- Standardized lead management and follow-up processes improving response time and yield.
- A sustainable referral and partnership ecosystem contributing meaningfully to enrollment.

Together, these outcomes establish a scalable, performance-driven system that strengthens enrollment, brand clarity, and long-term institutional growth.

06 · EXECUTION

Next Steps

The Strategic Enrollment Plan will require cross-campus collaboration to achieve. The plan spans multiple areas of the campus and is designed to include both innovation and improvement. As a part of the next plan, Florida College will continue to utilize the traction method as proposed in the book *Traction* by Gino Wickman.

07 · ON DECK

Additional Potential Strategies

The six strategies laid out above were selected by the Steering Committee to be the first strategies accomplished by the implementation teams. However, there was strong support for both the Trade and Technical expansion and a First Year Experience Course. While these two initiatives do not have as in-depth of a proposal as the initial six strategies, this section will serve to lay out the case for these two initiatives.

Florida College Trade and Tech

Florida College has an emerging opportunity to expand its mission-impact through the development of trade and technical pathways that align with its mission and respond to evolving student demands. Findings from the Student Pulse Survey and feedback from the Parent Dinner initiative indicate growing interest among students and families in programs that lead to clear career outcomes, financial stability, and reduced educational risk.

While not an immediate institutional priority, Florida College Trade and Tech (FCTech) represents a strategic expansion pathway that will be advanced if the core six strategies are achieved ahead of schedule.

Proposed Timeline

YEAR 1

Exploration and Alignment

- Conduct a formal feasibility study.
- Assess alignment with institutional mission and student success outcomes.
- Identify 2–3 high-potential program areas (e.g., skilled trades, technical certificates, or workforce-aligned credentials).
- Engage industry partners and potential employers for advisory input and partnership exploration.
- Review regulatory, accreditation, and financial implications.
- Develop financial model that supports the college's main budget.

YEAR 2

Pilot Development

- Design 1–2 pilot programs with clear learning outcomes and employment pathways.
- Establish external partnerships (e.g., apprenticeships, sponsorships, or dual-enrollment pipelines).
- Develop pricing, delivery models (certificate, non-degree, or hybrid), and staffing plans.
- Launch a small-scale pilot cohort.
- Begin tracking key outcomes (enrollment, persistence, job placement indicators).

YEAR 3

Evaluation and Strategic Scaling

- Refine program offerings based on data and stakeholder feedback.
- Determine long-term structure (standalone unit, integrated pathways, or partnership model).
- Expand successful programs and integrate into broader enrollment strategy.

First Year Experience Program

Florida College has a significant opportunity to strengthen student retention and long-term success by implementing a structured First-Year Experience (FYE) initiative. Internal analysis indicates that the first semester represents the highest risk point for student attrition, with common challenges including time management, academic navigation, and lack of awareness of available support systems.

A well-designed FYE program aligns directly with institutional priorities to elevate the student experience, improve retention, and strengthen academic outcomes. By providing intentional, early touchpoints that clarify expectations, build confidence, and connect students to resources, Florida College can proactively address barriers to success and create a stronger foundation for persistence and graduation.

Proposed Timeline

YEAR 1

Design and Pilot Implementation

- Determine delivery model.
- Develop core curriculum focused on academic navigation, time management, resource awareness, and career connection.
- Identify facilitators and assign session ownership.
- Launch pilot implementation with first-year cohort.
- Establish baseline metrics (retention, academic standing, resource utilization, student confidence).

YEAR 2

Expansion and Integration

- Refine program structure based on Year 1 assessment data.
- Scale FYE to all first-year students with consistent delivery model.
- Formalize alignment with Pathways program and academic support services (e.g., tutoring, advising).
- Expand faculty involvement, including program-specific connections to careers.
- Continue tracking retention, GPA, and engagement indicators.

YEAR 3

Optimization and Institutionalization

- Evaluate impact on retention, persistence, and graduation benchmarks. Standardize
- FYE as a core component of the student experience.
- Integrate FYE outcomes into broader Strategic Enrollment Plan KPIs.
- Refine content to better align with career readiness and experiential learning goals.
- Explore additional enhancements (peer mentoring, second-year transition support).
- Formalize long-term ownership and continuous improvement processes.

08 · REFERENCE

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